



A Victorian family home transformed

Want the ideal space for modern family life? See how one couple's knack for spotting great potential, coupled with an eye for design and a great building team, transformed this Victorian home.

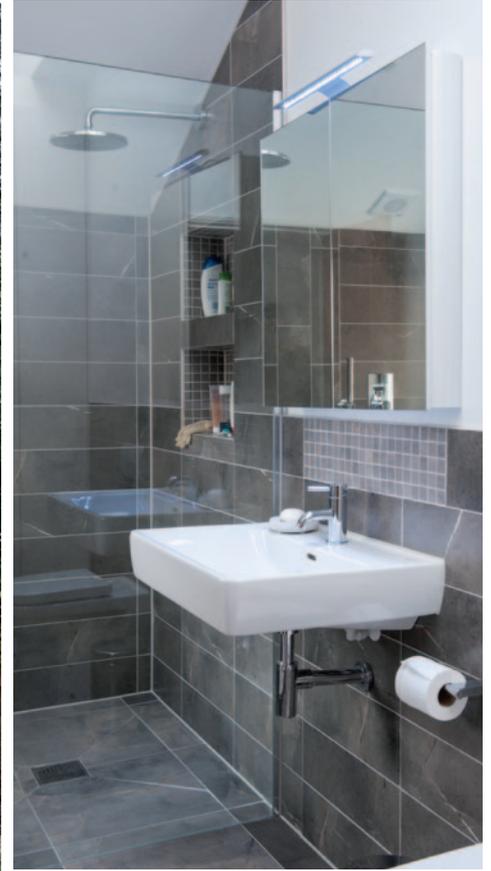
Not everyone could fall in love with a house stuck in the 1970s complete with cigar stained walls, chintzy carpets and dodgy coloured bathrooms but for the Bessler family, it presented the perfect challenge. "We wanted a project; something that added value and that we could put our own mark on," Sally remembers. "There was barely any natural light and the old owner had ripped out nearly all of the original features. As a project manager however, it was the perfect opportunity for me to put my skills to a rewarding use." Confident they could turn this Victorian house into a fabulous family home and with a new baby on the way, the couple set about choosing a building team.

At first, the Besslers anticipated using the building company from their previous project to realise their

vision. After spotting L&E (Loft and Extensions) in a local paper however, they felt they had nothing to lose by getting them round to quote for the work. "The surveyor from L&E arrived and instilled a lot of confidence in me. He was amiable and very patient as there were a lot of points I wanted to clarify," Sally comments. "We also liked the fact they came as a team and so could oversee the whole project rather than us needing additional contractors. They then took us to see five completed L&E projects where all of the owners we met were obviously so proud of what the builders had created. This gave us the confidence to choose L&E for our own build."

With the building team in place, work started almost immediately. Structurally, the plan was to remodel and extend the boxy ground floor area to open and lighten the space while incorporating a utility, cloakroom and storage area. The rear extension would be followed through to the first floor to house a large master bedroom and en-suite with vaulted ceilings and skylights. Although not vital for their immediate needs, the couple chose to incorporate a loft extension in the build to maximise the home's potential and avoid revisiting the project at a later stage.





The biggest challenge they faced was getting planning permission for the large, two-storey rear extension. While awaiting this, work started on permitted development including the loft conversion and internal work. Work progressed quickly. "They worked tirelessly and we built up a really good rapport with the team. The fact they were so quick meant that sometimes we weren't quite ready for them and had to make decisions quickly in order to keep up." Sally comments.

At last, the vital rear extension permissions came through. "We immediately contacted L&E to tell them," Sally remembers. "The next day we visited the house to find an unusual amount of light coming through the front door." Sally laughs. "They had taken down the whole of the rear of the house – it was so exciting and very efficient. Our next door neighbours were so amazed they even filmed it happening."

Living and working in Canary Wharf, the couple were unable to be on site for much of the time. "We came down every Saturday to meet with the builders. I was pregnant too so it was exhausting, but they were very flexible and waited for us to arrive even after they should have left. Our neighbours commented on how good they were and how considerate," Sally remembers. The foreman also made suggestions on how to improve the original design. "Our architect had put in plans where the supports would need to jut out from the

wall. L&E's builders suggested that these beams could be taken back to give us a flush wall. It made the look so much better for us and was above and beyond the call of duty."

DESIGN TIP

"Bring as much light in as possible, improving both sunlight and quality of space by introducing rooflights or roof lanterns."

Sitting in their bright and spacious kitchen it's hard to imagine the unwelcoming, confined space that this once was. The light, airy feel is emphasised throughout the house with white walls, warm oak flooring and skylights while contemporary style furniture makes the most of the space. The kitchen-diner is one of the many defining features of this build with its bi-folding doors and rooflights allowing light to flood in and creating an organic connection between inside and out. The vaulted ceilings in the bedroom and bathroom meanwhile add instant character and drama. Upstairs the loft extension allows plenty of room for visiting guests. The redesigned space has given them a whole new

way of living, replacing boxy rooms with a layout that flows into workable linked space. "We love it and it couldn't have come at a better time with our first baby's arrival four weeks later," Sally says.

So were they pleased they choose L&E to complete the build? "Yes, there were so many good things. At first we were worried as they were a new team to us. Going with L&E, a team we didn't know, rather than our old builders who we had been happy with was a big risk." That risk paid off however. "L&E were professional and efficient. They were patient and flexible when we slowed them down. We would definitely work with them again."

With a new baby at home there may not be much time for relaxing but the Besslers now have a calm, tranquil haven to call their own and the odd occasion to get a moments peace. "Lying our baby down to watch him gaze happily up through the skylights in itself is priceless!"

Mr and Mrs Bessler are so confident recommending L&E (Lofts and Extensions) that they are even happy to show you round their new home. Contact them via L&E to arrange a viewing.

L&E (Lofts and Extensions)

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