

# HOME IMPROVEMENT

ANTHEA SAVAGE



## RAISE THE ROOF TO GET MORE SPACE FOR LIVING

If you have outgrown your home, then converting your attic is a great way to add an extra room. But there are a few things to consider before you call in the builders

A roof-space conversion is an ideal way of creating extra living space where there is restricted land on which to extend the property.

Depending on the square footage available, you can create a bedroom, home office or, if you're particularly lucky, an entire living area. But before you start planning, you must make sure your roofspace can be converted. Here are some key elements to consider:

Not all roof spaces are suitable for conversion. To comply with ROI Building Regulations, in terms of habitable space, 50pc of the floor area above 1,500mm (5ft) should have a height of at least 2.4m (8ft).

Check the construction of the roof. If it is built of trussed rafters, then a roof-space conversion can be difficult. All the timbers crossing from the rafters to the ceiling joists are interdependent, and you cannot remove any without the risk of the roof collapsing. Rebuilding the trusses is one option, but this can be expensive.

### Planning

Your roof-space conversion must comply with building regulations which set out minimum requirements for structural integrity, fire safety, energy efficiency, damp proofing, ventilation and other key aspects that ensure a building is safe and habitable. Planning permission may also be required if you intend changing the outward appearance of the property.

Failure to comply with building control and planning regulations could result in legal action and difficulty in selling your property at a later date.

To maximise the potential of your roof space, engage with an architect/structural engineer who is trained to think outside the box. He will consider walls, water tank, chimney stack, joists and rafters, not all of which can be moved easily. Before embarking on an expensive roof-space conversion, think carefully about the cost relative to the amount of useful space that can be gained.

Depending on which region of the country you live, you could expect to pay anything from €900 per square metre for a simple conversion, up to €2,500 per square metre for more



complicated work. Fire safety is also extremely important and there are strict regulations governing this. It affects the fitting of staircases, escape windows in habitable rooms, smoke detectors on the new landing and specialist flooring and doors so they are either self closing or fire resistant.

Sound transference between floors can be an issue for conversions, so consider acoustic flooring and ceilings to make the space more soundproof.

### Insurance

A roof-space conversion is a major structural change to your home and can cost quite a lot of money, so make sure you have appropriate indemnity cover for all works being carried out. This can be provided by your architect, builder or taken out separately by yourself.

And always check the small print with regards to exclusions.

A bad conversion can detract from the value of your property, so don't be swayed entirely by price. Remember, if something sounds too good to be true, then it probably is.

Anthea Savage is Editor of Ireland's *Decorate Extend & Renovate* magazine, [www.decorateireland.ie](http://www.decorateireland.ie)



1. A roofline conversion following the natural slope of the roof.
2. Your choice of staircase will need to meet current building control regulations.
3. Integra is an automated electric windows and blinds system from Velux.
4. Carpet tiles, as pictured from Heuga, are a convenient flooring option.
5. Dependent on planning permission, you may be able to integrate a balcony to your roofspace conversion.

