

## In the know Overlooking your neighbours



**Stuart Piercy, architect at Piercy & Company, gives you the lowdown on windows on your boundary**

### What are the rules?

'The policy on overlooking varies between planning departments, but most are concerned with habitable rooms looking into habitable rooms, so living rooms looking into bedrooms and vice versa. As a rule of thumb, 18m between habitable rooms is a good place to start, but it can be considered on a case-by-case basis if there are circumstances that prevent a gap of this size. If you are looking into a non-habitable room, such as a landing or a bathroom, significantly less than 18m is allowed, but the planning officer will consider the effect on your neighbours' light and feeling of being enclosed.'

### How can I get light into a new-build on a narrow plot?

'Light wells and courtyards are good options. Getting light in from above can also create fantastically private, light-filled spaces. One trick I have used is to run a staircase along the whole length of a build and combine it with a roof light. You will need to fit a domestic sprinkler system though, as this gets round fire regulations which normally mean that stairs must have a lobby and enclosure.'

### Is it possible to get round the problem of overlooking by using unusual glazing?

'The options are usually a combination of obscured glazing, which can be etched with a design, perforated screens which can create beautiful internal patterns of light, and oriel windows that project from the wall and offer oblique views from the side but do not overlook directly. There are also new materials on the market, such as translucent concrete and glass containing a liquid-crystal film that can switch from opaque to clear, but these tend to be very expensive.'

(020 7490 7546; piercyconner.co.uk)



## Best of both

Even the closest of families need time apart, which is what makes this project in Melbourne, Australia, so special. Andrew Maynard Architects (+61 3 9481 5110; maynardarchitects.com) took neighbouring terraces owned by two generations of the same family and created a timber-clad extension spanning the width of both properties. On the ground floor, a nifty T-shape of folding doors opens up both kitchens to the outside and to each other, and links the two gardens. No wonder it's on the shortlist for the World Architecture Festival's 2013 awards.

## DIGGING DEEP

If you're looking to extend on a slope, going up isn't your only option. Architect Christopher Polly has more than doubled the size of this brick bungalow in Sydney by excavating the slope to insert a lower-ground floor below the original building. Above, at ground level, he added a bathroom, bedroom and study at the rear of the original home. The glazed, vaulted roof over the stairwell pulls light into the new addition, while its contrasting black cladding gives the exterior the appearance of a new-build project. (+61 2 9516 5994; christopherpolly.com)

## DIARY DATE

Hear Kevin McCloud in conversation with lighting designer Bruce Munro at the National Trust's Waddesdon Manor on 27 October. Tickets £35 each. (01296 653 226; waddesdon.org.uk)

