

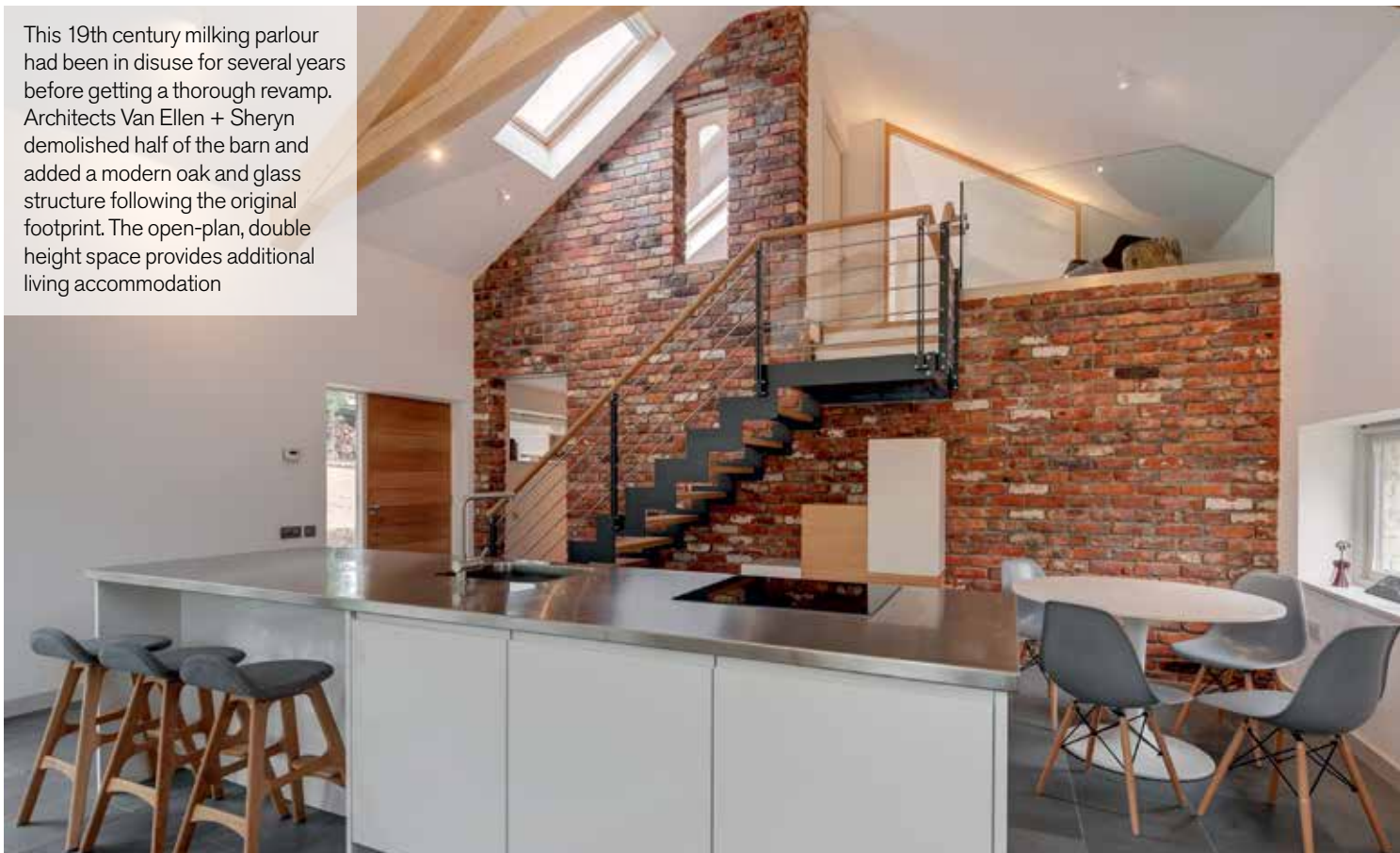


Wow factor conversions

Formally a mechanic's garage and workshop office, this 1950s building was converted into a stylish dwelling. The interior walls were removed to create an open-plan kitchen-dining-living area, along with a home office. Designers at Patalab Architects zoned the space by placing the staircase in the middle and sinking the ground where the lounge is located

Transforming underused spaces offers the opportunity to create unique living areas to fit with your lifestyle and personality. **Sofia Delgado** discovers seven stunning projects and shares the top tips for kick-starting your scheme

This 19th century milking parlour had been in disuse for several years before getting a thorough revamp. Architects Van Ellen + Sheryn demolished half of the barn and added a modern oak and glass structure following the original footprint. The open-plan, double height space provides additional living accommodation



This grade II listed house in Islington was renovated and extended by Dominic McKenzie Architects. The previously underused basement was transformed into a light-filled kitchen-dining area thanks to the addition of a double height rear extension. After digging up the garden, a concrete staircase was created to facilitate access from the basement to the exterior



Above and inset: A dilapidated barn was transformed into an award-winning dwelling. David Nossiter Architects created an open-plan kitchen-living space to preserve the original proportions of the structure. Materials were conserved to maintain a distinctive character, while contemporary glazing was added to open up the connection to the exterior



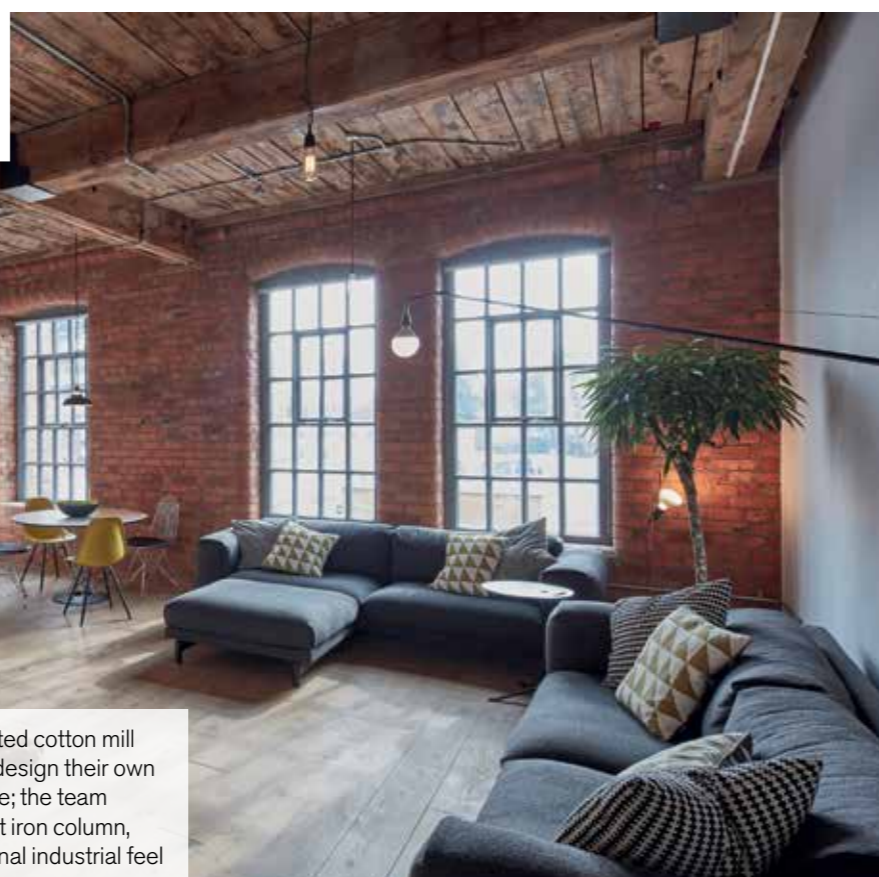
This once derelict mill tower was converted into an eco-friendly dwelling. Freeman Brear Architects specified slim-framed triple glazing by Velfac for this project, as they offer high energy efficiency and low maintenance. The result is an architecturally stunning home that is cheap and efficient to run



STEVE LANCEFIELD



Left and below: A former 18th century blacksmith workshop in the heart of Edinburgh was transformed into a nifty apartment using natural materials and a clever layout. Designers from Izat Arundell repurposed the entrance with glazing and a screened pivot door, which provide privacy yet allow views to the Grassmarket outside. Internally, sliding timber screens are a space-saving solution that create a secluded sleeping area



Having been left redundant for many years, this grade II listed cotton mill was transformed into shell flats for purchasers wishing to design their own home. Shown here is the work of Scott Donald Architecture; the team worked to conserve the old and integrate the new. The cast iron column, timber floor structure and red brick walls maintain the original industrial feel

COVERING YOUR BASES

Before committing to a conversion project, you will need to establish whether the structure is in a viable condition as well as figure out how much it's going to cost.

● **Understand local planning.** Although converting an agricultural building – such as a barn – now falls under permitted development unless situated in conservation areas, most changes of use for other types of buildings will require formal consent from the local authority. "If you are changing the external appearance you may well need planning permission," says Dominick McKenzie. "Even if you are not making modifications to the outside, you'll likely need to seek authorizations such as party wall agreements if you are making structural changes."

● **Appraise the site.** "Access during construction should be considered early on," says Uwe Schmidt-Hess from Patalab. "Buyers also need to think about sources of natural light, ventilation and whether the building's fabric needs higher energy performance."

● **Think about the converted space.** "A key question is what measures are required to make the existing structure fit the new purpose," says Uwe. "A study of layout options often forms the first step to really understanding what will be involved in the project." "When converting basements, for instance, the idea is to stop the rooms from feeling dark and gloomy," says Dominic. "Opening the underground area to both the rest of the house and the garden will transform it into more of a usable space."

● **Decide what will be conserved.** "With a transformation it's important to keep as many features as is practical, and incorporate these to the end product," says Abigail Salisbury from AR Design Studio. "Design constraints and restrictions can often create the most interesting results."

● **Be prepared for the unexpected.** "When dealing with existing buildings there is always a risk of delays as you are dealing with the unknown," says Uwe. "This can be minimised by thorough preparation and detailed site investigation. A professional design team should be able to advise you on the limitations of the structure." "You never know what you are going to find when, for example, you dig down – it could be pipes, roots, underground bunkers etc," adds Dominic. "Try to do as much research as possible prior to commencing work to avoid unexpected discoveries that can cause delays and additional cost to rectify."

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