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Real Homes
CASE STUDY

OPEN-PLAN EXTENSION TO A VICTORIAN FLAT

A mix of clever design and Scandinavian-style décor has resulted in a new light-filled living space for Emily and Angus Grierson

WORDS LAURA CROMBIE PHOTOGRAPHS BUILD TEAM

NEW EXTENSION

The living/dining space links to the garden through bi-fold doors by Build Team. An exposed London stock brick wall was laid with a deliberately messy finish for an industrial look. Shelving system, String, Dining table, Peppermill Antiques, J77 chairs, Hay, Cohen pendant lights, Heal's, Bobble rug, Loaf, Pouffe, Bodie & Fou





THE OWNERS

Emily Grierson (above), a GP, and husband Angus, who works in corporate finance, live here

THE PROPERTY

A two-bedroom, ground-floor flat in a Victorian terraced house in Stroud Green, London

EMILY LOVES

Big Sur, California
Espresso Martini
Liberty London
Spicy food
The film *Life Is Beautiful*
The book *Life of Pi*
Vintage SL Mercedes cars

SHE CAN'T STAND

The month of November

ate one Sunday evening, mid-way through work to extend their kitchen, Emily and Angus received a knock on the door from the neighbours in the flat above, who had noticed their floor was dropping downwards. 'We can laugh about it now,' says Emily, 'but at the time it was anything but funny. There were a few unforeseen setbacks like that while we were extending, but now the work is finished we can say it was all worthwhile.'

Having rented flats in the Kilburn area of London, Emily and Angus discovered Finsbury Park while staying with friends in nearby Holloway. 'It was a new area for us and we loved how vibrant it was,' recalls Emily. 'We viewed a lot of properties that were the finished article, but we wanted to be able to do the work ourselves so that we could create a home exactly to our tastes. When this place came up and we saw it had a garden, we knew it was the right fit.' The couple had viewed so many Victorian terraces before this one, that they had a clear vision for how it could be improved. 'I knew from the outset that we would extend back into the garden and out into the side return,' adds Emily.

A kitchen/dining/living space was to be housed in the new extension, with bi-fold doors providing access to the garden for indoor-outdoor entertaining. 'We wanted an open space and to get away from the small rooms you often find in Victorian houses,' says Emily. 'For us, there was no reason to have a separate kitchen and living space.' A bedroom that was previously located at the rear of the property was moved to the former living room at the front, as the couple no longer needed a separate living space.

Because it was their first home-improvement project, Emily and Angus enlisted the services of Build Team, a firm that offers a complete design and build service. 'It was attractive to us to have one company doing all of the work, rather than having to deal with individual teams,' says



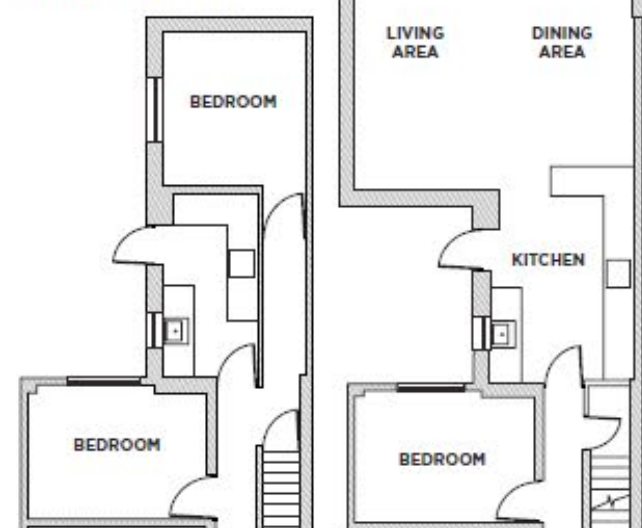
COURTYARD

Above Instead of extending to fill the whole side return, a courtyard garden was included to provide natural light to the kitchen and bedroom behind

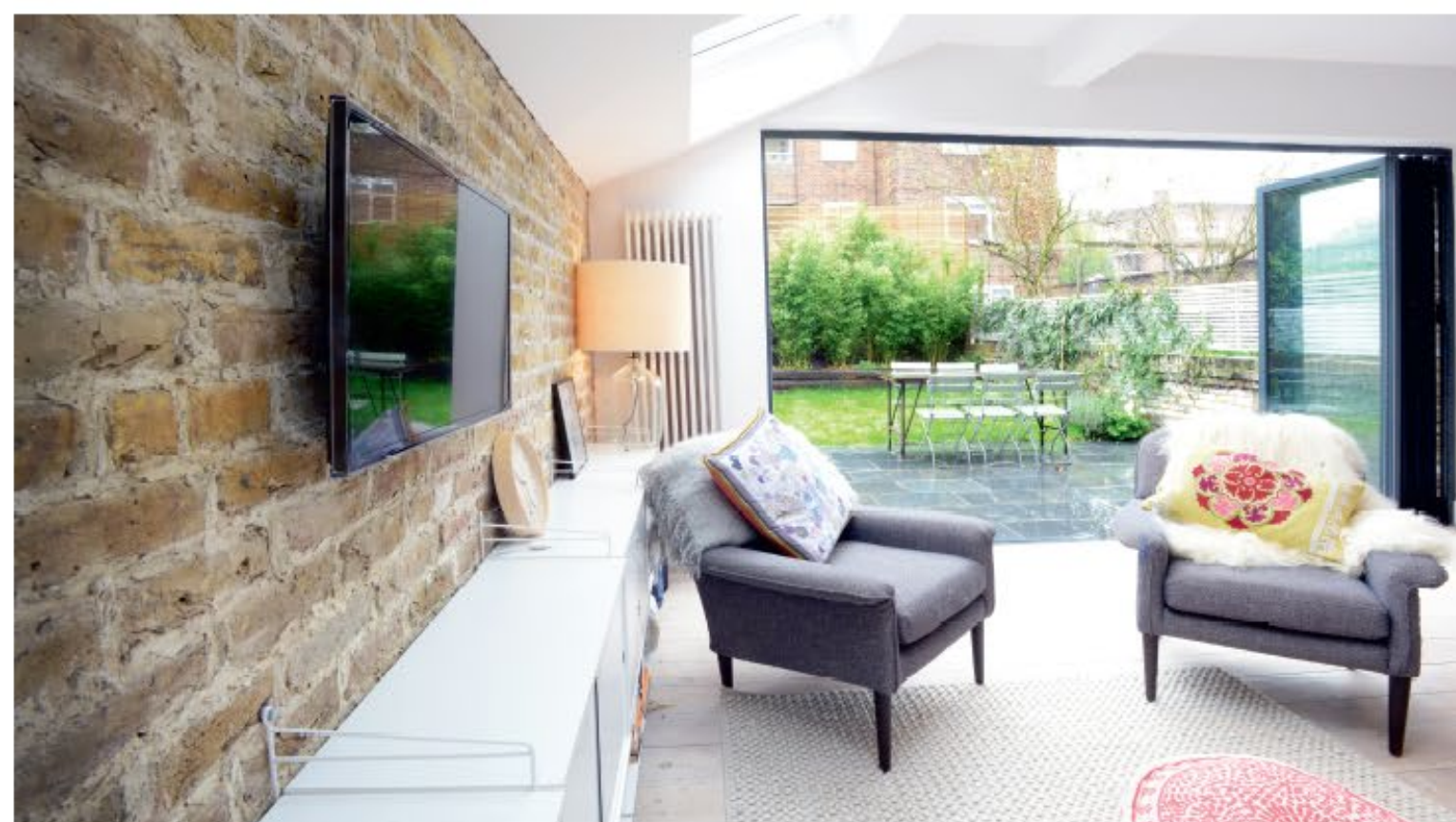
BEFORE

SOCIABLE SPACE

A corridor has been removed to widen the kitchen and a bedroom replaced with a large dining/living area



AFTER



LIVING AREA

Above Velux rooflights flood the living area with natural light. Monty sofa, Loaf Cushions, Niki Jones, Graham & Green and Lou Gardiner. Spun Done gold floor lamp, French Connection. Prints, Lou Gardiner

GARDEN LINK

Left A space for indoor-outdoor entertaining was top priority for the couple, who specified a level threshold for seamless access to the garden. Anders armchairs, West Elm

Emily. 'We might do things differently if we were to tackle another project, but at the time, and in the absence of any recommendations from friends and family, it was the best option.' The company drew up plans that realised Emily's ideas and they were able to navigate the planning process smoothly, despite the flat being in a Conservation Area.

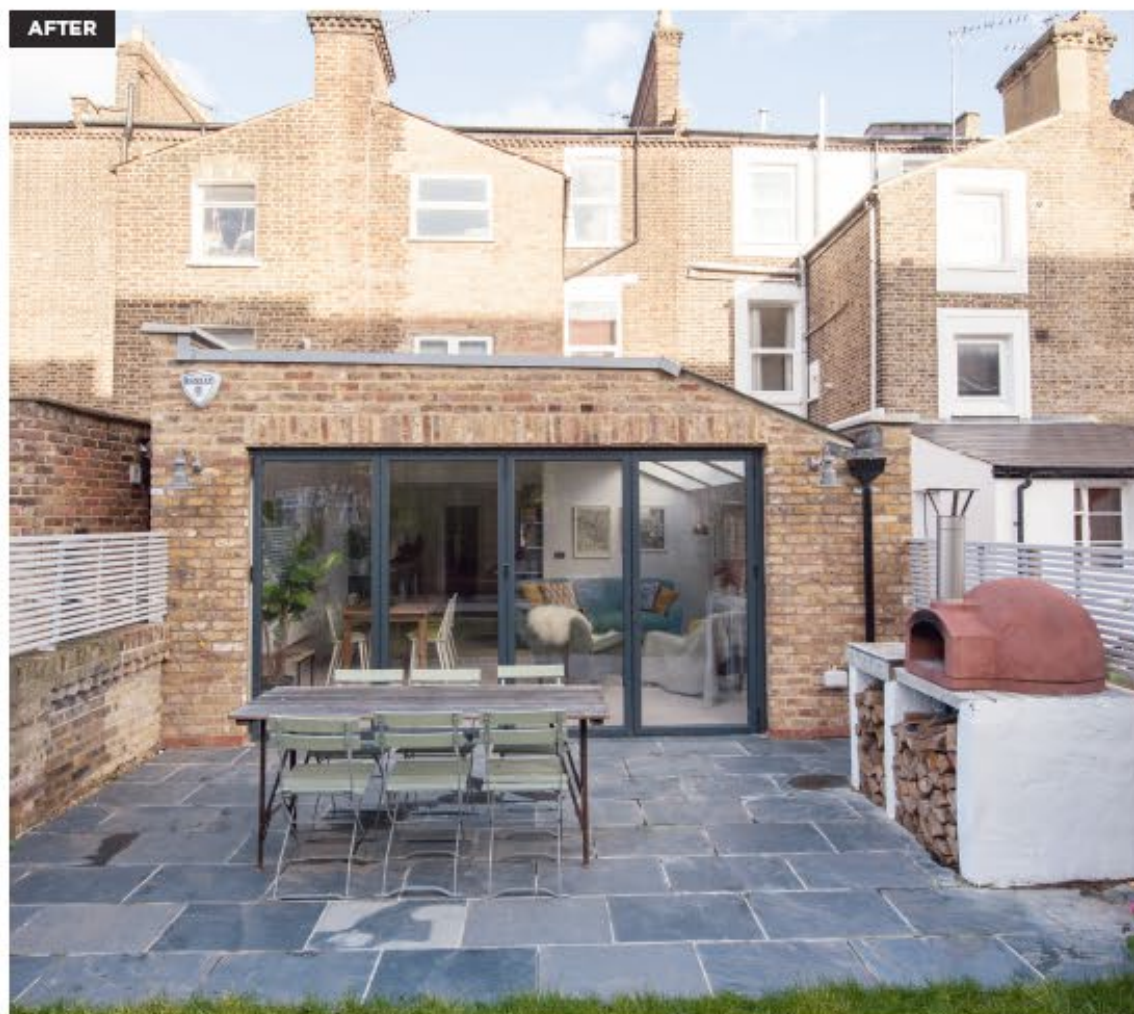
Due to the layout of the flat, the couple knew they wouldn't be able to extend all the way along the side return and, instead, had to use some of the space to create a courtyard that would allow daylight into the other rooms. 'It has created an L-shaped, open-plan space, which works really well for us,' continues Emily. 'This helps to define different zones for living, dining and cooking.' Rather than adding a flat roof to the side-return extension, Build Team introduced architectural interest and light to the space with a pitched roof featuring three large rooflights. With building work commencing just four months after they moved in, Emily and Angus took a microwave and a fridge they found on Gumtree into the spare bedroom to act as a makeshift kitchen. 'There was no way we could afford to move out and rent somewhere else, so we had to make do,' says Emily. 'I had no idea how far dust travels!'

A series of unforeseen setbacks delayed the build slightly, including issues with the Party Wall agreement. 'It was quite stressful,' recalls Emily. 'With flats above and to either side – some leasehold and some freehold – it was a frustrating process getting everybody to agree to the work.' There were also issues with drainage and the



TRANSFORMED EXTERIOR
Before, the flat had a cramped, dark kitchen and no link to the garden (above), so Emily and Angus extended to the rear and partially into the side return with a modern design (below). Angus built the pizza oven himself

'I spent a lot of time on Pinterest looking at painted kitchens before I chose this shade'



AFTER

SIMPLE DESIGN
Above As the ceiling in the kitchen is lower, the couple opted for shelving, rather than wall units, to add to the feeling of space. Laxarby units, Ikea; painted In Tempest, Fired Earth. Marble worktops, Carrara Marble. Handles, Onlinehandles.com. Metro Wall tiles, Tons of Tiles. Floorboards, Authentic Reclamation; finished with Woca softwood lye and white oil, The Floor Sanding Company of London



aforementioned slipping ceiling in the flat above, which required scaffolding to prop it up. With all the obstacles overcome, the structural work was finished in December 2015, two months later than initially planned.

When it came to decorating the space, the couple were influenced by their love of Scandinavian design, but opted to incorporate both traditional and industrial touches, too. An exposed brick wall in the living space was constructed using reclaimed London stock bricks, with Emily asking the builder to create a 'messy' finish. For the kitchen, Emily and Angus splashed out on marble worktops but saved money by buying units from Ikea, hand-painting them in a blue-grey shade, and adding stainless-steel door handles. 'I spent a lot of time on Pinterest looking at painted kitchens before I chose the right shade,' says Emily. 'I had to be sure it would work well in different lights.' Reclaimed timber was used on the floors throughout, finished to match the original Victorian floorboards. As they'd lived in furnished flats before, the couple had to acquire a lot of furniture quite quickly, mixing modern and antique pieces to create a homely feel.

'As soon as the project was finished I started thinking about what we could do next,' says Emily. 'We're happy with the flat now, so we'll stay here until we have a family and then think about moving so we can do it all again – but maybe without having to prop up the neighbour's flat next time!'

THE COSTS AND CONTACTS

Building work, including extension, bi-fold doors and windows
£60,000
Kitchen and appliances
£3,500
Furniture
£3,000
Marble worktops and fitting
£1,800

Painting and decorating
£600
TOTAL £68,900
Design and construction
Build Team, 020 7495 6561, buildteam.com
Kitchen Ikea
Worktops Carrara Marble
Flooring Authentic Reclamation