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Case study 3: adding a lower-ground floor to a terraced house

THE CHALLENGE: To create a new floor underneath a Victorian terraced house equipped with hi-tech gadgets and lighting, as well as copious amounts of storage

FAST FACTS

BUILD COST: £105,000

Owners: Jill and Andy Broadland, south London

Architect: William Toner Architecture & Design (020 7734 4055, www.leda.co.uk)

Construction: Padbury Building (07802 424970)

Floor space: 366 sq feet

Costs included: foundation (£1,000); glazing (£4,000); joinery and doors (£7,000); decoration (£3,500)

Why did you decide to extend into the basement?
Our house is a classic Victorian terrace with one living space that acted as the lounge, the playroom and the study. It was just too small and claustrophobic with our two children, Thomas and Jamie. We'd already converted the loft and fitted a new kitchen at the back, so going down was the only option left.

What was the space like before?
There was a very small cellar, the width of the main hallway above. We stored our wine down there and all the stuff that you'd usually put in the loft - which, as I've said, we'd converted.

Why did you employ an architect?
We thought an architect would be

more imaginative than a basement company, and William was recommended to us by friends. He also offered to project-manage, saving us the headache of co-ordinating the whole process.

What brief did you give?
We asked for a living space, downstairs bathroom, utility room and lots of storage. Andy had always wanted a plasma-screen TV and surround sound, so that was also on our list.

How much input did you have in the design?
We were happy to leave William to get on with it. We did reduce the size of the original design to cut the cost, but everything else stayed. The way

Above: the wood in the new staircase echoes the flooring in the living room. This room has supplementary soffit lighting and a light box

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A corner sofa ensures no floor area is wasted

Above: the plasma-screen TV is cleverly back-lit, maximising ambient light in this room. **Left:** even the design of the utility room works hard to make the most of the space allocated

William has introduced light to the space with the lightbox in the utility room wall and a light well at the front of the building is very clever. It gives an amazing sense of light and, on sunny days, you'd never guess the rooms were below ground level.

How long did it take to build?
The entire process took two years but the builders were in for five and a half months. Access was difficult, so during this time we moved into rented accommodation.

Has it changed the way you use the rest of the house?
Yes, completely. The basement has brought a whole new dimension to the house and makes it feel so much bigger. We definitely gravitate towards the sitting room and the kitchen above. I was worried that it would seem very modern in comparison with the rest of the

hours, but the staircase ties the old in with the new and it works brilliantly.

What's your favourite thing about the project?
The storage. The bespoke TV unit has loads of space for DVDs, videos and other bits and pieces. There is storage space built in underneath the stairs, concealed in the walls of the utility room and behind the mirrors in the bathroom. There's so much space that I haven't been able to fill it.

What would be your advice for others embarking on similar work?
If you can move out during construction, do, and don't be afraid to hire an architect and go for a more individual approach.

Is there anything you'd change?
No. Doing something so drastic to our home was quite scary at the time, but now it's finished and we're living in it, I absolutely love it. >>>

ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING

Many basements lack natural light, making artificial lighting a priority. According to architect William Toner, the secret to simulating natural light is to use a mix of both colour and lighting types. Colours should be both cold (for example, fluorescent) and warm (such as downlighters). Types of lights include spotlights, hidden fittings that provide a wash of light down walls and freestanding lamps. Wherever possible, opt for eco-friendly options, such as energy-saving light bulbs and light-emitting diodes (LEDs).

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“...an amazing sense of light”

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