



VELUX®

Room to grow:

The case for easily convertible attic design in new homes

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Historically, periods of housing pressure have often sparked creative responses that reimagined the potential of every part of the home.

Philip Elliott
National Sales Manager Ireland, Sales GBI Ireland

Foreword

As the UK and Ireland continue to grapple with the scale and complexity of the housing crisis, the conversation is rightly shifting. It is no longer enough to talk about how many homes we build, we must also ask what kind of homes we are building, and whether they are fit for the future.

The UK and Irish Governments' ambitious target to deliver new homes each year is both vital and commendable. Yet, as recent analysis makes clear, the true challenge is not simply meeting these targets at speed, but ensuring that the homes we build are designed with purpose, constructed sustainably, and adaptable to the evolving needs of the people who will live in them - something recognised in the Irish Green Building Council's (IGBC) Housing Performance Index (HPI). Equally important is making the best possible use of the land on which they stand, so that these communities can thrive for generations to come.

Across these islands, similar ambitions are taking shape: Scotland is targeting 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, Wales is embedding decarbonisation and space standards into its housing strategy, and Ireland's Housing Action Plan 2025-2030 recognises the need to ensure access for everybody to good quality, affordable and secure

housing suitable to individual needs as they move through their life. Together, these efforts reflect a shared recognition that quality and adaptability must sit at the heart of housing policy.

This report contributes to that conversation. It explores how better use of attic space - often overlooked in new build design - could unlock significant potential as just one aspect for more flexible, future-proof housing. It considers how modest shifts in planning policy and design practice could support a more resilient housing stock, one that can grow and change with its occupants over time, whilst reducing the demand on land use.

In doing so, it invites policymakers, planners, and developers to think differently about space, not as a constraint, but as an opportunity. It challenges us to reimagine the homes we build not just as products of today's market, but as the foundations of tomorrow's communities.

The idea of transforming underused roof space into liveable areas is not new. Historically, periods of housing pressure have often sparked creative responses that reimagined the potential of every part of the home. By opening-up the uppermost levels to light, air, and function, designers and planners have long recognised the value of making homes more adaptable, healthier, and better suited to changing needs. This approach continues to resonate today, offering a compelling lens through which to view the future of housing design - one that places wellbeing, flexibility, and sustainability at its core.



Philip Elliott
National Sales Manager Ireland
Sales GBI Ireland
December 2025



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It considers how modest shifts in planning policy and design practice could support a more resilient housing stock, one that can grow and change with its occupants over time, whilst reducing the demand on land use.



Introduction

The UK and Ireland's housing challenge is not just about how many homes we build. It's about how we design them, how we future-proof them, and how we make the most of land we use. As the foreword by Philip Elliott to this report sets out, the conversation is rightly shifting toward homes that are adaptable, space-efficient, and built with long-term needs in mind, with good design at the core.

Room to Grow contributes to that conversation by focusing on a specific and well-established, yet underexplored opportunity: designing new build homes with loft spaces that are easy to occupy or convert. Drawing on new research from Savills, this report highlights the scale of potential in building homes that are not only fit for today, but ready to grow with their occupants over time.

This is not a final solution, nor is it intended to be. Rather, this report

is an ideas paper: a starting point for dialogue between policymakers, planners, developers, and industry leaders. It explores how modest changes in design standards, planning policy, and construction practice could unlock thousands of future attic conversions, creating more flexible living space without expanding the building footprint and reducing overall land demand.

It also sets out the role industry can play in leading this shift: by embedding adaptability into

new build design, supporting homeowners with future-proof options, and working with government to remove barriers to smarter housing solutions.

By building with the future in mind and by treating attic space as an asset, not an afterthought, we can help deliver homes that are more sustainable, more liveable, and more responsive to the evolving needs of UK and Ireland households, whilst at the same time meeting government ambitions for housing delivery.

Summary policy recommendations

1. Conversion-ready design

Support conversion-ready design in local plans and design codes.

Local authorities should encourage the inclusion of conversion-ready attic spaces in new homes. These designs allow homeowners to easily adapt their homes in the future without requiring major structural changes or planning permission. This approach aligns with the growing demand for flexible living and supports long-term housing adaptability, especially as household needs evolve over time. It also offers developers a low-risk way to futureproof their housing stock while maintaining affordability.

2. Flexible housing mix

Encourage flexibility in housing mix policies.

Rigid housing mix requirements within local authority Development Plans can sometimes restrict developers' ability to incorporate flexible layouts or additional spaces - such as attic rooms - within new developments. Allowing greater flexibility in the number and configuration of rooms would enable more innovative and space-efficient housing solutions. This aligns with the National Planning Policy Framework for England (NPPF, 2023), which encourages local planning authorities to provide for a range of housing types and to respond to changing demographic and market trends (para. 63); and the National Planning Framework for Ireland (NPF, 2025), which recognises that more compact and sustainable development involves a greater proportion of residential and mixed-use development within the existing built-up footprints of cities and towns (page 24). Such flexibility is particularly valuable in high-demand areas, where maximising the usability of existing building envelopes -without increasing overall density—is a key policy challenge. By adopting a more adaptable approach, planning authorities can help developers respond more effectively to local housing needs assessments and market signals, as envisaged by the NPPF (paras. 61–65) and related guidance in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

3. Quality standards

Promote atticreadiness in Building for a Healthy Life and Lifetime Homes standards.

National housing standards such as England's Building for a Healthy Life and Lifetime Homes, and Ireland's Design Manual for Quality Housing and Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities, should explicitly recognize attic-readiness as a feature of high-quality, adaptable housing. Including this in design assessments would encourage developers to consider future flexibility from the outset. It also reinforces the importance of designing homes that can evolve with their occupants, supporting aging in place, remote work, and changing family dynamics.

4. Protect PDR

Clarify and protect Permitted Development Rights

Permitted Development Rights are a vital tool for homeowners looking to convert attic spaces after purchase. However, inconsistent interpretation and application of PDR across local authorities can create confusion and barriers. Clear national guidance and protection of these rights will ensure that homeowners can confidently invest in attic conversions. This also supports broader housing goals by enabling incremental expansion of living space without the need for full planning applications.

The Research – Savills

Unlocking the potential of attic rooms in new build homes

As the UK and Ireland continue to grapple with housing shortages and affordability challenges, innovative approaches to maximising space in new homes are gaining traction. One such opportunity lies quite literally above our heads: the underutilised potential of attic spaces.

In a comprehensive study commissioned by VELUX, Ed Hampson, Associate Director in Savills' residential research team, explores the scale, market implications, and regulatory landscape surrounding the integration of attic rooms into new build homes across the UK.



Ed Hampson

Associate Director, Residential Research

Homes built between 2020 and 2024 that could support viable attic rooms

Scotland

48.4K

Northern Ireland

23.3K

Ireland

91.7K

Wales

19.4K

England

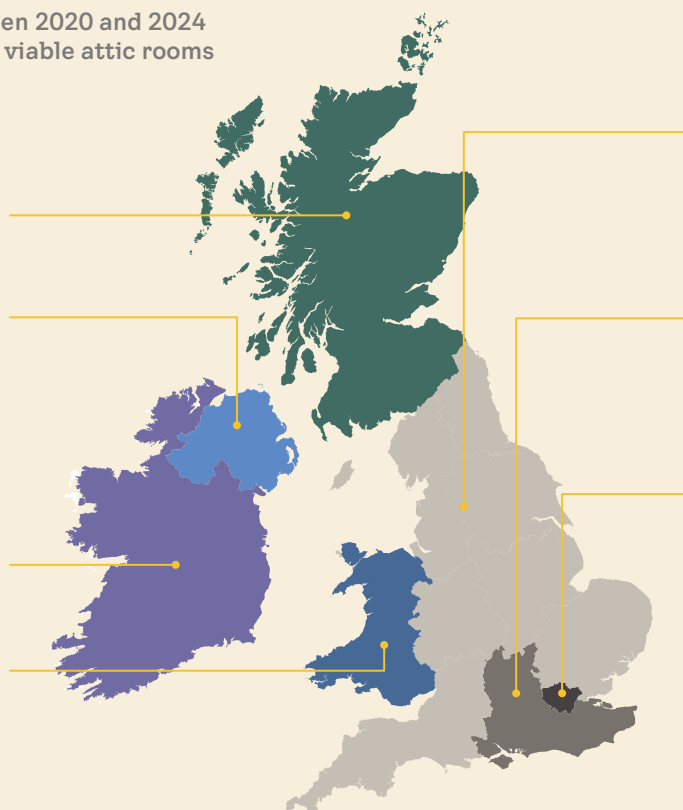
530K

South East England

90K

London

London offers limited scope due to the predominance of flats, which lack convertible roof space.



A missed opportunity in the roofspace

Between 2020 and 2024, approximately 669,000 new homes were built in England and 102,000 in Ireland. Analysis by Savills reveals that around 80% of these could have feasibly supported attic rooms that meet minimum space standards, equating to 530,000 in England and almost 92,000 in Ireland.

This represents a significant reservoir of untapped living space on an existing land footprint. Looking ahead, if housing delivery continues at our existing forecast levels (837,000 homes over the next five years), an estimated 391,000 additional attic rooms could be viable. If the UK government achieves its target of 1.5 million new homes in England, that figure could soar to over 700,000.

The potential varies between different regions in these islands. South East England, for example, emerges as the most promising area with over 90,000 viable attic floors

identified. In contrast, London's predominance of apartment buildings means the scope is more limited. Nonetheless, all regions reveal significant underutilised potential for attic rooms in newly built homes.

Savills also extrapolated the findings to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Using a proportional approach based on housing delivery volumes and assuming similar housing typologies, the study estimates that an additional 91,000 homes across the devolved nations could support viable attic rooms—48,400 in Scotland, 23,300 in Northern Ireland, and 19,400 in Wales. Although data granularity is more limited in these regions, the findings suggest that the opportunity to unlock attic space applies across the UK. This presents a UK-wide opportunity for developers and policymakers to consider attic-ready designs as part of future housing strategies.

Understanding the methodology

To estimate the potential for attic rooms, Savills employed a robust methodology using Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) data. By comparing homes with and without attic rooms, they calculated the average uplift in usable floor space—typically around 31% for detached homes. This uplift was then applied to the national housing delivery data, adjusted for regional and typological variations. Minimum space standards (6.51 sqm) and allowances for stairs and eaves were factored in to ensure realistic estimates. The analysis also considered roof pitch sensitivity, showing that steeper pitches significantly increase the viability of attic conversions.

Ireland has the potential to offer nearly 92,000 attic rooms in new build homes over the next five years.

Room to grow: The case for easily convertible attic design in new homes

The concept of attic conversion-ready homes offers a pragmatic path forward, balancing regulatory constraints with buyer demand for flexible, future proofed living spaces

The Research – Savills

Added value for an additional bedroom (to a 2-bed home):

c.€43.8K

Added value for an additional bedroom (to a 3-bed home):

c.€85.2K

Economic and market considerations

Whilst adding attic space involves construction costs, the value of additional space is well recognised, buyers consistently place a premium on homes with more rooms. Nationally, an extra bedroom to a 2-bed home can add around €43,800, rising to €85,200 when converting from three to four bedrooms.

Even if attic rooms don't command the same premium as standard bedrooms, they still offer meaningful value, especially when delivered cost-effectively. In high-demand areas, they can be a smart way to unlock extra space without the need to relocate whilst without the need for additional land.

Affordability shapes buyer preferences. In regions like the North East and North West, buyers often opt for larger homes with standard layouts. But in higher value areas such as the South East, where space is at a premium and moving costs like stamp duty are higher, homeowners are increasingly drawn to conversion-ready homes. These properties offer flexibility, future-proofing, and a compelling alternative to upsizing, making attic rooms a strategic asset in today's housing landscape.

Planning and policy barriers

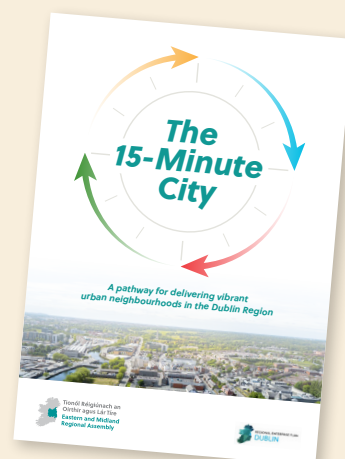
Despite the market and land-efficiency potential, regulatory constraints can present a hurdle. Local authorities often impose housing-mix requirements, limiting the number and size of bedrooms in new developments. Attic rooms, if delivered at the point of construction, may be counted as additional bedrooms, potentially jeopardizing planning approval.

However, developers can design homes to be "conversion-ready," allowing future homeowners to easily add attic rooms post-completion under permitted development rights (PDR). This approach aligns with emerging planning guidance such as the Building for a Healthy Life framework, which promotes flexibility and adaptability in housing design. While PDR offers a relatively straightforward route for most homeowners, it is not universally applicable, particularly in conservation areas or where local authorities have removed these rights.

Conclusion: a scalable, flexible solution

The findings of the Savills research highlight a compelling opportunity to enhance the utility and value of new homes through potential attic room integration. While challenges exist, the concept of conversion-ready homes offers a practical path forward, balancing regulatory constraints with growing demand for flexible, future-proofed living spaces. For developers, policymakers, and housing advocates alike, the attic room is more than just extra square footage. It's a strategic lever to address housing need, improve affordability, and deliver homes that evolve with the changing needs of modern households.

Attic rooms, if delivered at the point of construction, may be counted as additional bedrooms, potentially jeopardizing planning approval.



Unlocking the full potential by building smarter

Delivering soft density is central to creating sustainable, future-ready neighbourhoods. This approach goes beyond simply building more compactly. It means designing places that balance higher density with high-quality public spaces, access to nature, good design, and long-term wellbeing.

Compact, well-planned development reduces land consumption, protects green space, and supports more efficient infrastructure. Higher density can bring people closer to jobs, services, and amenities, making it easier to walk, cycle, or use public transport. It also reduces energy demand per person by lowering heat loss through shared walls and limiting the overall building footprint.

When designed thoughtfully, higher-density development enables integrated solutions such as district heating systems (an arguably underused solution in the UK and Ireland), large-scale renewable energy, and passive design strategies.

At the same time, limiting urban sprawl reduces the embodied carbon associated with roads, utilities, and car dependency. But density alone is not enough. We must give equal weight to quality of life. Considerate density means creating homes and neighbourhoods that promote health, comfort, and social connection.

This means embedding Healthy Homes principles into planning and design decisions to ensure that higher-density living supports wellbeing as well as sustainability. Key features of a healthy, high density home include adequate daylight and natural ventilation to reduce reliance on mechanical systems, effective protection from

overheating, and the use of low-emission materials and finishes to minimise indoor air pollution. Access to green space, communal areas, and inclusive design that accommodates people of all ages and abilities are also essential. By embracing considerate density, we can create neighbourhoods that are not only more sustainable and efficient, but also more liveable, inclusive, and resilient for generations to come.



Eugenia Maslova
Technical & Regulatory Affairs Adviser
VELUX GB & Ireland

Room in The Roof (RITR)

Regulation and policy



Supports housing targets:

Increases floor area per plot, helping meet housing delivery objectives.

Design flexibility:

Allows 1.5 - 2.5 storey homes that maintain traditional appearance, easing planning considerations and preserving character.

Alignment with policy goals:

Supports sustainable planning principles including carbon neutrality, efficient land use, and healthy homes.

Health and wellbeing

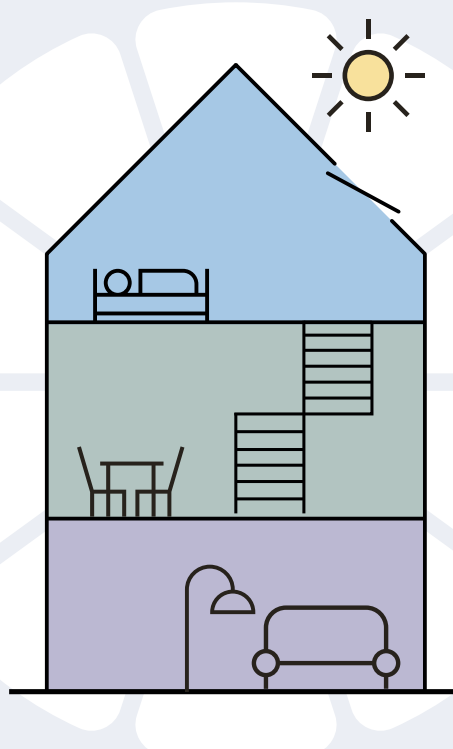


Better daylight access:

Roof form enhances daylight penetration deeper into the home and onto surrounding plots, improving internal comfort and external amenity.

Natural ventilation & IEQ:

Supports stack effect and cross-ventilation strategies, enhancing air quality and thermal comfort.



Green energy



Carbon reduction:

Lower external surface area reduces heat loss, contributing to lower operational carbon emissions.

Energy efficiency:

Compact roof-based designs improve thermal performance and reduce energy demand.

Renewable energy integration:

Optimised roofs to enhance opportunities for solar gain and to support the effective integration of renewable technologies, while still maintaining good daylight access.

Flexibility and adaptability



Efficient land use:

Using roof volume to create an additional habitable floor increases usable space without expanding the building footprint, supporting higher densities within existing height and scale.

Cost-effective space:

Utilising roof volume reduces per-square-metre construction costs compared with larger extensions or building footprints.

External and internal adaptability:

Suitable for small sites and infill developments, supporting gentle intensification, and offering both immediate and long-term flexibility to accommodate multi-generational living and evolving needs over time.



Adaptable design as a strategy for growth

A Bungalow 3 bedrooms for the space of 1	B Semi-detached 3 bedrooms for the space of 2	C Townhouse 4 bedrooms for the space of 3	D Detached house 5 bedrooms for the space of 3
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Across high streets, housing, and mixed-use developments, roof spaces hold untapped potential. By designing with flexibility in mind, these overlooked areas can become catalysts for growth - supporting regeneration, housing delivery, and long-term resilience without demanding additional land.

Room In The Roof (RITR) designs enable spaces to evolve alongside the people and communities they serve. Flexible layouts support multigenerational and multipurpose living, adapting easily to different stages of life, changing household needs, or shifting market demands. This adaptability not only maximises function but also futureproofs developments - ensuring enduring social and commercial value.

Today, we invite you to explore the opportunities revealed by rethinking how roof spaces are used.

The following RITR design typologies show how underused areas can be transformed into opportunity—demonstrating adaptable, efficient homes that evolve with their communities, delivering greater value, light, and livability without expanding the footprint.

Such an approach was recently adopted by Homes England in its Healthy Homes Standard which states the importance of ensuring that homes, when constructed, can easily being extended utilising the attic space

The four typologies represent an easily replicable approach to room-in-the-roof demonstrating the potential for increased bedrooms and usable space on the same land footprint.

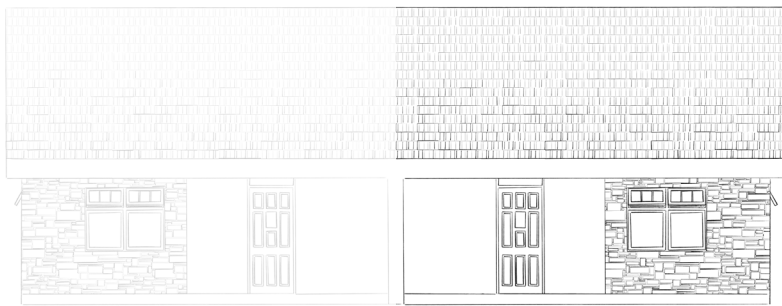
Concept A:

Bungalow – 3 bedrooms for the space of 1

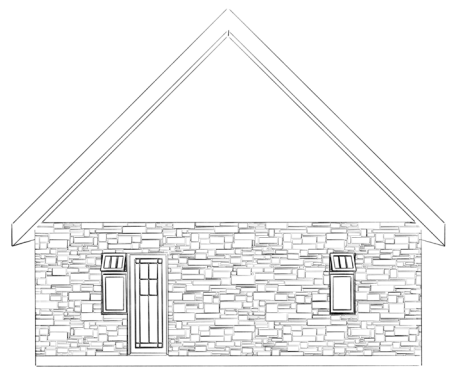
3-bed RITR cottage – blending modern efficiency with traditional aesthetics – ideal for places where character matters.

- Achieves efficiency comparable to a conventional two-storey house, even with reduced volume.
- Smarter layouts improve indoor environmental quality (IEQ) and deliver more functional living areas within a compact form.
- A ground-floor bedroom with a full shower room enhances accessibility, providing much-needed barrier-free accommodation suitable for a wide range of occupants.
- The traditional form adds character and supports delivery of new homes in areas where design must remain sympathetic to the existing built and natural environment.
- A refined roof profile and lower height allow daylight and sunlight to penetrate deeper into the built area, ensuring every plot benefits from natural light and balanced ventilation.

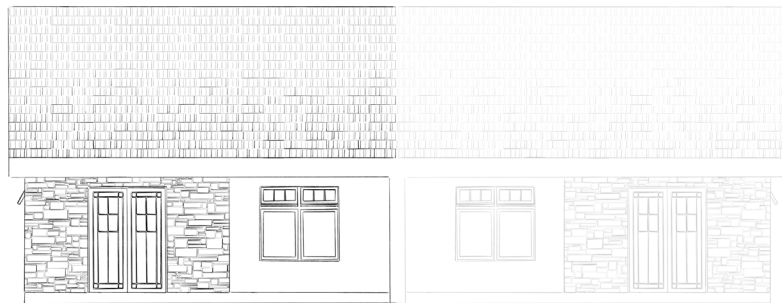
Before - 1 bed bungalow



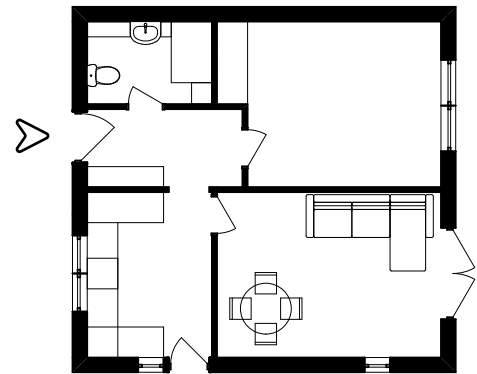
Front elevation



Side elevation



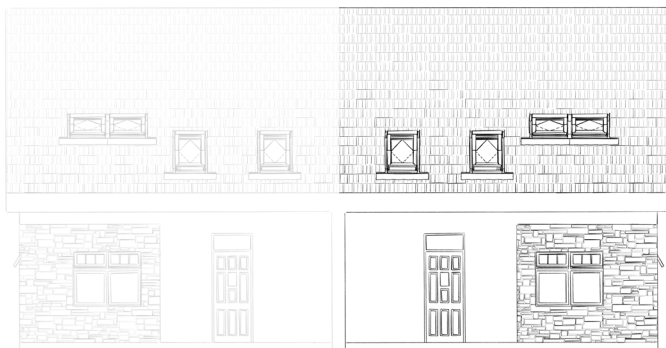
Rear elevation



Ground floor

	Footprint, m ²	Total GIA, m ² [- h <1.5m]	No. of bedrooms double/single	No. of stories	No. of bathrooms/ shower rooms	No. of WC	Difference footprint/GIA
Before	52	46.2	1/0	1	1	0	-
After		83.8	3/0	1.5	2	0	0/+37.6

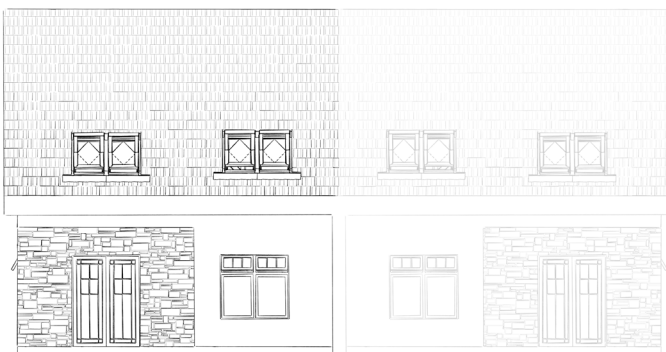
After - 3 bed 1.5 story house



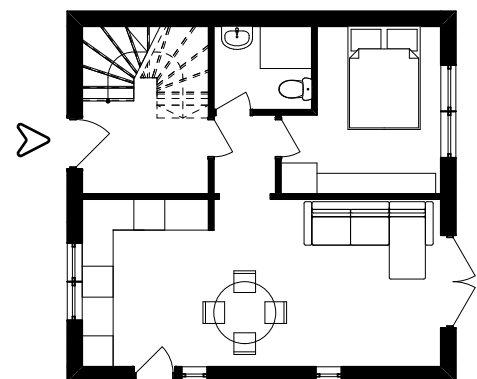
Front elevation



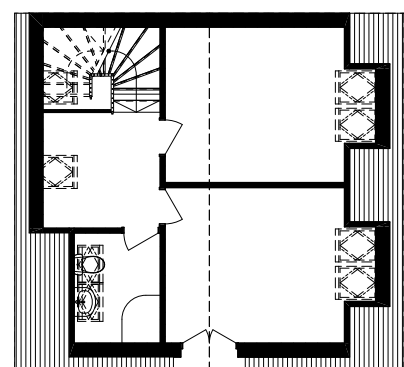
Side elevation



Rear elevation



Ground floor



First floor

Concept B:

Semi-detached – 3 bedrooms for the space of 2

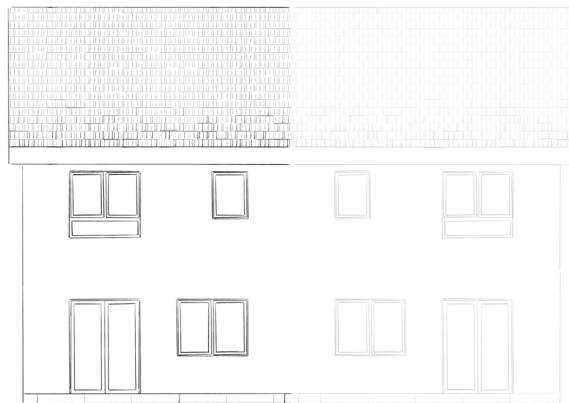
3-bed RITR townhouse – better living area, smarter footprint.

- Maintain compact footprints while offering enhanced living standards compared to traditional layouts.
- Additional auxiliary spaces, larger bedrooms, and optimised internal arrangements improve comfort and flexibility.
- Thoughtful placement of windows and voids supports daylight, airflow, and overheating mitigation, strengthening both wellbeing and energy performance.

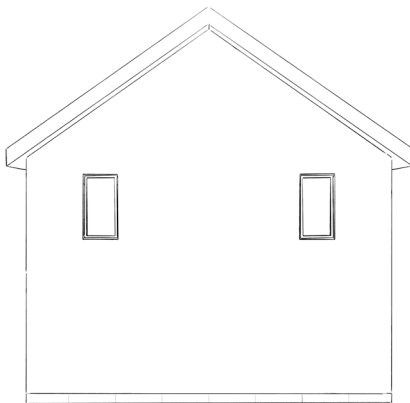
Before - 2 bed [+ box room] 2 story house



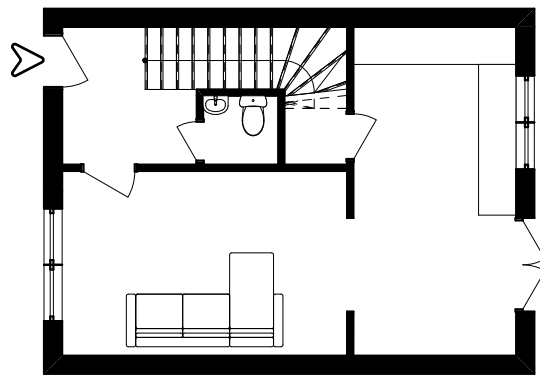
Front elevation



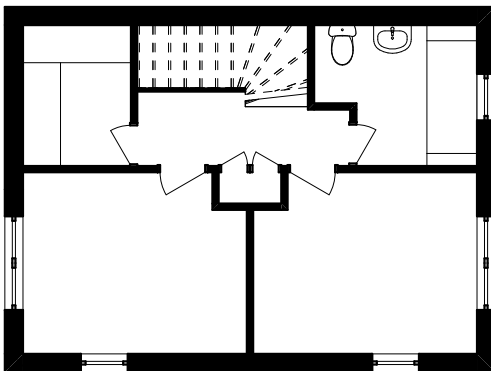
Rear elevation



Side elevation



Ground floor



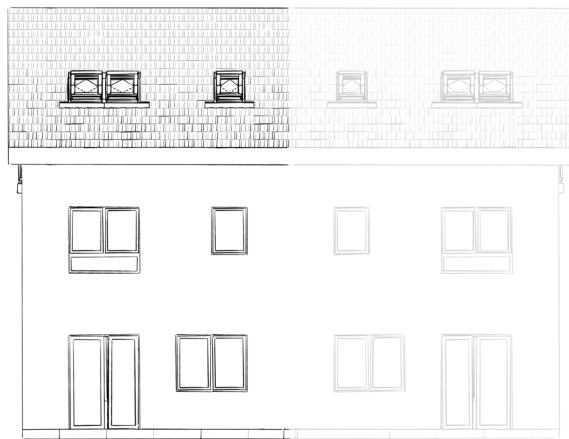
First floor

	Footprint, m ²	Total GIA, m ² [- h <1.5m]	No. of bedrooms double/single	No. of stories	No. of bathrooms/ shower rooms	No. of WC	Difference footprint/GIA
Before	44.5	76	2/0	2	1	1	-
After		106	3/0	2.5	2	1	0/+30

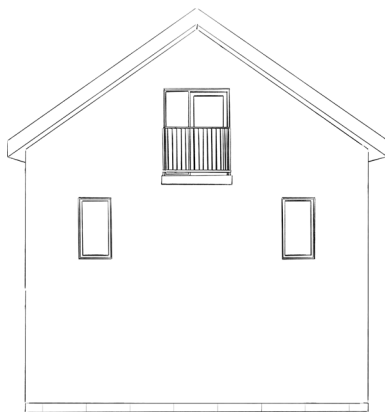
After - 3 bed 2.5 story house



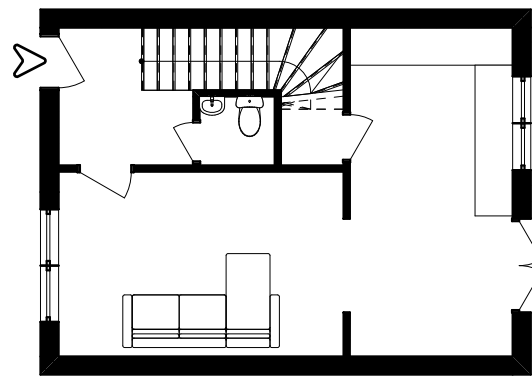
Front elevation



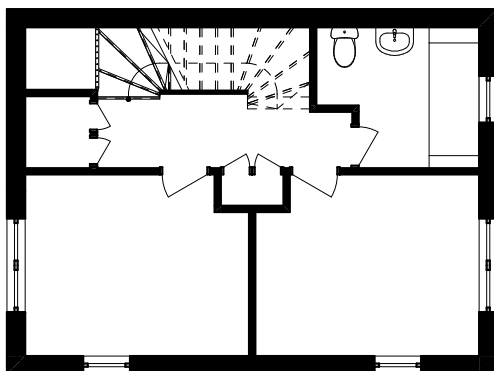
Side elevation



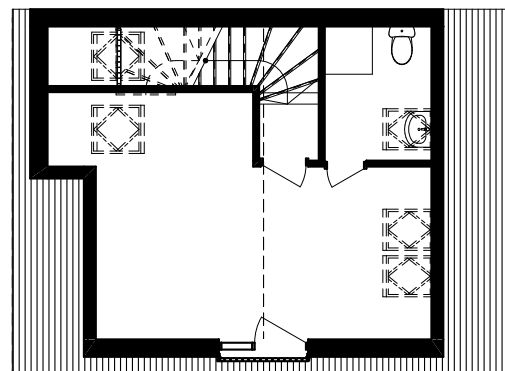
Rear elevation



Ground floor



First floor



Second floor

Concept C:

Townhouse – 4 bedrooms of the space of 3

4-Bed RITR townhouse – maximum space, minimum land.

- Designed to accommodate larger households while retaining an efficient, space-conscious footprint.
- Expanded bedrooms, a dedicated flexible room, and enhanced auxiliary spaces - such as generous storage and enlarged utility zones - provide improved usability and adaptability.
- Carefully zoned living areas maximise usable space, creating adaptable environments for evolving household needs.

Before - 3 bed 2 story house



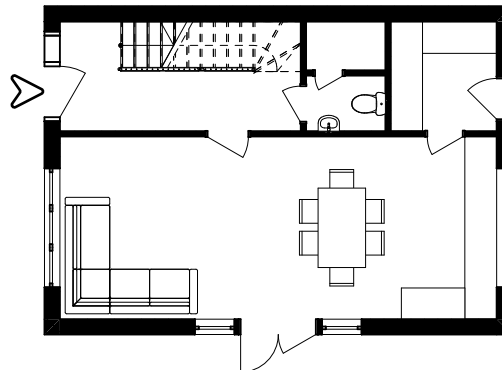
Front elevation



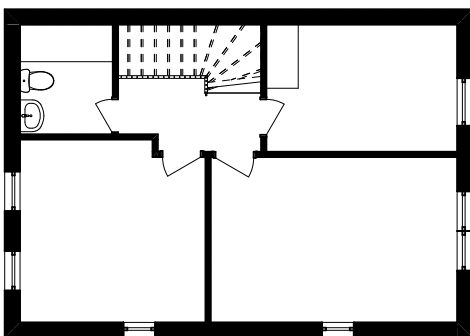
Rear elevation



Side elevation



Ground floor



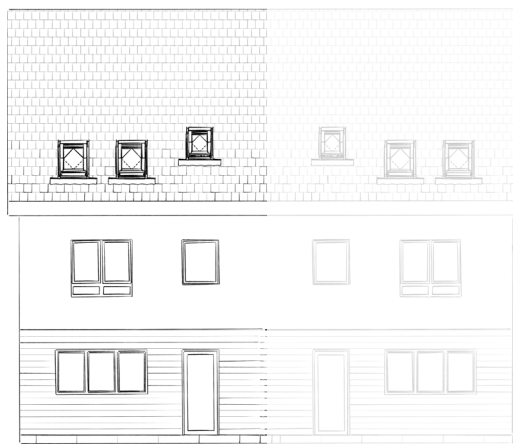
First floor

	Footprint, m ²	Total GIA, m ² [- h <1.5m]	No. of bedrooms double/single	No. of stories	No. of bathrooms/ shower rooms	No. of WC	Difference footprint/GIA
Before	53	92.8	2/1	2	1	1	-
After		131.2	4/0	2.5	3	1	0/+38.4

After - 4 bed 2.5 story house



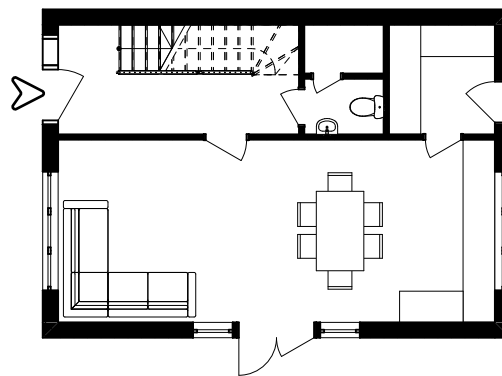
Front elevation



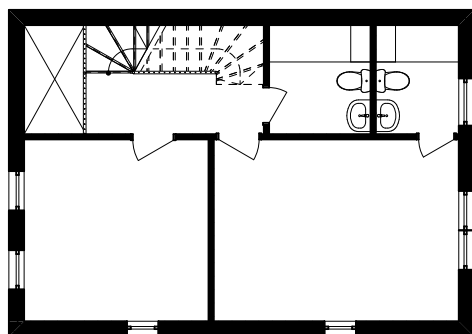
Side elevation



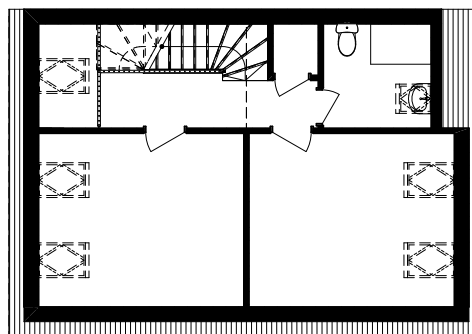
Side elevation



Ground floor



First floor



Second floor

Concept D:

Detached house – 5 bedrooms of the space of 3

5-bed RITR detached house – a modern home for extended families, with space for all

- Maximises space and adaptability without demanding more land.
- Efficient planning provides extra bathrooms, storage, and living areas while maintaining excellent IEQ.
- Smarter layouts and roof forms balance density with privacy and comfort, creating future-ready family homes that adapt to evolving lifestyles.

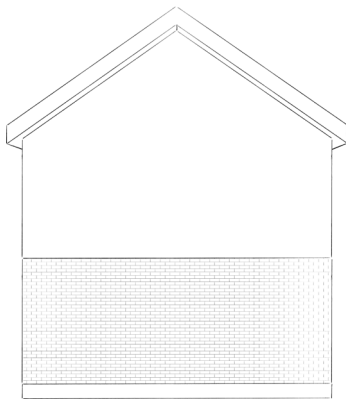
Before - 3 bed 2 story house



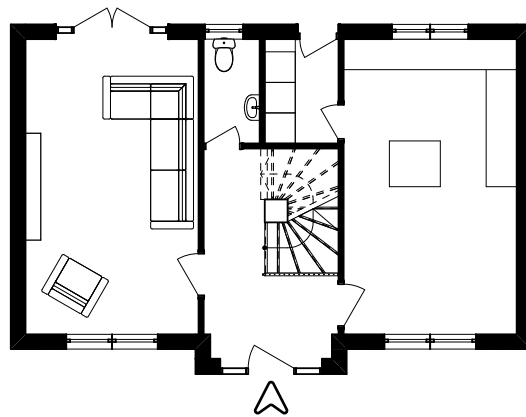
Front elevation



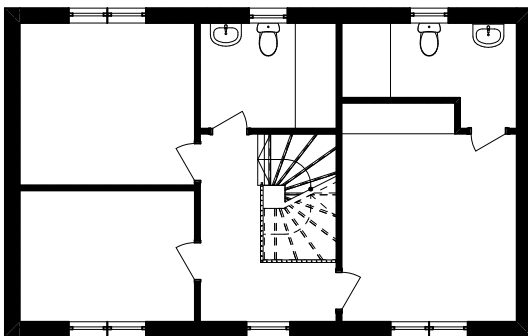
Rear elevation



Side elevation



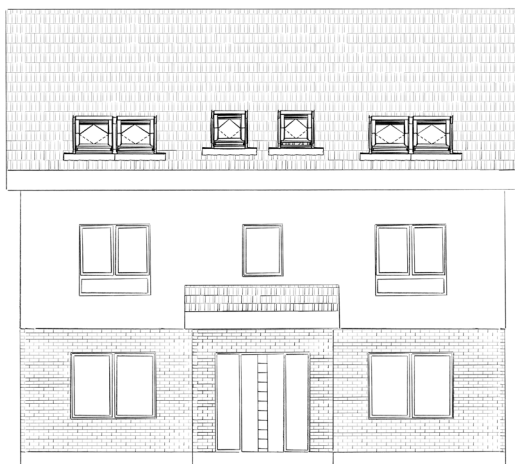
Ground floor



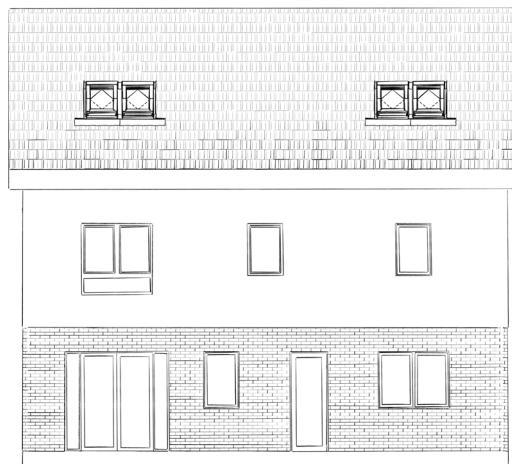
First floor

	Footprint, m ²	Total GIA, m ² [- h <1.5m]	No. of bedrooms double/single	No. of stories	No. of bathrooms/ shower rooms	No. of WC	Difference footprint/GIA
Before	67	11.3	3/0	2	2	1	-
After		156.2	5/0	2.5	3	1	0/+43

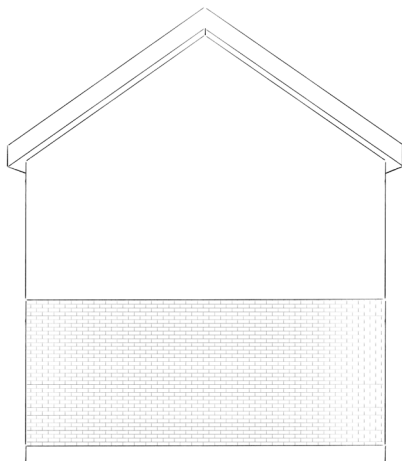
After - 5 bed 2.5 story house



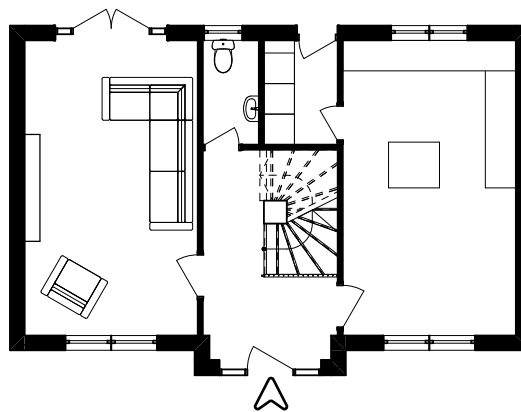
Front elevation



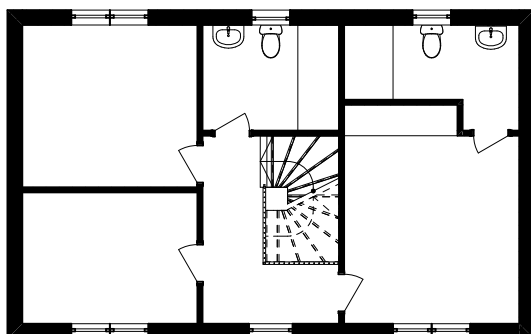
Side elevation



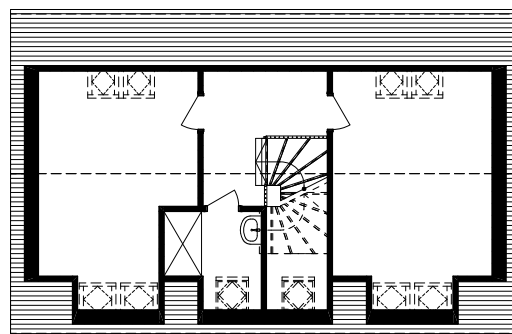
Side elevation



Ground floor



First floor



Second floor

Conclusion

As the UK and Ireland face ongoing challenges in housing supply, affordability, and sustainability, this report shows that progress depends not just on building more homes, but on building smarter. The evidence, including new research from Savills, highlights the untapped potential of attic spaces in new build homes, offering a significant opportunity to deliver flexible, future proof living environments without expanding the building footprint. Across the UK and Ireland, RITR delivers adaptable homes supporting 1.5M+ total targets, per NPPF and Housing for All.

By adopting conversion ready design, local authorities and developers can unlock thousands of additional rooms, supporting the evolving needs of households and enabling multi generational living. The policy recommendations, supporting conversion ready design in local plans, promoting attic readiness in national housing standards, encouraging flexibility in housing mix policies, and clarifying permitted development rights, provide a practical roadmap for embedding adaptability at the heart of housing strategy.

Market analysis confirms that buyers value additional space, with attic rooms adding meaningful premiums and offering a cost

effective alternative to upsizing. In high demand regions, conversion ready homes present a compelling solution for families seeking flexibility and resilience as circumstances change.

Integrating attic rooms also supports broader policy goals, including efficient land use, reduced carbon emissions, improved energy performance, and enhanced wellbeing through better daylight and ventilation. Architectural specialists and industry leaders emphasise that considerate density, achieved through adaptable roof design, can help create neighbourhoods that are more sustainable, liveable, and inclusive.

This report is a starting point for dialogue, inviting policymakers, planners, developers, and industry partners to rethink the role of roof space, not as a constraint, but as an asset. By treating attic space as a strategic lever for growth, we can deliver homes that adapt to the needs of today's and tomorrow's communities, supporting government ambitions for housing delivery while safeguarding quality of life.

VELUX remains committed to leading this conversation, working collaboratively to remove barriers and champion smarter, healthier, and more adaptable homes for all.



Dr Neil Freshwater
Public Affairs Manager
VELUX UK & Ireland

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