

LOVE, ACTUALLY, IS CREATIVE SPACE

Adding space to your home is a clever way to climb the property ladder, says **David Spittles**

A sedum-roof extension adds a 21st-century structural glass to listed-Georgian Hunt House in Islington (Paul Archer Design). Cost: £300,000

The entire back wall of this house in Cross Street, Islington was removed and the garden excavated to create a spectacular two-storey extension. By Paul Archer Design. Cost: £700,000

HERE is surely no better way to kick off this new decade than with an architectural showcase demonstrating clever and inspirational home extensions – “green” too – that do not cost a fortune.

New London Architecture, based at the Building Centre off Tottenham Court Road, is a forum for the capital's best design, with a year-round programme of events and exhibitions. Its latest offering highlights 32 London domestic projects, ranging from basement excavations and fabulous glass extensions to rooftop additions and mezzanines.

Next Saturday, owners can attend free architect surgeries on the dos and don'ts of home extensions, while leading local furniture retailers, such as Heal's, will be offering special promotions and discounts.

Don't move – improve. That was the popular trend towards the end of the Noughties as the choice of properties to move to dried up along with the availability of mortgage money. Increased moving costs and the loss of jobs further encouraged people to stay put. It is a “nesting instinct” that persists in this new year, according to a new report by insurance company Aviva that suggests 75 per cent of home owners plan to stay in their property for the long term.

Creating extra space is the home improvement that adds most value to your property and can be transforming in the lifestyle benefits it brings



WE BUILT UNDER OUR LAWN

Photographs by **Matt Writtle**

WITH two toddlers, Nigel and Chantal Dyble needed more space than their 1,300sq ft garden maisonette in Camden provided.

“Moving seemed too much of an upheaval – my wife was pregnant at the time – and it was going to be expensive, too,” says Nigel, a City banker. So the couple, both in their forties, came up with the idea of self-contained accommodation in the garden – a multi-purpose “hidden house” below their lawn, suitable for an au pair or for use as an office or guest suite, even for short lets to generate extra income.

Their home is part of a substantial Victorian building (the size of four town houses) split into apartments. The garden measures approximately 70ft by 25ft and has separate side access.

Working with architect Jake Edgley (www.edgleydesign.co.uk), the design priority was to bring natural light and air into the underground space. This was achieved by dropping a frameless glass cube into a concrete shell and incorporating a timber-clad internal courtyard, which doubles as a lightwell.

The 500sq ft space can sleep four and has a bespoke kitchen along one wall plus sliding partitions and foldaway furniture for extra flexibility. Intimate, quiet and peaceful, the bijou dwelling is a discreet sanctuary amid the bustling streets of north-west London.

“The light is so good you don't feel underground, and it is absolutely silent,” adds Nigel.



The garden was reinstated and given new fencing and decking which made it look better than before. The entire project (including planning permission) took 18 months. Neighbours were broadly supportive. However, the Dybles ended up about £40,000 over budget because of excavation complications. The final cost was close to £250,000.

“Today, the combined property is worth about £1.3 million, which

doesn't totally reflect the investment we have put in, but we believe we'll reap financial rewards in the future when the market fully recovers. Already the space has made a huge difference to our quality of life. “We have friends and family staying there, and have rented it out – several times to a Japanese chef, who adores it. We reckon we can make about £15,000 letting it out for six months a year.”

HOUSE TRANSFORMERS



Above: exposed concrete is a feature of this transformation of a Victorian semi, Ruskin Park House, in Lambeth by AY Architects. A cantilevered bay window brings light to a new “family living” space. Cost: £325,000

At Mapeldene Road, Hackney, Project 5 Architects opened the ground floor of this Victorian terrace house building a glass oriel window lined with cherry wood and an opening glass roof above a new kitchen. Cost: £190,000



This extension at Tray House, Redbridge, by Hayhurst & Co Architects, cost £170,000. A “black brick tray” floor helps unify house and garden. Existing walls and a garden room were cut into, to further reduce the indoor/outdoor divide

PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

In simple terms, there are now alterations that you can make to your house – including certain extensions – without obtaining planning permission.

You should confirm that yours is a permitted development before undertaking any work, but in general, you

should not require planning permission if you are planning:

- A side extension that is less than half the width of the original dwelling.
- A single-storey rear extension up to three metres in depth (but four metres if it is a detached property).
- A loft conversion, including a rear dormer.

FOR more information about permitted development, visit government website www.planningportal.gov.uk, which has a useful interactive guide covering all types of residential property.

Another useful source of free information is Planning Aid for London (www.planningaidforlondon.org.uk, or call them on 020 7247 4900).



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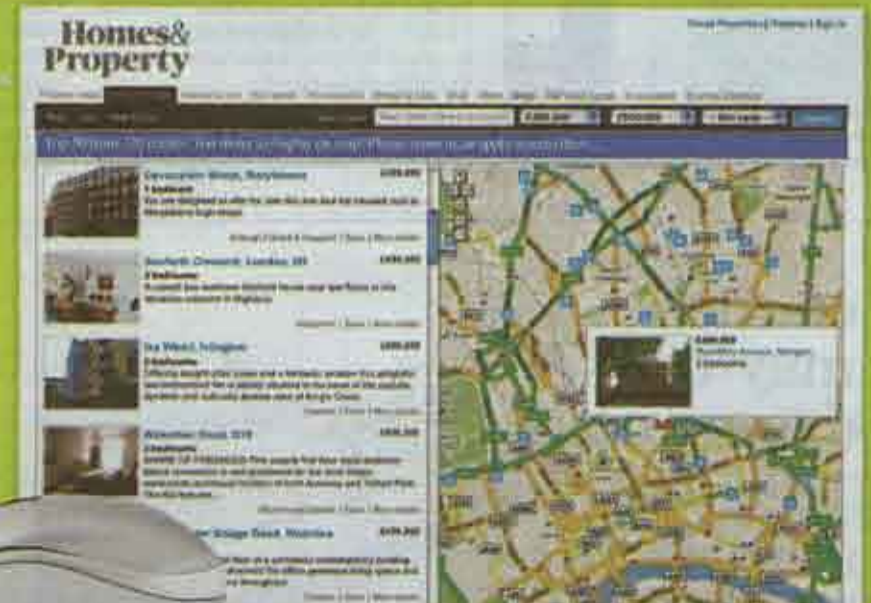
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