

A zinc-clad extension has opened up the rear of the house to the garden (here and bottom right)





# Open to change

Demolishing their conservatory for a new living area brought light and space into Emily and Ian Johnson's Victorian home

**R**enovations of Victorian homes are one of the most popular building projects in the UK, and it's easy to see why – while they're spacious and characterful, they often feature outdated rooms and impractical layouts. The driving force behind many of these builds is the desire to create flexible living spaces and introduce a better connection with the garden, providing a multifunctional, open-plan home that is more in tune with modern living. Sure enough, these aims were exactly what formed the basis of Emily and Ian Johnson's brief when they started planning the redesign of their detached London property.

'When we bought our house, one of its main attractions was its large garden,' explains Emily. 'But it was designed in such a way that we couldn't actually make much use of the outside space.' The couple's children, William and Edith, are six and eight, so it was important to Emily and Ian to create something that enabled them to play outside more easily. A dated, impractical conservatory led off from the back of the house, making access to the garden particularly problematic. 'This unattractive add-on blocked all the natural light, and after moving in the space had become little more than a dumping ground for our belongings,' Emily adds. The upper levels of the house also needed >

## AT A GLANCE

**Names** Emily and Ian Johnson  
**Location** Dulwich, south-east London  
**Property** Detached Victorian house  
**Bedrooms** 6 **Bathrooms** 5  
**Project started** September 2015  
**Project finished** June 2016  
**Size of house** 280sqm







Aluminium-framed sliding doors from IQ Glass enhance views from the corner of the extension

## HOMES | Contemporary extension

some attention – a small bathroom on the second floor featured a sloping roof that made standing up in the space difficult, while low ceilings and small windows in the previously converted loft made it feel dark and cramped.

Due to the property's location on the sought-after Dulwich Estate, Emily and Ian knew that making any major changes to their home would prove to be a challenging process. 'In addition to planning permission from the local authority, you also need to seek approval from the trustees of the estate for any changes to the exterior of the property,' explains Emily. 'For that reason, finding an architect with experience of negotiating the ins and outs of this particular planning process was key for us.'

The Dulwich Estate's database of local architecture practices that had worked on projects within the area led the couple to Simon Whitehead Architects, and after an initial meeting the couple felt it was the right company to take on their scheme. 'Simon had good ideas for introducing light into the house, and he was positive that it would be possible to achieve the many changes we wanted within our budget,' says Emily.

To meet the couple's brief for a well-designed, light-filled family home, Whitehead proposed making several changes to the property, all of which were approved by the local authority and estate. The old conservatory on the right of the house was the first thing to go, allowing the two windows in the living room to look directly onto the garden once more. On the other side of the house, a new zinc-clad extension brings light deep into the centre of the property, with >

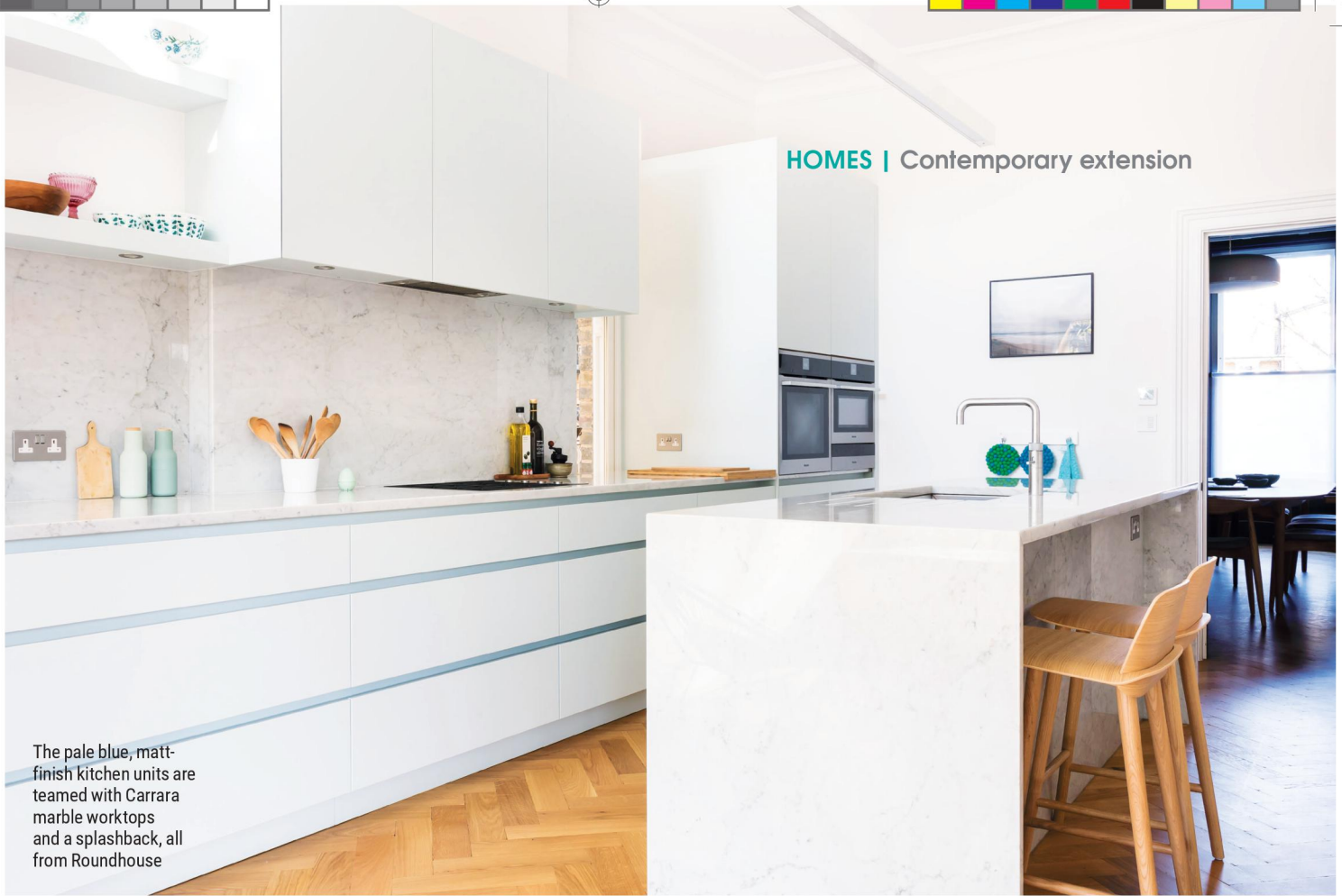


A clerestory window brings additional light into the kitchen



**‘Although the house has more of an open-plan feel, we like how each of the living spaces can still be separated’**





The pale blue, matt-finish kitchen units are teamed with Carrara marble worktops and a splashback, all from Roundhouse

a fully opening glazed corner ensuring a seamless transition between the indoor and outdoor spaces. 'The zinc cladding was Simon's suggestion, as we'd asked for a dark material that would retain its colour rather than fade over time,' says Emily. 'We also wanted there to be a distinct separation between old and new so you can see the history of the house.'

As part of the extensive redesign, the rear outrigger was completely rebuilt and a zinc-clad 'top hat' was added to increase the head height in the top-floor bathroom. With high-level windows running around three sides of the room, it has transformed what could simply have been a practical space into a light-filled retreat at the top of the house.

'I wasn't keen on this idea at first, as I thought it might look gimmicky from the outside,' admits Emily. 'I just couldn't visualise how it would work, but I'm pleased that Simon convinced me as we now get wonderful treetop views when walking down the steps from the landing into that bathroom.'

The existing loft has also been given an overhaul, and the space has been extended to create an extra shower room, while additional insulation has been fitted underneath the roof tiles. Inserting new window openings and cutting away sections of the ceiling to create a double-height vaulted effect has improved the natural light in these rooftop rooms.

An abundance of light is the first thing that strikes you when walking into the finished house. Oak-framed, glazed sliding doors at the end of the wide hallway provide a view through the extension and into the garden beyond. Light pours into the ground-floor kitchen from the glazed extension and a clerestory window, while a square picture window on the rear facade of the extension frames views of the garden. A new oak-tread staircase with a frameless glass balustrade >



The walls, ceiling and woodwork in the east-facing dining room are painted in Little Greene basalt for a saturated look

## HOMES | Coastal conversion

**below** The top-floor bathroom has been extended, featuring high-level windows



A vaulted ceiling adds to the feeling of height and space in the loft bedroom

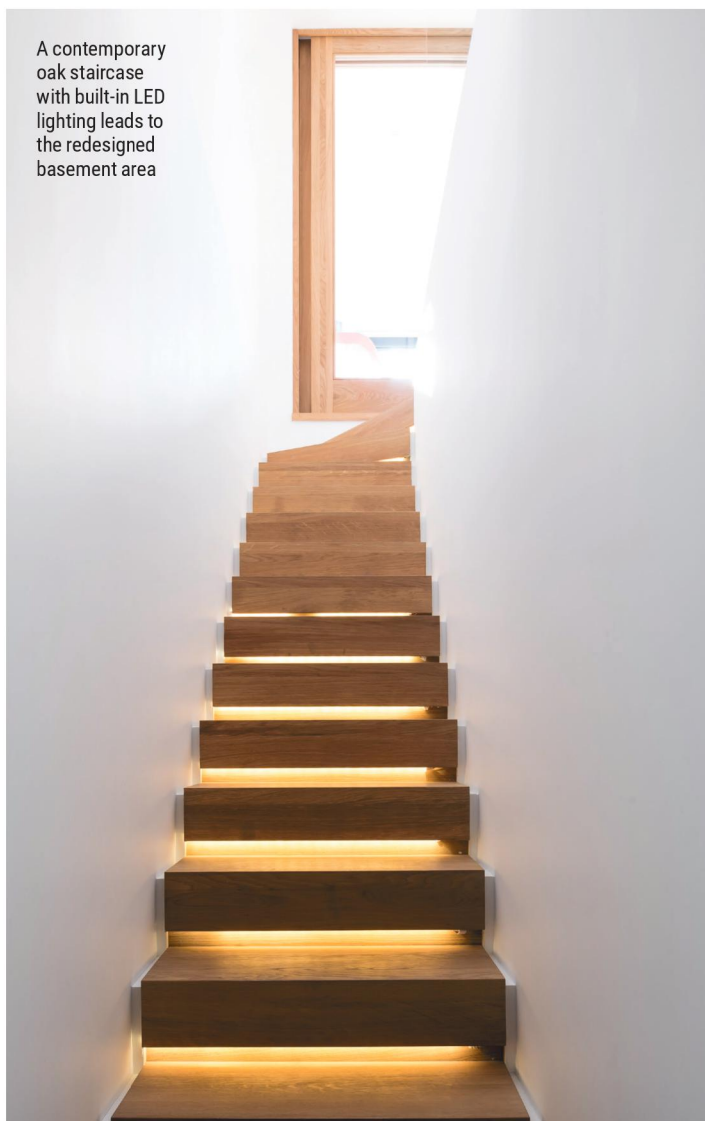
maximises the light in the redesigned basement. By digging down half a metre to create additional head height and then tanking the entire space to waterproof it, four small cellar rooms have been converted into a large utility space and wine cellar, with practical items such as the washing machine shut away behind cupboard doors so that the basement can be used as an entertaining space for parties.

Emily played a key role in designing the interiors, which reflect the modern, relaxed style of home the couple set out to achieve. Mid-century furniture and aged engineered herringbone flooring sit alongside a sleek, handleless kitchen with pale Carrara marble worktops, while the dark blue dining room is offset by the neutral tones used in other spaces. 'Although the house has more of a contemporary, open-plan feel, we like how each of the living spaces can still be separated if we prefer,' says Emily. 'We wanted the option of closing off the rooms to create a cosier atmosphere in the evenings. It also gives us more flexibility in terms of how we use the space in the future when the kids are older.'

For Emily and Ian, modernising their elegant Victorian home has, at times, been a steep learning curve, and Emily warns that the process can become all-consuming. 'When you're renovating an entire house, there are so many things to think about on a daily basis that you end up with decision fatigue, but you just have to keep going,' she says. 'Working with our architects to plan everything to the last detail paid off though, as the house is exactly what we'd hoped it would be: a light, modern and welcoming family home.' **GD**

**TURN TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR PROJECT DETAILS »**

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A contemporary oak staircase with built-in LED lighting leads to the redesigned basement area

# Project details Find out more about Ian and Emily's urban renovation

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## SUPPLIERS

### PROJECT TEAM

**Architect** Simon Whitehead Architects (020 7183 1063; simonwhitehead.com) **Main contractor** Martin Rachon (07845 416 211) **Structural engineer** Richard Tant Associates (020 7724 1002; richardtassociates.com) **Garden design** Tim Mackley Garden Design (020 8693 4832; timmackley.co.uk) **Drainage survey** Drainsmart (0800 740 8040; drain-smart.co.uk)

### STRUCTURE

**Glazing** ID Systems (01603 408 804; idsystems.co.uk)

### FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

**Kitchen and worktops** Roundhouse (020 7297 6220; roundhousedesign.com) **Wood flooring** The Natural Wood Floor Company (020 8871 9771; naturalwoodfloor.co.uk) **Porcelain floor tiles** World's End Tiles (020 7819 2100; worldsendtiles.co.uk) **Dining table, dining chairs and armchair** Hans J Wegner at Carl Hansen (020 7632 7587; carlhansen.com) **Paint** Little Greene (0845 880 5855; littlegreene.com) **Wallpaper** Cole & Son (020 8442 8844; cole-and-son.com) **Bright blue sofa** SCP (020 7739 1869; scp.co.uk) **Pink sofa** Loaf (0845 468 0698; loaf.com)

## FLOORPLAN



WORDS BETH MURTON PHOTOGRAPHY BILLY BOLTON



## SPOTLIGHT ON ZINC CLADDING

Cladding is often used to create definition between the old and new spaces. Non-sensitive to rust and corrosion, zinc has a high durability making it a popular choice for exterior coverage. The metal is soft and easy to form, completely recyclable and should last for decades. It is available in a variety of shades and finishes – expect to pay around £35 per sqm. Try VMZinc (01992 822 288; vmzinc.co.uk).



# Style finder

Old meets new in this period-style home



## IN DETAIL WINDOW SEATS

Factor in a window seat at the start of a project to capitalise on a view and create a space for reflection. Include accessible storage underneath and frame the walls and ceiling of the alcove in the same material. A similar project to the one above would cost around £6,000. Martin Rachon (07845 416 211)

## GET THE LOOK

### 1 Natural high

Dutchbone Kubu rattan pendant light, £149, Cuckooland (01305 231 231; cuckooland.com)

### 2 Suspended organiser

String pocket wall shelf unit in white, £115, String (+46 4018 7001; string.se)

### 3 Sorbet shade

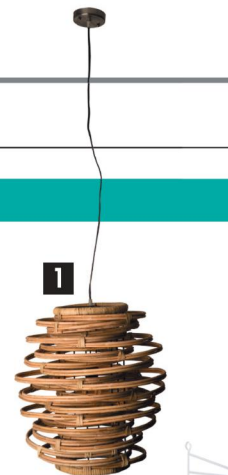
Theo sofa in carnation pink, from £941, Living It Up (0116 269 5960; livingitup.co.uk)

### 4 Retro storage

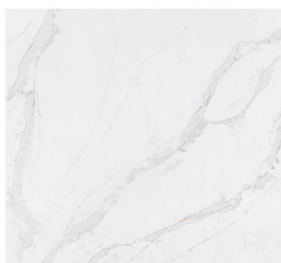
Jenson compact sideboard in dark stain oak, £499, Made.com (03442 571 888; made.com)

### 5 Block colouring

Darling New wall-mounted vanity unit in jade green, £1,113.60, Duravit (0845 500 7787; duravit.co.uk)



## MATERIAL FOCUS



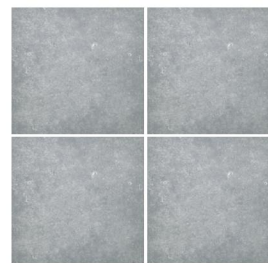
### MARBLE EFFECT

Silestone Eternal kitchen worktop in Calacatta Gold, from £400 per sqm, Cosentino UK (01256 761 229; silestone.co.uk)



### BOLD SHADE

Indigo night Endurance+ matt paint, £31.49 for 2.5L, Dulux (0333 222 7171; dulux.co.uk)



### DUAL PURPOSE

Spaces Bruges grey tiles for exterior and interior, £59.94 per sqm, Topps Tiles (0800 783 6262; toppstiles.co.uk)

COMPILED BY ANNA TOBIN