



# ‘We sacrificed some bedrooms to create a luxurious home’

Prioritising family life led Laura and Jamie Smith to reconfigure and extend their house, using a warm Scandi décor throughout

Words JANE CRITTENDEN Styling MARISHA TAYLOR Photography ADAM SCOTT

#### Kitchen

Made by Greg Cox was recommended for the couple's kitchen, and he suggested a modern take on the Shaker style, with a thin edge around the doors and wood on the island to contrast with Farrow & Ball's Railings. Marble-effect quartz worktops from Stone 4 Life and chocolate bronze Edgbaston cupboard handles from Armac Martin complete the look



**↓ Larder**  
 'Having a pantry was a non-negotiable, and Greg worked with our builders to make it happen,' says Laura. 'I particularly love the reeded glass in the door, which we've also used in one of the wall cupboards.' Walls painted in Farrow & Ball's Dead Salmon provide subtle contrast



**W**ith scope to extend out the back and into the loft, the four-bedroom property in Wanstead that Laura and Jamie Smith found in 2018 was just the kind of project they were looking for. The couple were drawn to the 1930s house due to its wide dimensions and big garden, compared to their previous narrow Victorian terrace. 'We had to be imaginative though, as the property was horrendous,' Laura recalls. 'Every room was stuffed to the brim, dark, depressing and filthy.' After the sale went through, the couple had two weeks to blitz the house before they moved in, knowing they'd have to live like this for →

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**↑ Open-plan space**  
 Laura was drawn to a clean, calm Scandi look with plenty of uncluttered circulation space in the extension. Spark & Bell's Smile Arc pendants were customised with a brass lamp holder and pink cables, and the Bella blue bar stools are by Diiiz



## Step inside...

### Meet the owners

Laura Smith (@renovate128), a solicitor, lives here with her husband Jamie, a project manager, and daughters Isla, 8 and Olivia, 6

### House details

A four-bedroom 1930s semi in Wanstead, east London

### When they bought it

2018



← **Window seat**  
An oriel window draws the eye to the garden and frames an old magnolia tree, which the couple kept when they landscaped outside. 'Everyone gravitates to this seat when we're in the kitchen,' says Laura. 'I designed it especially for the room, and asked my mum to make the cushion in a blue and cream Ikat fabric'



**Style steal**

Dark kitchens are bang on trend, but to keep your kitchen scheme looking bright and contemporary, team units with light coloured walls, worktops and flooring. This will help reflect the light as well as creating a lovely contrast with your chosen design

another year until they could start any major work. So rooms were fumigated and white-washed, carpets replaced with inexpensive lino and a basic kitchen fitted.

Local estate agents suggested that turning the property into a six-bedroom house would have more appeal if they decided to sell in the future, but Laura and Jamie felt a comfortable home that worked for their family was more important. 'We didn't need all those bedrooms, so we decided to turn two of the smaller ones into part of a main bedroom suite for us,' says Laura.

So over the next year, the couple put together a project plan, with the obvious change being to knock through the kitchen to the dining room and extend. Converting the loft into bedrooms and a bathroom for daughters Isla and Olivia worked well, but left them with four original bedrooms on the first floor. 'We wanted a guest room for Jamie's parents, who regularly visit, but I couldn't see us using the two smaller bedrooms very often,' Laura explains. 'So it made sense to turn one of them into a guest bathroom next to the room at the front of the house.' →



**Dining area**

The Maxlight sliding doors go right to the ceiling to maximise the light, and Greg crafted the table using leftover American ash floor planks and metal trestle legs from Etsy. Pink Beetle chairs by Gubi and a G-Plan sideboard add the finishing touches. 'I love the Mid-century look, and found this one on Ebay in immaculate condition,' says Laura



← **Living area**

'I didn't want the extension to look like a bland box so I created focal points by keeping the old fireplace and adding display shelving, which the carpenter made based on my Pinterest board,' says Laura. A DFS Hoxton armchair and sofa, Benuta rug and five-arm brass chandelier, from Spark & Bell furnish the space

→ **Downstairs loo**

Modern patterned floor tiles and wall-mounted baskets add a pop of personality to this small room



As the couple's bedroom lacked an en suite, Laura's dad, a property developer, suggested they take over the entire back of the house and create one luxurious space. 'We were a bit nervous about losing the bedrooms, but it made sense to turn the old bathroom into our en suite, and the adjoining fourth bedroom was ideal as a dressing room,' says Laura. 'It was the best decision, as we use all of the space every day.'

The couple split the building work into two phases and hired builders Summit Group after recommendations from

friends, moving into a rental for six months in February 2019 while the team tackled the loft and first floor. Phase two began in February 2020, extending and opening up downstairs and converting the garage into a utility. Lockdown caused a short delay, but the team were able to carry on by using the side access, while the family set up a kitchen and home school in the front living room.

'We were able to monitor their progress and we were really impressed with the team's work ethic,' Laura recalls. 'Slow deliveries and delays to materials added a couple of' →



**Hallway**

The 1930s house had very few period features, so new panelling in the hall adds character and interest to walls painted in Farrow & Ball's Stone White



Laura

“ I’m a quiet person, and perhaps that’s reflected in the interiors and my love of calm neutrals ”

← **Living room**

The couple wanted a smarter look for this grown-up space, adding colour to their existing grey velvet sofa and footstool from [Sofa.com](http://Sofa.com) with a Persian rug Laura’s parents gave to them

months to the schedule, so it was lovely to have upstairs finished to retreat to.’

Laura used Pinterest boards to collate decorating ideas, and began to see themes emerge from her saved images. ‘I love colour but I didn’t want to use too much, partly because life is crazy busy and I needed to be able to come in, close the front door and feel calm,’ Laura says. ‘I like teaming the darks with the lights, touches of plaster pink, and

muted Scandi tones, such as wood flooring, simple wood furniture and neutral walls.’

Laura sought out the right shade of white she could decorate with everywhere. ‘I was looking for a tone that wasn’t too bright, grey or beige,’ she says. ‘Farrow & Ball’s Strong White is somewhere in between and sets off everything I put with it.’

Decorating the upper two floors became Laura’s reference point for downstairs where →

## SPRING HOMES



### Main bedroom →

Wood panelling painted in Farrow & Ball's Inchyra hides the chimney breast, and was the starting point for the contrasting lighter décor that followed, says Laura. 'The quality and feel of the Souk wool rug and brass lighting from West Elm gives the scheme a smart elegance reminiscent of a hotel room'

### ← En suite

Laura has combined Lily Pad Admiral shower tiles from Ca' Pietra with white herringbone tiles from Fired Earth, to striking effect. 'It's such a luxury to have a nice en suite, and it's my favourite room,' she says. Sleek Edison wall lights by Industville frame the Dwell mirror above the Modus vanity unit from Lusso Stone



wood panelling and wardrobes in the couple's bedroom have been painted in Farrow & Ball's deep blue-grey shade Inchyra, and a similar dark and light combo repeats in the kitchen, with cupboards in the blue-black Railings. 'I'm a quiet person, and perhaps that's reflected in my interiors,' says Laura. 'I like how the blues feel like calm neutrals, while contrasting with the warm white and complementing the hints of pink.'

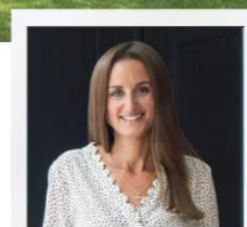
With further nods to Scandi style, flooring became another anchor point, where instead of carpet Laura opted for pale oak planks and a large rug in their bedroom, and engineered oak in the front living room and extension. 'Wood feels so nice underfoot, and is practical as it can be mopped,' says Laura. 'I chose herringbone in the living room, which I love. I just wish I'd →





**Olivia's room**

'I let the girls choose their own wallpaper, and Olivia's request was for a blue pattern with monkeys,' says Laura, who found Monkey Jungle from the Albany Tropical wallpaper collection at Wallpaperdirect. The Malm desk is from Ikea and Gubi Pink Beetle chair from Made In Design



Laura

↑ **Exterior** A double extension and loft conversion has created all the space the family need, with their two girls bedrooms in the loft and a large bedroom suite across the back of the first floor for Laura and Jamie. The couple had the garden landscaped at the same time

“ We were nervous about losing bedrooms, but it was the best decision, and a better use of space ”

been brave enough to use it throughout downstairs – I just thought it would be too much. But you learn something from every project to take to the next.'

The couple's furniture is mostly new, with plain wood Scandi styles alongside original or new Mid-century pieces complementing Laura's vision for calm and simplicity. A wall of floor-to-ceiling shelves in the extension living area are her pride and joy. 'We'd looked at buying units but they were so expensive, and Summit Group's

carpenter was amazing,' she says. 'So between us, we drew the design on the plastered wall and he made the shelves exactly as we wanted, and I love them.'

Now the whole house is finished, the family are really pleased with the outcome. 'Every time I come home, I think "this is a lovely place to live",' says Laura. 'I especially love our bedroom, which feels like a luxe boutique-hotel room. I'm so happy and settled living here.' @