Forget the property ladder, get a best cellar

Space-hungry homeowners are digging in with basement conversions that can adapt with the family, says Carol Lewis



peopleare dugging deep. burrowing into basements is high-quality

conversions with durability - a playroom and nanny flat transforms into a teenage den and cinema before eventually turning into a quiet refuge for granny. Here we look underground and called up at the press of at the popular trends in basement design:

Cinema/media room There is no need for a roll-down cinema screen and projector when state-of-the-art. 60-inch screens can double up as the main family TV and provide a full cinema experience with the lights off and the surround sound turned up.

What is more, the price of television screens has fallen sharply in recent years. Ask about simple hard-drive installations that allow you to store all your music and video, accessed via your computer and played directly to the TV/hidden speakers ground in providing affordable solutions." The emphasis is on simplicity and quality." Marc Stchedroff, managing director of The Oxford & London Building Company, says.

Wine cellars Large wine coolers and walk-in ocllars that are temperature.humidity and light controlled are increasingly popular and often incorporated into basement cinema areas. The key here is to make your | can be stored. This keeps the mess out of wine collection virible. "We design our own bespoke wine cellars, we take a brief that not only includes the expected

which region, as each has a slightly different bottle size." Rosie Caley, design moving high. | director at The Oxford & London Building Company, explains.

The emphasis Carlifts If you lack enough off-street parking space for more than one car or want to keep your Aston Martin DBS out of sight. then a carlift might be the thing for you. Up to three cars can be stacked abutton, James Bond-style. Increasing numbers of city dwellers are digging a car lift at the same time as they dig the busement:

> App control Forget complicated integrated control systems with complex control punels. trendsetters are controlling their homes using iPhone apps. Simply press a button on your iPhone to control sound. heating and lighting. There is no need to buy in premium software, this new breed of home control is breaking Stichedroff says.

Playroom About 90 per cent of the basements that we convert include a playroom," Richard Peel, founder of Esthury Basements. says. Many people choose to combine a large, open play space with whomecinema area that also contains a generous amount of cupboard space in which toys sight and can belp to balance the living space in Victorian houses that can be "abit topheavy



Digging more than 1.2m beneath your existing foundations requires a very specific type of risks insurance. Make sure that the contractor has this.

Check quotes. A fixed price should be just that. Ask previous clients how well the contractor kept to the quoted prices.

For a single storey basement under your house you should allow for a square metre cost of £2,000-£2,500 plus VAT for the structural work, and E800-E1,500 plus VAT for fitting out.

ility room is one of the most conversions. We are not talking about a cupboard for a washing machine. and dryer - these incorporate lots of storage, additional fridge or freezer space. and integral drying and airing cupboards with independent heating and extraction

Underground gyms An obvious choice because they can be tucked into an area that does not require natural light, leaving the front and rear of the basement, where lightwells are located, for bedrooms and living areas.

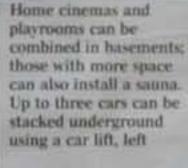
Swimming pool The fashion for dinky contra-flow pools has passed - unless you can fit at least a 20-metre single-lap pool in your basement it is simply not worth the outlay But for those with the space, a pool, gym and spais a cool combination.

Nanny flat/teenage den ometimes separate access can be ncorporated into the design. Utility rooms can double up as small kitchens. Many people start off with a nanny flat when the children are young and convert it to a teenage den when the children grow up. Peel explains.

Quiet study/studios These often double as the guest room with en suite shower room; a dual-purpose space at one end of the basement that allows peace and quiet for work.

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