



**JOHNNY HOLLAND,
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For most of the London properties he encounters, architect Johnny Holland finds opportunity for extension or inclusion of light

in either or both the attic and cellar of a house. "The top and the bottom are the two spaces we where we can do something," he says.

Space is often found at the top of a staircase, which facilitates extension into the loft, which Holland prefers to make lighter with architecturally sympathetic skylights.

Similarly, given the propensity for dark stairwells in Georgian and Victorian homes, a favourite place for skylights is directly at the top of the stairs, beneath the ridge of the pitch of the roof, where placement of a skylight will permit light to reach the ground floor of a property. Try The Rooflight Company for conservation-grade designs. "We do this as a rule. It is lovely to have light and a sense of the sky. Light from above is much more intense and the shadows created by it are much more interesting," Holland says.

It was overhead light that Holland introduced in this loft extension in a semi-detached west London home. The original attic space was divided into two small rooms which would once have been servants' quarters. Hampered by the small scale of the pre-existing wooden roof structures, Holland "cut the top off the building" to insert a new steel frame, which, being stronger than wood needed fewer supports, afforded more space and so created the multi-faceted roof present today.

The roof was then clad in sarking boards made of the same timber as the floor – twice-smoked oak with a white oiled finish, which Holland finds effective for creating character. "Use timber carefully," he says, "or it can look like a chalet or sauna. Avoid using too much pine, or, if it is used, paint it," he advises. To comply with modern-day fire regulations, the steel frame was painted with intumescent paint, to prevent it buckling.

Critical with overhead light is being able to control the light coming into the room, so black-out blinds were placed on all the windows. Here, Holland advises having the blinds made by the same manufacturer as the windows for an ideal fit – retrofitting blinds can be expensive. The other advantage of skylight is upward circulation to cool the house on warm days, which Holland refers to as the stacking effect. ■

Holland prefers to include as much overhead light as possible, in this instance by means of two skylights and a porthole window.

