

Frequently Asked Questions

What components make a successful basement?

We believe that three core elements make a good basement. They are:

- 1) Height - the height of your space needs to be in proportion to the ground floor and other floors of your house.
- 2) Light - sufficient light is essential to keep the spaces bright and welcoming.
- 3) Access - ensure that the staircases are in keeping with the existing property, ensuring that your new space doesn't seem like an add-on.

Why should I build a basement?

It is an effective way of gaining more space without the cost and hassle of moving home, and can add significant value to your property.

What shall I put in my new basement?

For modern family living, London properties lack sufficient space and a basement conversion can provide a complete new floor to your house. This can provide a number of rooms that can be used for any purpose. Most popular are a Media Room, Playroom, Games Room, Guest Bedroom, Nanny area, Swimming Pool, Utility or a combination of any of these – the possibilities are all there.

Does there have to be an existing cellar?

No, in most instances we can construct a basement where there is no cellar.

What head height can I achieve?

We consider 2.5m (8'0") to be a minimum comfortable ceiling height, but in most cases 2.8-3.0m is the norm, providing it is in line with other levels it can be as high as you want, although, of course, this will affect the cost.

It is possible to create more than one basement level, although this is dependant upon ground conditions and the location of the property, subject to the necessary consents.

Can I live in the property while the building works are in progress?

The majority of our clients remain in their homes during their basement conversion. As with any construction work, there will be some noise and debris but this is reduced through covering of exposed areas and only working during normal office hours.

We excavate in the front garden, where the window and light well will be and then construct a secure covered hoarding around the area. Our ability to tunnel under the property means that you are able to remain in residence with minimum disruption.

Do we have to use your architect or engineer?

NO, we are happy to work with the client's architects, engineer or interior designer. Alternatively we can supply or suggest a number of relevant professionals to you. We can simply provide a structural shell or handle everything from the design and planning to the construction and fit out.

Does a basement conversion require planning permission?

Basement planning permission is required when forming light wells and creating new habitable space with basements. If you have not employed an architect then we are happy to take you through the planning stage.

I live in a conservation area. Does this prohibit me from having a basement built?

Very rarely, although it may have some affect on the design of the light well.

Is it necessary to advise our neighbours regarding our proposed basement construction?

Yes it is. In most cases Party Wall awards will be required and we will arrange for a Party Wall Surveyor to act on your behalf.

Can we dig beyond the footprint of our house, like under the back or front garden?

This very much depends in which Borough you are located. We can advise you on what we believe will be accepted and permitted.

How long does a basement conversion take?

Once you get planning permission and the party wall awards are in place, dependant upon the size of the area and the extent of the works the dig should take approx. 4-6 months.

Do you give any guarantees on the work carried out?

Lowndes Lumb are able to offer 10-year insurance backed latent defect cover in respect of structural works. The waterproofing works are also covered by our 10-year guarantee and the cavity drain membrane waterproofing system is covered by a 30-year product guarantee.

What kind of insurances do Lowndes Lumb have in place?

We carry the very highest level of insurance, details available upon request.

Do I have a choice of fittings and finishes?

Totally. During the design phase of the job we will sit with you and agree a specification for all of these items. Our experienced fit-out teams will ensure that your new basement is carefully finished according to your spec.

How much will it cost?

The cost will depend on your precise requirements and specifications. As a rule of thumb, structural costs are generally £1,700-£2,500 per m² and fit-out costs are around £750-£800 per m².

What areas of London do we cover?

SW London is our core business; see the map on the website.