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THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT

Tall townhouses, dark basements, awkward corners – London homes aren't always easy to live with. But there's an interiors solution for everything, writes **Alexandra Goss**



CLEVER STYLING Left: The Vivienne modular sofa, £6995, and Wallace burl coffee table, £795, by Soho Home, sohohome.com. Above: A door frame is softly uplit, johncullenlighting.com

London homes can be found in all shapes and sizes, from handsome Georgian terraces to Victorian mansion blocks. Yet these period homes come with their own problems. "There are tall, thin townhouses, low-built mews, and a huge variety of flats, including north-facing ones and basement homes that hardly get any light," acknowledges Marc Goldberg, head of sales at Marsh & Parsons. "Yet there are clever interiors solutions for them all," he says. "You would be surprised by how many things can be solved by a redesign, clever lighting or simply choosing the right furniture."

KITCHENS

The kitchen is the heart of the home, so consider this first. If the room is small, Charlie Smallbone, founder of Ledbury Studio, advises having a layout with tall

cabinets with a fridge-freezer at one end, a dropped-down worktop with cupboard above it at the other, and the sink, the hob and a run of worktop in between.

"In a galley kitchen, always have at least a metre between the runs of cabinetry on either side of the walkway," Smallbone adds. "Dedicate one wall to tall cupboards with just base cabinets on the other – this opens up the space, making it feel less cramped, and you can add an open shelf or hanging rail above the work surfaces for extra storage that also looks good."

Cabinetry can be built all the way to the tall ceilings in Victorian properties, creating masses of storage, while bespoke solutions can convert awkward corners into usable spaces, says Will Lyne, master designer and co-owner of Christopher Peters Kitchens and Interiors. Lyne encourages clients to opt for as

SMART FINISHES Clockwise from below: Soho Lighting pendant, £589, soholighting.com; a mezzanine designed by Studio Indigo; Ardingly Cabinet £1,725, neptune.com; Holland chair, £795; Amara floor lamp, £625, sohohome.com



many drawers and internal sliding trays as possible. "These ensure every square inch of storage space is being used efficiently and that you can find everything easily," he explains. "Pocket doors are also great in a small kitchen and don't take up valuable floor space."

FURNITURE

In many London apartments kitchens are part of an open-plan area so the furniture needs to blend in with the living and dining spaces. This can be a daunting prospect, which is why many retailers now offer interior design help. Neptune's home design service costs £300 for the first room and £200 for each additional room, although this is deducted from the total when you spend £5,000 per room; the firm's freestanding furniture, such as its Ardingly cabinet (£1,725) or Carter bookcase (£1,460), can merge the kitchen seamlessly with the rest of the space.

Soho Home offers a design service, too, costing from £300 per room. "A small, compact armchair in a rich colour works well to open and brighten up an awkward corner, with a patterned cushion to add interest," says Candy Murray, the firm's


interior design manager. "Meanwhile, a floor lamp with a linen shade – such as our Amara Floor Lamp (£625) – gives off a glowing light, creating a cosy corner."

LIGHTING

Lighting is also one of the best ways to create warmth in a home with tall ceilings. Sabrina Fiorina, design associate at John Cullen Lighting, says: "While tall ceilings add space and volume, rooms can lose their intimacy so think about using a pendant at mid height to create a central focus and a sense that the ceiling is lower." Fiorina adds that uplights will show off the architectural details in a vaulted or pitched ceiling, while using them to light doorways, shutter boxes and



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BIJOU BATHROOMS Clockwise from left: Tubby Too roll top bath, Albion Bath Company; A West One Bathrooms design westonebathrooms.com; Tubby Too bath in gold albianbathco.com



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window reveals will provide a soft glow. What is more, lighting can really help poky places feel a lot bigger. "Glass shades are a wonderfully elegant and simple solution for bathing an interior with light and creating the illusion of more space," says Lee Lovett, co-founder of the Soho Lighting Company. For those narrow hallways, downlights can be directed to reflect off the walls to make the space appear a lot larger, while reflective surfaces also work wonders to fool the naked eye. Laura Hammett, founder of the eponymous, London-based interiors firm, says: "Large mirrors can bring a narrow entrance to life, while glossed console tables work to add extra shine."

BATHROOMS

Clever lighting, glass panels and mirrors help to make compact bathrooms look and feel bigger, according to Yousef Mansuri, director of design at C.P. Hart. "Opting for the same tone of tiles throughout the scheme will also give the space continuity and make it look larger," he adds.

If possible, opt for wall-hung basins and WCs as they instantly give the illusion of more space as you see more of the floor, advises Louise

Ashdown, head of design at West One Bathrooms. While she adds that pale and neutral colours will reflect light and give a sense of calm, she says bold wallpaper is perfect for a downstairs cloakroom.

Indeed, you shouldn't be afraid of colour in a small or dimly-lit home, says Mike Fisher, founder and creative director of Studio Indigo. "Painting a dark north-facing wall lighter won't necessarily make it brighter," he explains. "Rather, use it as an opportunity to use strong colour and pattern to create more characterful spaces." ■



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