

FROM THE TOP

Juliet Rowe and Casimir Ludwig have maximised space while keeping costs down

FEATURE VICTORIA JENKINS PHOTOGRAPHS WILLIAM GODDARD



The property
Victorian terraced house in Bristol.

Bedrooms Three.

Bathrooms One bathroom and one en suite shower room.

Improvements made The house was renovated including a loft conversion with en suite bedroom and a large kitchen-diner extension at the rear. The couple did as much as possible themselves, from tiling to installing a new bathroom suite.

Buying price
£283,000.

Renovation costs Approximately £80,000.

Now worth
£400,000.

House fact file



The two armchairs from eBay were re-upholstered by Juliet's mother and the overmantel mirror came from All Sorts in Bristol (01179 086893).



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DESIGN BRIEF 'We used the space as efficiently as possible then went for an uncluttered, neutral look with as much light as possible. Then we added splashes of colour to cheer it up.'

Why did you choose this house?

'We didn't have much money so we deliberately chose a rather run-down Victorian terraced house for its low price as we planned to do as much as possible of the renovation work ourselves. Luckily Casimir and his dad are both very good at DIY. Its appeal lay in its location and its original features, such as the cornicing and ceiling roses and, although it was tired, the house was at least habitable. The windows and roof were sound and so was the wiring. 'It was very dated with a small lean-to kitchen at the rear, woodchip paper, which pulled the plaster off the walls,

a plastic avocado bathroom suite and an ugly gas fire among other features dating from at least 20 years before. We stripped the wallpaper, removed all the worn-out carpets, sanded all the floors, re-plastered throughout and had a new boiler put in as well as a new consumer unit to replace the old fuse box.'

Why did you begin the renovations with a loft conversion?

'The house had only two bedrooms until we opened up the unused windowless loft to create a main bedroom and an en suite shower room. But the main reason was that by adding value to the house >>





DESIGN DECISIONS

'You can't have too many different sorts of lighting. We have six switches in our extension for the uplighters, downlighters, pendant, lamps, recessed and fairy lights. We don't use them all at the same time but we have the choice of creating different moods. Before we began, we borrowed some uplighters from our electrical suppliers to try.'



'The end wall of our kitchen-diner is made up of huge glass bifold doors'



ABOVE The extension was designed by Elke Dittrich of Dittrich Hudson Vasetti Architects (0117 914 8317, dhva.co.uk).

RIGHT In the garden, the decking was installed by Green Gecko (01179 396990, greengecko.gardens.com).

with a loft conversion we could then apply for a re-mortgage. With the extra borrowed money we could then build a big kitchen-dining extension at the rear.

'Another reason was that by starting at the top of the house and working downwards we avoided messing up areas that had already been redecorated. For instance we had to knock a hole through the attic floor to

install the staircase and more holes in the roof for skylights and this all caused masses of dust and grime. Once the loft was finished, however, it was a welcome retreat while the ground floor kitchen extension was being completed. We decided we would sleep on the top floor for privacy so that guests on the first floor could have the existing bathroom to themselves.'

What was the next step?

'We then went on to create a big zinc-roofed extension three metres deep running along the back of the house. The old lean-to was demolished and the end wall of our kitchen-diner is made up of huge glass bifold doors so at parties everyone can spill out into >>



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INTERIOR INSPIRATION

'With any extension or conversion, think carefully about what you want. Builders who deal with loft conversions will have a standard set of designs but you have to create a space that suits you. And if you come up with your own design it won't necessarily cost more. Don't do things too quickly. Live in the space for a bit and then decide what you want as you get used to it.'



the garden. We renovated the garden too. This included removing 75 bags of rubble and around 25 recycling bins of overgrown shrubs from the garden in order to create a small lawn, a raised bed, a decked area and a seating space.'

What else did you do?

'We did as much of the work as we could to save money. We laid new oak floorboards in the loft, stripped the wallpaper and painted the walls and ceilings throughout. We did all the tiling in the two bathrooms and sanded all the old floorboards and either stained or painted them and Cas made the tall bookcase in the extension.'

'In the sitting room we managed to create a new fireplace by simply mending a broken one we'd been given, rubbing it down and polishing it and then adding tiles bought from eBay plus slate for the hearth from a local shop. We opened up the fireplaces in both guest bedrooms. Our Ikea bedroom units were given a new lease of life with a lick of paint, and we replaced

LEFT This room was once part of a windowless loft. Juliet made the headboard by stapling fabric onto a padded wooden panel.

ABOVE & RIGHT The dressing table and chests of drawers are painted in Pale Powder by Farrow & Ball (01202 876141, farrow-ball.com).

the handles with pretty glass ones. In our en suite shower room, Casimir and his father built the shelf supporting the sink and the shelf/storage space by the shower. By saving money on labour we could afford better quality tiles so we put in beautiful iridescent mosaic ones round the basin.'

How did you furnish the house?

'By endlessly hunting for bargains via the internet or looking in local shops. For the sitting room we searched for ages to find a curtain track that would run all the way round the bay window and then Casimir's mother sewed the curtains from the fabric we sent her; two chairs came from eBay and I persuaded >>






ABOVE & RIGHT The toilet and basin are from Plumbworld (plumbworld.co.uk) and the shower tray is from Bathstore (0800 023 2323, bathstore.com).

RIGHT County Glass & Glazing (01296 487586, countyglassandglazing.co.uk) supplied the made-to-measure glass shower door.

my mother to go on an upholstery course so she could re-upholster them.'

What would you change?

'I wish we'd put underfloor heating beneath the chilly tiled floor in our en suite bathroom. We also plan to install blinds across the rooflights in the extension as this room gets so hot in the summer that fresh flowers wilt by the end of the day and we have to keep our wine rack upstairs. The room attracts masses of light and warmth, which is perfect for most of the year, but we have to open our bifold doors on the hottest days. I also wish we'd put a woodburner into the sitting room fireplace as it would be cleaner and more fuel-efficient than having an open fire, although I do really love having a lit fire on a cold day. Overall though I'm really pleased with what we've achieved here, and all on a reasonable budget.' 



ABOVE The white ceramic wall tiles and the iridescent mosaic tiles around the sink are from Topps Tiles (0800 783 6262, toppstiles.co.uk).