

# Bright, young things

With a young family to consider, Andrew Leith and Ase Aure moved into their south London property with renovation in mind. The narrow basement kitchen to the rear of the property, with an adjacent bathroom, was far from their ideal layout but they valued its potential.

A conversation with a friend led to the recommendation of a local architect, Simon Whitehead. As Andrew recalls, "The seeds of what is there now existed in our minds, but Simon was very good at offering solutions to make our ideas a reality." The brief was to create a child-friendly open space, maximising natural daylight and integrating the garden, whilst repositioning the bathroom upstairs.

Previously, a summer room led off from the living area at ground floor level allowing, "light to tumble into the living room." This was pivotal in the couple's decision to install a sliding glass wall along the rear of the building to retain this feel, while the chaotic positioning of the kitchen and bathroom in the basement below the summer room was tackled by opening up the rooms, revealing a double-height space to exploit.

The view from the living room into the kitchen clearly shows how Simon has made best use of the daylight – the combination of the beautiful folding glass doors, the substantial glazed ceiling section and the large rectangular window ensured that the use of light-absorbing brickwork was kept to a minimum. In fact, it was Simon's structural insight that gave Andrew and Ase the confidence to insert a glass balustrade between the two zones within the space allowing the light to flow through and, just as importantly, enabling them to keep an eye on the children whilst playing.

The double-height space guaranteed an airy feel, but it did highlight the matter of appropriate scales. Standard Ikea gloss wall units looked out of place on the vast sidewall where the functional part of the kitchen layout is sited in a U-shape, so larger base units were fitted instead. The industrial-looking spotlights initially concerned Andrew due to their large size, but he knew they had to choose a source with a high output in order to provide enough light for the workspaces below. Anything smaller would look insignificant. Hence, the ▶

Reorganising the basement living space has transformed this house into an inviting, bright and design-conscious family home

Report and styling: Katie Sellers Photography: Rachael Smith



## DULWICH HOME

couple researched all the design minutiae themselves to ensure the best quality for their budget without compromising on the critical structural details.

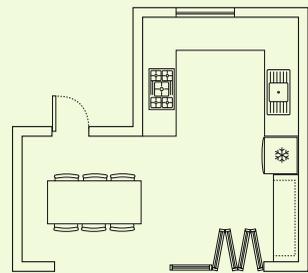
In the same way, the tasteful soft graphite Silestone worktops were chosen for their resilience to daily wear, while the dark wooden engineered oak flooring further enhances the gloss white units with eye-catching contrast.

Andrew and Ase deliberately opted for a white backdrop to capitalise on the overall theme of light and to provide a blank canvas onto which they could accessorise. As such, splashes of bright colour are introduced into the room to stunning effect – the chairs and pendant lighting accenting the dining table and spots of hot colour in the kitchen area.

“I hate shopping, but enjoy stumbling across things that we immediately love,” Andrew explains. “The red cooking pot was found at a car boot sale – bold and simple is what we like!” Fortunately the floor-to-ceiling shelving in the dining area offers plenty of storage space to be added to over time with the discovery of new finds.

However, it is the folding wall of doors that gives this living-working space the edge, retracting to allow an abundance of light and fresh air to fill the room, while inviting the outdoors, indoors. Indeed, Andrew was insistent that the garden and kitchen floors be on the same level so there was no physical boundary between the inside and outside. Weather permitting, this extends the house and allows the children to play freely. “The only downside is if their scooter wheels get a little muddy leaving a trail on the kitchen flooring,” he muses.

The bathroom was relocated to the first floor, utilising a bedroom that had previously been used as what the couple describe as a dumping ground. “Both of us have always disliked bathrooms with a ‘watery’ look, so we purposefully selected oranges and browns that aren’t an obvious bathroom scheme,” Ase explains. ▶



**Left:** The collection of bright potted plants on the paving area mirror the bright chairs bought from Aram and the Verner Panton pendant lighting, further harmonising the interior and exterior. **Above:** The shelving and drawer unit in the dining area was designed specifically for the space. Daily clutter is tidied away hidden from sight below, while treasured pieces are purposefully displayed. **Below left:** The Sunflex sliding doors fold back completely to open up the rear wall to the garden in its entirety. Previously access to the garden was via a single door shutting off the outside and therefore creating a clear distinction, which Andrew was keen to rectify. **Below middle:** Bursts of bold colour in the form of seating round the ILVA dining table add a joyful statement to the predominantly white interior. **Below right:** Family life was central at the planning stage and with Simon’s expertise Andrew and Ase have succeeded in striking a balance between function and creativity. The glass balustrade allows for the children to play in view whilst dinner is being prepared in the kitchen.





**Above:** Simon commissioned local tradesmen to construct the raised bathing area, which is made from marine ply with a wenge effect. Both this focus piece and the basin have generous proportions. **Below left:** In contrast to the kitchen design, the bathroom palette has a much warmer feel, but clean, stark lines and savvy design touches remain a constant theme. **Below right:** Andrew's favourite aspect within the bathroom is the narrow window. Positioned at a height that does not require blinds for privacy, it allows light to pour into the room creating an airy feel. The glass enclosure creates a shield without creating a barrier within the space. **Opposite page:** The dark shower enclosure was conceived to be a point of luxurious difference to the surrounding room. Tiles in a brick-style formation give this wet zone its own distinct look, as does the Hansgrohe wall-mounted showerhead and controls.



The result is a sophisticated design in warm, rich tones that instantly invites you to step inside. The splendid raised bath is a bespoke design made by local tradesmen to incorporate all-important storage and has capacious dimensions designed to add luxury to the space.

"Bath time is an important end to the day for kids, but adults want to relax later in the evening without a bath full of toys so more clients are choosing this idea," Simon notes.

Bordering the basin and bath is a band of colour made from glass neatly dividing wet areas from the white-washed walls, and the couple's decision not to take the conventional design route by steering away from a typical tiled splashback, in favour of a glass alternative, adds a glossy veneer to the room.

The design appears effortless until you turn to face the striking shower area. Here, black tiles laid in a brick-style formation create a marked contrast to the rest of the room. The oversized wet space is large enough for the kids to fit into, yet also provides a luxurious refuge for the adults embracing this couple's desire for family-friendly design. The recessed shelf area was designed in response to Andrew's dislike of shower accessories that, he stresses, "look like an afterthought; a bit too wiry and unsafe."

This collaboration between client and architect demonstrates how good design is often an organic process. Andrew and Ase were hands on with their research, consulting Simon with their ideas. He in turn ensured that proportions, restraints and layouts resulted in a triumphant interpretation of a family-centric remit. **[KBB]**

## SourceBook

## DESIGN

**Architect** Simon Whitehead  
(020 7183 1063 or  
[www.simonwhitehead.com](http://www.simonwhitehead.com))

## KITCHEN

**Cabinetry** Abstrakt range,  
Ikea (0845 358 3364  
or [www.ikea.com](http://www.ikea.com))

**Worktop** Silestone, Cargo  
Granite (01234 853439 or  
[www.cargogranite.co.uk](http://www.cargogranite.co.uk))

**Brassware** Minta design,  
Grohe (0871 200 3414  
or [www.grohe.co.uk](http://www.grohe.co.uk))

**Sink** Mythos design, Franke  
(0845 370 0191 or  
[www.frankekitchensinks.co.uk](http://www.frankekitchensinks.co.uk))

**Spotlights** Grid, Mr Resistor  
(020 8874 2234 or  
[www.mr-resistor.co.uk](http://www.mr-resistor.co.uk))

**Dining table** ILVA  
([www.ilva.co.uk](http://www.ilva.co.uk))

**Dining chairs** Catifa,  
Aram (020 7557 7557  
or [www.aram.co.uk](http://www.aram.co.uk))

**Pendant lights** Verner Panton  
'Flowerpot', Igloo  
(0800 027 2321 or  
[www.iglooshop.co.uk](http://www.iglooshop.co.uk))

**Sliding doors** Sunflex 70,  
I-D-Systems (01603 408804  
or [www.i-d-systems.co.uk](http://www.i-d-systems.co.uk))

**Flooring** Engineered oak  
boards, Real Oak Floors  
(0844 848 6840 or  
[www.realoakfloors.co.uk](http://www.realoakfloors.co.uk))

## BATHROOM

**Basin** Verso 120, Catalano  
at Giant (020 3051 2993  
or [www.giant.co.uk](http://www.giant.co.uk))

**Basin filler** Isystick, Zuchetti  
at Giant, as before

**Bath filler** Doble Bathrooms  
(020 8898 1001 or  
[www.doblebathroomsdirect.com](http://www.doblebathroomsdirect.com))

**Glass splashback** Glasskote,  
Glass Designs (020 8858 8050  
or [www.glass-design.net](http://www.glass-design.net))

**Tiles** Tile Magic  
(01474 369600 or  
[www.tilemagic.co.uk](http://www.tilemagic.co.uk))

**Shower enclosure** Living  
House (01722 415000 or  
[www.livinghouse.co.uk](http://www.livinghouse.co.uk))

**Shower controls** Hansgrohe  
(0870 770 1972 or  
[www.hansgrohe.co.uk](http://www.hansgrohe.co.uk))

**WC** Create collection, Ideal  
Standard (01482 346461 or  
[www.ideal-standard.co.uk](http://www.ideal-standard.co.uk))

## COST

A similar kitchen would cost around £95,000 including all structural and building work and all fittings. A similar bathroom would cost around £18,000 including all building, plumbing and interior fittings.