

A study in design

Making the best use of space is a key consideration when looking at how to ensure that a property reaches its maximum potential. Home offices are in demand and can often be fitted into previously unused areas

The demands of modern life mean that ever-more people are bringing work home with them or are actually working from their property as their main base for doing a wide range of computer or desk-based tasks.

Offering a well-organised work area in any property can be an added attraction for a potential buyer. While Swoffers would never recommend losing a bedroom in preference to turning the area into an office, there are other ways of satisfying demands for home working.

The first step is to cast a critical eye around the areas of the house which are not currently used for anything or which allow too much space for particular things.

Examples of space which could be transformed into a home office include areas under stairs, landings and large built-in old fashioned storage. Any of these is likely to be big enough to fit in a computer desk, chair and some filing space.



The good news about home offices is that they can take up as much or as little space as you like. Shrewd property owners will spot a couple of spare feet of floor and wall space and easily turn it into a work area.

Another thing to think about is whether the work area should be visible, or concealed. If space allows, turning part of a spacious landing into a dedicated home office would be appealing and might add value. At the other end of the scale, an unused alcove can be fitted with retractable computer plinth, shallow shelves and inconspicuous outer doors so that the whole thing is put easily away when not in use.

If the house is a family home, it is a good idea to investigate possible office or work areas somewhere near the hub of the home. This allows parents to still be aware of what is going on with youngsters, while fitting in some useful spells of work at the computer or desk.

Overly-generous utility rooms can sometimes be easily divided so that some of the space becomes an office and these areas will already have good power supplies so feeding computers, printers or any other IT equipment should be simple.

Points to bear in mind when planning a home office is that tastes vary. Some people like to shut themselves away to be able to concentrate. Others want to have a nice outlook to enjoy while testing the grey cells or there are those who do not want any distractions at all.

Making the home office a personal space is fine if there are no immediate plans to move but if the project is being considered as a way of making best use of the house space before calling in Swoffers, then the area should be uncluttered and neutrally decorated.

Potential buyers have to be able to imagine themselves living in the house and, as with all of the other areas, that means ensuring that there is a minimum of personal items. A messy computer desk full of your favourite posters, mugs, scraps of paper and ornaments will not convey the right message.

Under-stairs areas are probably the most useful site for home offices, although the prime use for this spot might be for an extra cloakroom if the house needs a second toilet.

Landings often have the advantage of plenty of light and potentially a window with a nice outlook so this part of the house is a good one for home working.

Take into account power supply when choosing an area. Unless your form of home working requires only a desk for a laptop – which can be charged elsewhere – you are likely to need several electrical points. That demand can be expensive if the area selected is nowhere near a supply.

Designing and equipping a professional-level home office will need more space. Generously sized garages might provide the solution. Many have room for the car but an area can be shaved off, although permission will be needed for such alterations.

The most economical way of fitting out a home office is to buy ready-made furniture. This is available in every style, from traditional wood to contemporary glass. Often, however, the best use of a small area means meticulous measuring to fit in the custom-made desktops and shelves.

If you are thinking of improving your house with a view to putting it on the market, call in one of Swoffers' expert negotiators to advise on the best way forward. Telephone us on 711766 for some advice from those with long experience of how to make best use of the space in any home.