

IN THE *detail*

KNOCKING THROUGH

Every little matters in your perfect kitchen, bedroom or bathroom, so we look at how this design feature can make a big difference

Words: Yvette Filer

"If you're tempted to take a sledgehammer to open the space up, you may want to do your research first."



A contemporary knock-through design with retaining elements in a listed townhouse by Trellis Design Studio.



Arched internal openings work well within this FAB Architects project, helping to add a divide and a stylish feature to the open-plan space.

When it comes to going open plan, there's more to consider than first meets the eye – particularly when walls need to be knocked through and either fully, or partially, removed. If you're tempted to take a sledgehammer to open the space up, you may want to do your research first and get advice from a professional about your specific project. Most people looking to knock through want to make a room look larger, add an extension, or create a more seamless flow. In fact, turning your downstairs kitchen, dining room, and living areas into one open-plan space is one of the most popular projects today.

Unless you have a listed building, you don't usually need planning permission for an internal reconfiguration, but there may be other stumbling blocks that could prevent your plans from going ahead, such as where your property's load-bearing walls are. Plus, you will still need to adhere to building regulations. As with any major home improvement, it is always best to contact your local council to double check if there are any restrictions in your area or to your property.

The next most important aspect is to find out whether the wall in question is, in fact, load bearing, as there may be significant limitations to what you can do if it is. "You can still remove a load-bearing wall, however, you will need the help of a structural engineer to install a rolled steel joist (RSJ) for support," explains Gregory Smith, Priceyoujoo's construction expert. "Another option is installing an archway; again, this will need to be done using proper construction methods

but can be a simpler way to join spaces together than removing an entire wall."

Archway designs have both practical and stylistic elements to consider, such as how much wall to leave in place and what the end result will look like. "Having an arch allows you to break materials, colour and light and can help in denoting different zones," explains James Owen Webster, director at AO Architecture. "They work well when creating small wall sections and installing sliding or folding doors for separation – ideal for when you want to shut off noise between a kitchen-diner and a snug, for example." However, an archway may not be to everyone's taste, and those looking for a contemporary finish may prefer a slicker design where a column or joist is on display if needed for a load-bearing wall. The choice comes down to what you want in terms of layout and functionality. "Ask yourself, what is important – flow, light, views, social communication, or control of noise," James adds.

Cost is the final factor to think about when deciding whether to tackle this kind of structural work. The labour associated with knocking through a load-bearing wall will be more than others, plus you'll need to account for the cost of any RSJs. The final look can make a difference, too. "An archway will cost anywhere from £1000 to £5000, depending on the size and whether it is solely decorative or load bearing," says Ana Delgado at Structural Repairs. "Remember, the cost of relocating light switches, electrical sockets, and extra radiators as well. And, of course, the price of making good, redecorating, including replastering."



Brassware: GETTING IT RIGHT

Lauren Sutton, head of Design Hub at Virtual Worlds, tells us how virtual reality software can help you save time when trying to choose your bathroom's taps

When looking at brassware for your bathroom, you may read magazines and research online for inspiration. There's so much information – but what about actually seeing design?

Choosing finishes

A ways think about the whole space and how you can tie it all together using materials and finishes. If you love brass, for example, try considering other accent metalwork such as the light fittings, shower screen frames, handles, and mirrors onside your taps.

See your new taps in situ

Let's be honest, spatial awareness is not a gift bestowed on everyone. To get it right, you'll want to do more than look at pictures. Virtual reality software can help you avoid so-called buyer's remorse. You can step into the space, look around, and to get a feel for everything.



Images: Created by Virtual Worlds Design Hub for Virtual XR Bathrooms

Black or gold?

With Virtual Worlds 4D technology, you're not only able to view the brassware in your new bathroom, you can also compare different looks and finishes at the flick of a switch.



Want to give it a go? To find your nearest independent retailer with Virtual Worlds technology, visit find4d.com