



2PM ARCHITECTS

DOWN TO EARTH

This family home in St John's Wood, London, has been opened up with a basement extension stretching the house's entire footprint and out into the rear garden. Designed by 2pm Architects, the space features a double-height glazed void and bespoke staircase with a glass balustrade. This ensures an uninterrupted connection between the two storeys, while allowing plenty of natural light to filter down into the space throughout the day. (www.2pm-architects.co.uk)

EXPERT VIEW HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR BASEMENT SPACE



LIAM DOWER, director of St Albans Basement, shares how to effectively maximise your new subterranean zone

Think about how you want to use the space as basements can be quite versatile. The zone's function will depend on the client and their needs – we'll take time at the very start of the project, when we are working out whether a basement extension is viable, to fully understand the client's brief and what their key requirements are. Most people looking to extend downwards are usually after a separate entertainment area, perhaps an office or study and an extra guest bedroom with an ensuite. Popular additions include a gym, wine storage, media rooms and a swimming pool/leisure/spa facilities, if the site conditions and budget allow.

Connecting the new space with the rest of the house is really important in ensuring a harmonious, functional floorplan. This is usually achieved via a centrally-located staircase either in the house or via a purpose-built link connecting the main property and, say, a basement garden. The way that this connection is achieved is unique to each basement project and the position of the stairs is initially chosen to maximise square footage inside, whilst also creating a seamless flow between storeys.

Getting natural light underground is one of the most important considerations of any subterranean project. To bring daylight into the basement, we often construct lightwells, which allow either windows or doors to be inserted. Depending on the garden space, large bifold, sliding or French-style doors might open onto a lightwell or even sunken courtyard zone, lessening the

feeling of being underground and increasing the space's access to natural ventilation. We often find that, where there is no room for a lightwell, we can still install high-level windows if a side alley permits, therefore exposing the light-locked rooms at the centre of the floorplan (typically bathrooms) to natural light. Glazed fanlights over any internal doors are another smart technique to provide the stairwell with natural light while connecting with the upper floors.

Planning artificial lighting and incorporating a layered scheme will help bring different moods and atmospheres to any basement. Careful lighting design can also help to break the space into zones without physically dividing the room. Many of our clients opt for a passive infrared sensor lighting system, especially in bathrooms, as these are zones are normally positioned in darker areas of the basement.



HIDDEN POTENTIAL

This stunning mews house located in Knightsbridge, London, has been significantly altered, extended and refurbished. The original internal floors and roof structure were demolished before excavating and forming a new lower ground floor extension with an office and cinema. The front and rear elevations were altered in keeping with the building's original character, while the internal spaces have been reconstructed to suit modern living requirements. (www.rbd.design.com)



DIGGING DOWN

Situated in the heart of a conservation area, this 1800s cottage has been extended from a modest 110m² to 160m² with a new basement and rear extension. The house was enlarged both above and below ground, excavating the existing cellar to the rear of the property and increasing the floor-to-ceiling height. Two full-depth lightwells were added at either end of the basement, alongside a separate access door via stairs in the lightwell, creating a bright, flexible space that doesn't feel closed off. (www.stalbansbasement.co.uk)