



For The Latest In Conversions LOOK DOWN

When it comes to thinking about the style of the basement, you will need to carefully consider the architectural detailing of the existing property. Replicating all the period features of the existing house can look horribly pastiche if it is not done thoughtfully. There might be a beautifully detailed cornice or period tiled floors there, but out of context on a new basement they could look very out of place. It's often best to leave that style behind and embrace the modern in the basement rather than attempting a fake match. A solid oak or walnut staircase with glass balustrades, very simple doors and square-profile molding can elegantly signal your entrance to a very different space and establish a new character.

The basement hallway is an important part of the design as it sets the scene for the whole floor, but it is often overlooked. Ultimately, when you arrive you don't want to feel as if you are in a basement! Consider angling the staircase so that you arrive into the centre of the hallway rather than facing an end wall, use glass balustrading to allow maximum light and visual space, and at all costs avoid a design which features a long thin tunnel for a corridor with doors leading off it. Depending on the architecture of the house, you may be able to introduce a angled wall to the hallway to create the impression of increasing space, while floor-to-ceiling glass panels move light around

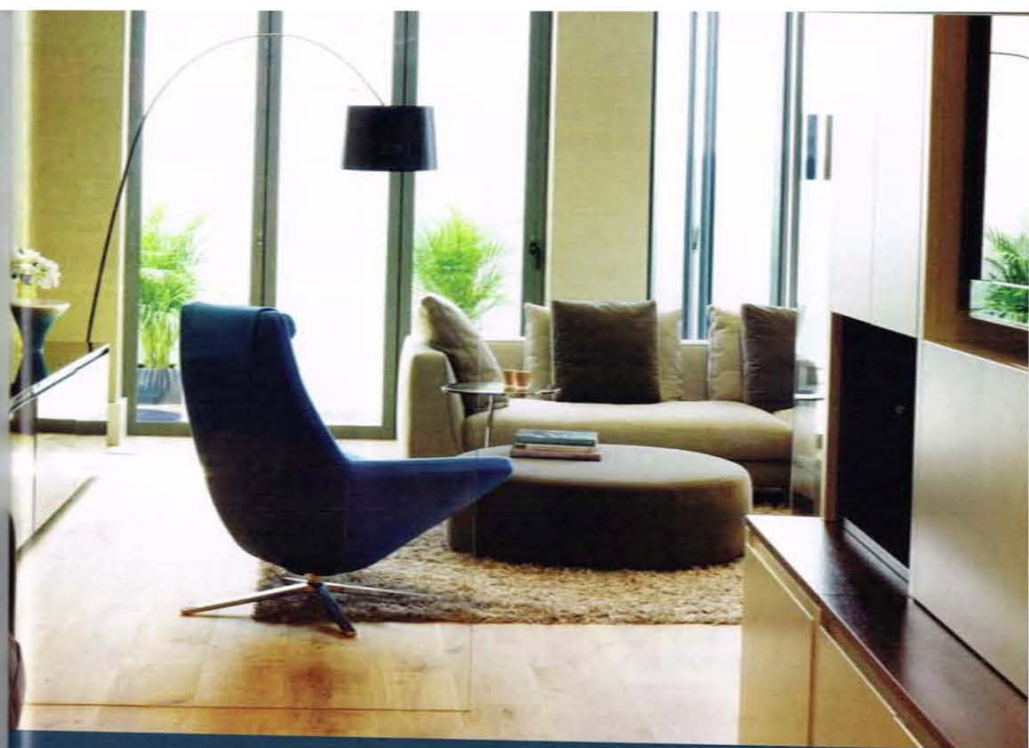
and create an interesting feature in the hall, leading the eye into the next room.

Living spaces and bedrooms need to be adjacent to a light well so they can have windows or external doors for natural light and ventilation, so they tend to be the front and/or back of the basement, where it is possible to dig a lightwell. The footprint of a typical Victorian terraced house is long and narrow so they tend not to have space at the side of the property for a light well. Semi-detached or detached houses can benefit from additional lightwells to the sides of the property.

Ancillary rooms less needy of natural light, such as laundry rooms, shower rooms, plant rooms and storage areas, as well as staircases, are usually best placed in the middle of the basement.

Basements are incredibly versatile additions to traditional homes and can add significant value, but you should always visit completely basements of the company you are considering working with so you can agree exactly what you do and don't like, and know what you can expect to achieve with them.

Images and words courtesy of The Oxford & London Building Consultancy Ltd and BasementWorks Ltd



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