

Considering a conservatory?

In a downturn you need to push the potential of your property to make a sale, says **Kate Watson-Smyth**

Until the housing market improves most of us are going to be sticking to the old adage of "don't move, improve". And if you really have to sell then you need to think about how you can maximise the value of your property.

The best way to add value is to add space and, at this time of year, with the great British summer being what it is, a conservatory could be the answer.

According to the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, adding a conservatory to your property can raise the value of your home by up to five per cent. Another recent survey found that you can expect to make at least 100 per cent of the cost of building a conservatory back by the time you come to sell. So, in theory, it's a winner all round.

Paul Fitzgerald, owner of Richmond Oak Conservatories, says: "Obviously we are in a temporary blip in the housing market, but I tell people that as soon as building is finished they will have added 50 per cent of the cost to the value of their house and if they move in five years' time, they will have added the rest and more."

Despite the doom and gloom, house prices are currently around the same level as they were four years ago and there are still some people who need to buy now out there, so if you want to reel one in, then it may be worth considering. They are more likely to overlook a small last bedroom if there's lots of well-thought-out space downstairs which might help clinch the deal.

So if you're thinking of calling the builders, Amanda Kaye of LK Interiors offers the following advice.



Shedding light: conservatories offer new interior options

"You can expect to make 100 per cent of the building cost back by the time you sell"

"The most important thing to remember is fading. You don't want to spend a lot of money decorating your conservatory to find that in six months' time, your carefully chosen colour scheme has faded away to nothing."

"Manufacturers are very aware of this now and there are some great fade- and water-resistant materials out there. This also means that you can take the furniture outside and it even doesn't matter if kids climb all over it."

"Equally crucial is the flooring. Wood can fade in the sun, so again, unless you want that washed out look, you might want to consider something else. Stone floors in a pale colour which will reflect the light back are a great idea. But as it's a natural material, it will take a bit more maintenance. Another great look is using the same flooring in the conservatory leading to the deck outside."

Using stone floors is not only cool in summer but means that you can throw down a couple of rugs in winter to make the room feel cosy and warmer and stone is also a good conductor for under-floor heating, she adds.

Ah yes – the heating. That is the biggest issue for the conservatory, with many people dismissing them as too cold in winter and too hot in summer. Unsurprisingly Fitzgerald rates this as



Osborne & Little do fade-resistant materials in wonderful colours and patterns (www.osborneandlittle.com)



Above left: Pentagon Tiles (www.pentagon-tiles.co.uk) make faux-wood ceramic tiles that won't fade; Above right: Indian Ocean (www.indian-ocean.co.uk) and Gloster (www.gloster.com) have woven furniture which can be used inside and out

a complete fallacy citing a range of new developments in glass technology.

"There are new types of glass coming out all the time – one launched last week which is three times more efficient than 15 years ago and will reflect the heat inwards on a cold day but doesn't do the opposite on a hot day.

"There are also types of solar-controlled glass for roofs that keep out 75 per cent of the heat, glare and UV light. They can have a blue tint so you might not want them for the walls, but you can use a different type of clear glass for those," he explains.

"Finally, you should use under-floor

heating as it warms the body from the feet up and deals with the problem of heat rising straight up from the top of the radiator and heating the ceiling. It's the perfect solution for the conservatory and means that the room can be used all year round at the right temperature for you," he adds.



Above: New England Shutter Company will make blinds to fit your roof. Prices from £375 per square metre (www.tnesc.co.uk)
Left: for Victorian-style conservatories, try Richmond Oak (www.oakconservatories.co.uk)

Conservatories Planning rules

■ Planning permission and building regulations are two separate issues and it is perfectly possible to pass one and fail the other. Under new regulations that came into force last October, a conservatory is now considered permitted development and you don't need permission as long as you stick to a few rules. Your contractor should be able to help you with these details

■ Building regulations state that the conservatory must not be larger than 30 sq m, the walls must be 50 per cent glass and the roof 75 per cent. It should not have any drainage facilities such as a sink or washing machine, and it should be separated from the rest of the house by a door.