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FLOOR DESIGNERS

GD HOMES LONDON



Homeowner Ben relaxes in the open-plan living room on the ground floor

Joined-up thinking

There's a deliberate difference in style between the lower and upper floors of this house that was once two flats

WORDS CAROLINE RODRIGUES
PHOTOGRAPHY FRENCH + TYE

IN BRIEF

LOCATION Dalston, east London
TYPE OF PROPERTY Remodelled Victorian terrace
BEDROOMS 4
PROJECT STARTED August 2020
PROJECT FINISHED March 2021
SIZE 188.2sqm
PROPERTY COST £1.45 million
BUILD COST £393,000



ABOVE Because the house is in a conservation area, the replacement double-glazed windows by Concept Linea had to be in keeping with the original windows in the terrace

Benedict Spence and Zoe Boyle were up for a project and the terraced house they found presented the ideal opportunity. Divided into two apartments, a one-bedroom and a three-bedroom flat, the property had the potential for conversion into a single home.

Cinematographer Ben, 40, was enthused by the prospect of living in the area. 'Dalston has a great mix of people, it's a microcosm of London,' he says. 'Plus, the house has fantastic bones – lots of original period features and natural light.'

Both Ben and Zoe, 37, who is an actor, realised that the one-bedroom flat at the lower ground level of the house could become an open-plan kitchen with living and dining areas, while upstairs maintained its period character. 'We wanted to keep the look of the Victorian terrace, so we were keen to retain the proportions of the upper floors,' Zoe explains.

'The house has fantastic bones – lots of original period features and natural light'

The couple had an architect in mind. George Bradley, a director of Bradley Van Der Straeten, had been a friend of Zoe's since they went to university together, and had renovated a flat for her in the past. 'George and Jessica Williamson, our project architect and project manager, understood what we wanted and did a really good job of refining all of our various influences,' says Ben. 'The practice took care of the planning process, so from our point of view it was incredibly smooth.'

The couple were gearing up to start the project in March 2020 when the first Covid lockdown hit and they had to quickly reassess. 'We both work in TV and film, and that work stopped overnight so we were looking at zero income with hefty rental and mortgage payments,' says Zoe. The pandemic put paid to the loft extension they'd planned, but they decided to press ahead with the rest of the build and, in August, the work got underway.

Although a bigger extension would have been possible, it would have involved structurally bridging a public sewer that sat at the foundation line, so Ben and Zoe settled on a smaller infill design, which still gave them a sizeable lower ground floor. Built on concrete strip foundations, the extension has a steel box frame to support the building's »



The rear living room fireplace fell apart during the building work. The contractor created a wooden replacement and painted it in Down Pipe by Farrow & Ball

back wall. 'We kept the steel and concrete to a minimum, and used a suspended timber floor,' explains George. The south-facing skylight is a simple rectangle, but the builder added ply surrounds and joists to extend over it and filter the daylight.

A new plywood staircase rises up from the lower ground to the ground floor and, as Ben and Zoe wanted to keep the floors above intact, it's directly below the staircase to the first and second levels.

The couple visited the site every two weeks. 'The work on the lower ground floor seemed enormous, technical and impressive, and it was exciting as the months progressed and the shape of the house started to show,' says Ben. There were no major changes made during the build, although there were hundreds of tweaks, with knock-on decisions required. »

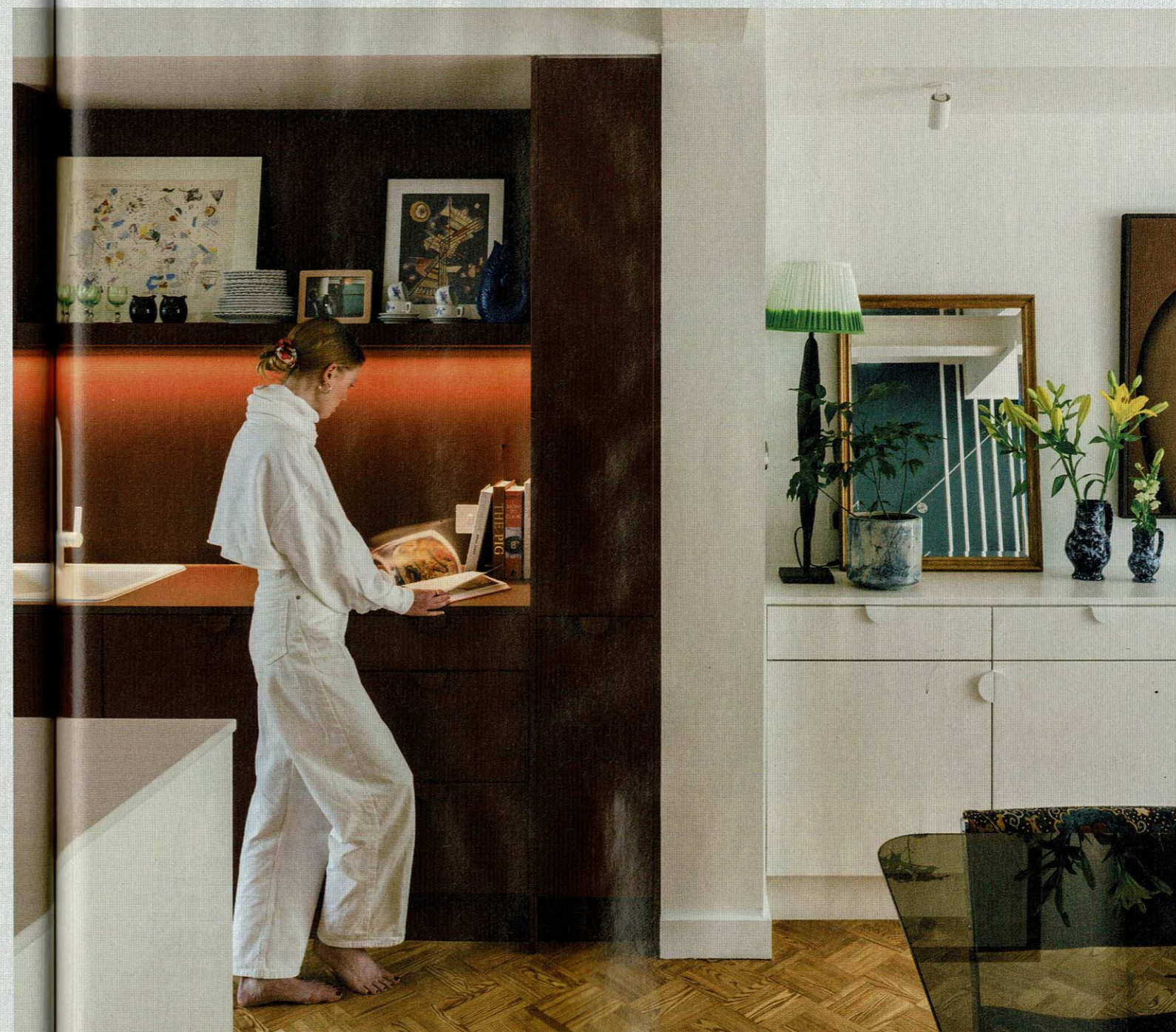


LEFT AND RIGHT The original cornicing and wood panelling in the ground-floor living room were part of the appeal of the house. The Pukka sofa is from Ligne Roset



LEFT On the kitchen island the induction hob is teamed with a built-in downdraught extractor. It is lit by a Light-Point slim fitting from Lampe Mesteren

RIGHT Zoe reads in the lower-ground floor kitchen. The Carrera units from DIY Kitchens are painted in Preference Red by Farrow & Ball



‘The work on the lower ground floor seemed enormous, technical and impressive’



The open-plan kitchen is at the cool, north-facing front of the house, with the seating area in the sunniest part at the back overlooking the garden. 'We love cooking together, so having a big island was a real priority, and by including a hob we can chat to our guests while we're at it,' says Zoe.

Though not part of the initial plan, the couple had enough leftover funds in their budget to replace all the single-glazed windows, which were in poor condition and losing heat. 'The cost was around £35,000, but we felt it would make a huge difference to the house's energy efficiency,' says Ben. The replacements had to be a close match to the Victorian designs due to the planning constraints of the conservation area. 'The new windows are double glazed with slim frames and glazing bar widths that replicate the originals as far as possible,' says George.

An unexpected expense resulted from moving the gas and electric meters 3m or so and then upgrading them to newer versions. 'The meters took a huge amount of paperwork and time, costing around £6,000 – which was far more than we expected,' says Zoe.

On the ground floor, the original cornicing was repainted, but the ceiling roses were the wrong proportion for the rooms and were replaced, while corbels were added to enhance the fire surrounds. On the first floor, Ben and Zoe toyed with the idea of squeezing in another bedroom instead of having a big bathroom, but they're glad they didn't go down that route. 'The bathroom gets so much light and it feels incredibly luxurious,' says Zoe.

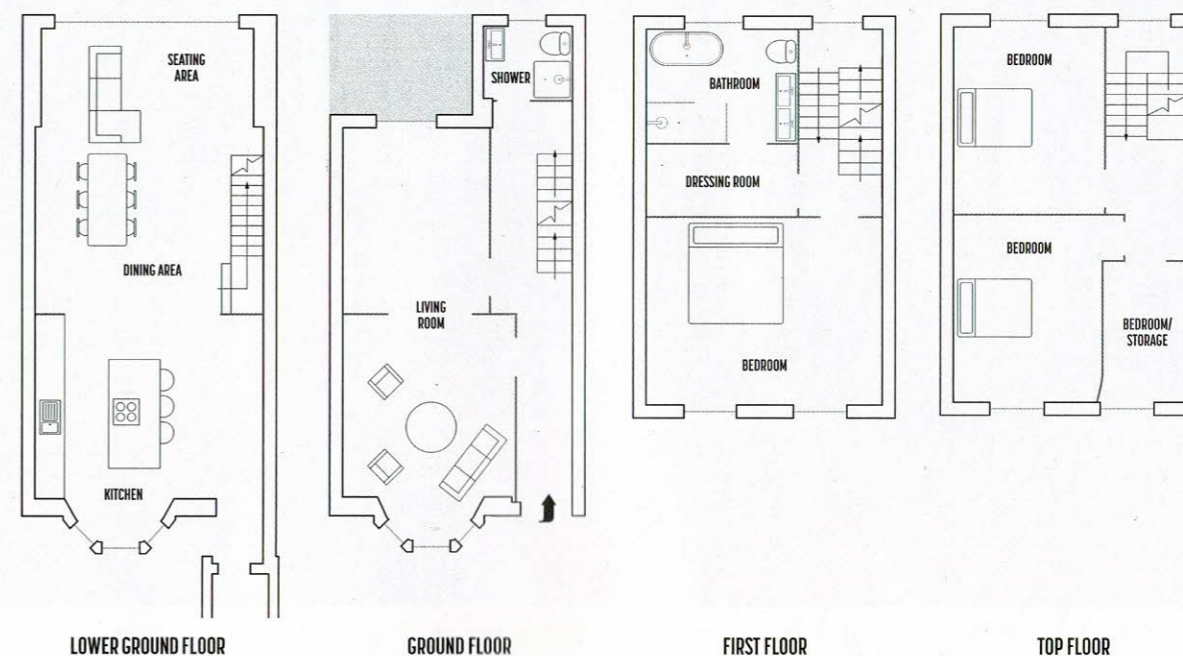
The couple were set on including vibrant colour throughout the house. 'The eclectic mix of influences on our Pinterest board included super-modern, traditional English, and 1960s/70s design,' says Ben. »

ABOVE The bright extension benefits from a large skylight. The wide floor-to-ceiling sliding doors are from Maxlight

RIGHT A new plywood staircase was built for the extension. Careful detailing ensures the balustrading lines up with the stair treads



FLOOR PLANS



The couple wanted a 1970s-style green shagpile carpet for their bedroom. When the supplier let them down, they chose Solar carpet from Brockway in Tangerine instead

RIGHT The first floor bathroom is large enough for a walk-in shower and a separate bath



'At one point it looked as though the entire house was going to be green.' Painting the extension walls white and adding colour through the kitchen cabinets and staircase was the architect's suggestion, while the green main bathroom and a yellow guest bathroom were Zoe's choices.

Just before moving in, Ben and Zoe found that the loft insulation had been shoved too deeply into the eaves, creating humidity and causing mould, which a specialist company removed. And the timber flooring on the lower ground floor was warping and had to be relaid before being sanded and refinished. They had already agreed to leave their rented home, so had no option but to move in while the work was done. 'Our furniture ended up rammed into the living rooms,' says Ben.

But after just seven months of building work the new open-plan living space and the renovated rooms above were all finished. 'We love the way the two parts of the house exist together,' says Zoe. **GD**



The existing two-storey outrigger was knocked through to join up with the new infill extension

SUPPLIERS

PROJECT TEAM

Architect Bradley Van Der Straeten
(b-vds.co.uk)
Structural engineer Constant Structural
Design (constantsd.com)
Contractor Optimal Build (07838 299651)
Building Control Stroma (stroma.com)

STRUCTURE

Sliding doors Maxlight (maxlight.co.uk)
Windows Concept Linea
(concept-linea.com)

Steel-framed fire door Metali
(metaliwindows.co.uk)

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Sockets and switches
Schneider Electric (se.com)
Lighting Lampe Mesteren
(lampemesteren.com),
Rockett St George (rockettstgeorge.co.uk)
Kitchen units DIY Kitchens
(diy-kitchens.com)
Worksurface Cosentino (cosentino.com)

Appliances Smeg (smeguk.com)
Sink Franke (franke.com)

Extractor Luxair (luxairhoods.com)
Bathroom fittings CP Hart
(cphart.co.uk), UK Bathrooms
(ukbathrooms.com)

Flooring Horning (horningfloor.dk)
Vinyl flooring The Colour Flooring Company
(colourflooring.co.uk)

Pavers Bradstone (bradstone.com)
Tiles Domus (domusgroup.com)

Bedroom carpet Brockway
(brockway.co.uk)

Paint Farrow & Ball
(farrow-ball.com),
Little Greene (littlegreene.com),
Paint & Paper Library
(paintandpaperlibrary.com)

FURNITURE

Bed Heal's (heals.co.uk)
Sofas Camerich (camerich.co.uk),
Ligne Roset (ligne-roset.com)



ENJOY CLEAN INDOOR AIR

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Briiv uses natural materials and biodegradable filters for its eco-friendly air purifier, a green alternative to plastic-heavy high-efficiency particle-absorbing (HEPA) systems. Moss, coconut coir and carbon nanofibre with silk filter air at up to 36sqm per hour – that's equivalent to having more than 3,000 plants in your home, according to nature.com.

Polluted indoor air can exacerbate allergies, make it harder to sleep and impair cognitive function. The Briiv device removes allergens, dust, mould and other airborne particles. With its stylish design and

smart-home technology, this award-winning air purifier also creates a eye-catching feature in any room.

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TOP Eco credentials and good looks combine in the Briiv air purifier, £299

ABOVE The filter can be controlled remotely via a smartphone app

For more information, visit briiv.co.uk

