



Spot the difference: Before (far right); with garage, and after (main): a cleverly added room

Extend into your garage

Make use of outside space to add another useful room cheaply

■ Converting a garage into another room is an increasingly popular project to add space. Common uses include an extra sitting room, which is especially good if you have teenagers or older children, an office, a guest suite, or as self-contained living space for an elderly or dependent relative.

A converted single garage will typically add around 45 sq metres of floor space to your

home. Be prepared to upgrade the existing floor, ceiling, light and ventilation to make it suitable for domestic use.

For the new room to work well, you have to be able to get to it easily from the main house. It's also worth thinking carefully about how a garage conversion might affect the flow of traffic through the ground floor. You might want to consider converting only part of it, so

you gain an extra room but retain space for storage.

If you like the idea, check for restrictive clauses in leasehold or new-build properties or in a conservation area. Ask your local council if you require planning permission, and expect to comply with building regulations. Local councils in towns or cities where parking is a problem may forbid garage conversions, so investigate before you plan.

'With any conversion work, if you take off more than 25 per cent of the original plasterwork, you'll be encouraged by the building regulations inspector to redo the whole of the room with the most energy-effective alternative.'

Gary Webb, Federation of Master Builders and owner of Whitenold Construction

COST

Around £12,000 to convert a single garage.

LOOK FOR

The opportunity to upgrade the insulation in all your exterior and interior walls.

AVOID

Losing too much storage space by making up for it elsewhere – with a garden shed or extra boarding in the loft, for example.

WHAT KIND OF HOUSE IS IT GOOD FOR?

According to Chris Brown, President of The National Association of Estate Agents, 'Inner city properties may benefit most from a garage conversion. Space to extend externally may be limited, and city-dwellers tend to have fewer cars, but weigh up the pros and cons. If residential parking restrictions are likely to be introduced, losing the garage could be a problem.'

CAN YOU DIY?

Not recommended. Employ a builder or a specialist garage conversion company.

garage has given us so much space'



Clare Hobbs, 34, lives in Devon, with her husband Tim, 41, and their

son Ben, four. Clare's three step-children, Jake, 13, Nadia, 11, and Ashton, 10, are often at the house, too. 'As we have four children with a big age range we need lots of space, so we converted the double garage. Now the playroom takes up one side, while the other is half office and half storage.

'The playroom measures 2.6 metres x 5.4 metres and feels like a proper room, with access from the utility room. The children have discos in there because the conversion company – Creative Garages in Plymouth – installed lights which react to sound. The areas under the roofs are boarded out, giving us even more storage. The bedrooms in the main house aren't big, so the extra space is great.'

HOW MUCH IT COST... £12,000

The garage has become an office and play room

