



Sliding doors open onto the garden and a sunken terrace, filling the open-plan space with natural light

PHOTOS: RDA ARCHITECTS

BASEMENT EXTENSION

Despite being pricier than a conventional extension (at £2,500-£4,000sq m), where there is no scope to go out or upwards, extending below ground level is proving increasingly popular, especially in higher value areas such as central London.

Planning permission is normally required but is not usually an obstacle, even within a conservation area, because the new space has no visual impact on the streetscape. Some local authorities don't even require a planning application. Converting an existing cellar is less expensive (£1,250-£1,650sq m) and does not usually require planning permission – but check with your local authority. For further information, see basements.org.uk.

Katie Froud, Dulwich, London

The basement extension to Katie Froud's semi-detached Victorian terrace house in Dulwich, London, has created a warm and welcoming family home.

With help from RDA architects, Katie, who works in marketing and has two sons, has added a large open-plan kitchen, dining and living area on the new lower ground floor, totalling 120sq m. "The new space has transformed the way we live," says Katie. "The house was very run down,

The first floor (right) is largely glazed at the rear to make the most of the view. A gallery in the children's playroom overlooks the kitchen, neatly linking the rooms



and while it looked smart from the front, like many Victorian houses the back didn't really work at all. We felt that there was scope for us to create something visually exciting, both from outside and within."

Katie's project is typical of a basement extension, with the property first being underpinned, before the ground beneath the building was excavated. Extra room allows for large lightwells to the front and back to fill the new rooms with light.

"I absolutely love the new space," she says. "And despite its size, we have managed to make it incredibly useable. The kitchen functions really well."

The project cost £500,000 in total, including renovating the whole property, and has added £700,000 to the value.

rdauk.com

Planning major improvements?

1 Decide on your priorities

Are you adding maximum value for minimum cost to sell for a profit – or planning your dream home?

2 Good design is key to success

Use an experienced architect (architecture.com) or designer, you'll save money and add value.

3 Don't change your mind

Decide on fixtures and finishes early on to avoid extra costs and frustrating delays.

4 Don't take on too much

DIY can save a fortune if you have the skills and time – or you could ruin your home!

5 Prepare a budget

Talk to lenders early on and plan your finances. Always allow 10 per cent more for unforeseen costs.

6 Always ask for references

From local builders to qualified architects, get references from previous clients – and check them.

7 Prepare a project schedule

Set a realistic timescale and schedule for the work, then do everything in the right order.

8 Agree prices up front

Discuss terms and only pay for work when it has been completed to your satisfaction.

9 Stick to the rules

New work must comply with building regulations. You must also notify your neighbours under the Party Wall Act.

- See homebuilding.co.uk or visit the National Homebuilding & Renovating Show at the NEC Birmingham, 24-27 March 2011. For discounted tickets, go to homebuildingshow.co.uk.

- *Renovating for Profit* by Michael Holmes (Random House, £25)