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GDHOMES EAST LONDON

A corner window provides a wide view of the back garden, which can be enjoyed from the built-in seat



An oasis in the city

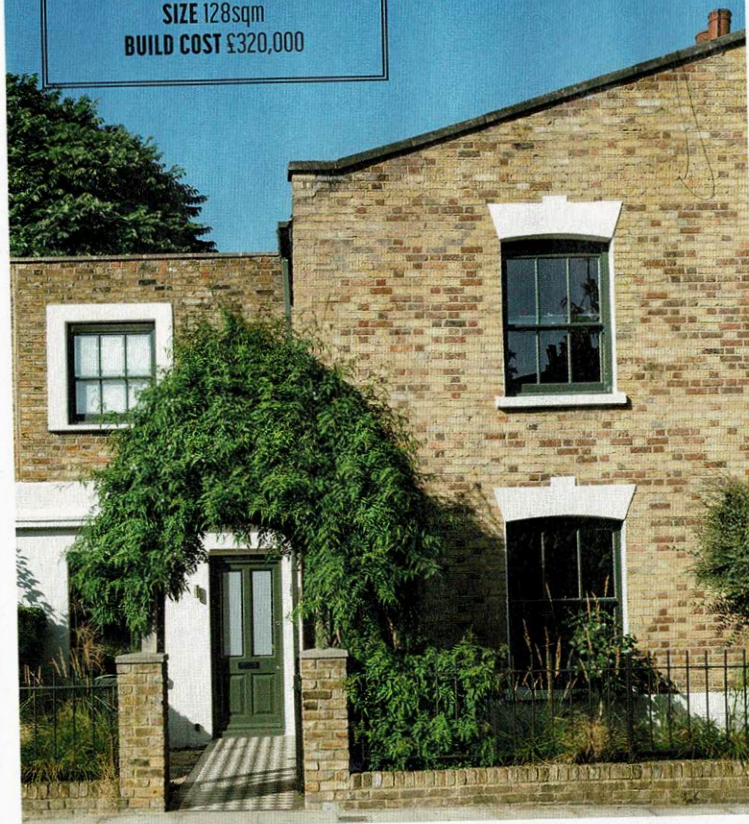
Behind and beyond this home's handsome brick façade is a tapestry of colour, texture and greenery

WORDS ARABELLA ST JOHN PARKER
PHOTOGRAPHY FRENCH + TYE

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IN BRIEF

LOCATION Hackney, east London
TYPE OF PROPERTY
 Extended 1830s terrace
BEDROOMS 3
PROJECT STARTED October 2018
PROJECT FINISHED November 2020
SIZE 128sqm
BUILD COST £320,000



Soon after Gareth Williams and Richard Sorger bought their home in 2007, they found themselves facing an unpleasant surprise. In 2008 the financial crisis hit and the property market collapsed.

Though the ground-floor layout needed work, the couple had to bide their time before making any significant improvements. 'There was potential to open up the rooms,' says Gareth. 'But we'd bought at the top of the market and had to wait until we had the funds to do anything more.'

Ten years on, Gareth, 55, a professor of design, and Richard, 51, an associate professor of fashion, had some savings and the seeds of a plan for their semi-terraced house, which has rooms on either side of a central entrance hall and staircase. 'We wanted to be able to walk all the way around the staircase downstairs and have a kitchen and a dining area with views of the garden,' says Richard. 'We had materials such as oak, exposed concrete, raw plaster and copper in mind.' »

ABOVE London stock bricks and sash windows are characteristic features of the houses in this conservation area

RIGHT Gareth and Richard redesigned the garden, teaming a bright Japanese maple, coneflower and purpletop vervain with Karl Foerster and goldtau grasses to soften the new brick-edged beds and paths





ABOVE AND ABOVE RIGHT The kitchen was designed by project architect Vladimir Krastev using units from DIY Kitchens. Its 3.2m long concrete island has a copper sheet lining facing the seating area

The pair found architecture studio Bradley Van Der Straten by searching the RIBA's online database. Practice director George Bradley proposed building a single L-shaped rear extension to replace the four existing ones. It would span the full width of the house, freeing up space around the staircase and providing a corridor between the dining area and a new separate kitchen. Enclosing the staircase with birch plywood made it possible to walk from the front door to the back of the house through the hall, or around the stairs and past the dining area.

The extension design included big windows and glazed doors, with a skylight above the kitchen and a

window set into the angle of the L, which caught the couple's imagination. 'It enables us to see from one side of the extension to the other and right through to the garden from the front door,' says Richard. 'We loved it.'

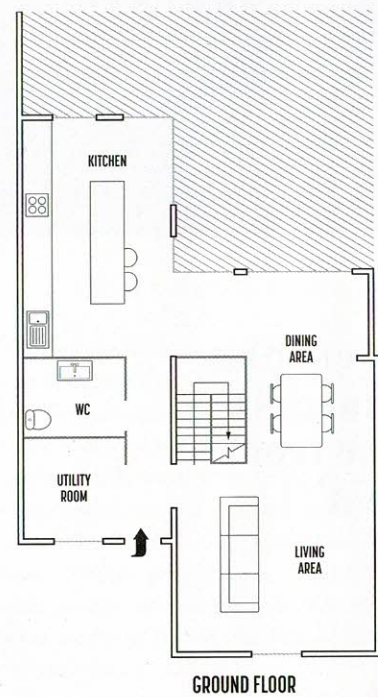
Increasing the size of the second storey above the kitchen also had benefits. 'Pushing out the rear wall to align it with the neighbours gave enough space for a second bathroom between an existing bathroom and bedroom,' explains project architect Vladimir Krastev. 'At the same time, it satisfied the planner's condition that nothing should stick out awkwardly.'

With planning consent granted, Gareth and Richard moved to a rented house in nearby Kentish Town, and »

'The glazed corner enables us to see right through to the garden from the front door. We love it'



FLOOR PLANS



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

ABOVE Birch plywood joinery surrounds the staircase and also incorporates a utility area and cloakroom

ABOVE LEFT New oak parquet flooring runs throughout the ground floor. The herringbone pattern is picked up by the brick path outside

work began. 'A couple of months in, when all but the bedrooms and bathroom had been knocked down, the pandemic hit and everything stopped for three weeks,' says Gareth. 'There was little of the house left, but the builder kept it weatherproof and secure. Although the supply line juddered a bit once work restarted, overall the lockdown only delayed us a little.'

When the extension was under construction, some underpinning and a couple of steels were needed to shore up the house. 'The more that is peeled away from homes like these, the more it becomes clear that they weren't built to last,' says George Bradley.

Although the plan was to reuse the original fittings, this wasn't always feasible. 'The old doors on the first floor didn't fit properly and we decided to put in new ones, so we ended up replacing other things too,' says Gareth. The treads on the staircase were very shallow, so a new one was made. 'When the ground floor was found to be resting on rubble-supported joints,

we decided to spend the money on having a solid concrete slab laid throughout,' he explains.

The arrival of the new windows from a factory in Germany caused a slight delay too. 'The builder called and asked how we felt about grey frames,' says Gareth. 'But they should have been black, so the window openings had to remain sealed while they were remade.'

One day the couple arrived on site to find a nice surprise – the new kitchen was in place. 'Our builder hadn't mentioned it because he wanted us to have a wow moment,' says Richard. 'The scope of the room was revealed, and it was huge.'

Luckily there were no more unpleasant surprises, and Gareth and Richard look back on the project with pleasure. 'We knew exactly what we were getting from the architects,' says Gareth. 'They told us what the job involved, all the things that needed to be done, and what everything cost. Our job was to make sure we could find enough money down the sofa to pay for it.' **GD**



The fire surround in the living area is a clever reproduction by the contractor as the original fell apart during the build. It has been skimmed with microconcrete to look the same as the others in the house

The unusual artwork above the bed in the guest bedroom is a Japanese tomb rubbing

BELOW Ceramic tiles from the Interni range by Domus give the new bathroom a sleek, modern look



SUPPLIERS

PROJECT TEAM

Architect Bradley Van Der Straeten
(b-vds.co.uk)

Contractor Optimal Build
(07838 299651)

Structural engineer Symmetrys
(symmetrys.com)

STRUCTURE

Windows and glazed doors

First Folding Sliding Doors
(1stfoldingslidingdoors.co.uk)

Bricks and exposed steels Optimal Build

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Parquet floor Atkinson & Kirby
(akirby.co.uk)

Kitchen carcasses and fronts
DIY Kitchens (diy-kitchens.com)

Kitchen worksurface
Mortise Concrete
(mortiseconcrete.co.uk)

Kitchen tap Hansgrohe (hansgrohe.co.uk)

Bathroom sanitaryware

Drench (drench.co.uk)

Bathroom tiles Domus (domusgroup.com)

Shower tray Volente Bathrooms
(volentebathrooms.co.uk)

Loo Grohe (grohe.co.uk)

Built-in cupboards and wardrobe

carcasses Ikea (ikea.com)

Paint Farrow & Ball

(farrow-ball.com)

FURNITURE AND ACCESSORIES

Kitchen and dining room lighting

Astro (astrolighting.com),

Hem (hem.com)

Dining table Hem

Dining chairs Established & Sons
(establishedandsons.com)

Living area armchair Artek (artek.uk)

Sofa Heal's (heals.com)

Coffee table Matthew Hilton
(matthewhilton.com)

Garden furniture Hay (hay.dk)

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