

conservatories

Things you need to know before buying a conservatory.



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How to use this zero stress guide

When it comes to building a conservatory, many people accept that high levels of stress are normal... **but it doesn't need to be that way.**

Planning is the key to success in any undertaking and it is particularly important in a major project such as adding a conservatory to your home – a serious investment, by any standards, that will add significant value to your property. Yet it is all too easy to be swept along on a tide of excitement and enthusiasm which can result in taking hasty decisions that are best made after very careful consideration.

So whether you are hiring a professional company to complete the installation, or aiming to build it yourself, the reality is that the time you spend in researching and planning will pay dividends in the smooth running of the project.

That is why we believe you will find this guide a really useful reference to take you through the maze of decision-making with which you will be faced – from initial design and construction right through to the selection of accessories. You'll learn about the choices to be made and what to take into consideration before you make them. We warn you about the pitfalls to avoid. We point you to websites that will provide more detail on particular aspects of the project in which you are especially interested. In short, we invite you to benefit from our expertise and make the whole experience as straightforward as possible.

Of course, no project is 100% stress-free but if you follow our advice you'll come as close to it as humanly possible.

Furthermore, get it right and you can look forward to enjoying the benefits of your conservatory for many years to come.



10 things you need to know before buying a conservatory

1. Planning permission isn't always necessary – but check for yourself rather than relying on the conservatory supplier to take care of it for you - **page 5**
2. Most conservatories are exempt from Building Regulations provided they meet certain criteria - **page 6**
3. Think carefully about the shape and style you want, choosing a design that will enhance your home rather than devalue it - **page 7**
4. Matching the construction materials and colour with those used for your home will ensure the conservatory blends in with the existing building - **page 9**
5. Most conservatory companies quote for the external area of the extension – make sure you calculate the required internal floor size when ordering
6. It's a false economy to go for the cheapest supplier – get at least four quotations and buy the best conservatory you can afford - **page 11**
7. It makes sense to have a small contingency for unexpected problems that might surface once construction starts
8. It is prudent to view some installations done by your proposed supplier and talk to customers about the quality of construction and service
9. Money spent on roof, window and insulation upgrades at the outset will be saved later on accessories to keep your conservatory cool in summer and warm in winter
10. Buy from a conservatory specialist rather than a DIY store if you are planning to 'do it yourself' – the former can give you invaluable advice on glazing and roofing options and you might need his help when things don't go according to plan.

Planning permission – do you need it?

Adding a conservatory to your house is considered to be permitted development, not needing an application for planning permission, subject to the limits and conditions listed below:

- If you live in a terraced house, or in a National Park, AONB or conservation area, you are allowed to develop up to an additional 50 cubic metres, or 10% of the cubic content of your original dwelling, whichever is greater. This is cumulative, so any previous work needs to be taken into consideration
- For all other properties it must be less than 70 cubic metres or 15% of the cubic content of your original dwelling, whichever is greater
- Extensions cannot exceed 115 cubic metres under permitted development rights
- No part of the extension should exceed the highest part of the roof of the original dwelling
- No more than half the area of land around the 'original house' would be covered by additions or other buildings
- No extension should be closer to a highway than 20 metres, or closer than the original dwelling, whichever is nearer
- The extensions should not exceed four metres in height within two metres of the boundary of the dwelling
- You should not alter any part of the roof
- Extensions are not a permitted development within the curtilage of a listed building.

Additionally, if you live within a National Park, AONB or conservation area:

- Development of an outbuilding greater than 10 cubic metres, within five metres of a dwelling, is treated as an extension
- You should not use cladding.

If you have any doubts about planning permission, make the necessary checks with your local planning officer – it's better to be safe than sorry! Don't rely on your conservatory supplier to sort it out – you're the one who will be in trouble if planning rules are flouted.

Visit **your local authority website** (www.local.direct.gov.uk/) for more information or **visit the Governments website** (www.direct.gov.uk) for interactive tools and more.

Scotland's planning legislation also allows for certain works to be exempt from planning permission.

In homes other than flats and maisonettes no building warrant is required for an unheated conservatory under eight square metres attached to an existing house. The conservatory must be located a minimum of one metre from any boundary and must not contain sanitary accommodation nor be situated on land within the boundaries of which there are harmful or dangerous substances. A door must be provided between the conservatory and the house.

However, due to the more complex nature of Scotland's planning legislation it is highly advisable to liaise with the Development Promotion Section of the local council – and essential to do so when contemplating adding conservatories to listed buildings, houses in conservation areas, flats or maisonettes. See the **Scottish Governments Building Standards website** (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/>) for further details.

Building regulations – are they applicable?

In general, conservatories and sunrooms on residential property are exempt from Building Regulations as long as the extension meets the following criteria:

- It is single storey and sited at ground level
- It is permanently separated from the remainder of the property by a door
- The floor area does not exceed 30 square metres
- At least half the area of the walls is formed of windows
- At least three-quarters of the roof consists of glazing, polycarbonate sheets or a similar translucent material
- Any radiator(s) is controllable – if fixed heating installations are proposed, they must have separate temperature and on/off controls

- The glazing meets the requirements of part N, schedule 1 covering toughened/safety glass
- There are no drainage facilities, e.g. for a sink, washing machine or WC
- Bear in mind that if your conservatory does require building regulation approval it will need glazing with the highest insulation quality such as Pilkington K glass (low E) with argon-filled units.

This guidance relates to the planning regime for England (if in doubt please consult the **English Government's Planning Portal** (www.planningportal.gov.uk) for further information). Policy in Scotland & Wales may differ. If in doubt contact your **Local Planning Authority** (www.planningportal.gov.uk).

TOP TIP:

All criteria must be met to claim exemption



Range of styles

Conservatories come in a wide range of shapes and styles to complement everything from a small terraced cottage to the grandest mansion.

It should go without saying that it is important to choose a style and size that complements the architecture of your home but many purchasers get carried away and ignore this basic tenet. The result can be seen in vast conservatories that are almost bigger than the homes on which they are built, or intricate, Victorian-style extensions on box-like modern buildings. It's not a good look and, even worse, it can actually knock thousands of pounds off the value of the property.

Many people have no options about where on their property to site their conservatory. However, if you do have a choice, make sure you build it onto a well-used room such as the kitchen or living room.

Depending on its shape, it is generally inadvisable to put doors in the front of the conservatory as this creates a corridor that allows less flexibility for positioning furniture.



P-shaped Conservatory

Your choice of conservatory will depend on your budget and lifestyle.

As well as the different shapes other choices to make include whether to go for full glass, lower infill panels or dwarf walls; single, double or sliding patio doors; period details such as coloured leaded lights – almost any combination is possible. It is also a good idea to copy interesting details from your house design – such as bargeboards and unusually shaped windows – into the design of your conservatory.

If you can't find what you want 'off the shelf' you can go down the bespoke route – which may indeed be necessary if you have a unusually-shaped home. This is naturally more expensive but it does mean you can have a conservatory made to measure and designed to meet your every whim.

Remember, too, that size matters. Always calculate the desired internal floor area when ordering a conservatory and bear in mind that most suppliers provide quotations based on external sizes.

Range of styles

It's a good idea to mark out the area of your new conservatory before obtaining quotations. Use stakes and string and, if possible, fill it with the planned furnishings to check whether you have as much space as you want. If moving furniture is impractical, use sand or chalk to mark out the spaces they will take up.

Finally, if you're looking for a specific and unusual design, have plans drawn up by an architect – but, as with all suppliers, speak to several before making a decision about which to use.

See www.conservatoriesonline.com/style.htm for further information.



Lean-To Conservatory



Edwardian Conservatory



Victorian Conservatory



TOP TIP:
Use an Architect if you
want an unusual design

Choice of materials

The four basic materials used for conservatories ensure that there is something to meet every taste – and every pocket.

PVCu Conservatories

PVCu, uPVC, PVC-U, and PVCU all essentially refer to the same substance. The most popular choice, this is an excellent material which has the advantage of needing little or no maintenance. The least expensive of all the available materials, it is most popular in white but is also available in mahogany and oak wood-grain styles.

Problems with discoloration are negligible and most suppliers will provide warranties against this. The design of the windows varies from company to company but points to look for include: Internal or externally-glazed windows – an option offered by most PVCu systems. Internally-beaded windows, where the glass is held in from the inside, are generally deemed more secure and burglar-resistant. However, there are also perfectly satisfactory externally beaded PVCu systems on the market. Many feature either internal wedge gaskets or a double-sided tape that firmly fixes the external bead.

Thickness of PVCu wall – most PVCu systems for window and door construction are ‘multi-walled’ with internal reinforcement provided by either aluminium or galvanised steel box section. Wall thickness can vary from system to system, most being around 3mm or 3.5mm. In general the thicker the walling, the stronger the section.

Ask your supplier to show you a sample section and establish whether the frames are fully reinforced. Be aware, too, that the greater the number of internal walls, the greater the strength of the building.

Depth or thickness of frame – the depth of frame extrusion can vary from as low as 50mm to more than 70mm, although most are in the 60-65mm range. This, too, has an effect on the structural strength of the conservatory – the thicker the frame, the stronger the conservatory section.

Note that PVCu is unacceptable to planners for use on listed buildings, nor is it popular with planners in conservation areas.

Hardwood Conservatories

A more expensive material, hardwood is the choice of those seeking a traditional design with an authentic look and is a particular favourite for use in listed buildings or period properties. It has the twin benefits of being suitable for the recreation of virtually any traditional design or feature, while incorporating the contemporary advantages of double-glazing.

Hardwood is available in a variety of stains such as mahogany and light oak, as well as various painted finishes and, while it does require periodic maintenance, this is not an onerous task thanks to modern paints and stains. As with PVCu, the frame thickness will affect the structural strength. It is also important to ascertain which jointing method is used – most suppliers use a traditional mortise and tenon joint but other systems do exist.



TOP TIP:
PVCu is a great budget option

Choice of materials

Aluminium Conservatories

This shares many of the features of PVCu, although aluminium is more expensive and does not provide such efficient insulation. However, it is an excellent choice for commercial locations and any circumstances in which strength is an important factor.



Many conservatories, although clad in PVCu, use aluminium in the roof structure because of its superior strength.

Oak - Green and Seasoned Oak Conservatories

Despite the higher cost, oak has become the most sought-after European hardwood for conservatories. It is used in two forms – green or seasoned.

When trees are first felled, the wood – known as green oak – is softer, full of sap and easier to cut. Conservatories using green oak are built from large pieces of oak held together by beech pins. As the wood dries and shrinks, the beech pins tighten and pull the building together.

Green oak conservatories are often recommended for use in period properties as these tend to be single-glazed and riddled with nooks and crannies – natural airflow is part of the appeal. Seasoned oak, which is dried before the manufacturing process, is recognised as the superior material for conservatories. Huge slices of wood are racked in the open air until the oak has weathered, shrunk and hardened, at which point the wood is ready to be carved, if required.

Seasoned oak is used for all styles of conservatory, from simple contemporary designs to the more traditional, complete with intricate carvings.

The wood can be painted or stained – a popular solution is to paint the exterior to blend with the house while using a natural stain on the interior to accentuate the wood grain.



See

www.almostimpartialguide.co.uk/conservatories/what_style.htm for more details.

TOP TIP:

Aluminium is often the best choice for commercial (hard wearing) locations

How to choose a supplier

You may opt to choose your supplier after deciding what style and type of conservatory you want. Alternatively you may pick the supplier first and rely on him to guide you through the available options.

Whichever way you choose, always get quotes from at least three potential suppliers, you can **visit the Quotatis website (www.quotatis.co.uk)** to get FREE quotes. Personal recommendation can be one of the most reliable ways to choose a supplier but you might also want to try a national 'household name' or a smaller regional specialist.

Any potential supplier must be able to clearly explain how the site will be prepared and how the conservatory will be constructed as well as providing details about the construction's strength and durability. You will need reassurances regarding workmanship and continuity as most companies use subcontractors who are only interested in their aspect of the job. You need to be confident that the conservatory company's installation manager will visit site regularly and project manage the tradesmen.

Check for training and competency certificates awarded by the company's manufacturers and suppliers and also scrutinise guarantees and warranties offered.

Before making your decision:

- Check out some completed installations
- Talk to previous customers to find out if the builders were efficient, prompt, tidy, etc. and if there were any major delays
- Try to meet the builders who will be doing the work – you will be in close proximity throughout the build period so you want to be sure you can get on with them
- Visit the company's showroom where you can view the different styles available
- Check whether there is a computerised bespoke design service so you can see how the finished building will look.

In order to make an informed purchasing decision based on hard facts rather than salesman's patter, find out as much as you can about construction materials and glazing options, etc. – you'll find plenty of information in this book but for further details visit some of the websites listed in the Appendix.

Be guided by the advice above but also follow your instincts. Is this a company you feel good about? Does it inspire confidence? Gut feeling counts in such purchasing situations. Above all, though, don't be rushed into making a decision before you are ready to do so. Certainly don't be taken in by those 'sign up today and I can knock X% off the price, guv' exhortations. In fact, if you find yourself on the end of such sales patter our advice is to walk away!



TOP TIP:

Always get quotes from at least three potential suppliers, visit www.quotatis.co.uk to get FREE quotes

Going down the DIY route

Doing it yourself is certainly an option – and the favoured choice for those who want to save money and/or keep overall control of the project.

However, it's not for the faint-hearted – nor for the inexperienced. On the other hand, if you are a competent and confident DIY-er you can take on such a project and make a success of it. A number of companies now specialise in supplying the DIY market and there are plenty of 'how to' guides available which give useful tips.

The savings you make from doing it yourself will be maximized if you buy a standard conservatory model and do all the work yourself. However, if there is any aspect of the work you feel unable – or unwilling! – to tackle, such as digging the foundations, it makes sense to bite the bullet and sub-contract out that task.

The aspect of self-build that often appeals most is having total control over the project and the end result. There is always the suspicion that a contractor working to a fixed price might be tempted to take short cuts. If you are doing the job yourself, though, you are more likely to spend as long as necessary ensuring that each task is completed perfectly and correcting any problems that might arise. If there is something unusual about your site, which might require a little extra attention, then this can be particularly relevant.

If you go down the DIY route you must expect the project to take longer than a contractor who spends half his working life putting up conservatories.

However long it takes though, you will have the immense satisfaction of knowing that everything has been done exactly as you want it. And if you are a perfectionist then DIY is almost certainly the most satisfactory option for you.

Is there a downside to doing it yourself?

For a start, it's hard work physically. It can also be lonely if you are working entirely by yourself, particularly if you encounter problems. Another pair of hands and an objective viewpoint can work wonders in overcoming the challenges that arise and this is where friends, relatives and neighbours can help.

You will find that many DIY conservatories do not currently offer alternatives such as Pilkington K glass and 25 mm polycarbonate. If you are keen on top insulation specification then you may have no alternative but to choose a made-to-measure conservatory from a supplier offering these alternatives. This will usually cost more.

While there are a number of companies offering a wide range of standard models, there are fewer set up to supply a DIY consumer with a made-to-measure conservatory. Many of those who do provide a 'supply only' service are companies that normally supply the trade or small builders. These companies will assume that you are familiar with glazing and normal installation practice – 'holding the hand' of DIY-ers is not part of the service. You will also often find that you will be responsible for supplying silicones, fixing screws, trims, glues etc.



TOP TIP:

DIY is cheaper and huge savings can be made but it's not for the inexperienced

Going down the DIY route

Bear all this in mind when you place your order. Also check whether there is a helpline available should you have any problems. Be prepared, if necessary, to pay more to get the help you may need – these companies are, after all, selling at trade prices and will not expect to have to give you any more help than they would the trade.

Remember that regulations regarding electrical installation require that a qualified electrician who is approved to carry out and certify such work should carry out the work. Alternatively, if you undertake the work yourself, a qualified contractor must separately certify it. Failure to notify building control is a criminal offence.

You can find plenty more information at www.conservatoriesonline.com/diy.htm

Other useful links:

www.conservatoriesonline.com/survguide.htm

www.conservatoriesonline.com/survguide2.htm

www.diy-conservatories-uk.co.uk

www.conservatoriesonline.com/construct.htm

TOP TIP:
Make use of plentiful
'How To' guides



Price guide

It is impossible here, due to the number of variables in specifications, to give anything other than a rough guide to pricing calculations.

Price variations, especially for bespoke designs, can be considerable. As a rough indication, for example, hardwood conservatories can cost 30-50% more than PVCu for made-to-measure designs.

Shown below are example prices for various conservatories. The prices relate to PVCu only; they cover supply and fit, include VAT and assume a straightforward site that is flat and easily accessible.

To help with price comparisons – and because of the many different requirements – the varying specifications have been split into three categories:

Bronze

This assumes a reasonable quality PVCu frame extrusion plus standard double-glazing and 16mm polycarbonate in the roof.

Silver

This assumes a top-quality PVCu frame fitted with superior locking and security features, Pilkington K (Low E) double-glazing and 25mm or 35mm polycarbonate in the roof.

Gold

This assumes a top-quality PVCu frame fitted with superior locking and security features, Pilkington K (Low E) double glazing in both side frames and roof.

The frames may also be fully reinforced and/or connected by structural mullions. Equal site line may also be an option with this specification along with perhaps some sort of Solar Control Glass such as Celsius Performance Glass or 'anti sun' glass. It is very important when comparing prices – and always get at least four quotations – to compare 'like with like'. Make sure every detail of the specification is identical on each quotation. And whether you are shopping at the budget or luxury end of the market you should always buy the very best conservatory you can afford.

It is not unusual for prices from suppliers for similar-sized conservatories to vary by several thousand pounds and this underlines the importance of comparing 'like with like'. As well as differences in the specifications, service standards may also impact on cost. Long-established suppliers with extensive showrooms, sound warranties, dedicated service engineers and customer help-lines will have higher operating costs than the one-man outfit working from home with just a mobile phone.



TOP TIP:

Get at least four quotations

Price guide

Do bear in mind the other factors that can affect the overall cost of the project. These include:

- Site – if it is not flat and easy to work on then additional building work will almost certainly be required and the cost could be substantial
- Accessibility – if the builders are unable to get to the site without going through the house this, too, could push the price up
- Parking – it's not just easy access for the builders; if there is no room for a skip outside the house any soil removed will have to be taken away daily, adding to the cost

- Drains – building regulation approval will be required if drains or manholes have to be moved
- Electricity/plumbing – costs will rise if provision needs to be made for these services

When assessing your budget, remember to allow a small contingency of around 10% for any unexpected extras or additions that may be needed. These could include changes you decide to make after you place your order, which might add to the cost. In addition, preparation of the site can sometimes throw up unforeseen problems that have cost implications.

Example
Victorian style conservatory
3.6 m x 3.35 m
(approx. 12 ft. x 11ft)



Bronze specification
£7,500 - £9,000
Silver specification
£9,000 - £12,000
Gold specification
£13,000 - £17,000

Example
L-Shaped Edwardian
7.5 m x 4.5 m
(approx. 24 ft. x 15ft)



Bronze specification
£15,500 - £19,000
Silver specification
£19,000 - £22,500
Gold specification
£25,000 - £35,000

Roofing systems

Aluminium Conservatories

The roof is acknowledged to be one of the most important parts of conservatory construction so it is helpful for you to know something about the different roofing systems so that you can ask appropriate questions of your supplier.

Firstly, establish what the roof is made from – it might be aluminium, steel, timber or PVCu – and whether it will be able to accommodate 25mm / 35mm polycarbonate and glass roofs. Aluminium, thermally clad in PVCu, is the most popular choice.

A purpose-built roofing system is a ‘must’ and for this reason roofs made entirely from standard PVCu window frame extrusion – even if they are fully reinforced – are not recommended. They are not as strong and impenetrable as roofs made from other materials.

You should specify a roof system that is thermally clad or thermally broken to provide better insulation and reduce the risk of condensation. Find out whether there is a range of guttering and rainwater goods to complement the roof and, if you have a tricky site, if there are appropriate purpose-made roofing components.

In practice, many conservatory suppliers use very similar roofing systems so the choice often boils down to the quality of a supplier’s installation, its warranties and after-sales service. There is little point in having a first-class roof if it is badly fitted.

Make sure that the guarantee on the roof is for the same length of time as the rest of the framing and check that the guarantee specifically mentions this.

Ask some probing questions, too, about any vents being installed in your conservatory roof. Ensure that they comply with British Standards, check whether there is the option of manual and electric opening as well as thermostat and rain sensor control units. Finally check the guarantee.

**Avoid roofs made of PVCu only - Very few conservatory roofs, even those on PVCu Framed Conservatories, use a ‘PVCu Only’ roof. Many PVCu conservatories use aluminium roof members, clad in PVCu.*



One ridge design with variable pitch from 5° to 40°



Variable pitch wall plate



Slim sightlines to glazing bars and ridge beam enhancing aesthetics



Variable aluminium box eaves beam (5° to 40°). Integral clip in ogee gutter system

TOP TIP:

Avoid roofs made of PVCu only*

Flooring

As with all other aspects of your conservatory, the choice of flooring will reflect your needs and the purpose for which the extension will be used.

Until relatively recently the choice was between ceramic tiles, laminated timber, carpet or vinyl. Now a product known as engineered hardwood flooring has been developed to meet the needs of people who yearn for the look and feel of a timber floor. (Note that solid timber flooring is not recommended due to the problems of warping from the build-up of heat.)

Engineered hardwood flooring is proving extremely popular since it is hygienic and easy to clean, warm in winter and cool in summer, lasts a lifetime and even improves with age. It has to be professionally installed and comes with a 25-year manufacturer's guarantee. An added benefit is that it can be used with a special range of under floor heating.

Visit www.conservatories4uk.com/flooring.asp for further details.



TOP TIP:

Wood flooring is now available for conservatories

Heating

There are several options available for heating your conservatory but you need to consider these in the planning stages. If your existing central heating system has sufficient capacity it's a simple matter to add one or two radiators, although note that they must have the facility to be turned off separately from the original system. Alternatively, electric radiators are a straightforward option.

However, radiant underfloor heating is gaining in popularity and can be used under tiled, slate and even timber flooring, thanks to the introduction of a special heating element from Flexel International.

- Low running costs
- Maintenance free
- Reduced dust circulation
- Invisible
- Frees up wall and floor space
- Easy installation.

www.conservatoriesonline.com/underfloor_heating.htm to read more.



TOP TIP:
Underfloor heating is recommended

Glazing

There is a wide range of specialist glass available, including Low Emissivity (Low E) glass like Pilkington 'K' which, while more expensive to install, offers heating savings by making a double-glazed unit up to 30% more energy efficient than standard double glazing. Pilkington also makes a self-cleaning glass, Activ™.

Please see:

www.conservatoriesonline.com/activ_self_cleaning_glass.htm

However, especially if you have children, your main consideration might be safety in which case it would be prudent to specify either toughened or laminated glass throughout your conservatory. Toughened glass, the cheaper option, is usually 4mm thick. If broken it shatters into small pieces of relatively harmless glass (untoughened glass, by contrast, breaks into potentially lethal shards).

Laminated glass is usually two pieces of 3mm thick glass separated by an interlayer – giving an overall thickness of 6.4mm. The glass cracks rather than shatters when broken as the interlayer holds the cracked glass in position. For this reason, laminated glass also makes an ideal security glass. It is possible to combine toughened and laminated glass to make a double-glazed sealed unit.

Other types of Solar Glass to check out are:

Celsius Performance Glass

www.conservatoriesonline.com/celsius_performance_glass

www.k2conservatories.com/glass

Solar Control Glass

www.conservatoriesonline.com/solar_control_glass_uk

Pilkington Activ™ Blue For Conservatories

www.conservatoriesonline.com/activ_blue_self_cleaning_glass



TOP TIP:

Safety glass is a MUST HAVE

Blinds

The ability to control heat and glare is essential if the conservatory is to be usable throughout the year and blinds are the traditional way of offering protection from the sun in the summer and helping to retain heat in the winter.

The available range of styles and materials means you'll be spoiled for choice but, as with all home furnishings, your decision will be dictated by your budget and your lifestyle. For maximum effectiveness, it is recommended that they be also treated with a special solar finish.

Roman blinds provide a more traditional alternative. Although available in a number of materials the usual choice is French pinoleum, which comprises thin strips of woven wood that filters sunlight very gently and has first-class solar properties. This classic wood weave style perfectly complements the rattan and wicker furniture often chosen for a conservatory. However, note that some materials used for Roman blinds – such as bamboo – are not suitable for roof blinds. Like pleated blinds, Roman blinds can be automated for remote control.

Roller blinds can be produced in a wide range of fabrics although the best choice for conservatories feature special solar-reflective aluminium backing to provide essential temperature and glare control. Not necessarily the most aesthetically appealing option, these blinds nevertheless offer a highly efficient way of deflecting heat build-up and glare.

Creative types with a sewing machine might prefer the more cost-effective option of DIY drapes or shutters. They won't offer the same degree of protection from heat and glare as professionally-installed blinds, although they will soften the light and cool the atmosphere – how much will depend on the fabrics chosen.



Pleated blinds are not only the most popular choice, but also the most effective, since they reflect up to 83% of the sun's heat. Available in a wide range of colours and patterns, they are very easy to maintain, especially if treated to repel dirt and damp.

Remember to check the width of the pleats before buying – the slimmer the pleat, the neater the overall look. Pleated blinds 'concertina' fold away tidily and can be automated for remote operation.

TOP TIP:

Pleated blinds are considered the most effective styles

Blinds

Free-standing tall timber shutters, which are available at most DIY stores, can be positioned to reduce glare through the windows; they are particularly useful if you want to watch television or use a computer. Alternatively, smaller shutters can be fixed to the windows externally although this is a task that should be entrusted to the professionals – it's definitely not a DIY project.

Vertical and Venetian blinds, available in wood, wood effect and aluminium, are another option but they can be difficult to fit. What's more, they are highly efficient dust traps.

Unless going down the DIY route, do have your conservatory measured by the supplier who will be fitting the blinds rather than providing the measurements yourself.

Once they are in place you will find that they significantly enhance the conditions in your conservatory, making it a pleasant and enjoyable place to work, rest and play all through the year – rather than a greenhouse in the summer and a fridge in the winter.

Other useful links:

www.sun-blinds.com

www.conservatory-interiors.com



Furniture – choose with care

Whatever your conservatory is used for – sitting room, dining room, playroom or office – there is a very good reason why cane remains the number one material when it comes to furniture.

While it makes sense to choose furniture and furnishings for your conservatory that complement those in the main house it is also important to remember that this is a room that is bathed in light throughout the year, subject to strong sunshine during the summer and, if there are children in the family, probably gets a good pounding.

Quite simply, cane ticks all the boxes. It's a natural material that is sturdy enough to stand up to the rough and tumble of family life and the regular 'through traffic' in a conservatory, but light enough to carry out into the garden if required. It maintains its good looks with very little upkeep and will even thrive on neglect. It's suitable for everything from chairs and sofas to tables and storage units. From thick cane to the more elegant rattan, there is a wide range of furniture and accessories to suit all tastes. Clearly heavy furniture is out of place in a room that is predominantly glass. And although there is plenty of wooden furniture that will look good in a conservatory, remember that sunlight will eventually bleach the wood.

Of course, glass shouldn't be overlooked – except perhaps in families with small and/or boisterous children. A glass-topped table especially looks stunning in a conservatory, maximising the feeling of space and light. Cushions and soft furnishings in a conservatory will get plenty of wear and tear so the materials should always be washable. Choose heavyweight fabrics that won't rot in strong sunlight – be aware, though, that there is little that can be done to prevent colours fading. Furnishing your conservatory needs as much consideration as any other room in your house – it's hard to go wrong, though, if you stick to cane and glass.

Use Cane Furniture throughout your home, not just in the conservatory or garden room:

The living room, bedroom, office, porch, entrance hall etc. are all suitable for a range of cane furniture – which now includes luxurious leather seating as well as the more traditional fabrics.

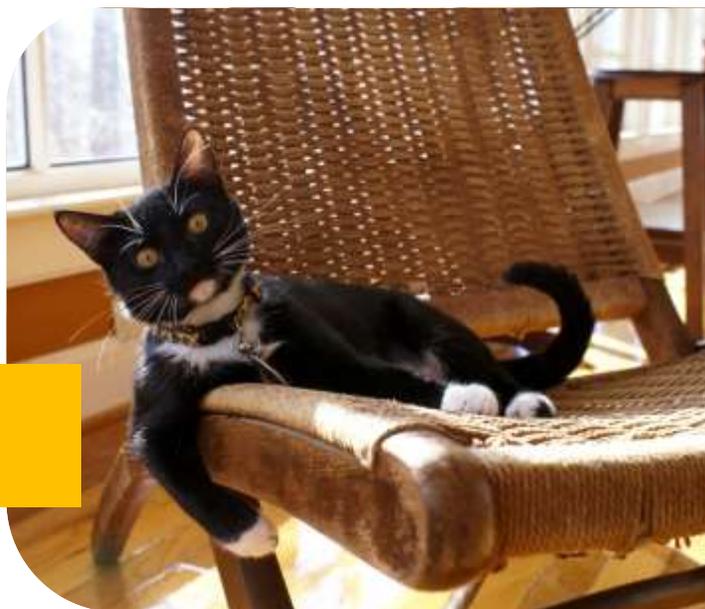
Useful Links:

www.conservatory-cane-furniture.co.uk

www.conservatoriesonline.com/cane_furniture

TOP TIP:

Cane furniture is most practical



At a glance guidelines

General advice

- Negotiate fairly with suppliers. Don't expect to get all mod cons if you're only prepared to pay for the cheapest design.
- Try to meet the builders who will be doing the work – it's crucial that you can get on with them.
- Check for yourself whether you'll need planning permission.
- Be friendly and cooperative towards the builders – you'll enhance the chances of getting the job done well.
- If possible, view some installations done by your proposed supplier. Talk to their customers about how the builders went about their work.
- Always have a small contingency budget as there may be unexpected and unpleasant surprises once the construction starts, for which money will need to be available.
- Buy the best conservatory you can afford. Gather as much information as possible on glazing options and construction materials so that you can make an informed purchasing decision.
- Inform neighbours of your plans so that they won't be offended by your conservatory – either through jealousy or loss of light in their garden.
- Let your insurance company know about the new extension, as you will need to review your cover.

Design and decision tips

- Choose a shape and style that will enhance the look of your home.
- Try to match the construction materials and colour with those used for your home.
- Take interesting details like bargeboards and unusually-shaped windows into the design of your conservatory.
- Don't compromise on the size of your conservatory. Use pegs and string to mark out the area of your proposed conservatory and then, ideally, fill it with the planned furnishings – a dining table, a sofa and plants – to check whether you have as much space as you would like. If moving the furniture is impractical, use sand or chalk to mark out the spaces they will take up.
- Always calculate your internal floor size when ordering a conservatory and remember that most conservatory companies quote for the external area.
- Get at least three quotations but don't automatically choose the lowest. The cheapest supplier will rarely give you the best product or service.
- Build your conservatory onto a well-used room, like your kitchen or living room.
- Depending on the shape of the conservatory, it is generally inadvisable to put doors in the front of the conservatory, as it creates a corridor that makes fitting in furniture difficult.
- Have a plan drawn up by an architect if you are looking for a specific and unusual design. This helps in discussions with the supplier and will also enable you to compare estimates on a like-for-like basis, which is important.
- The more money you spend on efficient insulation and roofing and glazing systems, the less you'll end up spending on heating and cooling systems for your conservatory.
- Remember to budget for extras such as blinds, furniture and heating.

TOP TIP:

Let your insurance company know about the new extension, as you will need to review your cover

Why use Quotatis?

The Quotatis service is 100% FREE to people looking for a trade professional.

You can use Quotatis to match your job needs with our qualified trade professionals whether it's at home or work. We don't charge you a penny, Quotatis charges our registered trade professionals a small fee for matching your requirements to their skills.

All our references come from people like you.

To become a Quotatis registered contractor, trade professionals must allow us to vet them and take the names of 3 referees they have done work for. We then check these independently. Their performance is regularly appraised by their new clients, who then report back to us. The only exception to this is when a contractor is a member of a trade association or competent person scheme such as Fensa, Part P & Corgi

We do our best to recruit new, vetted trade professionals if we can't provide an immediate match to your requirements.

It is possible that some requests in some areas will be difficult to match at first. When this happens, we will do our best to recruit new, vetted trade professionals to meet your needs as quickly as possible.

We only give your contact details to a maximum of 5 trades professionals.

We give your name and telephone number to no more than five trade professionals, and give their details to you. You can then call them to arrange an appointment. They may also call you.

We constantly monitor our trade professionals standards and performance.

We monitor our registered trade professionals performance regularly and if their standards fall - we cancel their registration. We don't want you to suffer at the hands of amateurs. It's as simple as that.

We have plenty of professionally registered trades people.

Most of our registered contractors are members of reputable trade associations or competent person schemes such as Fensa, Part P & Corgi. If you have any issues with the trade professional during the job we can give you the details of the membership body to which they belong. If an issue is discovered after the work has been completed and paid for, we will help you to get the original trade professional to put it right.

We take the hassle and uncertainty out of getting the right professional the first time.

Picking someone from the phone book can be very time consuming and fruitless if none of your chosen contractors are available. It may even result in you inadvertently using a 'rogue' contractor with all the associated issues. With Quotatis.co.uk you know that each trade professional who contacts you has been vetted, is monitored by happy customers, and is available and qualified to do your job.



Quotatis, we'll get you the best quotes first time every time.

Appendix – Useful sites

<http://conservatories.quotatis.co.uk/>

www.quotatis.co.uk

www.conservatories.com

www.conservatoriesonline.com

www.conservatoriestoday.co.uk

www.conservatories4uk.com

www.local-conservatories.co.uk

www.conservatories.org

www.hardwood-conservatories.co.uk



Suite 1
Joseph King House
Abbey Farm Commercial Park
Horsham St Faith
Norwich
NR10 3JU

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