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THE KNOWLEDGE EXPANDING YOUR OPTIONS



LISA MACKENZIE, regional sales director for south west London at estate agents Kinleigh Folkard & Hayward (kfh.co.uk)

■ Extending your home is often less expensive than moving. If you like where you live, but your family has outgrown the existing space, then adding a bedroom avoids the upheaval of relocating.

■ We have seen a huge increase in basement conversions, but they can be hugely expensive, so are only really an option in areas where property prices are very high, otherwise you won't make back your investment. In up-and-coming areas, stick with a ground-level or loft extension to avoid overdeveloping. Remember, it's better to have the worst house in the best road than the best house in the worst road.

■ Another classic mistake people make is to create a house that is top-heavy, with too many bedrooms and not enough living space, or they over-extend on the ground floor and end up with a garden that's very small in relation to the house.

■ The front of the house used to be the social area of the home. But now, thanks to the popularity of TV chefs, cooking is seen as a communal activity and people gather in the kitchen. This means kitchen extensions with doors that open on to a garden are popular with everyone.

■ Aim to recoup the money you spend and add saleability to your property, but don't try to make money. A design that enhances your quality of life is more important, as is ensuring you end up with a well-executed build – a shoddy job can actually detract from a house's value.



This sleek glass ground-level extension by Giles Pike Architects cost £125,000



Clad in Siberian larch with an integrated shutter, this extension adds a kitchen, dining area and study, lit from a skylight that can be closed off from the rest of the living area. Projects by Hayhurst And Co start at £50,000

Focus on GROUND-FLOOR EXTENSIONS

Get it right and a ground-floor extension will turn a cluster of small, dark living spaces into a light-filled social hub

A ground-level extension is the most obvious way to increase the size of your home and can turn a cramped kitchen into a spacious open-plan living area or cool kitchen-diner. 'Many people love the charm of a period house, but not the small, dark rooms, so a modern extension is a great way to bring in light and create a more aspirational space while still retaining the original character,' says architect Dan Brill.

INSIDE OUT

'The biggest trend in ground-level extensions is clients wanting to create a direct connection between the house and the outside space,' says Simon Gill at Simon Gill Architects. 'This can be done through the use of sliding doors with flush thresholds that allow almost the entire back of the house to open up. And by using the same or similar materials and finishes in both spaces to blur the boundaries.'

Natural stone and porcelain floor tiles work well both inside and out and help to create

continuity, while wood floors can be teamed with decking in a similar shade for a seamless look. Or choose the same finish, such as brick, wood cladding or a striking paint and run it from the kitchen out to the garden.

'Don't forget that if you are going to be looking on to your outside space all year round, then it's worth spending some time and effort to get it up to scratch,' says Adam Howard at Evonort.

A CLEARER VIEW

'Glazing technology has moved on tremendously over the past few years and it's now possible to get huge, full-height doors that allow you to open up the entire back of the house,' says Matt Giles at Giles Pike Architects. 'Although folding doors are still popular, extra-wide sliding doors have fewer uprights and therefore will allow a better view when closed.'

The latest models have really slender frames too – to maximise the sense of space, choose a dark colour to make them even less noticeable.

PHOTOGRAPHY (TOP LEFT) KILLIAN O'SULLIVAN; (BOTTOM LEFT) LOGAN MACDOUGALL-POPE



This build by Lipton Plant Architects used large skylights and sliding doors to open up a dark lower-ground floor, linking house and garden, with kitchen cabinetry extending outside. It cost £300,000

PIVOT DOORS

'Glass companies have been perfecting pivot doors for years, so they are now becoming more popular,' says architect Paul Archer at Paul Archer Design. 'A complete absence of uprights means an unobstructed view, plus you can open up a width of around 2.2m. They are also ideal if there is no space for a sliding door to sit to one side.' A pivot door measuring H2.2 x W2m could cost from £3,000.

LIGHT SOLUTIONS

Glass roofs or skylights can be used to great effect to bring light into a newly extended ground floor. 'An extension turns what used to be the outside into an inside space,' explains Paul Archer. 'This means you need to draw daylight back into the original part of the building and the most effective way to do this is with a strategically placed skylight in-between the old and new structures.'

CONSIDER THE ECO ANGLE

Part L of building regulations dictates the overall

amount of glazing that can be used in an extension, but you can offset this elsewhere by adding more insulation or installing a more efficient boiler. Low E or triple-glazed panels allow you to incorporate much more glazing into a build. Your architect can do a set of calculations to show you what is possible.

DOUBLE UP

'A double-height extension can completely change the way a house feels,' says Matt Giles. 'People are beginning to appreciate that a beautiful and uplifting space is as important as actual square footage and that in itself can add value. A good design can unite a gloomy basement and ground-floor living area, plus it provides the opportunity to include a mezzanine, which can really add drama.'



LEFT The wing of this Grade-II listed house was rebuilt by David Mikhail in timber and glass to offer views to the garden from the entrance hall. The garden was terraced to give level access from a family room, roofed in one huge sheet of glass. Projects start at £300,000. BELOW This extension by Simon Gill Architects includes a barbecue area that feels as if it's been slid out of the house into the garden, helped by a sliding door opening that is flush all round. Projects start at £120,000



FYi
Green roofs made with the zero-maintenance plant sedum (try sedumsupply.co.uk) are a hot trend. They look good, reduce the chance of flooding and increase a roof's thermal insulation.

CHOOSE TO CLAD

Wood is still a popular choice for exterior cladding as it's relatively inexpensive, renewable, easy to work with and beautiful to look at. But unless it's treated regularly with a protective stain, it will age over time. 'We use a lot of western red cedar: it's resistant to weathering, lightweight and stable, so it doesn't twist or buckle,' says Dan Brill. Other options include burnt larch, which is a striking black shade, European oak or coppiced sweet chestnut, which over time turns a lovely silvery grey.

'Alternatively, you can take materials that are already part of the building and use them in a more playful way,' says Nick Hayhurst at Hayhurst And Co. 'We recently completed a project on a house with a slate roof where we used slate as cladding on the external elevations too.'

