

## LIVING ROOM

Fi found her calling for interior design while renovating the ground-floor spaces of her home, choosing statement lighting against a dark grey backdrop.

**Wall** painted in Madison Grey; **Palm 'hairy' light shade**, both Abigail Ahern. For a similar olive green **sofa**, try the Fargo from BoConcept. **Radius coffee table**, Habitat. **Alhede rug** and **Stave mirror**, Ikea. **Green Mongolian faux-fur cushion**, Wilko. **Fiat cushion**, TK Maxx





**CALMING COLOUR**

**Left** Fi and Maggie the dog relax in the kitchen living area. **Walls** painted in Pure Brilliant White, Dulux; **doors** to garden painted in Down Pipe, Farrow & Ball

**EXTERIOR**

**Below** Behind the narrow façade of this archetypal Victorian terraced property now lies a spacious family home. **Shutters**, Hillarys Blinds



**THE OWNERS**

Fi Duke, a renovation project manager and interior designer, and Paul Briggs, a recruitment director, live here with children Sophie, 12, and Tom, 10

**THE PROPERTY**

A five-bedroom Victorian terraced house in Chelmsford, Essex

**FI LOVES**

Le Marais, Paris  
**Chai Latte**  
*To Kill a Mockingbird*  
**Fiat 500 Classic**  
 The Italian film *Life is Beautiful*  
**Havanese dogs**

**FI CAN'T STAND**

Unkindness

*Real Homes*  
**CASE STUDY**

# EXTENDED AND UPDATED TERRACED HOME

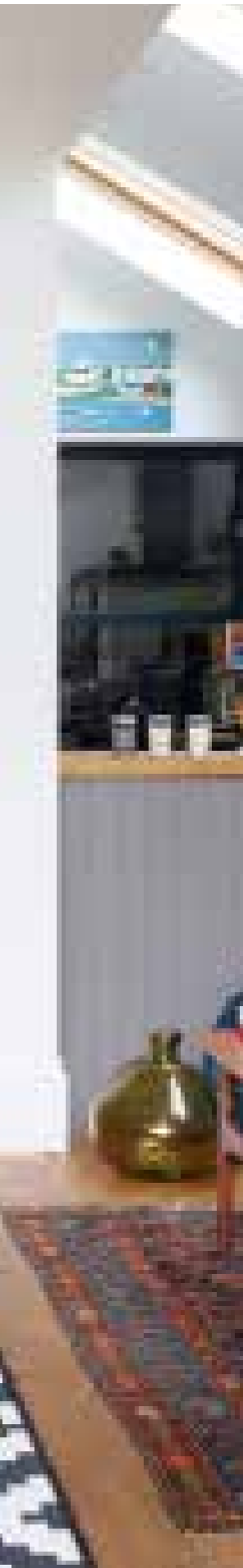
Space was tight in Fi Duke and Paul Briggs' three-bedroom home, until a loft conversion and side-return extension transformed the Essex property into a stylish family space

WORDS AND STYLING **ANNA TOBIN** PHOTOGRAPHS **RACHAEL SMITH** ►

**KITCHEN/DINER**

Tongue and groove panelling painted in Charleston Gray by Farrow & Ball separates the kitchen from the dining space. **Fridge-freezer**, Fisher & Paykel. For similar units, try Cooke & Lewis' Holywell range at B&Q





When Fi Duke and husband Paul Briggs bought their three-bedroom Victorian home in Chelmsford around eight years ago, their daughter Sophie was four and son Tom was two, and they could see that they would possibly outgrow the property. However, it was the potential to extend the house out to the side and convert the roof space that sold it to them. 'I could see straightaway that it had tons of potential,' recalls Fi, 'and it's kind of grown with our family.'

As they couldn't afford to do everything at once, the couple started with the most pressing renovations, before gradually working their way through the house as their budget allowed. First on the list was a new roof, and replacing the old windows with better-insulated sash windows. 'They were a really unattractive 1960s style, and very draughty, so we went for wood-effect PVC, then installed shutters throughout,' explains Fi. 'They're neat and extremely practical for privacy when living in a busy street. We can tilt them so that they let the sunlight through, but no one can see in, which is so much better than net curtains.'

As the family had discovered problems with the plumbing, next to be tackled was the bathroom. 'We pulled everything out and started again with white Victorian-style sanitaryware in keeping with the house.' A year in, with planning permission secured, work then began on the kitchen. 'The old space was quite small and had a door leading out on to the classic Victorian side return,' says Fi. 'So we extended out into this area to create a much larger ➤

#### HEART OF THE HOME

**Below** A Steel Cucine 100 range cooker from Bradshaw is flanked by Retro Metro Swiss Cottage tiles

from Fired Earth, and a glass splashback from Maldon Glass. For a similar chimney hood, try the Bosch DWW077A 50B, John Lewis



*'I could see straight away that this house had potential, and it's grown with our family'*

#### SEATING SPACE

**Below** A Stockton electric stove from Zigi Fireplaces creates a cosy corner in the kitchen. Three-leg chair, Blue Sun Tree. Bench seat, Heal's. Rug, Ebay

#### DINING AREA

**Right** The garden views are enjoyed from the Vintage G Plan table from Ebay. Eiffel chairs and Karsten pendant light, both Blue Sun Tree. Rug, Ikea

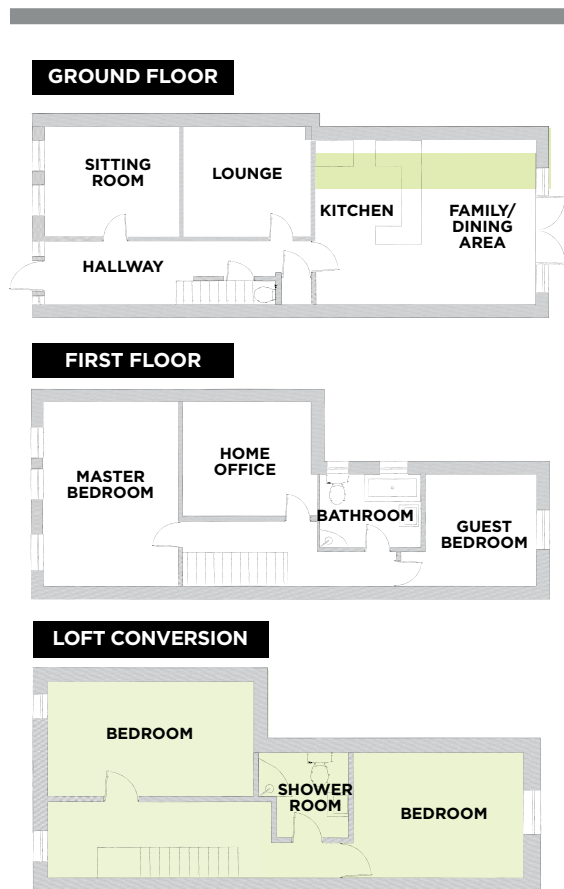


open-plan kitchen/dining/entertaining space.’ The one hindrance to the open-plan design was a fixed middle steel. ‘We didn’t want it to obstruct the view at the back of the house, so positioned it in the middle of the room,’ she adds. ‘What was the dining room became a playroom, and as the children have grown and the amount of toys reduced, we’ve closed it off from the kitchen with an internal Crittall-style window and turned it into a snug.’

Using a local architect to put together basic drawings from Fi’s designs, the couple then selected builder Ian Wallaker, who had been recommended by friends. ‘He was very knowledgeable and made us feel confident, advising us on spacing and layout, which was a great help. He was also happy for me to get involved.’ Fi project-managed the various phases of the build from the start. ‘Ian and his team did a really good job, keeping us in the loop throughout,’ she adds.

The focus of the kitchen was to be the dining and sitting area where large doors open onto the garden, so Fi chose kitchen units that look and are arranged more like ➤

*‘We extended into the side return to create a much larger open-plan kitchen’*



**CONTEMPORARY RENOVATION**

Extending into the side return (in green) has created a large, open-plan kitchen, dining and living area. A loft conversion houses two bedrooms and a bathroom for the children, while a first-floor bedroom has been converted into a home office



**BEFORE**

**WORK IN PROGRESS**

Above By simply extending by a couple of metres to the side, Fi and Paul dramatically increased the sense of space

**TRANSFORMED REAR ASPECT**

Below An architectural-style garden door, made bespoke by Trustwood Joinery to Fi’s own design, works well in a period property



**AFTER**



**GUEST ROOM**

Book shelf motif trompe-l'oeil wallpaper - try Young & Battaglia for similar - and a fun flamingo from DZD, add interest. For a similar floor lamp, try the Kartler, B&Q. For a similar mother of pearl pendant light, try the Eglo Chipsy, Dusk Lights. Sergio silver wool throw, Wool Me



**HALLWAY**

Above Fi replaced lino with mosaic floor tiles more in keeping with the house. For similar, try Victorian tiles, Original Style. Door sign, Battlesbridge Antiques

**FIRST-FLOOR LANDING**

Below Avebury Aldbourne Stripe carpet contrasts with walls painted in Farrow & Ball's Down Pipe. Orangina print, Artrepublic

furniture than traditional units. 'I wanted to keep the walls clear so that there would be a clean line across the room,' she explains. 'I also put the boiler in the loft, so that there was nothing at wall height needing to be hidden behind a unit.'

The couple chose hardwearing engineered wood flooring bought from the sawmill at Orlestone Oak in Kent, and treated the wood themselves as they were able to get it at a much better price. 'I wish I'd gone for concrete or Corian worktops now, instead of oak,' admits Fi. 'I feel there is a little too much wood in here; I wouldn't advise anyone to choose both wooden flooring and worktops!'

With the rear of the ground floor given over to family space, Fi has kept the main living space more formal, but added interesting accessories picked up when visiting family in Scandinavia, as well as from charity shops and Ebay. It was as she was refurbishing the downstairs rooms that Fi realised she had a knack for it, and so decided to retrain as an interior designer. With the children getting older, the couple also felt that they could do with an additional bathroom, so converted the loft into two bedrooms and a bathroom for the children, turning the second bedroom on ➤





#### HOME OFFICE

Above A former bedroom is now Fi's office. **Desk** made from a worktop and two Ikea **drawer units**. Vintage-style **armchair**, Pepper Mill Antiques

#### BATHROOM

Right Fi found the vintage **towel rail** for her scheme on Ebay. For a similar **bath and basin**, try Bathstore. For **floor tiles**, try the Travertine design, Walls & Floors



the first floor into a home office for Fi's business, and the back room into a guest room. The couple decided to hire local specialist Chelmer Loft Conversions for this. 'I was very involved from day one,' says Fi. 'I would often source items such as radiators and door finishes myself so I knew exactly what I was getting; they joked that they had never seen a client up and down the ladder so much!'

One of the key requirements for the loft conversion was for it to feel as though the extra floor was part of the original house. 'The staircase was built to follow on and match the stairs from the ground floor, even down to the wooden spindle design,' says Fi. 'And I made sure that the two bedrooms on the top floor have nice tall ceilings, too.'

The family is delighted that their house is now finally finished, although Fi is always dreaming up new plans. 'I really like the little outdoor room area that we've created in the garden,' she says. 'Sometimes I think it would be nice to have our outdoor sofas covered by a glass box extension, so that we could sit on them all year round. But then I think I'd regret it once our few days of summer come around, so we'll leave it for now...' 🍷

#### THE COSTS AND CONTACTS

Loft conversion

**£30,000**

Kitchen

**£20,000**

Bathrooms

**£18,000**

Side extension

**£10,000**

Windows

**£10,000**

Flooring

**£10,000**

Garden

**£5,000**

Decoration

**£5,000**

TOTAL

**£108,000**

Purchase cost in 2008

**£350,000**

Estimated value in 2015

**£630,000**

Potential profit

**£172,000**

**Construction** Ian Wallaker, 01702 545556

**Loft extension** Chelmer Loft Conversions, 01245 409292

**Doors and windows** Trustwood Joinery, 01277 203203; Bygone Collection, 01376 510410

**Kitchen** Howdens  
**Flooring** Orlestone Oak



**MASTER BEDROOM**

Fi dyed her existing John Lewis **bedlinen** grey to give it a new lease of life. For a similar **bedstead**, try Linea Hoxton, House of Fraser. **Hooks and chair**, both TK Maxx. **Bird cushion**, John Lewis. For a similar **aztec rug**, try The Rug House