

The first floor at the back of the house has floor-to-ceiling glazing and a sunroom that leads onto the balcony



Open house

Behind an unassuming exterior, white walls, big windows and generous spaces make this London terrace stand out from the crowd

WORDS JANE CRITTENDEN PHOTOGRAPHY ALISTAIR NICHOLLS

Mattias Johansson, 47, and his wife, Cameron, 44, had been looking for a home within easy commuting distance of central London. So when Cameron's parents decided to sell their terraced townhouse in Dulwich, London, the timing couldn't have been better for the couple and their two daughters Ellen, six, and Evie, three.

Cameron, who works in international relations, lived in the 1960s-built home through her teenage years and later rented it from her parents as part of a house share with friends. When Mattias first saw the property he was unimpressed by its unassuming exterior. 'You could pass by and think nothing of it,' he says. 'But inside, the light and views at the back are a lovely surprise.'

Mattias was born in Sweden and the couple, who both love Scandinavian design, felt the style of the house would work well with Nordic-inspired interiors and they were keen not to lose any of the original features. 'There were a few changes to be made in terms of the layout and the whole house needed updating,' explains Mattias.

Architect Darren Oldfield helped the couple create a plan for the renovations, coming up with ideas for »



ABOVE From the upper floors, the four-storey house looks out over the London skyline. A flat roof on the garage, as well as the balcony at the rear, were replaced during the renovation



IN BRIEF

LOCATION Dulwich, London

TYPE OF PROPERTY

1960s terraced townhouse

BEDROOMS 3/4

PROJECT STARTED October 2016

PROJECT FINISHED August 2017

SIZE 221sqm (including garage)

PROJECT COST £200,000

CURRENT VALUE Approx £1.3 million

The balcony is a suntrap in the warmer months. The couple plan to fit an awning to protect the west-facing living room from the sun's glare



making better use of the spaces by taking down walls, and fitting new electrics, plumbing, bathrooms and bespoke joinery. 'He provided drawings for nearly every room on every floor,' says Mattias. Then, during spring 2016, Mattias and his dad spent a long weekend stripping the house of furniture and fittings ready for the builders.

Built into the slope of a hill, the townhouse is laid out over four floors with the upper ground floor at street level, which is where the majority of the alterations took place. A quirk of this floor – and the one above – were the white plastic panels covering the lower part of the windows, which were removed and replaced with glass. 'The idea was to bring more daylight inside,'

Mattias says. 'Now when we come through the front door, we can see right through to the trees outside at the back of the house.'

The couple's wish for an open-plan living/dining area and kitchen on this level saw two walls taken down to open up the snug to create a single space. This required a clever bit of design from the structural engineer, who was concerned about the lateral stability of the house.

'A concrete beam runs beneath the kitchen floorboards and a steel beam runs across the ceiling connecting both party walls,' explains Darren. 'The engineer specified a narrow column on both walls connected to both beams, which forms a rigid frame.' »

ABOVE An original internal window separates the living room from the hall. The glazing was replaced with toughened glass to make it child safe. Built-in bookshelves were designed by the architect

RIGHT The strong lines of the 1960s staircase balustrade are a key feature of the house

The couple love Scandinavian design, and felt the style of the house would work well with Nordic inspired interiors



FLOOR PLANS





'When we come through the front door, we can see right through to the trees at the back of the house'

Opening up the upper-ground floor to the staircase also had an impact on complying with fire-safety building regulations. Mattias and Darren explored various solutions such as sprinklers and a fire curtain but settled on a water mist system. 'It's linked to a high-pressure pump in the garage that is connected to the mains water,' Mattias says. 'If there ever is a fire the mist will minimise water damage.'

As Mattias and Cameron both work full-time, they hired a main contractor with project management experience. But as the renovations progressed, it became apparent that things weren't going well, and what should have been a three-month project turned into more than six months. 'It got to the point where I was double-checking the work rather than simply monitoring how things were' »



THIS IMAGE AND LEFT
Mattias designed
the sleek kitchen
using Ikea's online
planning tool. The
classic dining table
and chairs are by
Danish designer
Hans J Wegner



LEFT Ellen and Evie's zingy bathroom on the first floor is a fun combination of bright yellow flooring and a vivid orange blind

BELOW The guest bedroom, with bay window, is on the first floor facing the street

going,' says Mattias. 'Darren and I would have done a much better job ourselves.'

Things came to a head with an extraction system that should have been fitted in the loft to ventilate the kitchen and lower-ground floor. The flue for an old gas boiler ran up through all four floors to a chimney, making an ideal passageway for the new ducting. Months passed without the work being completed, and eventually the family moved in without it being done. 'The firm went

bust shortly after the build finished, so we had to pay for a specialist installer,' says Mattias.

Not ones to dwell on a setback, Mattias and Cameron have had a couple of years to appreciate the benefits of their updated home. The rooms are bright and welcoming with the kitchen a particular favourite. 'It's where we cook, eat, do homework and have parties,' says Mattias. 'The house suits us, and we're always happy to come home.'

Which, really, is all you can wish for. **GD**





A new flat-panel radiator maintains the clean lines in Mattias and Cameron's bedroom

LEFT In the main bedroom en suite, the architect proposed a customised vanity to slot in by the shower. An all-white wall scheme opens up the room with a contrasting charcoal grey rubber floor

SUPPLIERS

PROJECT TEAM

Design Darren Oldfield Architects
(darrenoldfield.co.uk)
Structural engineer Blue Engineering
(blueengineering.co.uk)

STRUCTURE

Flat roofs Cousins Roofing & Building
(cousinsflatroofing.co.uk)

FIXTURES & FITTINGS

Fitted furniture Andwoodcraft
(andwoodcraft.co.uk)
Kitchen Ikea (ikea.com)
Tiles Topps Tiles (toppstiles.co.uk)

Bathrooms Park Street Bathrooms
(parkstreetbathrooms.com);
Bathstore (bathstore.com)

Carpets and rubber floors
First Floor Fulham (firstfloorfulham.co.uk)

Wood flooring Flooring Supplies
(flooringsupplies.co.uk)

Light fittings Olive & the Fox
(oliveandthefox.co.uk)

Meinertz SkyLine Plinth radiators
Venturi (venturiluk.com)

Underfloor heating
Nu-Heat (nu-heat.co.uk)
Xpelair Xplus 2 ventilation

Ventfiltersrus (ventfiltersrus.com)

Halo Fire Mist System
Quenchfire (quenchfire.co.uk)

Dulux Trade Diamond Matt paint
Dulux Decorator Centre
(duluxdecoratorcentre.co.uk)

FURNITURE & ACCESSORIES

Hans J Wegner Wishbone and Elbow chairs, and dining table
Carl Hansen & Søn (carlhansen.com)

Sofa Ikea (as before)
Freestanding shelving
String (stringfurniture.com)