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Seven ways to add value

FROM GARDEN OFFICES TO A KITCHEN MAKEOVER pages 6-7

From kitchen makeovers to green improvements, seven ways to boost your property's value.

By Jayne Dowle

Garden offices, garage conversions and kitchen renovations are, in order, the top three ways to deliver return on investment if you're thinking of home improvements.

"On average a garden office will cost you almost £9,000 to complete, but it will add 8.4 per cent to the value of your home," says Adam Kamani, the chief executive and co-founder of MoveStreets, the property portal that conducted the research. "That's £23,076 in the current market, meaning an overall value boost of £14,089 once the cost of the work is accounted for."

However, don't take up all your outdoor space, warns Tim Bannister, a property expert at Rightmove. He says that the site has recorded a 70 per cent uplift in buyer searches for "gardens" in January. "It's looking likely to be the first restriction-free spring we've had since 2019, which means many will be looking forward to hosting friends and family during the Easter or bank holidays."

There are limits on how far a home can be improved and extended under permitted development, so carefully weigh up your space and the size of the garden and outdoor areas before making irreversible decisions. In other words, plan smart, think smart and live smart.

1 Garden office

A basic timber structure suitable for use as a garden office can cost from about £4,250, according to Checkatrade, a tradesperson comparison website that, in conjunction with the Guild of Property Professionals (GPP), recently undertook its own research into adding value to homes.

If you already have an outbuilding you'd like to convert to an office or studio space the costs are much less; a shed conversion, including improving insulation and decoration, is estimated to set you back as little as £1,650.

If you are starting from scratch it's important to consider legalities and structural issues, planning permission, damp-proofing, foundations and insurance. Another consideration is the possible capital gains tax that may arise on disposal should you run a business from your garden office, warns Iain McKenzie, chief executive of the GPP.

2 Garage conversion

Converting the garage into a home office, playroom or studio space or even just to add extra storage is also a smart addition, costing on average £14,500 but adding £27,471, leaving £12,971 — or 10 per cent — in added value, Kamani says.

"A garage continues to be one of the most popular [Rightmove] keyword search terms, though the role of the garage may have changed over time and due to the pandemic," Bannister says. "Where once it was just a place to park a

car or store belongings, now people are seeing it as additional space they could perhaps use for either work or a hobby."

However, as most garage conversions can be done under the permitted development rules, meaning you don't have to apply for planning permission (you will need a Lawful Development Certificate under permitted development and to meet building regulations), you should always consider the improvement as part of a "whole building" strategy.

The cost of an extension depends largely on size, obviously. For instance a single-storey extension can cost as little as £25,000, Checkatrade says, with a loft conversion roughly at £37,500.

"Glass extensions are becoming increasingly popular and can add up to 7 per cent to the value of your home," says Mike Fairman, the chief executive of Checkatrade. The catch? The average glass extension will cost £3,000 a square metre, so it's not a cheap fix.

3 Kitchen renovation

Updating the kitchen may add £15,109 (5.5 per cent) to the value of your home and, if you plan it on a tight budget, could cost about £8,528 on average to do, according to MoveStreets.

It could be a good priority, because a nice, shiny new kitchen will impress potential buyers, who typically would

Main: a London project by Threefold Architects with double-height windows that have 'thermally broken' frames to improve insulation. Above left: the bathroom of Burma House, an east London renovation by Paul Archer Design

rather not face the upheaval and disruption of replacing tired units and out-of-date appliances themselves. However, tread carefully.

Don't choose anything outlandish — being tasteful counts — and pay particular attention to aspects such as clever layout, use of space and lighting. This can be tricky to pull off, but make sure a new kitchen "balances" with the rest of the house too.

And of course if a full renovation isn't within budget, revamping cupboard doors, worktops, taps and sinks can help. A professional respray of kitchen cabinet fronts can cost as little as £80 per cabinet, or replacing work surfaces £500

Value added tips

COVER STORY



“A super-fancy spa bathroom can add significant value, with an estimated increase of £5,000 to £10,000



COVER: TIMOTHY SOAR; MAIN IMAGE: CHARLES HOSEA

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Converting a
shed to an office
is estimated to cost just
£1,650 — including
insulation and
decoration



to £800, depending on the material, according to Checktrade.

4 Upgraded or extra bathroom

A super-fancy spa bathroom can add significant value, with an estimated increase of about £5,000 to £10,000, according to VonHaus, an online home retailer. So the addition of must-have spa features such as an air-bubble freestanding tub, steam shower and Bluetooth speaker showerhead could help you clean up on a sale.

“Bathrooms with baths, rather than exclusively showers, add more value as they are often essential for parents of young children,” McKenzie says.

Eke out space for a downstairs cloakroom and you could add up to £2,000 — the elements of privacy, ease and access are all good selling points, he adds. According to Checktrade this will cost about £1,250 on average, accounting for materials and labour.

5 Driveway and external lighting

An impressive entrance makes an instant impression and ramps up that all-important kerb appeal. Checktrade believes that decent outdoor lighting can add between £1,000 and £2,000 in value to a property. When you're budgeting bear in mind that the average cost to install a single low-voltage outdoor wall light is £165, according to Checktrade.

If your home has a driveway, consider its condition. Would it benefit from an upgrade? Depending on the location and size of your home (and driveway), Checktrade reckons that a decent driveway can add 5 to 10 per cent to the value of a property. The cheapest — but perhaps not the most stylish — solution is tarmac. Checktrade says this should cost £50 to £85 a square metre.

6 Eco features

We'd all love our homes to be as energy-efficient as possible to help us to tackle rising fuel bills and feel that we're doing our bit for the planet.

Installing double glazing can increase a property's value by up to 10 per cent, according to Checktrade, at an average cost (eight windows, two uPVC doors) of between £4,000 and £5,000. According to Checktrade the average cost of installing an air source heat pump

Clockwise from main: a London project by Threefold Architects, with windows that help to insulate; garden room by the Swift Organisation; garage extension to a house in Edinburgh, by Konishi Gaffney Architects; kitchen by Herringbone Kitchens. Cover: kitchen extension in Dartmouth Park, London, by Cousins & Cousins Architects

ranges from £3,000 to £18,000. Solar panel installations can add between 14 per cent and 38 per cent to property values depending on where you live. You'll pay between £5,000 and £8,000 for a photovoltaic system and £4,000-£5,000 for a solar thermal system.

7 Good maintenance

It's a boring (and expensive) fact of life that keeping value in a home means a more or less continual investment in maintenance. While chimney pointing, fence repairs and drain maintenance may not make your heart sing, making sure everything is shipshape can add between 3 and 5 per cent to average value, according to Checktrade.

The roof is the big-ticket number. Roof repairs can cost in the region of £375 for just one roof valley replacement, according to Checktrade. However, as the GPP points out, this is important: it estimates that roof issues picked up by a structural survey can reduce an asking price by £5,000 to £10,000.

While unlikely to be the clinching factor in a sale, small problems and defects can create an impression of a house being left to rot — leading to low offers and sad faces all round.

For appearance's sake, the property industry body Propertymark advises, tackle minor issues such as peeling paint, dirty walls, dripping taps, squeaky floors, doors or stairs, mouldy sealant, limescale build-up, badly fitted laminate flooring and broken lightbulbs.

Serious issues such as damp should never be hidden: they will show on any survey and come back to haunt you.

Ikea's first small store: the verdict

My initial impression of Ikea's first “small store” is that it is vast. Granted, compared with Ikea Wembley, the first “bijou” offering from the Swedish retailer in Hammersmith, west London, is positively diminutive.

It's approximately one quarter the size of an average Ikea superstore, at 4,600 sq m across two floors. Unlike the out-of-town big blue boxes, this one has shop windows, with enticing room sets. Trolleys have given way to cheery yellow wheelie baskets and superstore checkouts to a cashless self-checkout area. Joy of joys, once through the door, shoppers are encouraged to browse, to walk in whichever direction takes their fancy, double back, stand and stare. There's no bossy one-way system here. Ikea is well aware that customers come expecting bargains and price tags are extra-large and prominently displayed.

Ikea researchers took virtual tours of about 200 homes owned by Ikea fans in the neighbourhood and the room sets and stock are based on their insights. Among the best buys are the Adils desk, £29, the trolleys that serve as mobile storage for home offices, bathrooms and kitchens (from £10 for a Vesken) and compact furniture stars such as the Marius stacking kitchen stool, £5. The leaf-shaped Lövbacken side table, £50, is one for the fans, a descendant of the 1950s Lövet, while the bamboo Knixhukt pendant, £40, looks set to be a classic.

Shipping is the one thing diehard



Ikea fans will complain about. This is what makes a small store a game-changer. Out of 4,000 product lines on display, 1,800 are available to take away on the same day. And there is a plan to launch “Collect Near You Lockers”, a network of 20 storage spaces where your Ikea shopping can be delivered, free of charge if you spend more than £200.

You do have to visit Hammersmith, though. The new Ikea is the flagship store in what was Kings Mall, a shopping centre opened in 1979 and dismal since before the start of this millennium. Bought in 2019 by Ingka Centres (part of the Ingka Group, which also includes Ikea Retail), the mall of sadness has been rechristened Livat, meaning “lively gathering” in Swedish. And while the inside has improved beyond recognition, if you perch on the cheery yellow benches outside, inhaling exhaust fumes from the A315, you probably won't feel in the mood for a livat. But at least you can still enjoy Swedish meatballs.

Katrina Burroughs