

Article for Homelife

What are the advantages of a conservatory?

One of the real advantages of conservatories over any other type of extension, is that they bring the outdoors indoors. They let in significant light and warmth while still providing shelter from the elements.

Conservatories are a versatile space, which can be used for lounging, dining or even a playroom.

With the recent addition of bi-folding doors, automated roof vents and varied glazing styles, the possibilities for creating a more bespoke and individual design are now even broader.

The benefits mean that the popularity of conservatories has continued to increase and in 2006 the number erected in the UK peaked at 250,000.

Research by Royal Mail Home Insurance has revealed that 61 per cent of UK homeowners are planning to update their properties in the next two years and that nearly a third of respondents (32 per cent) intended to build a conservatory.

Do I need planning permission?

The barriers to building a conservatory are a lot less onerous than you might expect. A conservatory should not require planning permission as long as the building is not listed, the conservatory proposed is less than 25 square feet and is not on an elevation that is visible from the road. In all cases the contractor you choose should be able to give good advice about any planning issues involved.

Will it add value to my property?

Many people fear that the benefit of adding a conservatory may not be reflected in the value it adds to the property. However, according to the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors in 2009, adding a conservatory to your property can raise the value of your home by up to five per cent.

The addition of an extension, and in particular a conservatory, is often one of the first considerations for owners looking to add value to their property but it is only in recent years that the average homeowner has begun to see a conservatory as a viable option for extending the home.

What are the pitfalls and options?

Advances in the industry mean that many of the problems which once plagued conservatories have been dealt with. Whether you are considering a uPVC, timber or aluminium conservatory the thermal properties have vastly improved in recent years.

Timber has always been an excellent material for insulation but new fabrication methods of uPVC and aluminium frames have eradicated the old problem of cold bridging – the inward seep of cold weather.

In addition, the introduction of solar control glass, means that conservatories which may have been unbearably hot in the summer months are more temperate and indeed the opposite is true in the winter, with the glass containing warmth within the structure.

Other improvements, such as insulated floors and dwarf walls mean that, overall, the conservatory has become a far more feasible option.

Have Jersey contractors got access to quality conservatory companies which can provide the latest designs?

The range of conservatories and glazed extensions continues to evolve and in recent years, with the return to traditional designs, there has been a resurgence in the use of hardwood timber. The Jersey market now has access to company's which are market leaders in hardwood timber conservatories and orangeries.

Some of these company's work in partnership only with local contractors whose credentials match their standard of workmanship and are continually pushing the boundaries of conservatory design.

Conservatory specialists and contractors can help with even the most demanding brief, whether that be a fabulous view to be captured, important architectural details that need to be respected, or a tricky roof detail that must be incorporated.

From the modern glass box 'Grand Design' styles to the more intricate and bespoke timber designs, there is something available to suit every style and budget.

How much will it cost?

At the lower end of the price range £10,000 as a good figure to look at as a starting price, but really the sky's the limit as far the top price is concerned. Depending on the size required, for example, a large orangery could cost as much as £100,000.

Where did it all start?

The Romans used glass structures, much like our modern glasshouses, to house exotic plants and fruit and the combination of the Latin words for stored or preserved – conservato – and 'ory' for 'a place for' give us the word we have today.

During the 17th century with the expansion of the British Empire it became increasingly popular to bring back plants and animals from new territories. Most of these were completely unsuited to the British climate and the desire to cultivate these species' resulted in advances in conservatory design and technology.

By the 19th Century royalty and aristocrats had taken the concept a step further, inviting great architects such as John Nash, to create magnificent glass structures to house their exotic collection of plants and to entertain.

It was not until the 1970s, however, that conservatories really became mainstream with improvements in glass technology and householders trying to find ways to escape the creep of urbanisation and return to nature.

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