

# REAL HOMES

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## COVER STORY

'We've renovated our Victorian home with a mix of traditional and modern features'

## CASE STUDY SPECIAL

# 12 dream extensions

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# Real projects

- EXTENDED Victorian home
- Contemporary REDESIGN project
- Edwardian PROPERTY renovation
- Grade II-listed COTTAGE

Interior design secrets revealed!  
see page 98

CONVERTING YOUR GARAGE?  
Expert advice for a successful project





**Above** The elegant redbrick house was restored to its former glory by Emma and Barry Dudley (pictured right with their children). The door has been painted in Down Pipe by Farrow & Ball and decorated for Christmas with a silver wreath from RTfact Flowers

## FACT FILE

### THE OWNERS

Emma Dudley, who is a part-time badminton coach, and her husband Barry, a marketing executive, live here with their children, Luke, 11, Abigail, 10, and Josh, six

### THE PROPERTY

A five-bedroom detached house built over three floors

### THE LOCATION

Twickenham, Middlesex

### WHAT THEY SPENT

The couple bought the house for £1.42million in November 2009. They have spent around £101,000 on renovating the property, which has been recently valued at around £1.8million



# Period house

Emma and Barry Dudley took a neglected Edwardian property that was split into three flats and transformed it into a stylish home using a mix of high street buys and personal touches

WORDS **STEPHANIE SMITH** PHOTOGRAPHS **COLIN POOLE**

When they were on the lookout for a renovation project, Emma Dudley and her husband Barry were excited when they saw a photograph of a large Edwardian house for sale on a property website.

'It had been divided into flats and was described as needing some care and attention. We thought it had the potential

**PRACTICAL TIP**

When renovation work results in a net change in the number of units – e.g. three flats into a house, a VAT registered builder can charge the reduced rate of five per cent, saving 15 per cent on almost all of the labour and materials



# conversion

**Above** At Christmas the family gathers in the sitting room. A leather suite from John Lewis is teamed with a Habitat rug. The Christmas tree and mantel display above the original fireplace are from RTfact Flowers

to be a lovely home – a place where we could put down roots,' says Emma, 'but we didn't realise what a challenge it would be.'

Emma and Barry were living round the corner from the property in the St Margarets area of Twickenham when they spotted the house.

'We loved living in St Margarets, because

of its great transport links to London, plus there were plenty of parks for our three children, who were settled in good local schools,' says Emma.

The couple already had home renovation experience as they had renovated their present property, a Victorian semi-detached house, and converted the loft space.

'We enjoyed renovating it and were getting to the stage where we wanted to move to somewhere bigger, so we arranged a viewing of the Edwardian property,' Emma explains. 'The moment we saw the house we fell in love with it and knew we could create our dream home – but it would be complicated to achieve.' ▶

#### DESIGN TIP

When you're deciding how to design an open-plan kitchen/breakfast room, it's best to allocate the space with the best light, views and outdoor access, while also making sure that the dining area is directly adjacent to the kitchen



**'We wanted to see where the light came in at certain times of day, so we could plan how divide up the house'**

The property was divided into three separate flats, with the ground floor and first floor flats owned by one person and the top flat by another.

'The two flat owners agreed to band together to sell them as one property, which was lucky for us, and there was every indication that the local planning office would be happy to see it remodelled into one house again,' says Emma.

However, that meant there would be two sets of owners, two sets of solicitors and double the paperwork, with the potential for things to go wrong. As the house had

been split into three leasehold flats, the couple also needed to convert the three into one freehold property.

'Taking on so much legal work might have deterred a lot of people, but we were determined to buy the house,' Emma explains. 'We also found out that the sale had fallen through on other occasions, but fortunately Barry and I are quite calm by nature and we held our nerve.'

The couple found a buyer for their own property, so they were in a good position to go ahead immediately, but then the sale dragged on and they needed to draw on

their calm resolve more than ever.

'Our buyers pressed us to exchange contracts, but by October the owners of the flats were not ready to exchange,' says Emma. 'We didn't want to lose the sale of our house, so we took the decision to exchange and move out, effectively making ourselves homeless, trusting it would all work out eventually.'

Fortunately, a friend of the couple was going abroad for a month and let them stay in her house while they waited to exchange contracts, which finally came through in November, so the family was



**Left** The new rear extension houses the open-plan dining/living/kitchen space. The high gloss dining set is from Heal's

**Above** Emma bought the stylish mirrored cabinet at Maison. The oak flooring is from UK Flooring Direct

**Below** The extension's sitting room is furnished with Habitat sofas and decorated with stylish RTfact Flowers decorations

able to move in just before Christmas.

'It was such a relief to be in there at last, although we knew we had a lot of hard work ahead,' says Emma.

As they had pushed themselves to buy the house, Emma and Barry were in no rush to change everything immediately.

'We felt it would be a good idea to live in it for a while so we could see how the space worked for us,' says Emma. 'For example, we wanted to see where the light came in at certain times of the day so we could plan the best way of dividing up the house.'

The couple eventually ran their design ideas through a structural engineer, earmarking a budget of £100,000 for the whole house renovation.

'We quite liked the way the top flat had been laid out, so we left the parquet wood





**Above** As the kitchen is on another level to the extension, a balcony and stairs were created to make it feel part

of the open space. The elegant chandelier is from Taylor'd Lighting. The Calagaris desk chair is from Heal's

**Below** An Urban Linear kitchen from Magnet is accessorised with a Cosmic Black worktop from Middlesex Marble



flooring and the basic room divisions more or less the same,' says Emma. 'It seemed a good idea to turn the large sitting room at the top into the master bedroom and make the kitchen our en suite bathroom, as it already had plumbing. That left a spare room and a home office for Barry, so it is now our own self-contained suite.'

The middle floor has become three bedrooms for the children, with a family bathroom in place of the original kitchen at the front of the house – but it's the ground floor that has seen the most changes.

'There's a utility room and shower room behind the stairs in place of the ground floor flat's bathroom and small study,' Emma explains. 'We've kept the front room as a sitting room, where we like to retreat in the evenings – but the kitchen space has been totally transformed.'

The couple wanted the back of the house to be open-plan, with lots of natural light and doors leading out onto the garden. As the kitchen was on a different level to the garden, they chose to add an extension all the way across, with folding sliding doors opening out onto the garden.

'By installing a small set of stairs, we were able to link the original kitchen space with the new extension area. By doing this, we



created a balcony effect from the kitchen, while the new space is now on the same level as the garden,' says Emma. 'We've also fitted a large angled rooflight to flood this room with light and help bring more of the outside in.'

The new extension area was designed to be a contemporary informal dining space with a large open-plan living area for the family. However, the couple loved the period detailing on the cornicing in the kitchen and decided it would be a shame to remove it, so they decided to restore it and incorporate it into the new space.

'We had to consult an architect about our plans for the extension and work closely with a structural engineer to submit them for planning permission,' says Emma. 'Two sets of revised plans later, permission was granted and work went ahead.'

The couple chose a contemporary high gloss white kitchen with a large island unit as a central point with bar stools for the children to use as a breakfast bar. Smart limestone-effect tiles have helped define this space.

'We were concerned that using oak wood flooring throughout the ground floor would merge the spaces into one area, so the limestone flooring has helped ►

**Above** The Prima Donna feature wallpaper in the master bedroom is by Osborne & Little. Its pink accent colour

has been picked out in a luxury throw from Heal's, where the couple also bought the bed and matching bedside tables

**Below** Abigail's room is elegant with a Next bed and bedding by Lulu Guinness. The tree is from RTfact Flowers





**Above** The top floor master bedroom leads into an en suite bathroom that was originally the kitchen of one of the flats. The chest of drawers is from Heal's. The flooring is original – try The Natural Wood Floor Company for similar

**Right** The en suite has been furnished simply with fittings from Bathstore and tiles from Color 1, including the slate flooring. The original kitchen's plumbing was used in order to save on the budget



## PLANS

GROUND FLOOR BEFORE

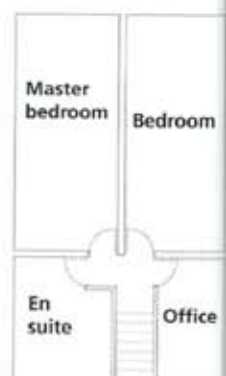
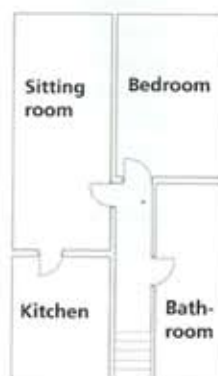
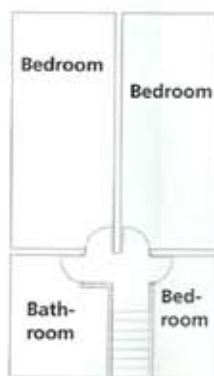
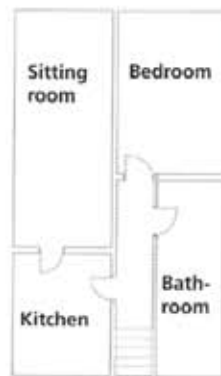
GROUND FLOOR AFTER

FIRST FLOOR BEFORE

FIRST FLOOR AFTER

SECOND FLOOR BEFORE

SECOND FLOOR AFTER



The three flats were converted into a five-bedroom home, with a new utility room, shower room and home office. Extending the ground floor has created an open-plan kitchen/dining and living space

differentiate the two spaces, plus it is much easier to keep clean,' Emma explains.

The couple decided to remove an original Victorian fireplace from the kitchen, knowing it wouldn't suit the new open-plan contemporary space, and moved it to their front sitting room.

'I love that fireplace and I couldn't see it thrown into a skip. It feels like it's always been part of the sitting room,' says Emma.

Emma and Barry wanted a simple,

uncluttered style throughout the house, with high-quality furniture and fittings. This is most apparent in the bedrooms, where statement wallpapers and furniture have been teamed with natural wood flooring and neutral schemes to help create stylish focal points.

Their design ethos is continued in the en suite to the master bedroom, with simple white bathroom furniture making an elegant contrast to dramatic slate flooring.

'The master bedroom and en suite are one of my favourite parts of the house,' says Emma. 'It really reflects our style – Barry and I worked well as a team to achieve our dream look.'

Although the renovation project took eight long months, the family were able to stay on site throughout.

'We were in the unusual – though lucky position – of having several kitchens, bathrooms and bedrooms to choose from,'

WHAT TO CONSIDER IF ...

you plan to  
turn a series  
of flats into  
one property



If, like the Dudleys, you choose to take on this type of project, be aware of the financial and legal implications before you start, says **Jennifer Newton**

Converting several flats into one property can be a great way to achieve your dream home, but there are pitfalls. For example, if one flat owner withdrew from the sale after you had already bought one of the other apartments, you would be stuck with a flat you don't want. You need a way of controlling the

timing of buying all the flats so you won't end up bound by contract to buy each one separately. This also means you can arrange for the property to be surveyed by your mortgage lender in order to take out one mortgage for the whole property and not as individual mortgages for each flat.

DRAW UP A LEGAL DOCUMENT



**Caroline Gardner** (left), a solicitor at [www.1stpropertylawyers.co.uk](http://www.1stpropertylawyers.co.uk) says:

'You could start the buying process for the flats as a linked transaction to exchange contracts simultaneously on each property. Getting all the flat owners to agree to sell and exchange contracts on the same day could be difficult – but there is another way.

'By organising what's known as an option agreement to buy each flat, subject to certain conditions (together with the grant of planning permission for the conversion) you would have the flexibility not to trigger the option if one flat owner

didn't want to sell. A premium would have to be paid to each flat owner at an amount negotiated between both parties for the grant of the option, which would give the sellers peace of mind. However, you would only be bound to complete the purchases if the conditions of all of the options were satisfied.

'Before you incur any costs, you must approach the local authority for advice on converting the building into one residential house. You should also speak to the landlord about buying the freehold, so you could potentially buy the leasehold titles for the flats and merge them with the freehold title on completion to achieve a freehold house.'

3 ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR SUCCESS

**1** Planning permission will be needed to convert the flats into one property – check with the local authority first. They are likely to be in favour, providing the plans are sympathetic to the house.

**2** The work required to turn several flats into one property will vary. You will usually have to turn a door back into a window, remove partition walls and internal doors and upstairs kitchens.

**3** You must merge the different utility meters back into one of each for the property. The gas, electricity and water meters must be turned into single inlets, for example.



Emma smiles. 'We could move around from flat to flat as the project progressed. The builders cracked on with the renovations, doing their best to work around family life and keep disruption to a minimum – they succeeded brilliantly.'

The couple believe they have achieved their dream family home, as Emma explains: 'This house is perfect for our lifestyle and three growing children.'

'It really comes into its own at Christmas with a house full of people,' she adds. 'We love hosting big family parties and enjoying the benefits of our open-plan space.'

CONTACT

**Structural engineer:** John Rawlins of Antrey Structures 07951 228100

COSTS

Extension	£30,000
New kitchen	£20,000
General building work	£12,000
Heating and electrics	£12,000
Bathrooms	£10,000
Furniture	£8,000
Decorating	£6,000
Garden	£3,000

**TOTAL £101,000**