

EXPERT VIEW: *Understanding your site*



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# LET THE SUN IN



**T**he clocks are poised to spring forward and the landscape begins to awaken, as the darkness of the winter recedes. Our mornings begin to brighten and our days begin to lengthen. This is a time of year when we can really appreciate the quantity and quality of light available to us in Ireland, as the sun reaches parts of our homes and gardens, where it has been absent for the darker winter months.

So how do we harness this wonderful natural resource in our homes? The optimum we look for is that the functions of the house are orientated to take best advantage of the sun's passage; bedrooms to the east, kitchen to the south and living spaces to the west. That is a rule of thumb. Unfortunately for most, this will be pre-determined before we buy our house, but if this can be influenced during the design stage or during a renovation project, every opportunity should be taken.

All of our houses have access to natural light or at least the potential for natural light, no matter how dark or poorly lit your current interior may feel. The key to unlocking this potential is to understand your site and your house's orientation. This time of year is ideal to fully appreciate this as you will be seeing an average for the year, the effect in summer will be greater with the longer days and less in winter with the shorter days. This is equally applicable to interior and exterior spaces and will let you identify where your home's potential is.

So how do we capture the sun? Increased glazing, depending on your orientation and restrictions, this can be windows, patio doors, and roof lights. Roof lights can be particularly effective in restricted

suburban sites. Use good quality products with high insulation values to offset any potential heat loss. Look at introducing new windows to existing walls, look at your gable walls, blank rear walls. The impact of rooms having multiple light sources can't be overestimated, as this will result in varying light throughout the day, adding interest and animation to the space. Can internal walls be removed to create more open spaces? Introduce glazing to internal walls or internal doors to 'borrow' light through the house. Discuss these options with your architect to get their professional advice on planning and structural issues and any implication these may have.

If you are extending, refurbishing or building from scratch, ensure that your functions are orientated the correct way; utility functions to the north, bedrooms to the east and kitchen and living spaces to the south and west. This may mean relocating existing functions within the house but take the opportunity to do it and it will be money well spent and your investment will be generously returned in energy savings. The result will be bright, healthy, light-filled and warm spaces, where the daily passage of the sun will follow and light the passage of your day.



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