

Bricks & Mortar

Summer in the country market

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THE GUIDE

The race for space is taking on a new urgency in many suburbs. Homeowners desperate to make their houses larger would like to move, but mortgage affordability rules and stamp duty continue to be insurmountable barriers. The housing market slowdown and property price falls in some areas are also making relocation difficult. However, as a result, ingenious extensions or cleverly designed new homes are being created.

Convert your garage

Many semi-detached or detached homes have garages, but these days nearly half of us fill them with clutter — a study from RAC Home Insurance suggests that 4.6 million of Britain's 10.6 million garages no longer shelter cars. How about chucking out the clutter and developing the space into a study or a granny flat?

In Shepherd's Bush, west London, a garage has been converted into a two-bedroom glass and steel home of 110 sq m. It is on the site of a former timber yard and was bought by the owners of an overlooking house to stop property developers redeveloping it intrusively. The couple have since sold their house and moved out of London, but they use this compact pied-à-terre, the Courtyard House, for the husband, who spends weekdays in the capital.

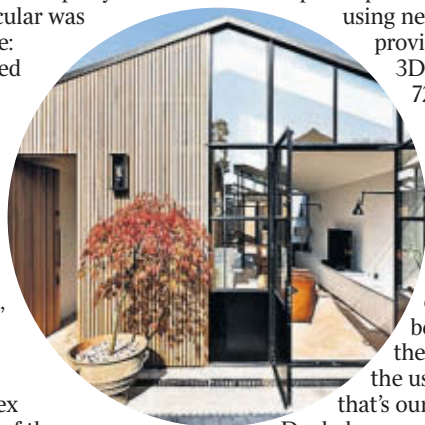
With such a tiny space available, De Rosee Sa, the architects, had to create a basement, which contains the second bedroom, an external courtyard and bathroom. The ground floor has a living room, kitchen and bedroom with en suite.

Crittall-style steel and glass doors maximise light and space. Internal walls of the three courtyards are clad in western red cedar battens, in a nod to the site's history as a timber yard.

The redevelopment took 18 months, cost £450,000, and was far from simple. The architect said that the party wall process in particular was a planning nightmare: agreement was needed from 16 adjoining owners. Local opposition also had to be overcome.

Maximise your existing space

If all that sounds too much like hard work, there are ways to generate more space without a complex planning process. Alex Depledge, a founder of the architecture company Resi.co.uk and a prominent female property technology entrepreneur, says that reorganising your existing rooms or knocking down internal non-supporting walls will often create the space you're after.



The light-filled Courtyard House is a converted garage in Shepherd's Bush, designed by De Rosee Sa architects



An extension by Tailored Living, in Dulwich, southeast London, makes the most of natural light and garden views

The new ways to win the space race

Have you already extended your home, but are still feeling cramped? Fresh possibilities are opening up, says **David Byers**

Depledge and Jules Coleman set up Resi after selling Hassle.com, their home-cleaner booking website, for £27 million. Their new company aims to speed up home extensions by using new technology to provide floorplans and 3D impressions within 72 hours, and to crunch council data to give clients the best chance in planning applications. "Many people are obsessed with everything looking beautiful, but they've forgotten about the usability of space — that's our specialism," Depledge says.

"A lot of Victorian houses were built with a lot of circulation space — like corridors, which people move through to get to another room, but don't use — and not much liveable space... such as living rooms or kitchens. If you're short



Alex Depledge (left) and Jules Coleman of Resi.co.uk help clients to plan their home extensions. Left: the Courtyard House has a basement and cost £450,000 to convert

of space, then minimise the circulation space if you can and turn it into rooms you actually use. That's where the modern trend of 'opening up' homes comes from: the desire to turn circulation space into liveable space."

Remove non-structural walls

Many Victorian homes have giant first-floor bedrooms and tiny lavatories, often separated only by internal, non-supporting walls. Demolish them and extend your bathroom into some of the unwanted space.

"You can push the whole bathroom across by half a metre," says Nick Stockley of Resi.co.uk.

"Removing a non-structural wall costs a few thousand, but moving house — with all the associated costs, including stamp duty — is likely to cost much more."

Take out your old chimneys

Today chimneys are largely a huge waste of space. Stockley says that removing chimney breasts will allow you to extend your first-floor upstairs bathroom or bedrooms. "Often when you access a bathroom from the first

floor there's a chimney breast in the way stopping you from extending your poky loo," he says. "If you remove the breast, you can extend the bathroom."

It'll save you money too. Building a new bathroom somewhere else in the house will cost up to £12,000, but removing a chimney breast costs only £2,000 and allows you to keep your (now bigger) bathroom where it is.

When is a ceiling not a ceiling?

Victorian and Edwardian homes commonly have a flat ceiling with a large gap above. Generate extra height by exposing the vaulted structure. Sometimes your height space increases so dramatically that you can install a mezzanine storey for up to £25,000, but mostly you'll have only enough room for deluxe roof lights.

This extra height, however, still generates significant space. Exposing a vaulted ceiling will usually cost between £3,000 and £4,000.

Don't bankrupt yourself after watching television renovation shows

It's easy to get carried away before it suddenly hits that you haven't saved as much as you need. New research by Direct Line, an insurer, suggests that households underestimate the cost of renovations and redecoration by about £3.4 billion each year, spending an average £7,427 more than expected. It found that in the past five years 23 per cent of new property owners have faced spiralling costs in an effort to create their dream homes.

Dan Simson, the head of home insurance at Direct Line, says that television shows can be misleading about the difficulties of renovation work — the *Grand Designs* effect. "It's important to research and price the work accurately, building contingency costs into the budget, to ensure your home improvements come in on time and meet your expectations," he says.

Beware planning rules

Any work or alterations that affect a neighbouring property require you to issue a party-wall notice to the owners under the Party Wall Act (England and Wales). For details, visit communities.gov.uk. Alterations to a leasehold property need consent from the freeholder.

The rules will be much tighter if you live in a listed property or a conservation area: check the Historic England site (historicengland.org.uk) for advice.

Think big

If you're one of the tens of thousands of millennials living in a microflat, or very small apartment, one of the keys to happiness is decluttering and great storage. In his new book *Happy by Design*, Ben Channon — known as the Mindful Architect — explores how the design of our homes increases feelings of wellbeing.

Multifunctionality of rooms is key, Channon says. Many developers can install beds that fold into ceilings, hide cupboards behind mirrors and tuck kitchens behind wardrobe doors. "Finding creative ways to maximise storage — whether under the bed or in

a ceiling void — can make a home seem so much bigger," he says.

Channon recommends browsing the architecture, interiors and design website Dezeen (dezeen.com) for ideas about the latest inventions and high-tech solutions for the home, and the architecture innovations website Arch Daily (archdaily.com).

For inspiration for amazing — if extreme — multifunctionality ideas, architects swear by this video from Gary Chang, of Hong Kong, who has adapted his 344 sq ft apartment in numerous ways to maximise space (youtube.com/watch?v=WB2-2j9e4co).