



# BETTER IN BARNES

The horrors of a house renovation have destroyed many a relationship, but for architect Lee Mainwaring and girlfriend Jennifer Hunt, who also trained as an architect, the fraught process brought them closer together

Lee says: “The builders walked off the job leaving the house half demolished, with the electrics and plumbing taken out, the walls down and everything left in a pile in the garden.

“It was stressful because we were living with my parents and both spending two and a half to three hours a day commuting into work in central London, but all the problems pulled us closer and a couple of weeks ago we got married.”

Thankfully one of the builder’s team eventually took on the project again and finished the major work leaving the couple of sort out the kitchen, painting and finishing touches.

The story began when the Mainwarings explored the Little Chelsea area of Barnes, thinking wistfully that with even tiny terraced houses costing a million or more the area was beyond their budget.

Then they spotted what was effectively the back half of an end terrace house that had been used by a small business and had already been sectioned off from the front part of the house.

“It had a tatty conservatory running around the building

and inside it was divided into lots of small rooms, some with no natural light. We saw it as an opportunity to have some fun and turn it into something really wonderful.”

They bought the property at what was a bargain price – for upmarket Barnes – and used their architectural skills to work out how to turn it into a light-filled and harmonious home.

Under permitted development rights they were allowed to move the walls out to the existing boundaries of the conservatory, into what had been the side extension. They also put in stylish new windows and converted the downstairs to one big entertaining space with a kitchen/dining room and seating area of around 50 square metres.

Upstairs they created two bedrooms and a bathroom. Moving the walls out had left only a small courtyard garden but they cleverly made this part of the house, bringing the outside inside by using the same polished concrete flooring that covers the downstairs of the house and by installing bi-fold doors.

To keep costs down they bought the kitchen units on line, using a carpenter on a day rate to install them.

Lee explains: “You only need to spend money on

“We saw it as an opportunity to have some fun and turn it into something really wonderful”

Lee Mainwaring



# THE PROJECT



surfaces that you will see or touch. So we topped our kitchen island with white Corian, which is expensive. The polished concrete flooring was also expensive. Nine men turned up at 7.30am and stayed until 9.30pm. They poured the concrete on the floor and then kept testing it until it had nearly gone off. Then they got down on their knees with kneepads and polished it, working really fast. We love it."

The main advantage of the floor – apart from its beauty – is that it is hard to mark or damage. Because of the meticulous planning and extensive cupboard spaces the house looks much larger than it is. One of its lovely features is a folded oak stairway which makes a sculptural shape against the white walls.

Now the couple have decided it is time to have more fun with another major project.

*Limes Field Road, Little Chelsea, Barnes SW13, £975,000, Knight Frank 020 3597 7680*

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## GETTHELOOK...

### >>DESIGN

Lee Mainwaring, Partner and Design Director at Architecture Initiative

### >>INTERIOR PAINT

Dulux Warm White

### >>KITCHEN UNITS

unitsonline.com

### >>POLISHED CONCRETE FLOOR

Steyson Granolithic Contractors

### >>BI-FOLD DOORS AND WINDOWS

Reynaers

### >>COFFEE TABLE

Try Stockholm Coffee table, £350. [www.pib-home.co.uk](http://www.pib-home.co.uk)

