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GD PROJECTS BASEMENT CONVERSIONS

Construction matters

When there is insufficient headroom in the basement, the floor must be excavated to create more height. This can be a very slow process and involves structural work such as underpinning, which is where concrete reinforcements are inserted beneath the existing walls.

'Underpinning provides support for the structure of the house while the floor is being dug out,' says Robert Wood, director of Simply Basement (simplybasement.co.uk). If the ground floor above is retained, steelwork, new structural slabs or foundations may be needed. Whether or not they are required depends on the scale of the conversion, the age of the house and the existing foundations.

The spaces must also be protected from water ingress. This can be done in three ways: by creating a barrier, through structural integrity, or with a cavity drainage system that diverts water from the house. 'A specialist waterproofing contractor can design and install the appropriate solution, but always seek an insurance-backed guarantee,' says Stephen Butt.

For the project to meet Building Regulations, insulation, ventilation and heating will also need to be addressed. >>



RIGHT AND BELOW This five-bedroom Victorian townhouse in Primrose Hill, north London, has a utility room and kitchen-diner on the lower level. Architectural practice Zulufish increased the ceiling height to create a bright, open space that leads out to a secluded courtyard. The conversion costs took up £600,000 of the £1.2 million project budget. (zulufish.co.uk)

