

LIVING IN THE SOUTH



4 CREATE A LUXURY BATHROOM

The home-spa concept is gaining momentum, with walk-in showers, underfloor heating and built-in TV and sound systems all proving popular. Creating an extra bathroom by carving up a large bedroom could well add value to your home, but make sure you are not going to end up with a mean-sized boudoir — one possible solution is to steal a little bit of space from each of two adjacent bedrooms. The state-of-the-art, walk-through Tradition shower adds 'wow' factor to this bathroom (shown left). It costs £705, and the Rimm cast-iron bath is £938; both are from Aston Matthews (020 7226 7220, astonmatthews.co.uk).



5 INSTALL A NEW KITCHEN

Even in relatively modern properties, the layout of the kitchen may not be using the available space to the full. It could also be possible to knock through to an adjacent dining area to create a more sociable room. 'If you are planning a new kitchen, don't make the style too personal, especially if you are planning on selling in the near future,' cautions Miles Shippside of Rightmove. This smart oak kitchen (shown right) is by Extreme Design (01344 627567, extreme-design.co.uk), and costs from £40,000. It is complemented by a striking yet inexpensive and easy-to-change papered feature wall.



6 WASTE UNDER THE STAIRS

This often-neglected area could be earning its keep as useful storage (think a sleek run of easy-to-access cupboards), a home office or a WC. If you opt for the latter, look out for small-scale sanitaryware that won't make the space feel cramped. Robin Levien's design for a diminutive washroom suite (shown above) costs £860.43 in total — including the taps and accessories — at Ideal Standard (01482 346461, ideal-standard.co.uk).



7 BUILD A SUMMERHOUSE

If you have exhausted all the other possibilities of improving your home, what about building at the end of the garden? Obviously, this extra 'room' will be less practical than any space tagged onto the house, but it could make a wonderful office or simply an indulgent retreat. Shown left is a summerhouse that was created as a workplace for a north London writer by Sarah Wigglesworth Architects (020 7607 9200, swarch.co.uk). The structure is made of prefabricated timber sections assembled on site, and plays on the idea of a shed at the bottom of the garden. It was also designed to frame views of the surrounding woodland and cost £24,500.

8 INSTALL A SPIRAL WINE CELLAR

Perfect for a wine connoisseur, but do bear in mind that any installation in a smaller home is unlikely to increase its value. This design by Spiral Cellars (0845 241 2768, spiralcellars.co.uk) is a watertight, pre-cast cylindrical system that is sunk into the ground, and offers storage for up to 1,800 bottles. An average-size design will cost around £15,000.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

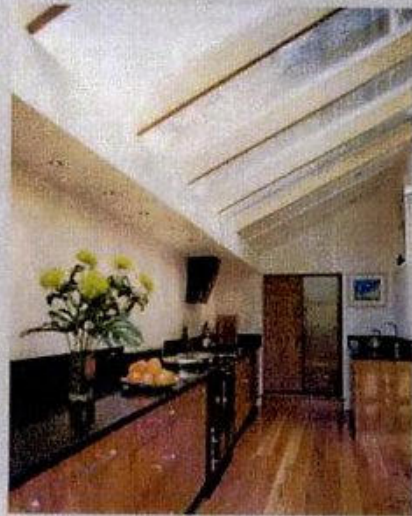
Moving home has never been so expensive, so if you need more living space, it may be worth staying put and working with what you have. You could extend up, down or outwards, or even turn a cupboard into a washroom



Photo: Alison Funnell/Designer Architecture

1 MOVE INTO THE ROOF

This is a great way to gain space without encroaching on the garden, but always be realistic about what you can use your loft for. For example, is it practical to climb flights of stairs to reach a playroom? Also bear in mind that you need 2.4 metres of headroom to be able to convert your loft; lowering the floor or raising the roof is an option, but can prove costly. In this project (shown left) by Form Design Architects (020 7407 3336, form-architecture.co.uk), the roof of a 19th-century coach house was raised to create a new level, which houses a studio bedroom, a shower room and a fabulous terrace. Expect to pay from £150,000 for complex work like this.



2 DIG A BASEMENT

'Most gardens in the capital aren't huge, so you are limited as to how big an extension can be,' notes Maggie Smith of The London Basement Company (020 8847 9449, tbc.co.uk). 'With a basement, you can go under the entire property and into the garden.' Prices for a commission such as the one shown below, which involved excavating beneath a property to create space for a family room, study, utility area and a shower room – start from £350 per sq ft.



Photo: Rachel Conchem

3 ADD AN EXTENSION

Extending the front, back or side of your property is an obvious solution, but any work carried out will need to comply with planning and building regulations (visit planningportal.gov.uk for more information). 'It's also vital that the style of your extension fits in with the rest of the property, as this "kerb appeal" adds value,' says Miles Shipside of property website Rightmove.co.uk. The light-filled space above, by Architect Your Home (0800 849 8505, architect-yourhome.com), was achieved by building into a redundant side return; it cost £48,000.