**Loft conversions, party wall agreements, and bringing your project to life**

If you’re struggling for space but not ready to up sticks and move, a loft conversation could be the answer to your property prayers. It’s less disruptive than building an extension, and less costly than relocating. But before undertaking any major building works – particularly a party wall agreement loft conversion, which carries with it certain legal obligations – you need to get to grips with what’s involved.

**Planning a loft conversion: The lowdown**

A loft conversion can set you back between £20,000 and £45,000. While the costs may seem high, you’ll be adding up to 20% to the value of your home. But before creating that mood board or sourcing stylish pieces to adorn your new living space, you need to assess whether your loft is usable:

* Your internal height should be at least 250cm. Measure from the top of the ceiling joist to underneath the ridge board in the apex.
* As a minimum, the internal footprint of your loft should measure 550cm side to side inclusive of chimney, and 750cm front to back.

Whether you’re planning to use the room as a cosy study, bedroom with en suite, or mother of all walk-in wardrobes, you need to start with a plan. Unless you want to crouch in the shower, bathrooms demand good head height; wardrobes can be built into the eaves to maximise storage; while playrooms can be designed to make the most of quirky features. Really think about what you hope to get from your loft conversion, and start jotting, sketching, or listing.

**Finding the right company for your project**

While some brave souls do attempt DIY loft conversions, it’s an extremely tricky process... and one that’s best left to the professionals. But before placing your trust (and budget) into their hands, we’d recommend viewing their previous work, rather than accepting written references alone.

Happy customers will be only too pleased to show you around, which means you get to inspect the standard of work for yourself. Chatting to past customers can also turn up valuable nuggets like: “they were brilliant, but three weeks late”; or “I loved their work, but wasn’t too keen on the plasterer”.

And as always, make sure you obtain three separate quotes for your planned project.

Beyond the build, an architect or building surveyor can prepare drawings and designs for your proposal, and even manage the project for you – from finding a suitable builder, to obtaining the necessary approvals.

**Legislation, legislation, legislation**

The last thing you want is to convert your loft into a beautiful new space, before finding you’ve contravened a piece of legislation you didn’t even know existed.

While loft conversions don’t normally require planning permission – unless you’re extending the roof space beyond the highest part of the house, or you live in a conservation area – it’s best to check with your local planning department before starting any works.

Building regulations will always apply to loft conversions for your own safety. These ensure that the stability of the existing structure isn’t compromised; you have appropriate sound insulation between your conversion and the rooms below; the structural strength of the new floor is adequate, and the stairs to your new floor are safe to use. You’ll also need to comply with certain fire safety regulations.

But as well as building regulations and planning permission, there are specific party wall obligations that you will most likely be subject to if you live in a terraced or semi-detached property. Under the Party Wall Act 1996, you must give adjoining owners notice of any building works taking place on or near your party wall. This can be a bit of a complicated process, so to protect your interests; it can be beneficial to trust the management of your party wall notice to a surveyor.

**Moving your project forward**

Converting your loft is a savvy, value-adding, space-maximising move. But it’s not without complications. There’s no reason to feel daunted by the scale of your project though; you just need the right professional support to make sure things run like clockwork.

As experts in party wall matters, we can give you impartial advice; appraise your project before work starts; prepare and serve party wall notices; prepare schedules of condition; negotiate and prepare party wall awards; carry out defect surveys, and manage the entire project on your behalf.

[Call to action]

For professional and objective advice on your party wall agreement loft conversion, get in touch with our experts today.