

SPACE

A photograph of a modern interior space, likely a rooftop terrace or a large room with a skylight. The ceiling is a large, clear skylight with the word "SPACE" written in white, sans-serif capital letters across it. The walls are light-colored, and the floor is made of dark wooden slats. A large, rectangular, brown cushioned bench is positioned on the left side of the room. A red and white flag is hanging from the wall on the right. The lighting is warm and ambient, suggesting an evening or dusk setting.

RESHAPING YOUR HOME FOR THE WAY YOU WANT TO LIVE **FAY SWEET**

limitations and priorities

Budget estimates

An important question to be asked at this stage concerns finance – do you have an adequate amount of money to spend? Do you know the maximum you can borrow and the maximum you can actually afford to borrow? Set yourself a limit for the scheme's budget and stick to it. Build in a ten per cent buffer zone – it is comforting when the unexpected happens, and a bonus if it doesn't. Here are the main expenses to consider.

- Builder's quote – including all materials.
- Plumber, electrician, gas fitter fees.
- Architect's fees.
- Planning fees.
- Fixtures and fittings that you will have to buy, e.g. bathroom suite, doors, windows.
- Decorating costs, including flooring.
- Ten per cent buffer.

Budget reviews

If you are planning major work and it is beyond your initial budget, could the job be completed in stages? Do you need to be so radical? If it is within budget, could you be more radical?

Building restrictions

An essential piece of research is to discover whether your home is subject to any planning or conservation restrictions. If your property is registered as being of historic interest, it is likely that you will be unable to remove walls or tamper

with internal detailing such as cornices or fireplaces. You will also need to seek permission for even fairly simple schemes like making or moving a doorway. However, there are clever ways of working around these restrictions – for example, in one listed house even the ceramic floor tiles were listed for preservation, but the owners wanted a wooden floor. The solution was to keep the tiles and lay the timber floor over the top.

You may find that there are restrictions imposed by law on the

sorts of materials that you can use in your scheme, the shapes and types of replacement windows and even the colour you paint the exterior. However, in addition to preserving the past, a small number of planning authorities are prepared to keep an open mind when it comes to adding extensions to protected buildings. If the proposed structure is of a high-quality design and uses elegant materials, it is possible that your architect will be successful in arguing his or her case.



Building plan reviews

If you are unlucky enough to have your plans turned down and you think your proposals are reasonable, it is essential that you talk with your planning department. It may be that you have been turned down on a technicality, in which case you will need to get to the root of the problems and resubmit your proposals. To avoid this anxiety and time loss, it is a good idea to consult your local planners before you submit an application as they can offer advice on sensitive issues.



LEFT You might think that gaining permission for such a daring glass extension would be problematic, but time spent with planners will help you negotiate the minefield of local planning law. Plenty of councils are open-minded and willing to encourage good-quality modern design.

ABOVE Some really exciting results can be achieved when you are prepared to push at the boundaries. Sometimes plans are refused because of a small technicality that could easily be overcome. Consultation is always worthwhile. Even planners don't expect us all to live in the past.