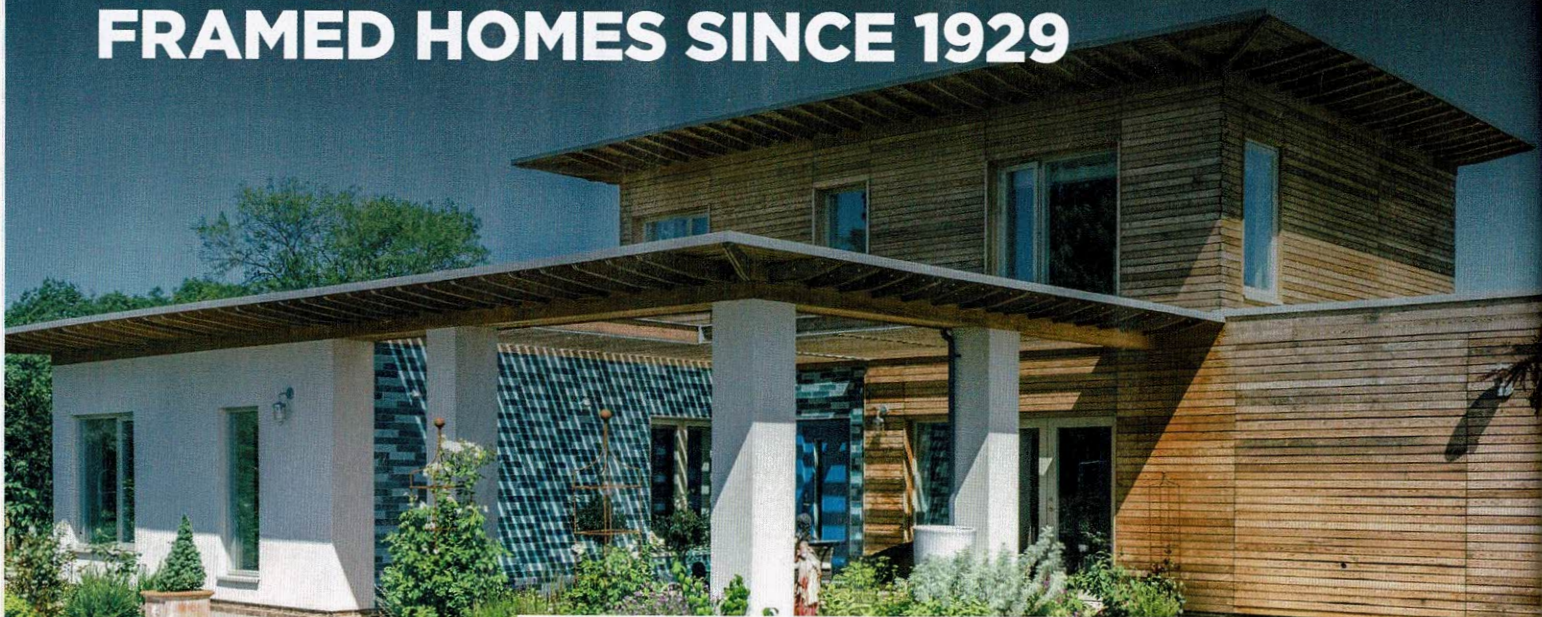


# ENGLISH BROTHERS: BUILDING TRULY BESPOKE TIMBER FRAMED HOMES SINCE 1929



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GD HOMES LONDON



Rex plays on the built-in bench that runs along one wall in the living area. The seat has storage space beneath

## A CREATIVE COLLABORATION

An ingenious use of space, materials and colour  
brings a sense of joy to this family home

WORDS REBECCA FOSTER PHOTOGRAPHY FRENCH + TYE



# IN BRIEF

**LOCATION** Stoke Newington, north-east London  
**TYPE OF PROPERTY** Two-storey terraced house  
**BEDROOMS** 3  
**PROJECT STARTED** June 2016  
**PROJECT FINISHED** August 2020  
**SIZE** 80sqm  
**PROPERTY COST** £512,000  
**BUILD COST** £65,000



ABOVE George, Ilaria and Rex on the path behind their back garden. Aluminium frame windows replace the house's original UPVC designs

Though not actively looking for a new home, George and Helen Bradley's interest was piqued when they were told about a property on the market nearby. George, 43, who is an architect, and Helen, 40, who is head of campaign engagement for a charity, lived with their daughter Ilaria, nine, in a two-bedroom mews house in Stoke Newington, north-east London, that they built themselves.

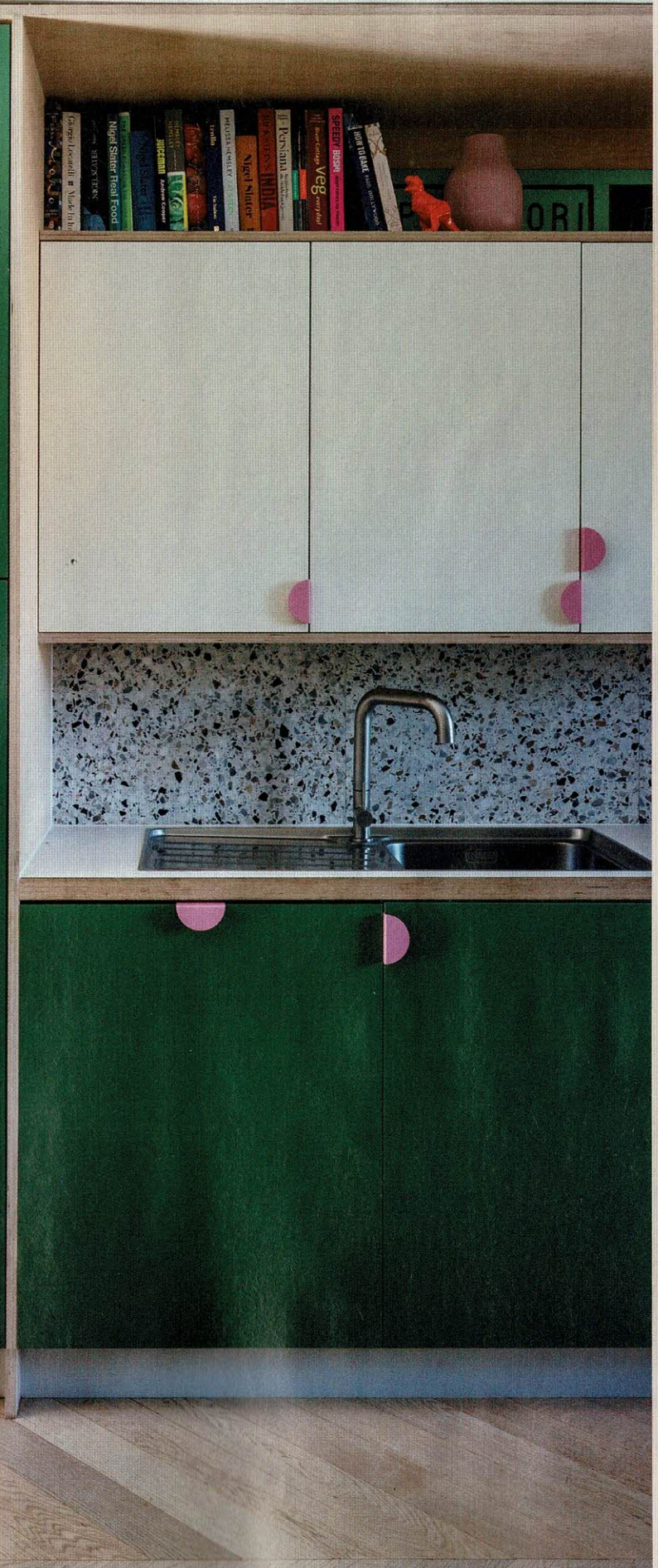
But the potential of the 1980s, ex-local authority terraced property up for sale caught their attention. 'The house gave us the opportunity to scale up and stay in an area we love,' George explains. 'It's long and narrow with the staircase in the middle of the layout, and the rooms at either end get plenty of daylight.'

The couple brought in a structural engineer to look at their new home, which was in a poor state of repair. The investigation revealed the building is concrete frame with steel beams in the ceiling. 'None of the walls on the ground floor are loadbearing, so from a structural point of view we were free to rip everything out,' says George. »



ABOVE Slightly widening the front hallway gave a greater sense of space and room for the plywood dividing wall with built-in storage

At the front of the house, the galley kitchen features a terrazzo splashback made with surplus offcuts from a client's project





Unable to afford to tackle all the renovations immediately after buying the house, George and Helen split the work into two stages. While still living in the mews house, they set about replacing the bathroom, installing wet underfloor heating upstairs, and fitting a new gas boiler. 'The overlap in living arrangements was a lucky part in the chain of events,' says George.

After the birth of their son Rex, five, in 2018, George and Helen felt ready to tackle the next phase of works the following year. But as leaseholders the couple face constraints over the changes they can make to their home without permission from the freeholder. 'After buying the house and becoming impatient to go open plan, I knocked through one of the ground-floor walls myself as a temporary measure,' says George. »



ABOVE George and Helen's joiner built a plywood frame around cabinets from DIY Kitchens to create a bespoke look



ABOVE Engineered oak flooring from Havwoods runs throughout the ground floor



To add texture to the scheme, the window surrounds are lined with plywood



## 'Impatient to go open plan, I knocked through one of the ground-floor walls myself'

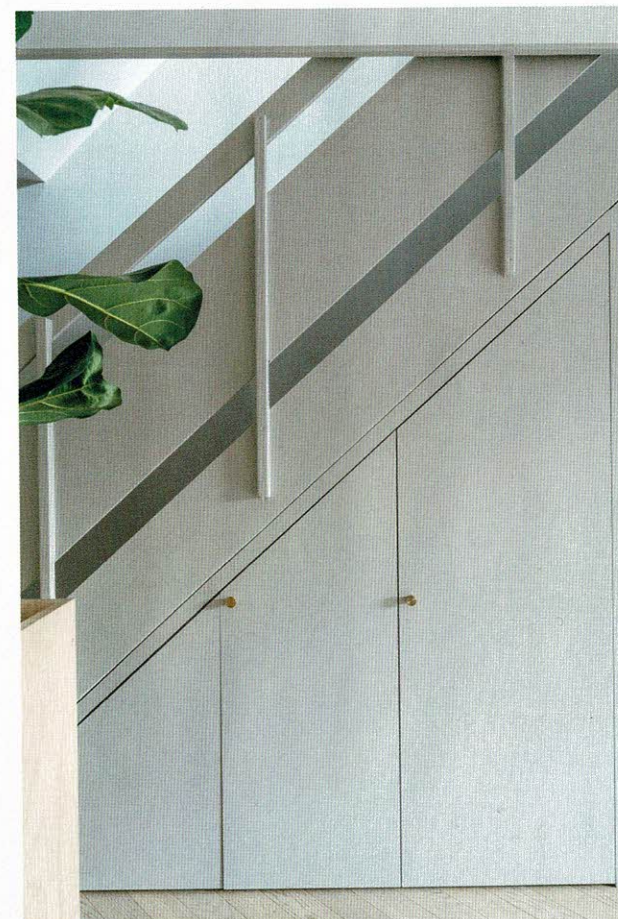
Seeking permission from Hackney Council before taking down more walls, George drew up the open-plan layout proposal, submitting it along with reports from the builder and structural engineer demonstrating that the improvements wouldn't damage the integrity of the building. 'The council's main concern was that everything would be in accordance with Building Regulations, so we appointed an approved inspector to provide reassurance,' says George.

Replacing the windows and exterior doors was a priority. 'The units had thick, ugly frames,' says George. 'So it was a relief the council gave us consent, as replacing the glazing makes a big difference to the space.' They also improve the terraced house's thermal performance. 'There's very little exposed wall, so the main thing was to upgrade to double glazing,' »



ABOVE Ilaria cross-stitching on the sofa, which came from Made. Above is a poster of the moon from the Science Museum





## 'There's very little exposed wall, so the main thing was to upgrade to double glazing'

he explains. And after ruling out installing floor insulation due to the height of the rooms, mineral wool in the roof space further minimises heat loss.

Despite the uncertainty that the pandemic brought to the construction industry, George and Helen's project kept moving forward. 'We'd been chatting to our contractor throughout 2020,' says George. 'We set the build up as a filler project for him, between the ebb and flow of his other jobs.' The family stayed with both George and

Helen's parents during the works, and construction began in July 2020 with great progress on day one when the ground floor was cleared of the internal walls.

The chance to work on another project with Helen is something that George greatly appreciates. 'Though Helen is not a designer, she has brilliant ideas,' he says. 'The colours and materials in the kitchen are the best representation of our collaboration.'

The family moved back in before the start of the autumn school term in September. 'Moving in was a bit of an anticlimax,' says George. 'With dust everywhere, I did wonder whether we'd done the right thing. But I soon snapped out of it when I realised how amazing the space is for all of us. We were lucky to live in the house with its former layout, because it helps us enjoy the changes even more.' GD

**ABOVE LEFT** A new cupboard topped by a planter conceals a gas meter in the centre of the ground floor

**ABOVE** New built-in cupboards under the stairs provide an excellent storage space for coats, shoes and the kids' scooters

In George and Helen's bedroom, a half-height wall built from the oak flooring forms a shelf behind their bed







ABOVE Cement Puzzle tiles from Barber Osgerby cover the floor of the upstairs family bathroom. The portrait is of George's dad  
RIGHT Helen designed the graphic pattern on the walls in Rex's room



## SUPPLIERS

### PROJECT TEAM

Architect Bradley van der Straeten  
Architects (b-vds.co.uk)  
Building Control Ball and Berry  
(ballandberry.co.uk)  
Contractor, painter and decorator  
Optimal (07838 299651)  
Structural engineer Constant SD  
(constantsd.com)

### STRUCTURE

Glazing and front door Velfac (velfac.co.uk)  
Insulation Rockwool (rockwool.com)

### FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Basin Catalano (catalano.co.uk)  
Boiler Vaillant (vaillant.co.uk)  
Brassware Crosswater  
(crosswater.co.uk),  
Dowsing & Reynolds  
(dowsingandreynolds.com),  
Hansgrohe (hansgrohe.co.uk)  
Floor tiles Barber Osgerby  
(barberosgerby.com)  
Kitchen carcasses DIY Kitchens  
(diy-kitchens.com)

### Lighting

Delta Light (deltalight.com),  
Habitat (habitat.co.uk)  
Paint Farrow & Ball (farrow-ball.com)  
Sink Franke (franke.com)  
Sockets and switches  
MK & Schneider (se.com)  
Timber flooring Havwoods  
(havwoods.com)  
Underfloor heating Nu-Heat  
(nu-heat.co.uk)  
Worksurface Plykea (plykea.com)

### FURNITURE AND ACCESSORIES

Armchair, beds, bedside  
tables, cabinets, dining table  
and floor lamp Ikea (ikea.com)  
Dining chairs Barber Osgerby  
Planter Woodblox  
(woodblox.co.uk)  
Poster Science Museum  
(sciencemuseum.org.uk)  
Shelving String (stringfurniture.com)  
Side table Habitat (habitat.co.uk)  
Sofa Made (made.com)

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