Best Heating System for a Renovation Project

How to choose the right heating setup when upgrading an existing home

Renovation projects rarely offer a blank canvas. Existing floors, wall construction, insulation levels, ceiling heights, and room layouts all affect what heating system may be practical.

The best heating system for a renovation depends on the condition of the property, the scope of works, the available budget, and whether the project is a light upgrade or a full refurbishment.

Common heating options for renovations

1. Upgrade existing radiators
This can be the simplest route where the existing system largely works but needs improvement. Larger or more efficient radiators can sometimes improve performance without major disruption.

2. Low-profile underfloor heating
This is designed for projects where floor build-up must be kept as low as possible. It can be suitable in some retrofit situations, but the floor finish and heat demand still need careful consideration.

3. Standard water underfloor heating
This may work well in a full strip-out renovation, especially if floors are being rebuilt anyway.

4. Electric underfloor heating
Often used in single rooms such as bathrooms or kitchens where installation simplicity matters more than whole-house running cost efficiency.

5. Heat pump-compatible systems
Some renovation projects include wider energy upgrades. In these cases, emitters and insulation may need improving so the property can perform well with lower flow temperatures.

What matters most?
Before choosing a system, consider:

- How well the property is insulated
- Whether floors are being lifted or replaced
- Ceiling height and floor build-up limits
- Existing boiler or planned heat source
- Floor finishes in each room
- Budget for both install cost and running cost
- Whether the project is one room or the whole house

Typical renovation scenarios

Light renovation
Keeping most of the existing structure often favours radiator upgrades or electric UFH in selected rooms.

Major renovation
If floors are coming up and insulation is being improved, water underfloor heating becomes a more realistic option.

Single-room upgrade
Bathrooms, kitchens, and extensions often suit underfloor heating more easily than the rest of the house.

Common mistake to avoid
A heating system should not be chosen in isolation. The heating, insulation, controls, and floor build-up all need to work together. Bolting an expensive heating system onto a poor-performing building is rarely the masterstroke people hope for.

Final thought
The best renovation heating setup is the one that fits the building as it actually is, not as the brochure pretends it is. Start with insulation, layout, and build-up constraints, then choose the heating system that genuinely suits the project.