

# Looking for more room? What about that garage...

## New trend in garage conversions boosts value

By ANTHONY CARROLL

They say that simply giving your house a spring clean could put thousands of pounds on its value.

And television programmes like Changing Rooms and House Doctor have encouraged people to ponder how to make the most of their homes, prompting people to try to find space for an extra bedroom or eke out space for a downstairs cloakroom.

But now householders are taking the rush to make a profit from their homes a step further – by getting rid of their garages.

The latest phenomenon in the world of home improvement could see the end of the humble garage as home owners decide to get rid of the structures to help increase their property's value on the market.

Garages are now being viewed as potential cash cows as families realise that they can turn their vehicular space into a profitable new room or area, which could lead to their property's value shooting up by 20pc overnight.

So instead of being seen as a dumping ground for discarded toys, tool boxes and barbecue sets, the Norfolk garage is now increasingly being seen as the perfect way to capitalise on space and create extra room at the same time.

In the last few months the number of garage conversions has soared in the county as people replace the cold, underused and sometimes cobweb-covered areas with bedrooms, office space, gyms and even home cinemas.

On average around four to five properties in East Anglia a week are now converting their garages, with the growing trend being put down to people finding it harder to sell their houses and choosing to improve what they already have instead.

And by spending at least £8,000 on conversions a home owner could then see their property's price rise by up to one fifth overnight as potential buyers put room space before garages on their wish list.

Gillian Leask spent £11,000 converting the garage at her 100-year-old Potter Heigham home into a spare room which she now plans to use as an holistic massage area.

She said: "I just thought my garage was just sitting there doing nothing really and decided to do something about it. And now I have this absolutely wonderful new room which could be used for so many things."

"It is totally fascinating to see what can be done to a garage and I think there are so many people out there who would love to have a bit more space for their things or create another bedroom."

Garage conversions are best suited for homes that have alternative parking provisions on site and for some work to go ahead planning



Picture: ANTO YRELLY



Gillian Leask turned her garage into a spare room, top. Above, Gillian at her home with Michelle Clarke, of The Garage Conversion Company.

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Gillian Leask

permission is needed from district councils.

The demise of the garage is also being put down to the fact that the average building's 150 sq ft capacity is no longer sufficient to house large family saloons anymore.

Detached garages are also being seen as prime sites for conversion

into annexes or extra accommodation.

The Garage Conversion Company, the country's largest conversion firm, has worked on 2,000 projects in the last four years nationally and the number of new orders has spiralled in the last few months.

Michelle Clarke, who runs the

company's East Anglian franchise, said: "At the moment we are incredibly busy. At the moment it just seems that people cannot sell their properties and so work out other ways to capitalise on them."

"Another reason for the growth in conversions is that people may need extra space for elderly or frail relatives."

It normally takes the Garage Conversion Company about two weeks to carry out all the work and the firm will also provide planning permission advice.

For more information ring 07904 030763 or 07876 400737 or visit [www.garageconversion.com](http://www.garageconversion.com)

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