

KITCHEN-DINER

The trio of black pendants over the island clearly marks out this work zone from the rest of the room. Nordlux Pure Black 1 pendants, £67 each, Illumination.co.uk. Bespoke kitchen units by Higham Furniture; painted in Cornforth White and Railings estate eggshell, both £60 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball. Welles stools, £149 each, Swoon. Bespoke bifold doors, Cedar Bifold Company



OPEN TO CHANGE

Rachael and Daniel Smith endured the drawbacks of building work in winter to create their dream space

FEATURE SEÁN O'CONNELL | PHOTOGRAPHY VERONICA RODRIGUEZ



REPLANNED

HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

LOCATION North London
ROOMS Hall, sitting room, kitchen-diner, media room, study, utility room, cloakroom, four bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom

PURCHASED 2013
PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'Before this, we shared a flat in north London,' says Rachael.



SITTING ROOM
White walls accentuate the light feel of this elegant space. Walls painted in Strong White estate emulsion, £45 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball. Izzy sofa in Midnight Blue, £620, Sofa.com. Grande Black pendant, £85, Habitat. Yeoman CL5 woodburner, £975, Stoves Are Us. Bespoke plantation shutters, Shutterly Fabulous



MAIN BEDROOM
The pistachio-coloured bed breaks up the cool neutrals. Peony king-size bed and headboard, £695, Button & Sprung. Walls painted in Cornforth White estate emulsion, £45 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball. Jieldé Signal bedside wall lamps, £120 each, Holloways of Ludlow. Steps merino throw, £259, Heal's



STUDY
Dark, cocooning walls suit the function of this room. Walls painted in Squid Ink pure flat emulsion, £48.50 for 2.5L, Paint & Paper Library. Izzy armchair, £620, Sofa.com

Having just taken possession of their new home, Rachael and Daniel Smith were eager to begin maximising the internal space. With a view to starting a family, opening up their Victorian terrace in north London was the obvious way to proceed, but they realised it would be a full-on project.

'First, we had our architect and builders plan the extension, as well as a top-to-bottom renovation,' says Rachael. 'However, our main priority was replacing the roof, followed by the critical stuff that needed doing before we could move in – new electrics, plumbing and heating.'

After focusing on making the room at the top of the house liveable – which included raising the ceiling – the pair camped out in there for the remainder of the project. 'We had a mattress on the floor and basic amenities such as a fridge and a microwave,' says Rachael.

While living on site was convenient for Daniel, who acted as project manager and oversaw the work, it wasn't always easy. The removal of the rear wall, which left the rest of the home exposed to the elements, coincided with the coldest winter months. 'At that time, our most treasured possession was an electric blanket,' says Rachael. 'Our timing definitely wasn't the best – a stone bath we'd ordered was delivered months before it could be installed, so it sat in the midst of all the work, in a box that our builders had to make quickly to protect it.'

During that period, not only had all the walls and ceilings been stripped back to the original studs and joists

in readiness for being replastered, but heavy-duty building work was happening at the back of the house. 'To create extra ceiling height in the new kitchen-diner, we decided to dig down and lower the floor level,' says Rachael.

For a project this substantial, there were surprisingly few hitches, which Rachael puts down to good teamwork. 'The construction company, Basement Services, was helpful and efficient,' she says. 'Dan was brilliant, too – he sourced a lot of the materials and also organised the electrics, lighting, alarms and sound systems.'

However, Rachael came into her own with the decor. With her love of interiors, and having collected samples and created mood boards, she had clear ideas about how each room would look. The couple opted for a colour scheme that she describes as 'softer than monochrome', pairing white paintwork with dark, inky emulsion on the walls.

Despite buying most of the furnishings and accessories new for the house, the Smiths were also keen to retain the property's Victorian character. Among their most significant additions were the period fireplaces they reinstalled on each floor. 'Pairing old with new can work really well,' says Rachael.

Although certain areas are still a work in progress, the couple are pleased that they now have the space they dreamed of. 'From the start, this was always designed to be a family home,' says Rachael. 'A year ago, we had our daughter, Ella, so we appreciate the way our house is now, and feel like all the hard work has paid off.' 🐰



ELLA'S BEDROOM
'I went for neutral shades so the room could easily change and grow with Ella,' says Rachael. Walls painted in Skimming Stone estate emulsion, £45 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball. Vivid Atelier Rabbit II and Deer II prints, £18 each, FYI