

Below Stairs

There are a number of things to know before converting your basement into a bedroom. For instance, you must have a window and light well, mainly to provide a form of escape but also to allow for natural light and air. "Every light well we construct has a ladder from the base to the top and if a light well has a grille over it, there is an opening hatch in the grille," explains Maggie Smith from London Basements, expert in basement excavation, conversions and construction. "Converting an existing basement (or cellar) will generally require excavation and underpinning to achieve a habitable head height, which we consider to be a minimum of 2.4m. Most existing basements below a typical Victorian or Edwardian house have a head height of approximately 1.5m to 1.8m."

Waterproofing is of vital importance when converting a basement but a cavity drain membrane system combined with sump pumps work perfectly to keep a basement dry. "It is based on a studded, sealed membrane system through the walls and floor, with gulleys behind and below the membrane that take any build-up of moisture to a tank in the floor, where it is pumped away to the main drainage," explains Maggie.

Because of the structural works required to convert or construct a basement, *KBB* suggests seeking the services of a basement specialist who has the expertise and equipment to carry this out. "There are so many new companies starting up. Research should be carried out into the history of the company being used, making sure to take up references from previous clients," adds Maggie.

**London Basement 020 8847 9449 or
www.londonbasement.co.uk**

Going underground

Everything you need to know about converting your basement by London Basement:

- A property does not require an existing basement or cellar to have a basement constructed. A large proportion of London Basement's projects have nothing below ground level at all, but it can create a completely new floor level.
- In the majority of cases clients continue to live in their property whilst works are carried out. This is done by digging down in the front garden, breaking through below ground and 'tunnelling' under the property.
- With a basement conversion, you are not limited to just constructing below the existing house. You can go beyond the main body of the house, under extensions and even under the garden.
- The cost of a basement conversion often makes sense when stacked against moving costs to gain the extra space, taking into account the cost of a larger house, stamp duty and the cost of moving.

Photograph: Andreas von Einsiedel