

November 2017



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INSPIRING HOMES

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COVER STORY



A mixture of pieces from around the world creates one-of-a-kind style in this contemporary apartment (page 81).

HALL
 Glass balustrades keep this space and the landing light and open. Walls painted in Slipper Satin estate emulsion, £43.50 per 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. Find a range of graphic rugs at Heal's, from £400



REPLANNED



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Detached house

LOCATION

Berkshire

ROOMS Hall, sitting room, kitchen-diner, study, utility room, cloakroom, play room, four bedrooms (two en suite), two bathrooms

PURCHASED 2008

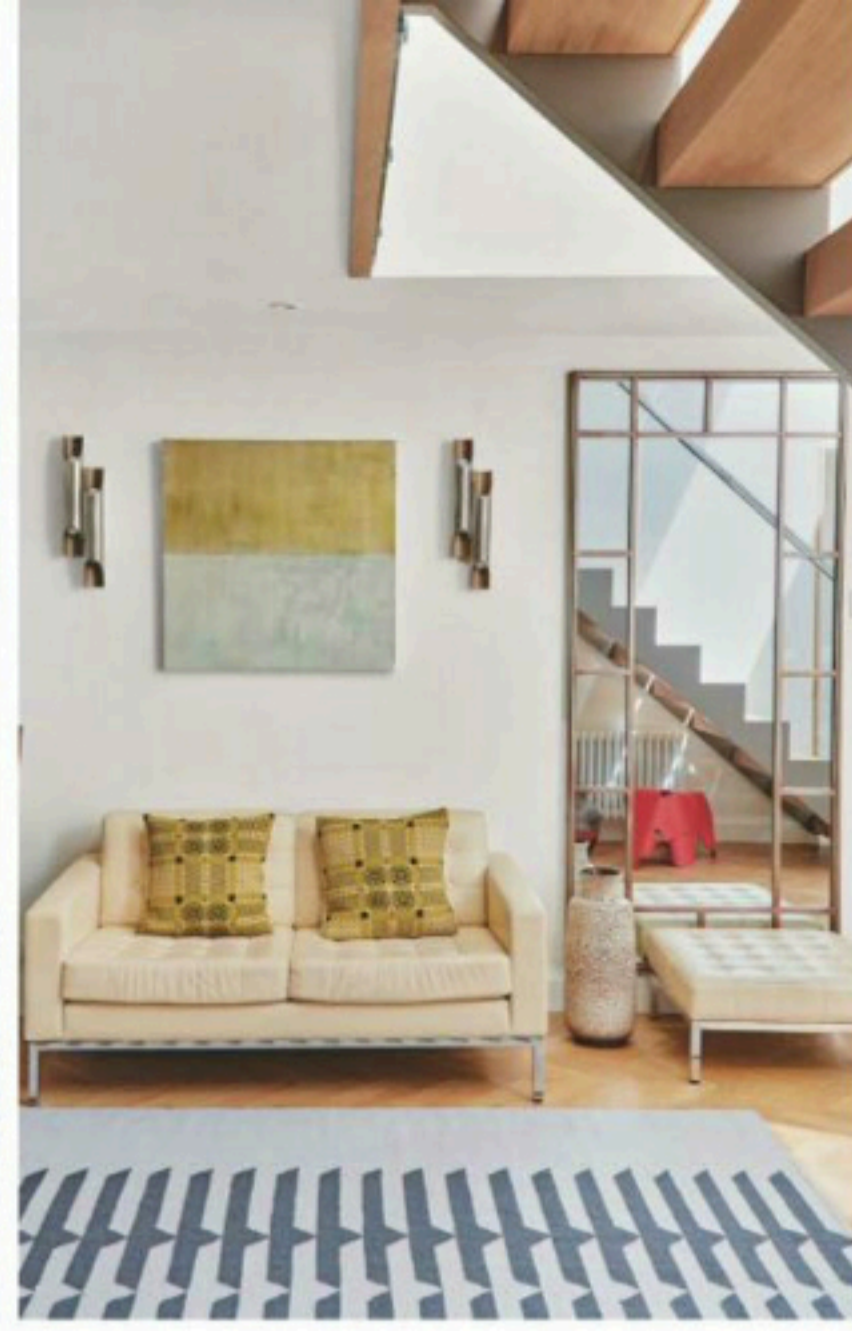
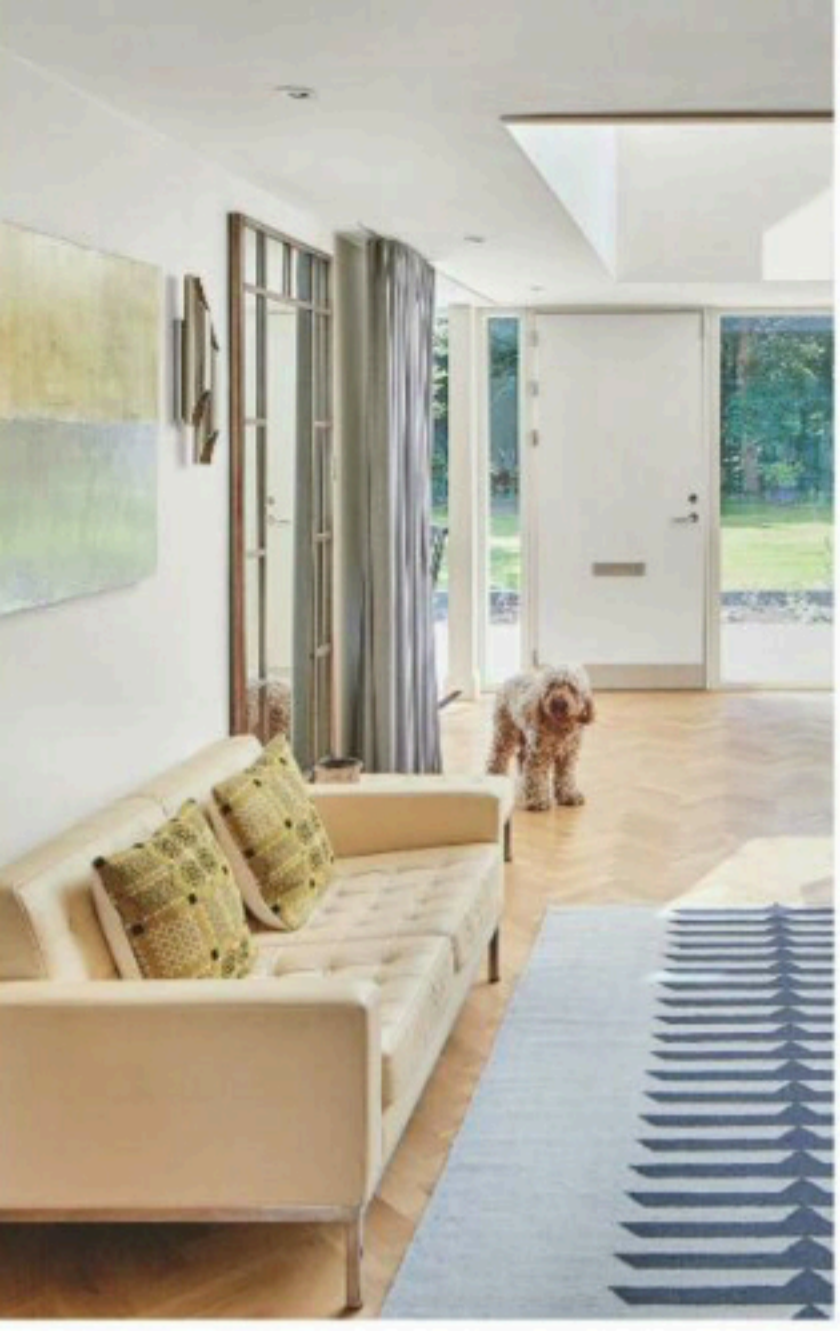
PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'Before moving here, we lived in a house in Newbury,' says Kate.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Kate Cooper and husband Andy revamped their higgledy-piggledy home, creating open-plan spaces and relaxing corners

FEATURE DILLY ORME | PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID PARMITER

**KITCHEN-DINER**

'This room is positioned in the centre of the house and when I'm standing at the island unit it feels like I'm at the helm of a ship, able to keep an eye on the family in the surrounding spaces,' says Kate. Bespoke kitchen cabinetry, from £45,000;

Silestone Blanco Norte 12mm leather finish worktops, from £225sq m; Mercury 1200 range cooker, £3,995; cooker hood, £1,295, all Ben Heath. Natural oak parquet herringbone flooring, from £50sq m, Broadleaf Timber. Imo bar stools, £396 each, Pinch Design. Artek A330S golden bell pendant lights, £337 each, Skandium

DINING AREA

Kate and Andy sacrificed a formal dining room and created an open-plan space that features a table and chairs and a cosy seating area. Skovby SM 38 dining table in oak white oil/white laminate, £1,619, Taskers of Accrington. Vienna Chairs, £180 each, Benchmark Furniture



BEST BUY *'The wooden breakfast bar stools are by Russell Pinch, made as a prototype for Benchmark. I bought them in its warehouse sale for a bargain'*

When Kate Cooper was on maternity leave with her newborn son, Sam, it became very apparent that the family really needed room to grow. Kate was toying with what would have been a disruptive extension in the townhouse she was living in with her husband, Andy, their two-year-old daughter, Penny, and baby Sam. Then a chance meeting with an estate agent set her on a different path.

'Initially this house was described as being 1970s and needing a lot of work,' says Kate. 'But I was intrigued and popped to see it without telling Andy. When I saw the site, I realised it offered much more potential than our current house. It was an ample size, but the orientation didn't feel right. However, there was plenty of scope for development. For example, the front, south-facing garden was not being

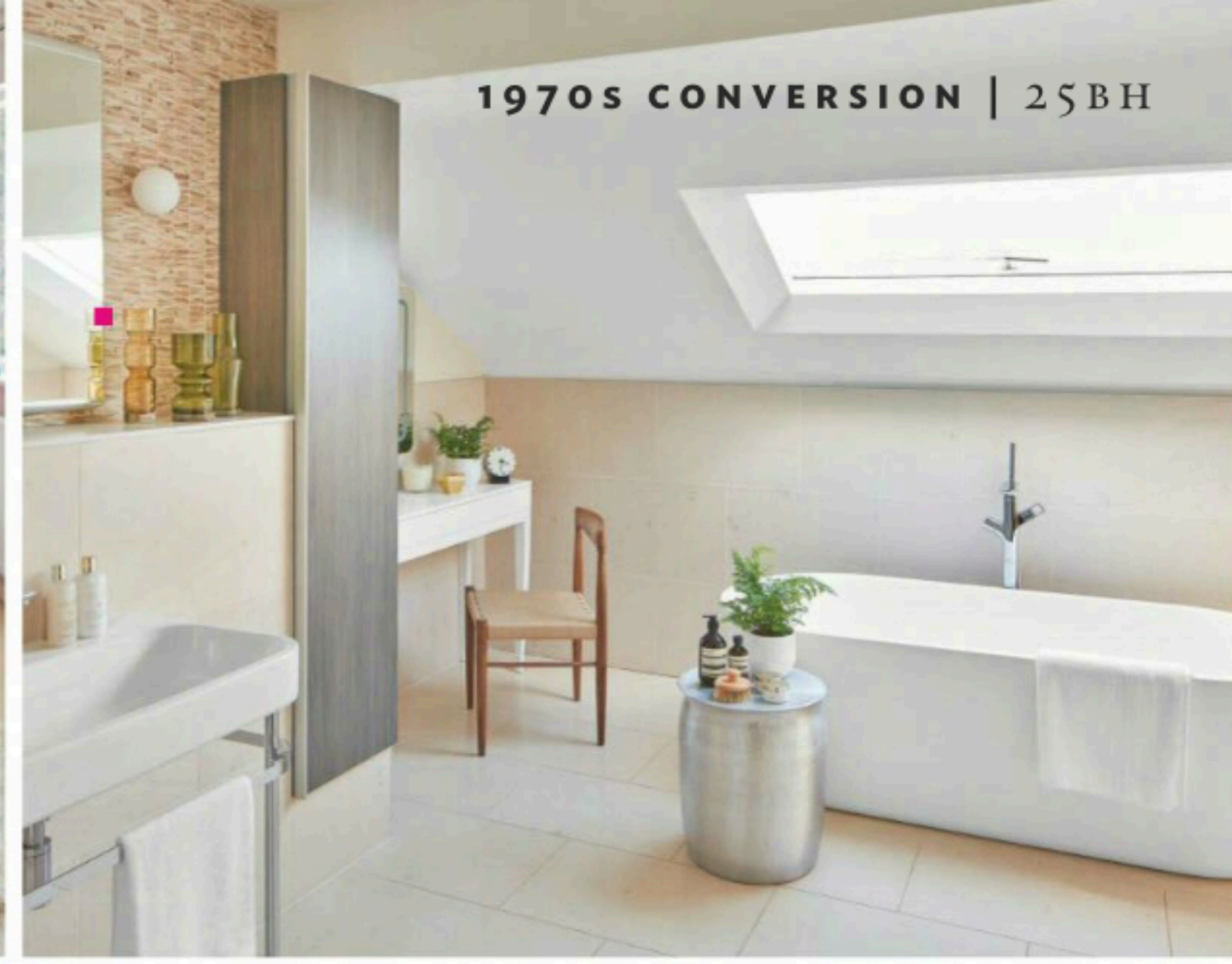
utilised due to a drive cutting across it.' But taking on the challenge proved successful. 'It was definitely the right move,' says Kate. 'The house has grown with us. When we moved in Penny, now 12, was a toddler, Sam, now 10, a baby and Rosie, now 6, not even born. She ended up toddling her way through what became a building project, five years after moving in.'

Kate, who is director of architectural practice Absolute Architecture, and Andy wanted the house to work as a relaxed home, where they didn't need to be too precious and the children could use all areas. 'Our idea was to have big, light, open and social spaces with no barriers, but also some private spaces to retreat to,' explains Kate. 'We did originally plan the layout so that we could install glazed screens between the hall and kitchen, but we love the openness. The house is in such a





SITTING ROOM
Vintage furniture and a collection of colourful ceramics give this area a retro look. FB2 double-sided woodburning stove, £2,280, Firebelly Stoves. Flos glo-ball pendant light, £321, Heal's. The Lars accent chair in Diego Grey, £399, Made.com, would also suit this setting



ROSIE'S BEDROOM
A bunk bed with a cupboard and drawers underneath offers invaluable storage. Similar Stompa bed, £1,049, John Lewis

BATHROOM
'This space is a relaxing retreat, where I can

enjoy some quiet time,' says Kate. Moleanos beige honed limestone tiles, £47.99sq m, Mandarin Stone

MASTER BEDROOM
Soft greys create a serene scheme. Tight Space Storage king-size bed, £970, Loaf

DESIGN TIP 'Keep an overall palette fairly consistent and use accessories to highlight and contrast. You can always change or move pieces if you get bored'



private location that we didn't need the usual formalities of a hall either. I think the openness and double-height entrance space are unique, bringing in plenty of light and allowing us to give the house an overall contemporary look. It has also worked as a great way to connect the house to the garden.'

As well as maximising space and light, Kate factored in sustainability upgrades into the overall design. 'We insulated the house externally and it makes an amazing difference to the comfort level,' she explains. 'We then kept things simple with the decor. The small details became really significant – light switches and radiators are all prominent visually, so we wanted to get those right. A big success was the lighting control system in our open-plan areas. It's brilliant to have all the lights set at the push of a button. Our huge coat cupboard was also a good idea – we have a whole wall of shoe and bag shelves. The big lesson

we learnt is not to compromise too much and take your time to get what you want. We've taken 10 years in total to finish the project but we've done it at a relaxed pace, as and when we can.'

Kate loves the simplicity of Scandinavian design, in particular the sense of craftsmanship. So she has stuck to a simple palette and filled the house with things she has collected over the years. 'Some are new, some junk shop finds and some pieces passed down from my Welsh grandparents,' she explains. 'I like the sense of history and quirkiness that these things add.'

'I love lots of domestic 1950s architecture,' she continues, 'including Scandinavian and British, for its use of natural materials and intention to create houses that really work. We have added a few glamorous touches for a bit of fun but tried not to be too consciously on trend. Ultimately, we want this house to remain a timeless classic.' 25

