

CAN I CONVERT MY GARAGE?

Although most garages can be converted, there are cases where people run into problems. Check for any restrictive covenants or clauses that may prevent you from making changes that alter the external appearance of your home. Even if you find you are subject to such restrictions, you may still be able to convert the space, retaining the front section for storage and converting the rear area.

“You might require planning permission if you live in a Conservation Area or there is some type of restrictive covenant left on your property,” confirms Stuart Letts. “All this can be found out by making a phone call to your local planning department, giving them your address and informing them that you would like to convert your garage. Then they can generally tell you there and then over the phone if you will need planning permission or not.

“You must submit a Building Notice to your local authority or private building control company before work commences, which usually costs in the region of £324,” says Stuart. “The inspector will come out throughout the conversion checking the work. After the conversion is finished they will issue you with a final certificate. Without this certificate you may have problems if you ever come to sell your house.”

The building inspector will be looking at ventilation, damp-proofing, insulation, fireproofing and fire escape routes and, of course, structural soundness. ▶

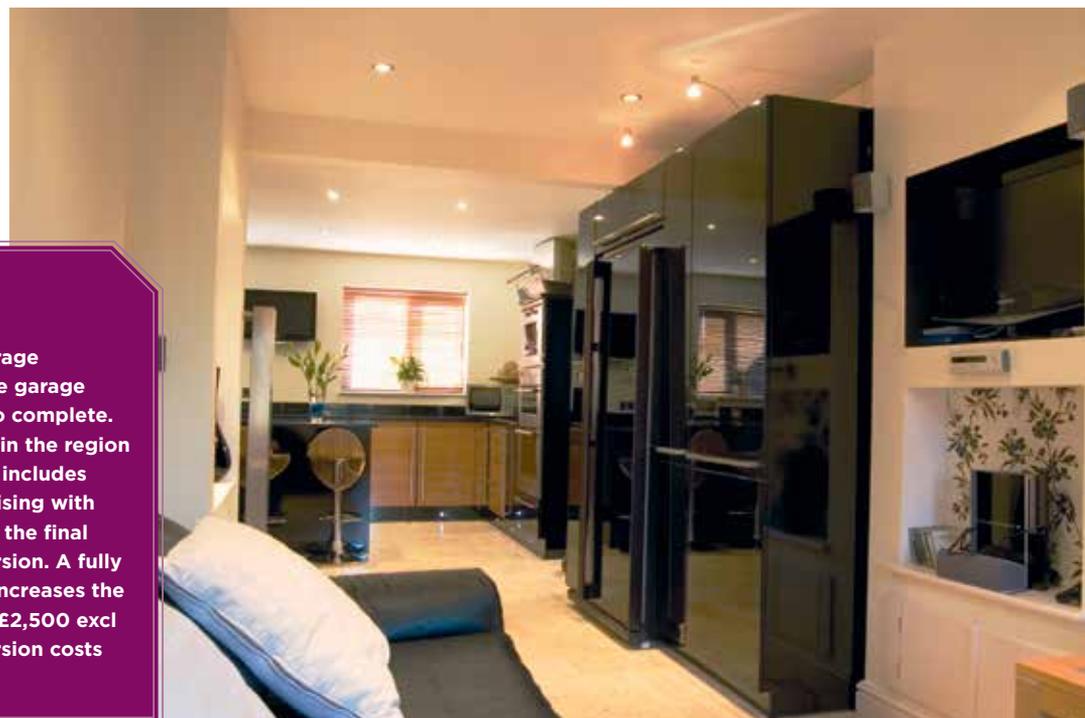
LIVING KITCHEN

This is the ideal way to get a larger kitchen with space to eat and entertain in without using up valuable garden space.

This garage conversion to a family home involved removing the rear wall of the garage where it backed on to the existing kitchen to open the spaces for an open plan area that could be enjoyed by all members of the family.

The brief also included an area for the children to watch television and use the games console, but not be in a separate room.

The conversion, not including the supply and fit of the kitchen, cost in the region of £10,500 from Garage Conversion Specialists (0845 370 5030; garageconversionspecialists.co.uk).



COST GUIDE

According to Stuart Letts from Garage Conversion Specialists, the average garage conversion takes around 10 days to complete.

“A basic garage conversions costs in the region of £7,500 excl VAT,” he says. “This includes submitting the Building Notice, liaising with the building inspector and gaining the final certificate at the end of the conversion. A fully equipped shower room generally increases the price of the conversion by around £2,500 excl VAT. A basic double garage conversion costs around £12,500 excl VAT.”

USING THE SPACE

Most garages, being originally designed to house a car, tend to be long and narrow — a shape that does not immediately lend itself to a good living space. For this reason it is common for people to break the space into two smaller rooms using stud walls, with the smaller of the two rooms often acting as a WC or shower room — or for storage (bearing in mind the conversion of the garage will take away some storage space).

When it comes to using the new room, this will clearly be determined by your own needs, and garage conversions are a great idea for a number of uses, including home offices. This can make perfect sense, as garages are usually located away from the main living areas and capable of having their own, self-contained entrance for work-related visitors.

“It is common for people to break the space into two smaller rooms”

Where garages adjoin the kitchen, knocking out the wall between the two in order to create one larger kitchen/diner is a popular option — and also overcomes the long, narrow issues. Another good use of garages that sit alongside a kitchen is as a utility room as they also offer the potential for a back door.

Using the space as a playroom and keeping it partially open to an adjacent kitchen makes it possible to supervise younger children while carrying out day-to-day jobs, and garage conversions are also the ideal spot for a second living room for older children to relax in — keeping the inevitable noise away from your own relaxing spaces. Other options include gyms, home cinemas and spare bedrooms.

In the case of detached garages, you have the option of converting them into a separate annexe, subject to planning consent. ▶



THE PLAY ROOM

This conversion, by **Garage Conversion Specialists** (garageconversionspecialists.co.uk), provides a playroom for the owners' daughters. As it was a double garage, a dividing fire wall was built between the new room and the garage to meet Building Regulations. An opening was created in the rear wall from the existing kitchen, a new insulated floor was installed, and the exterior walls insulated too. It took 10 days to complete and cost £9,000.



Garages

FLOORS AND WALLS

A common problem among those wishing to integrate their garage space into the rest of their home is that the floor levels are not the same — integrated garages are required to have a step down to prevent flammable liquids passing under doors.

Of course, it is fine to keep a step down, but in all likelihood the floor will require additional damp-proofing and insulation in order to meet Building Regulations anyway.

A new concrete floor can be poured with a damp-proof membrane added between the layers along with insulation before being given a screed finish. Alternatively, a raised timber floor can be built over the existing floor, with a gap of 150mm between the joists and original floor. Damp-proofing and insulation can be laid beneath and between the new floor.

In many garages a damp-proof course will have been laid in the walls when it was built, but do check this.

External walls are covered by Building Regulations and must meet requirements in terms of moisture-proofing and insulation. If you are converting an integral garage, the exterior walls will probably meet Building Regulations. Otherwise, a second block wall or a stud wall inside the existing exterior wall can overcome insulation issues — although obviously this will decrease the interior dimensions of the space.

Interior walls between rooms in the conversion must meet Building Regulations' requirements for fire-proofing. This can mean one or two layers of fire-proof plasterboard on stud walls, although for block walls this is unnecessary.

Detached garages usually require additional insulation if they are going to be usable spaces.

PLUMBING AND WIRING

Keep in mind that additional pipework and wiring in a garage will place greater demands on the household mains. Ask your electrician if this is likely to be an issue — an additional mains supply can be installed but the cost is highly variable, running between £500-£20,000. This will also require the



installation of a separate consumer unit. Otherwise, locate the garage on the current consumer unit.

VENTILATION

When you decide to use your garage as another room, adequate ventilation will be required in order to meet Building Regulations standards, and fire regulations need to be met too. A fire escape route is required with an opening introduced to be no less than 0.33m², while Building Regulations also requires that, for ventilation purposes, an opening of at least 1/20th of the floor area of the room served is created.

It is common to add windows or doors where the front opening of the garage once was — adding a block or brick wall to fill the gaps can bring the opening to a standard size while eliminating the need for additional footings due to the decreased weight when compared to a full infill wall — sometimes an issue, particularly in the case of detached garages built some time ago. ■



THE DINING ROOM

The purpose of this garage conversion was to provide extra family space. The work, carried out by Garage Conversion Specialists, involved removing some internal walls and fitting steels to support the new spaces. In total the project cost £11,000, including work to open up the existing kitchen and dining room to the new space.