

Houzz Tour: A West London Victorian Terrace is Totally Transformed



You'd never know it, but to turn this small Chiswick house into a spacious family home the entire interior was razed and rebuilt



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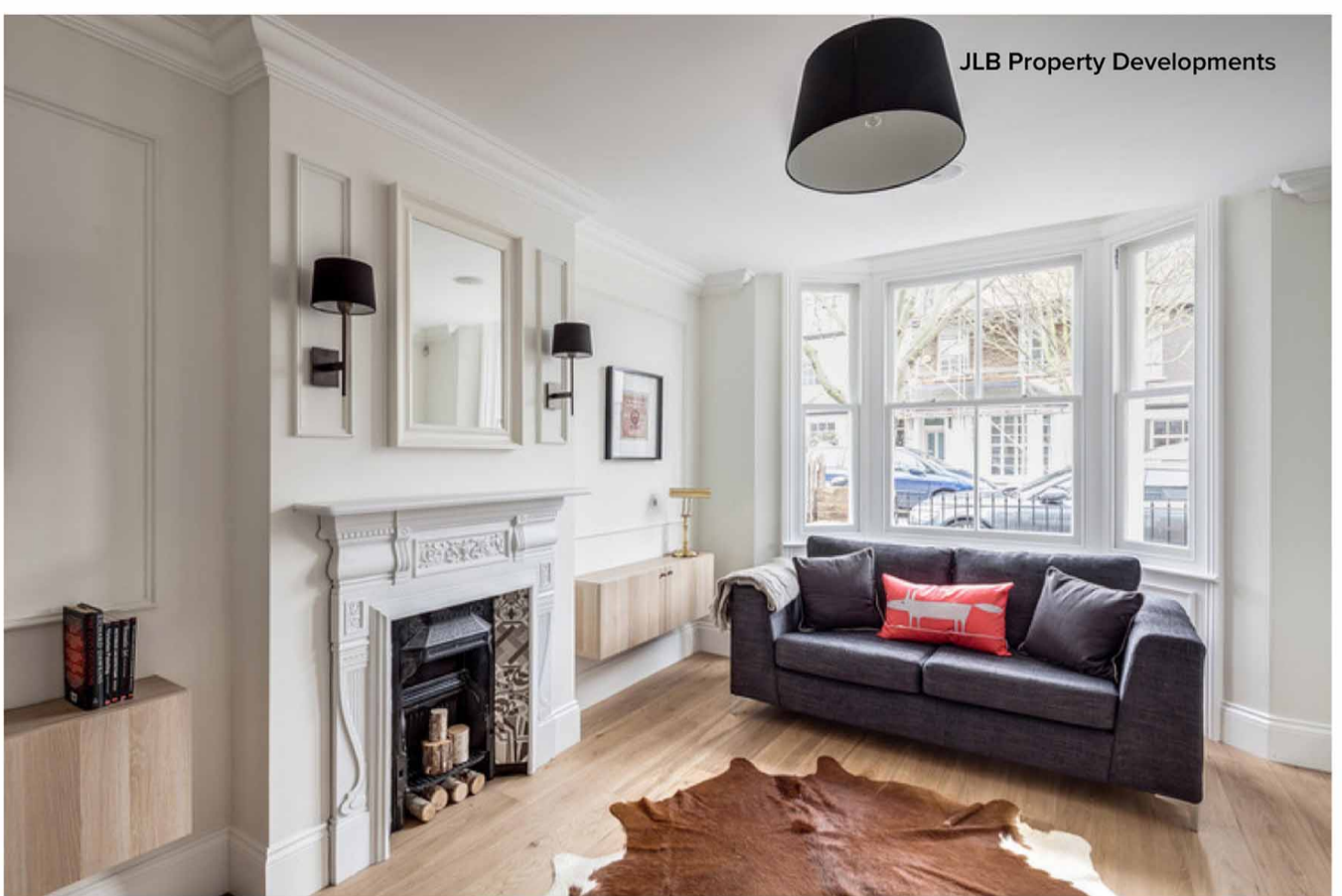
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From the outside, this looks like a smart, but otherwise ordinary Victorian terraced house, architecturally comparable to the millions of others that characterise so many English streets, give or take the odd side return or loft conversion.

But as well as having had these ubiquitous alterations, this ingeniously designed house has also been cleverly enlarged from the inside and restructured to create way more space than you'd ordinarily get with just these two changes. The house also now has higher ceilings, larger rooms and a collection of features only to be expected in a house that was bigger to start with, including a utility room; two full bath/shower rooms; underground storage for bikes, buggies and bins; a downstairs loo, and a stylish study/home cinema – and not a mega basement in sight. Phew. How did they fit it all in?

'We pretty much took down the house completely, just leaving the front and side walls, and then rebuilt it within the same footprint, stealing five centimetres from here, five from there and expanding the space,' explains designer Reuben Spiring. He removed bulky chimney breasts, put in an entirely new staircase, and added skylights, windows and a cathedral ceiling in the spare room, custom designed to let light flood in. He also tactically added mirrors to further trick the eye into seeing more space, and the floor was lowered enough to create the sort of ceiling heights more in keeping with Georgian houses.

'Very wealthy people dig these big basements,' explains Reuben, 'and what do they put down there? We've provided it all without digging down. We think we've been clever to squeeze so much into a smaller house – it's certainly thrown a few people.'



Houzz at a Glance

Location Chiswick, west London

Period Victorian

Size 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms

Designer Reuben Spiring of JLB Developments

That's interesting The exposed bricks in the kitchen were taken from the original chimneys, which were all removed in the renovation

This room provides a visual clue to the luxurious sense of space in this house. One of the ways Reuben Spiring's team expanded the space here was by removing all the chimneys. Though the sense of a chimney breast remains, the slimline protrusion is purely decorative and the fireplace is not useable.

'If you want more space in a small property,' says Reuben, 'you have to lose a few things. This was one of them – in small houses, every little detail makes a difference. And you could always have a bio-ethanol fire in there,' he adds.

The sleek-looking wall cupboards are from Ikea. Reuben's cabinet-maker customised the size, and added new handles for a bespoke look. The finish was a great match for the American white oak flooring, which Reuben bought unfinished, before oiling it all by hand with Osma oil. 'It just feels better than a sprayed, factory finish,' he says.

Besta shelf unit, Ikea.

'With just a loft conversion or a side return,' says Reuben, 'you can never go too far and a small house will still feel a bit poky.' As such, the most dramatic expansion of space came vertically, and ceiling heights were raised on every floor.

Reuben achieved this by digging out the foundations and laying new concrete floors, insulated and heated, yet still much thinner than the originals. This added around 40cm to the overall interior height, allowing ceilings of 2.5m (the average in a terrace like this, says Reuben, is around 2.3m or 2.4m, and as low as 2m in a standard loft conversion, which often lowers the ceiling height of the room below).

The underfloor heating also means there are no space-sucking radiators in any rooms.



A new staircase was constructed from scratch, being custom-built to allow maximum space within the flow and footprint of the house.

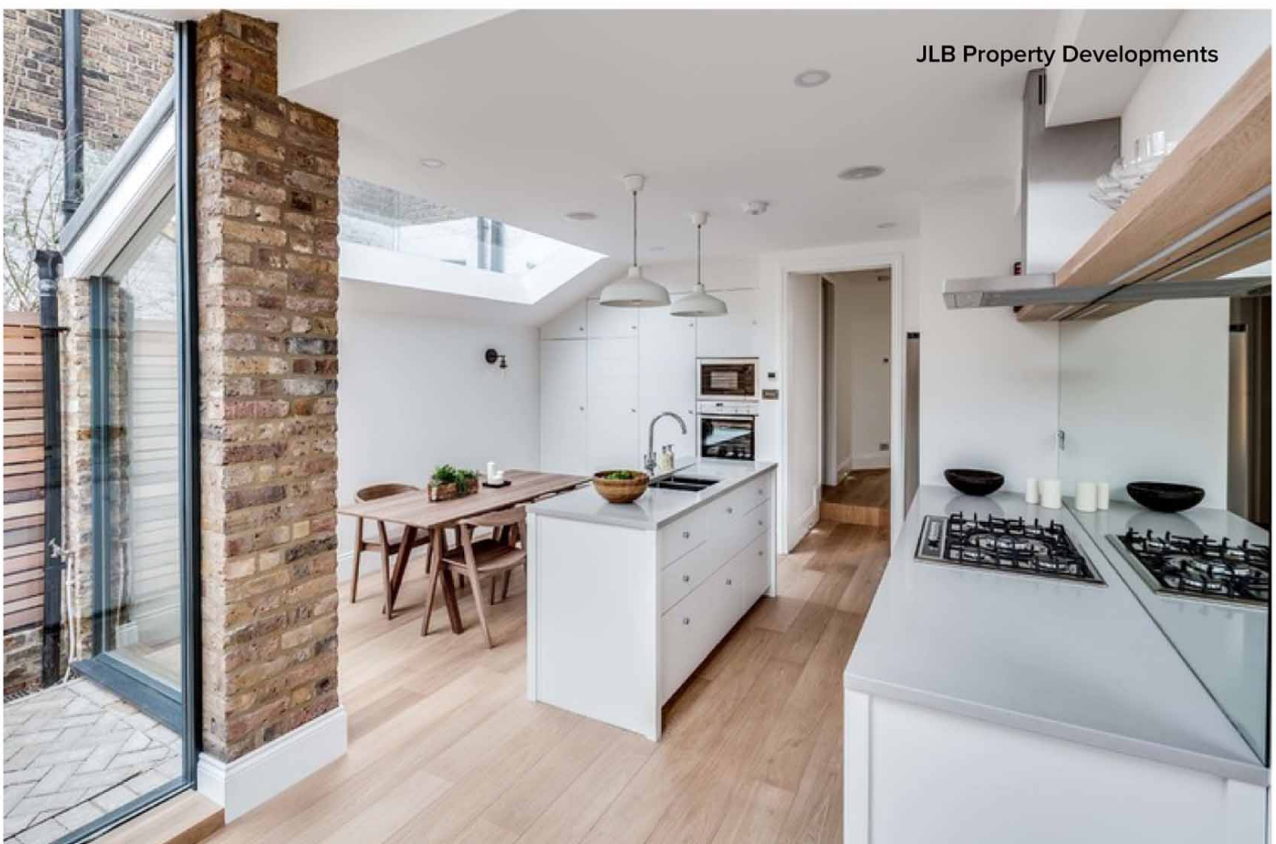
Discover 10 steps to a smarter staircase



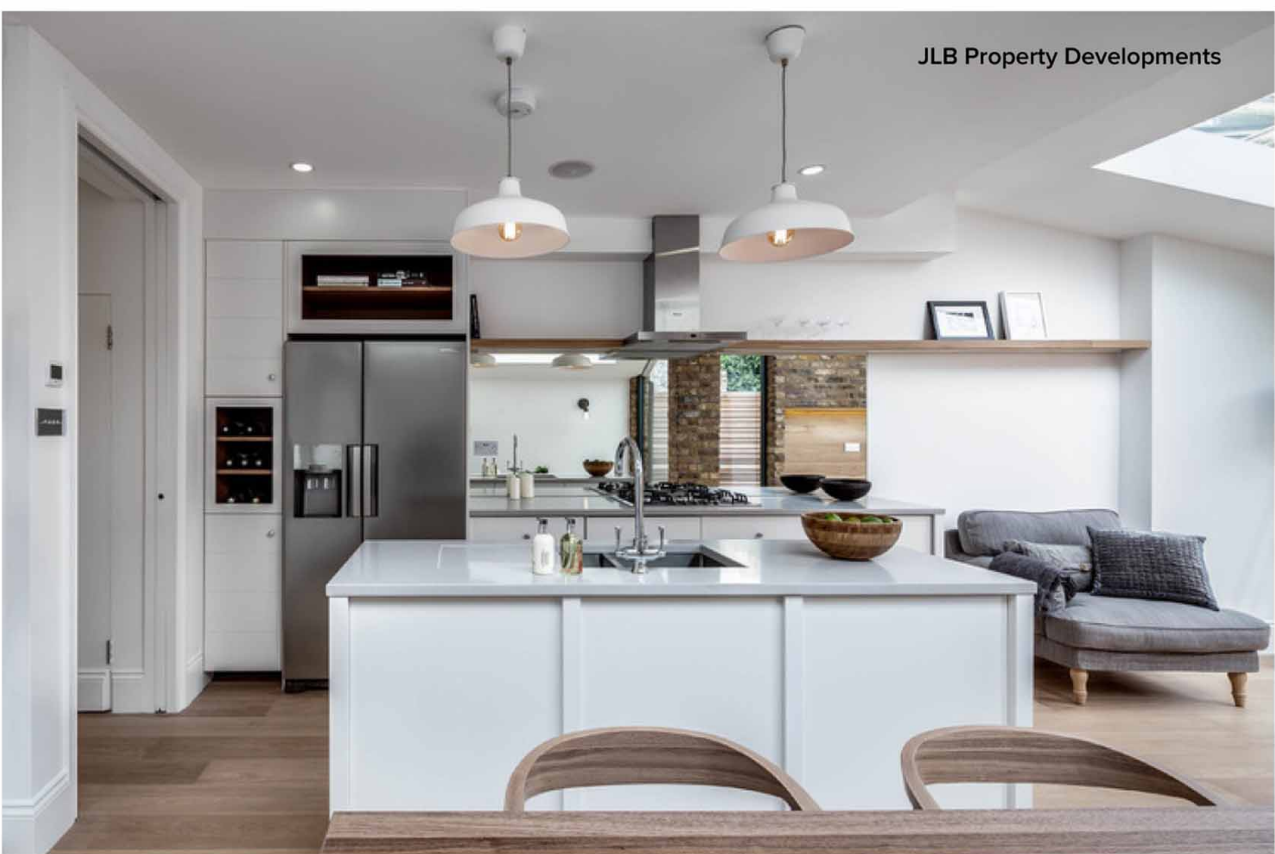
Not one of the ‘period’ details in the house is genuine, nor even especially historically appropriate, including the wall panels designed and made by Reuben’s team. ‘We weren’t trying to replicate the exact era,’ Reuben explains, ‘we just tried to make it look aesthetically pleasing, with a nod to the era. ‘There were no original features left in the house when we got it, and there’s no hiding it’s a contemporary house – but we tried to give it a traditional twist.’

Despite the lack of authentic details, the fireplace is a Victorian one, salvaged when another house was gutted. The original tiles were missing, so Reuben added modern encaustic designs. The cast iron surround was rubbed down and spray-painted white.

Armchairs, Ikea. New England sofa, World Stores. Rug, City Cows. Walls painted in Strong White, Farrow & Ball. Mr Fox cushion, Scion.



The back of the house was extended and flooded with light via plenty of glass; the skylights were custom designed and made by Reuben’s company to the maximum size possible.



‘Using mirrors to increase space is such a classic interior design trick that I was almost reluctant to do it,’ says Reuben, with a wry laugh. ‘But if you’re putting a hob against a wall, a mirror is a great idea for a splashback, especially in a family space where you want to be able to see what’s going on behind you.’

The shelf above the hob, stretching along the wall, is a floorboard. Häfele makes systems for invisible fixing. The worktops are quartz stone.

Pendant lights, Ikea. Lightbulbs, Edison. Fridge, Samsung. Tap, Abode Designs.



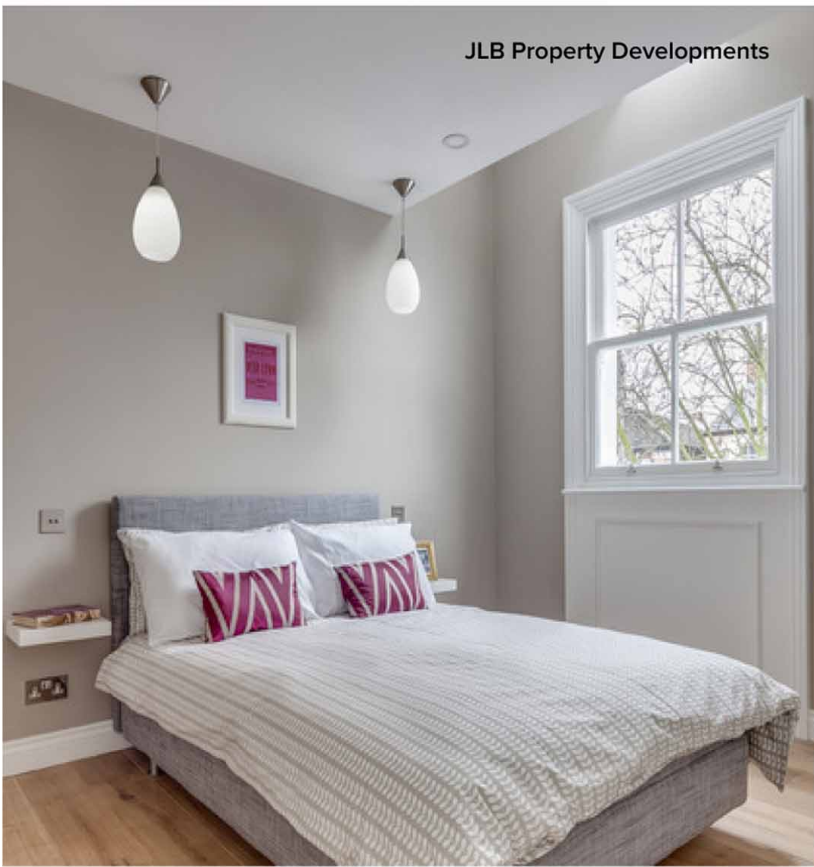
Mirrors have been used cleverly throughout the house to boost light and trick the eye into seeing more space. Here, one is tucked inside the cupboard hiding the tea and coffee making area.

The units were all handmade by Reuben’s team.

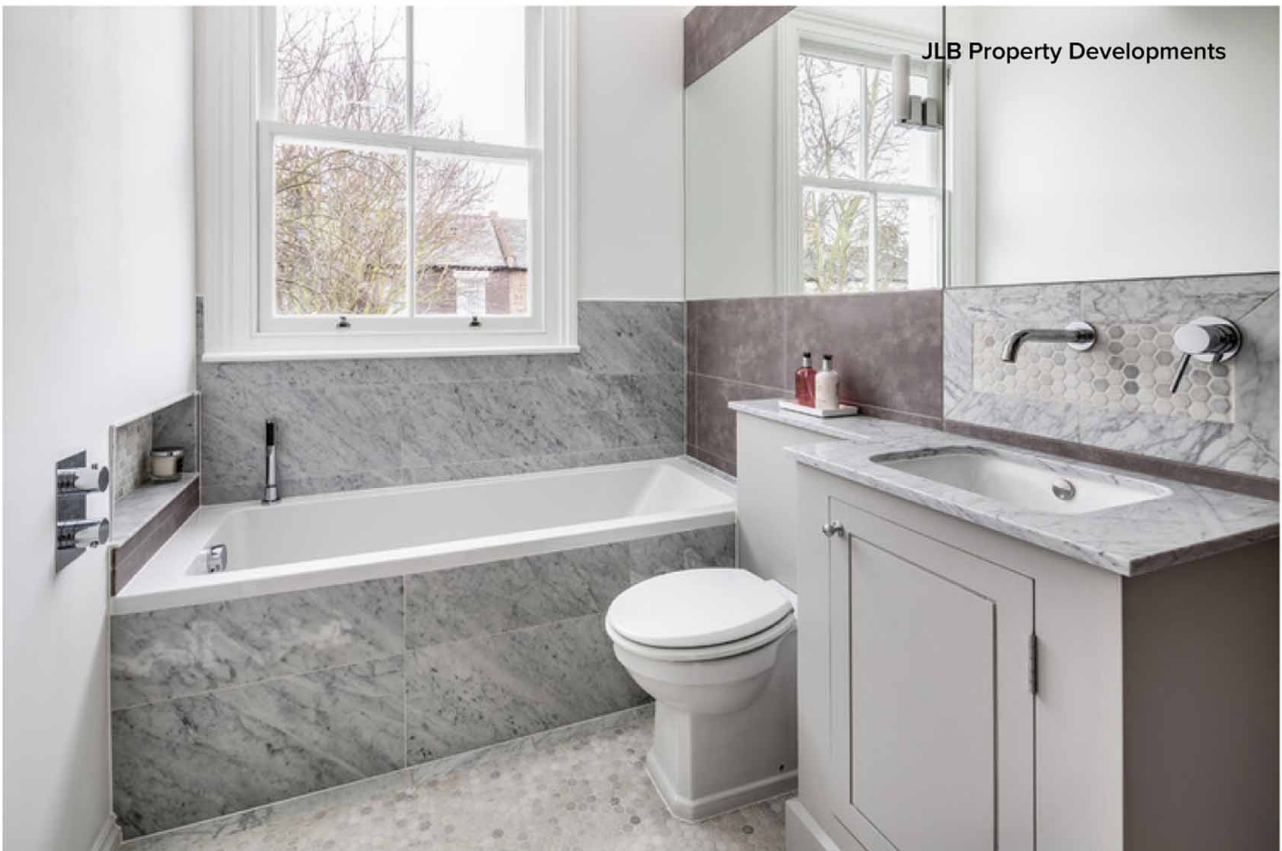
Discover 10 ways to work magic with mirrors

In the first floor bedroom, a cathedral-style ceiling above the window with a skylight above it increases the amount of light in the space. ‘It’s a really nice feature,’ says Reuben, ‘you get more volume and sense of space and light.’

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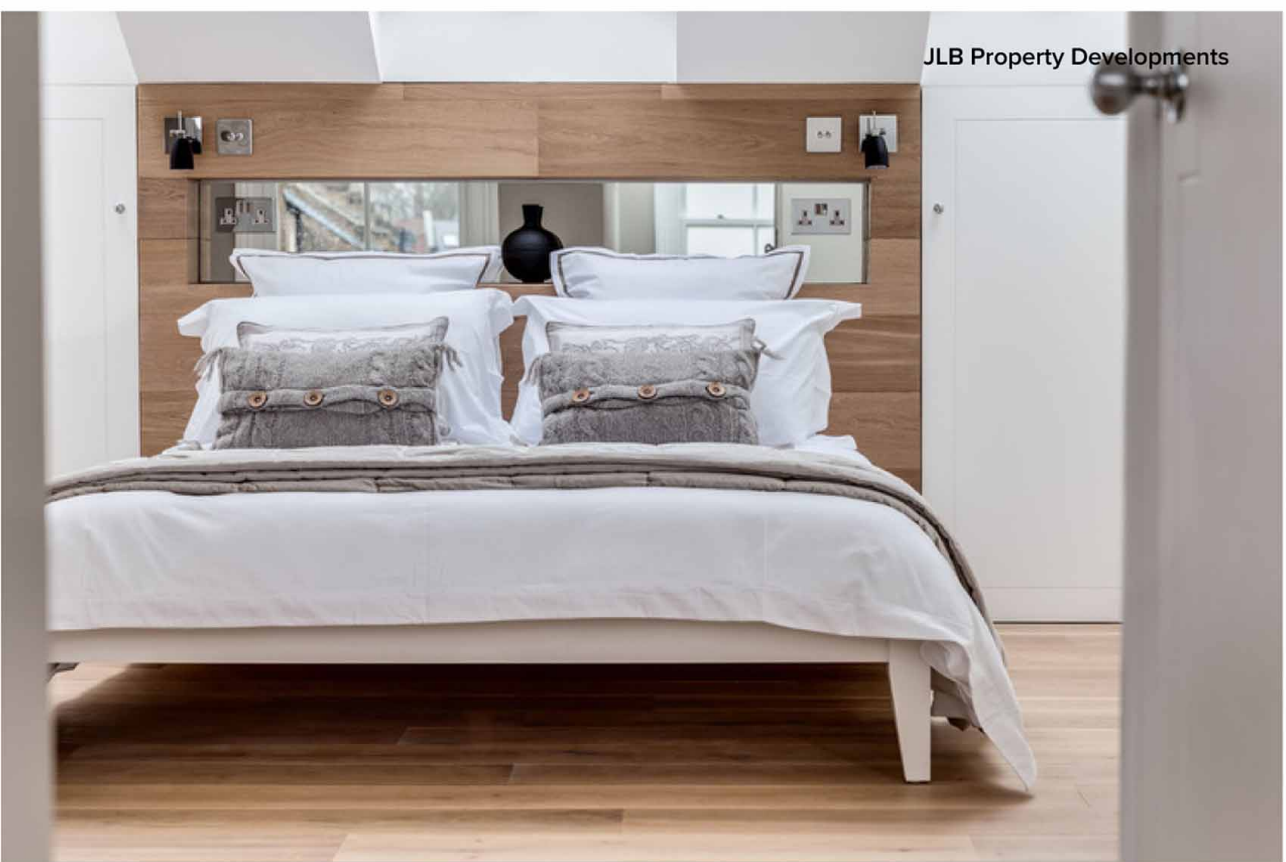


*Bed, Ikea. Pendant lights,
The Lighting Centre.*



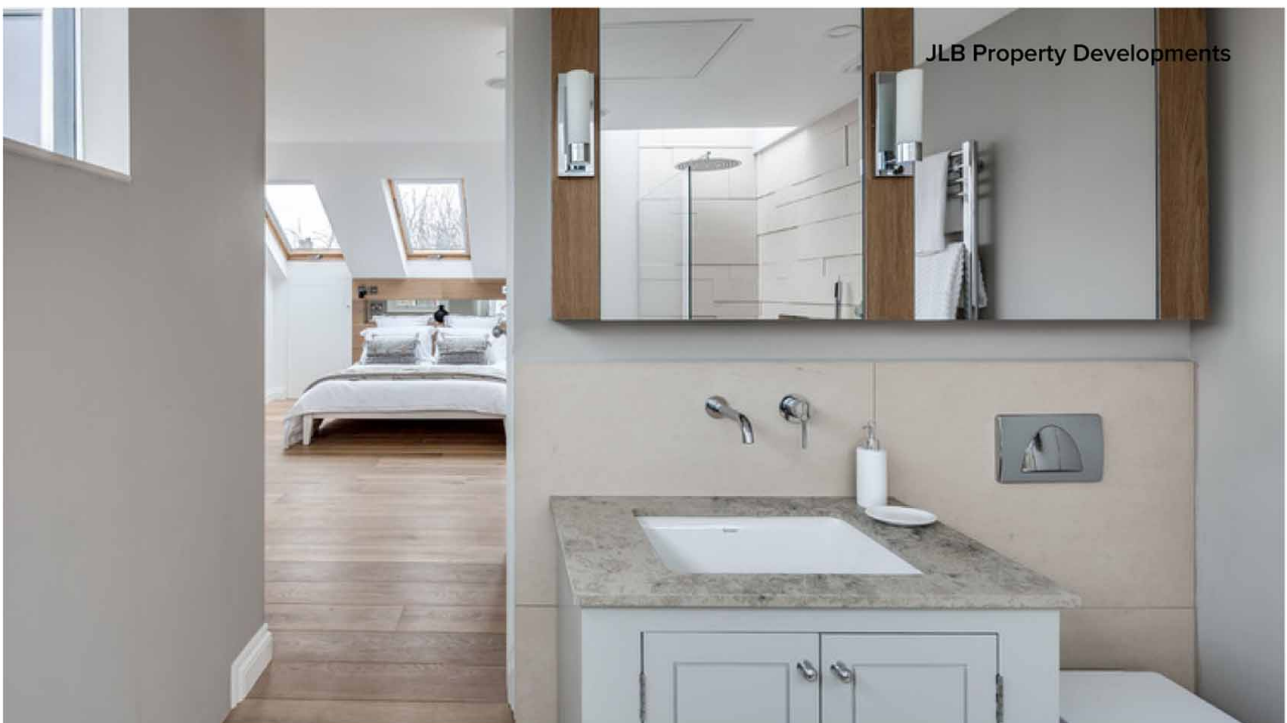
The family bathroom is clad with sheets of carrara marble, inlaid with hexagonal honed tiles in the same marble behind the basin. The darker tiles are made from porcelain and all are from Mandarin Stone.

Cabinet paint, Farrow & Ball.



The headboard on the bed was custom-made from flooring and mirror, and has a shelf and handy sockets for charging phones and tablets.

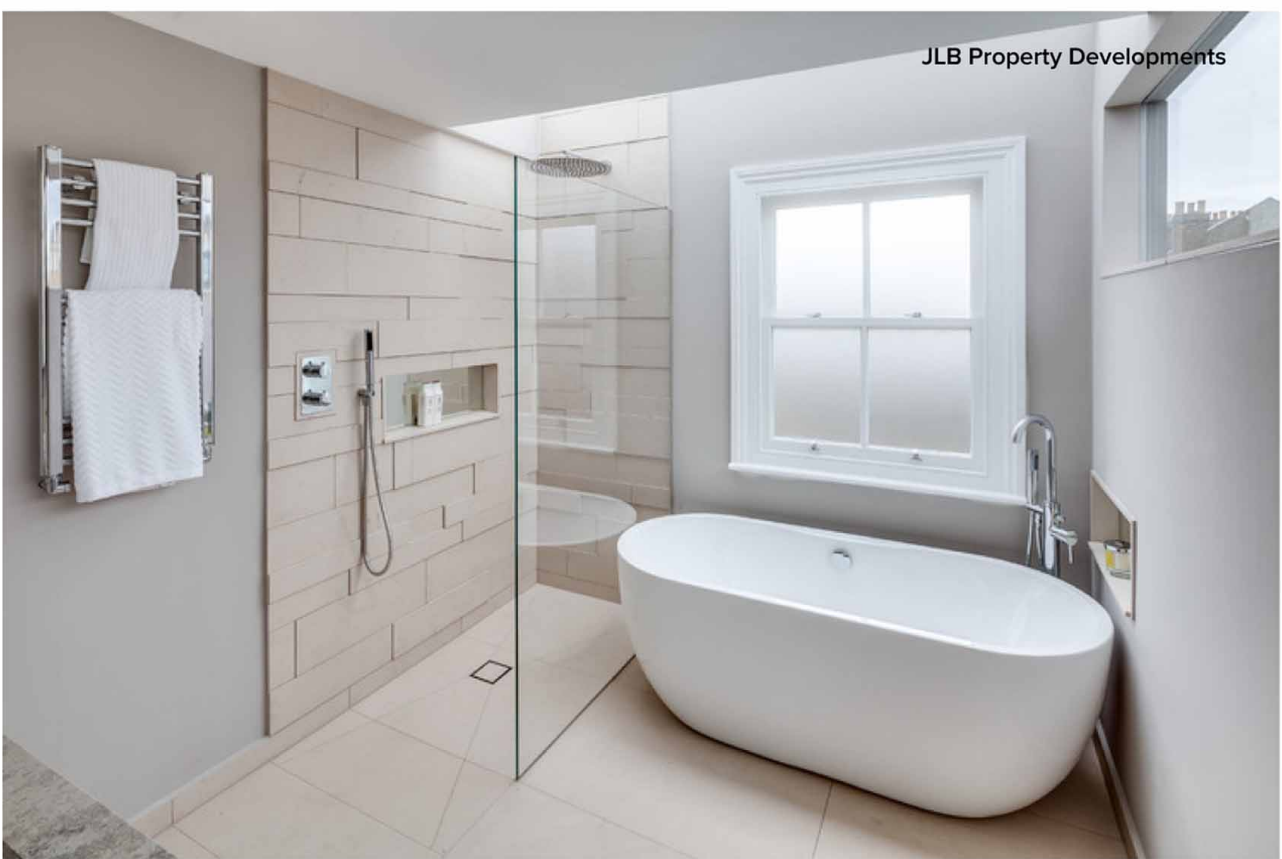
Bedside lights, The Lighting Company.



The entire top floor of the house is given over to a spacious bedroom and en suite, with gorgeously high ceilings. The walls are painted in Farrow & Ball's Elephant's Breath, which carries through to a corner of the bedroom.

The top of the basin is Jura grey limestone, and the wall tiles are made from Moleanos limestone.

Wall paint, Farrow & Ball.



The luxuriously large en suite has a bath as well as a walk-in shower. The unusual stepped tiling in the shower area was ‘a nightmare’ to put in, according to Reuben, and involved getting tiles cut at different widths and then using different thickness levels of adhesive and waiting for one lot to set before doing the next. ‘You can buy ready-made panels like this,’ he says, ‘much easier!’



The grass in the compact garden is artificial. ‘I’d always been against it, but it’s getting so good and feels really nice and thick,’ says Reuben. ‘It’s worth paying a bit more.’ The fence is red western cedar and made by alternating two different width panels.



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The garden study/cinema is fully wired for electricity and cable TV, and has underfloor heating and plenty of storage. 'It's a small garden,' says Reuben, 'but we decided that however big your garden is, you never use all of it. So taking two metres of it to gain an extra room like this offsets what you're losing.'

You can just see a bit of the sedum roof over the kitchen-diner in the foreground here.



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Above the desk is a pull-down screen, and in the cupboard on the opposite wall is a projector. The black finish on the wall is linseed oil paint from Sweden, where it is widely used on house exteriors to preserve the wood. 'It has a lovely matt finish,' says Reuben.

Stockholm chair, Ikea.

TELL US...

What do you think about this Victorian conversion – would you go this far to create more space if you had the budget? Share your thoughts in the Comments below.