

EXTENSIONS BIBLE 2021



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Build It

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO ADDING MORE SPACE AND VALUE TO YOUR HOME

This once-dark Victorian cellar is now a spacious, light-filled and comfortable family zone thanks to George & James Architects

Underground transformation

LOCATION
London

EXTENSION
SIZE 5m²

TOTAL
HOUSE SIZE
230m²

CONSTRUCTION
METHOD
Reclaimed
brick & block

BUILD COST
£192,000

BUILDING
WORK TOOK
7 months

A previous basement conversion at this west London property had resulted in an under-used family room, dark kitchen-diner, and a utility room that stole the prime position overlooking the garden. So, it was in need of a spatial rethink to improve the layout for the growing family.

The homeowners approached George and James Architects to create a more welcoming, usable space. The first step was to remove as many internal walls as possible, connecting the south-facing front lightwell with the north-facing rear garden to deliver a spacious, bright basement. At the front of the house, a small extension was added to provide a lightwell, which is now used as an entrance lobby, utility space and storage for shoes and coats. Under the external stairs, there's space for refuse and recycling storage, hidden from view.

The heritage style of the property, and its position in a conservation area, prompted

the designers to rethink the external staircase leading down to this new space.

They replaced the modern steel flight with one in traditional stone, boosting the property's kerb appeal.

By letting the light in, the home has been transformed, creating a welcoming, social space underground. The front portion houses a Terazzo-tiled kitchen and a dining zone sits towards the rear of the basement. A music room opens out onto the garden via a set of full-height aluminium French doors in a heritage, Art Deco style.

To create a more inviting route down, the internal staircase was also adjusted, adding a glazed balustrade and a bright pop of colour in the stair runner. This theme carries through to the steel columns, pendant light cabling and soft furnishings of the basement.

Top Tips



Simon Drayson, director at George & James Architects, shares the secret to creating a light-filled, comfortable basement

- Light is paramount. There are two main ways to ensure adequate light levels: natural sunshine, which can be achieved by extending outwards to create space for a rooflight or a lightwell; followed by artificial sources, which should be limited to recessed spotlights and wall lights. Another way might be to borrow light from the floor above.

- Most basements are achieved by underpinning the foundations of the existing house, to create the additional headroom whilst making sure your property (and that of your neighbour!) stays standing. They also require at least two forms of waterproofing. It is becoming increasingly common for these details to be required in planning submissions, alongside drawings, which will likely increase your upfront costs.

- Consider your heating, plumbing and ventilation. Given that your basement will most likely include a new concrete floor, underfloor heating is a no-brainer. If you are planning a bathroom or kitchen downstairs, you might need to rely on a macerator for your foul drainage. Any principle living spaces will need fresh air, likely by mechanical means.

GEORGE & JAMES ARCHITECTS

George & James are an established and talented architectural practice, with completed projects across London, and the south. Originally established in 2013 in central London the practice has recently moved its studio to the rural and inspiring South Downs National Park.

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