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Pictures: Tim Crocker

CASE STUDY

Fully

2 evolved



Richard and Christine Miller's one bedroom ground floor flat was fine for a couple but far too cramped for family life. The solution?

Extend in structural glass and excavate within the basement to form a four bedroom maisonette.

In the past when people outgrew their homes they sold up and moved on to buy larger properties – rather like a hermit crab changing its shell for a better fit. Today, home owners often search for other alternatives and many choose to extend or remodel their existing homes rather than uproot to another area. This was the case for Richard and Christine Miller, who had been living in a tree-lined road in London's Highgate for a number of years and were happily ensconced in the neighbourhood.

"We had been renting our one bedroom ground floor flat in a semi-detached Victorian house since 1983," says Richard, who works in the music business. □

The dining area has been squeezed out from the building and enclosed with glass to connect it directly to the decked garden, which is planted with architectural plants such as olive trees and bamboo.





Fluid and open living, dining and kitchen spaces exploit the existing level changes in the apartment.



months of noise, dirt and disruption the work generated."

The fact that the Millers' home sits on a crossroads enabled builders, Copués Construction, to access the property from the side and move earth from the basement up by conveyor belt to the waiting skips. This excavation was largely carried out by hand and took several months to complete but, had the family lived in a mid-terraced home, the problem would have been intensified by the necessity to wheelbarrow the soil out through the main house.

The enlarged cellar was tanked and a lightwell created overlooked by windows in the children's new



The new glass box extension provides plenty of opportunity for alfresco dining.

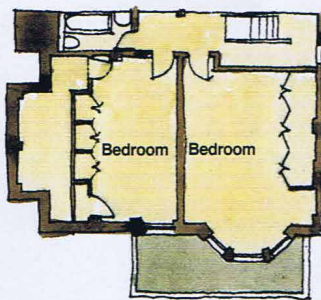


bedrooms. Seamlessly joining together the new and old elements of the building proved challenging because of the various levels, but Julian King has made this problem into a feature so that two sets of stairs now lead down from the existing living room into the new extension.

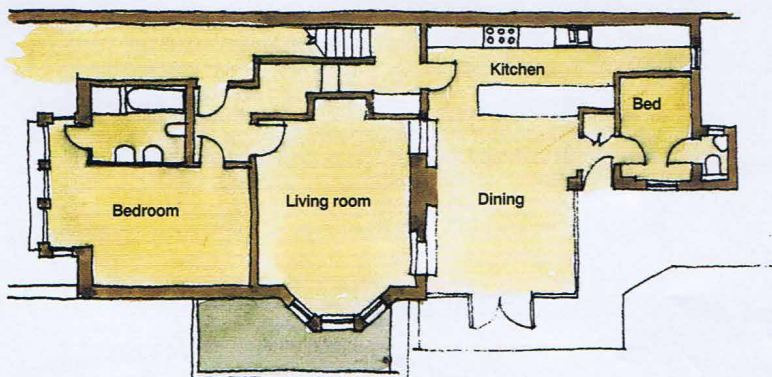
This avoided undermining the footings and the need for expensive underpinning.

A small digger was brought onto the site to dig out new foundations for the glass box extension, which was supplied and installed by specialist contractor Cantifix Architectural Glazing. "It was terrifying watching the huge glass panels being craned into position because they are extremely heavy and were held in place by suckers," says Christine, who works in London for Chanel. "The glass roof sits at a slight angle so that rainwater runs off and down the sides, which makes sitting inside rather like being underneath a waterfall."

Basement



Ground floor



Recessed vented heating in the extension prevents the glass from misting up, and heat from the sun dissipates throughout the large open plan space and avoids overheating, whilst a trench of drain enables the maple flooring of the kitchen/dining room to sit at the same level as the external decking, preventing water from running back inside the house.

Double glass doors open outwards into the garden, connecting the eating area with the outdoors, and the interiors have been designed to provide maximum storage in order that surfaces can remain uncluttered and avoid detracting from the views. Richard and Christine enjoy cooking and the functional peninsular breakfast bar contains drawers, cupboards and a wine rack and acts as a room divider between the kitchen and dining areas. Two full height pull-out larder units provide additional storage and the fridge-freezer is contained in a recess beside the utility room, which was formerly the family bathroom.

The project took eight months to complete and cost £180,000 – a figure which the Millers feared could easily have doubled, which meant that certain finishes were dictated by budget. Even so, Christine and Richard have introduced some eye catching features, including the unusual grey concrete kitchen worktops which are inset with small pieces of coloured stone, and the abstract digital wallpaper in the newly revamped sitting room. Virtually all of their traditional furniture has been discarded and replaced by new contemporary pieces, which were purchased to better suit the style of their freshly remodelled home.

"We were so lucky because the team of architects and builders working on the project were such a lovely bunch of people," says Richard, who was astonished to see hundreds of visitors queuing for hours to view the flat during Open House London, an annual event when buildings are opened to the public free of charge.

"There were a few hiccups, but on the whole it was an experience I would be happy to repeat again, and one which has enabled us to remain living in an area and a property we have grown to love," he continues. "Highgate is like a village, and we have no need to consider moving because the flat has stretched to accommodate us perfectly and is now the size of a small house."

Contacts:

- Wilkinson King Architects: 020 7284 1975, www.wilkinsonking.com
- Cantifix Architectural Glazing: 020 8203 6203
- Copués Construction (builder): 020 8363 3523
- Hardwood Flooring Company (flooring installation): www.hardwoodflooring.co.uk
- Kyode Lipede (concrete worktops): 020 7916 8290
- Kahrs (UK) Ltd (maple flooring): 01243 778747
- Timber Fit (kitchen units): 01582 414127
- Villeroy & Boch (ceramic tiles): 01625 525202
- Bette (bath and shower tray): 01789 262262
- Open House London: www.londonopenhouse.org