



CASE STUDY 3

'Our too-small garage became a spacious dining room plus a utility room'

Little more than a storage area and too small for their car, Sue and Barry's garage was simply wasted space. After years of deliberation it took just a fortnight to turn it into this stunning room

Sue and Barry Hemmings refer to their former garage as

nothing more than a glorified storage space. 'We couldn't use it for our car because, once you drove inside, it was so narrow there wasn't space to open the car doors to actually get out again!' says Sue. 'So it was a bit of a dead loss as a proper garage really.'

Considering a conversion

The Hemmings, who live in a 1980s three-bedroom detached house in Bedfordshire, had toyed with the idea of doing something with their garage space for several years. 'We kept seeing adverts in our local paper for garage conversion companies, but it was only when our neighbours made enquiries about converting their garage that we made the decision to go ahead too,' says Sue.

Sue and Barry were in no doubt how they would make use of the converted space. 'Half of

our lounge was lost to the dining area,' says Sue, 'so it was very cramped, especially when our granddaughter Poppy came to see us – she needed more room to run around and play. We decided to turn the garage into an additional dining room for large family gatherings and to entertain, with a separate utility room at the rear.'

No planning permission required

After almost a decade of mulling it over, the Hemmings called in The Garage Conversion Company to discuss their requirements and ask for a quote. Luckily, planning permission was not required for the job, as the footprint of the home was to stay the same, although the conversion did have to meet certain building regulations.

'The company took care of all that side of the job too,' says Sue. 'We really didn't have to lift a finger – plus they were able to incorporate some of our ideas into the project, which meant we got exactly what we wanted.'

What was involved?

The work included removing the garage door, building up the wall and installing a bay window, which was one of Sue's particular specifications. A new doorway had to be cut from the hall into the dining space, as the original door to the garage was used to access the utility room. A new concrete floor was laid to raise the garage floor level to that of the house, and the central heating was extended into the new room.

With the walls insulated, and light fittings and even an extra phone point in place, the walls were ready for plastering and coving, and once this was finished the conversion was complete.

The conversion includes a utility room behind the dining room. This houses the freezer and tumble dryer, and Barry fitted a run of units, which match those used in the kitchen, to provide useful storage



'The job ran like clockwork. The workmen cleaned up properly every night and there were no hitches along the way,' says Sue. 'At the end, we were basically left with a plastered shell, all ready for us to decorate.'

And then it was over to Barry to paint the walls a pale mushroom shade and install units into the utility space. With cream curtains, pink carpet and a dining table that seats six in place, the room was ready for use. 'It was definitely worth doing,' says Sue. 'We've regained full use of our living room and can really entertain in style now.'

How long did it take?

Two weeks, which included waiting three days for the concrete floor to dry out.

How much did it cost?

The cost was £10,500, not including the decorating, furniture or furnishings.





Sue and Barry's new dining room gives them more scope to entertain in style, thanks to the pale wood table with granite inserts from Harveys. A new doorway was created to enter the room

The details on... converting a garage

An average garage is often wasted space that can be converted and if your garage is integral, you'll only need minor building work.

What's involved?

- An integral garage is by far the easiest to convert. Usually it is adjacent to the kitchen, making it ideal for a kitchen/diner, for example. You could also turn it into a study, dining room or guest bedroom. The builder will line the exterior walls with rigid foam insulation and plasterboard. The ceiling will also need plastering or plaster boarding. A separate electrical circuit for lights and power sockets will be connected directly to the consumer unit (this may need replacing if it's too small) and some form of heating added – usually the most cost-effective approach is to extend your central heating. The garage door can be replaced with a window or window/door combination, using Low-E (low-emission) glass, with a 450mm opening to act as a fire escape. A damp-proof membrane will have to be laid before the floor is screeded to bring it level with the rest of your house.
- A linked garage that has foundations and walls that meet the building regulations will still need the roof bringing up to the new insulation standards. This will mean more rigid insulation slabs and an air space between the insulation and the new ceiling.
- Detached garages are often built with shallow foundations and thin walls that will be difficult and costly to bring up to standard so it's often more economical to rebuild from scratch.



The central heating was extended into the new dining space and the radiator positioned below the bay window that Sue particularly specified in the conversion

Do you need permission?

Planning permission isn't usually required for a garage conversion, as you aren't developing a new building, just converting an existing space – but always check. And remember to discuss your idea with your neighbours first, as it will affect them. Permission is required if the new rooms will be bigger than the garage, if it's intended for commercial use or for a self-contained flat, or if local restrictions apply.

Finishing touches

Open up the space with a window at the front and large glazed doors at the rear, or at least another large window. A close boundary may mean a side window isn't possible but one or two roof windows can bring in even more light. Make sure the doors, windows, brickwork and internal joinery match the rest of the building.