

Worcestershire interior designer, Elaine Lewis, provides professional insights into creating a home that offers future resale opportunities

A home with

ADDED VALUE

There are many factors to consider when you're planning to invest in your home. It's not just about creating a space you and your family can enjoy living in, but creating a home with an increased resale value as well.

Cost versus return is, of course, a major consideration, so always remember that not all home improvements add value. They can make your home more saleable, but that will not necessarily increase its sale price, as all properties have a ceiling. No matter how much you spend on improving it, your home cannot command an asking price that is much higher than the other properties of a similar nature in your road.

While there are small things that can instantly add value to your home, such as tidying up the outside areas, completing any major repairs and painting, more significant renovations are much more likely to provide a higher return.

So what are the best investments for our homes?

Top: Loft conversions add value to your home. Image courtesy of Georgejmclittle.

Right: First impressions always count. Image courtesy of David Papazian.





'live a life less ordinary'

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A new conservatory.
Image courtesy
of Still View
Photography.

1. LOFT CONVERSION

The easiest way to add an extra bedroom and bathroom is to consider a loft conversion; it's a safe investment policy that can be carried out relatively easily and will push your home into the next price bracket. It's not too disruptive either as most of the work can be carried out from outside and natural light can be brought in via dormer windows or roof lights. A loft conversion does not require planning permission, as it uses existing volume; however, creating dormer windows may need planning permission if they face a highway (typically at the front of a property) and so it is always worth checking with planners.

2. ADDING NEW SPACE

A conservatory, for example, will increase the value of your property, but firstly, you should consider how much you can improve the existing spaces in your home.

3. UPDATING EXISTING SPACES

Value can be added by improving public spaces, such as the kitchen and dining room, combining these areas for a more family orientated, multi-functional living area. So are there any walls you can knock down? Open-plan areas with glass bi-fold doors that extend outdoor living to the indoors also give a sense of space and openness; rooms with clear sight lines will make a house seem larger, especially if the flooring and wall finishes seamlessly flow through.

THE KITCHEN is among one of the most expensive home improvement projects, but it is possible to give a tired kitchen a

new lease of life without breaking the bank. At the most basic, walls can be painted and cabinet hardware changed to freshen up the look. You can upgrade appliances and cabinets with the same footprint, which saves the expense and hassle of moving the plumbing and electrics. Good quality worktops are critical as they are, together with the doors and handles, the part that everyone will notice the most. Make sure there is adequate lighting; a single pendant can easily be replaced with a halogen unit that will create a far whiter light, which is ideal for kitchens. A good upgrade will more than pay for itself at resale time.

BATHROOMS need to be fresh and clean, with adequate lighting and a touch of luxury. Ideally, at least one bathroom should have a shower. If the existing sanitary ware is chipped, stained or coloured peach, pink or avocado, you should consider swapping it for basic white, which can be purchased for under £300 and has a much broader appeal. Flooring should be clean and hygienic and wall tiles regouted or replaced to freshen the look. Adding a mirror or two will make the space seem larger and brighter, and think about adding a heated towel rail. If you're completely refurbishing the bathroom, now is the time to fit underfloor heating, another added luxury.

Many older properties still lack **central heating**. Install it and you'll not only benefit while living there, but you'll eventually make your property more saleable too.

Double glazing is also a must these days. Replacement windows should be in keeping with your home, in both style and materials, otherwise they can detract from its value.

In some areas of the country, the ability to **park close to your front door** comes at a huge premium. So, if you have room on the front or side of your house to add parking tastefully, you're sure to increase its value.

Inappropriate cosmetic additions can also lower your home's value, so it's time to rid yourself of such things as polystyrene ceiling tiles, pine cladding, poorly laid laminate flooring and conservatories with a polycarbonate roof. So, invest in restoring some of the features you want to show off, such as fitting appropriate windows in keeping with the property's era; restoring period fireplaces, stripping beams, bannisters and handrails coated in layers of varnish, and polishing those beautiful wooden floors.

And finally, most buyers decide if they don't like a property in the first few seconds of arriving. It can be hard to shake off negative first impressions, so repaint, repoint, change, repair, add a porch, replace windows and tidy that garden. ●

Elaine Lewis has been professionally styling residential and commercial interiors for over a decade. She lives in Malvern with her family. See ► www.elainelewisdesigns.co.uk for more information. Follow her on [Instagram.com/elainelewisdesigns](https://www.instagram.com/elainelewisdesigns) and [Facebook.com/elainelewisdesigns](https://www.facebook.com/elainelewisdesigns)

