

# Level Best



Changing the layout and the height of the floor gave the owners of this stunning home the kitchen–living space of their dreams

Report: Caroline Foster Photography: Van Swan

Previous page (p139): Shabby bay windows were replaced with contemporary floor-to-ceiling glass structures that allow access to the patio and garden. The stylish dining table is positioned in front of the window to take advantage of the garden views.

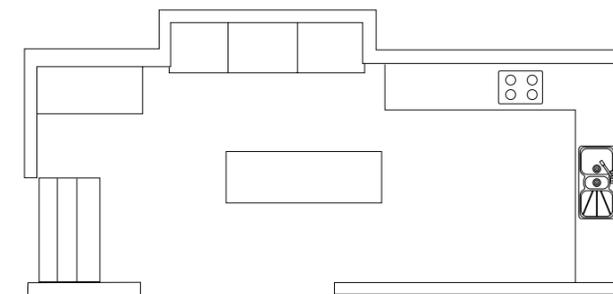
Right: Simple Caravaggio P2 pendant lampsinglosswhiteilluminate the island and emphasise the ceiling height.

Below: The island is the statement piece within the kitchen and is made up from the Rational Neos kitchen design. It includes a chunky 100mm Caesarstone Blizzard worktop that gives the island a solid and imposing appearance.

Opposite page: The addition of a seating area and a feature gas fire offer a cosy corner for friends and family to relax when meals are being prepared. Porcelain tiles in cream have been used throughout the room to unify the kitchen, dining and living zones.



“Brown is such an organic and calming colour and I can add vibrant touches such as flowers when I want to jazz it up a little.”



**A** hot housing market may seem like a distant memory today, but when Susan Pemberton and her husband John began searching for their ideal family home 10 years ago, they soon learnt that you had to be quick off the mark to secure a property. “Having lost a number of potential homes we were feeling pretty desperate,” Susan recalls, “so when a large, split-level terraced Victorian house came on the market in Highgate, we made sure we were the first to view it and offered the full asking price immediately.”

The interior retained a number of original period features and had the essential garden for the couple’s two boys, Matthew and Samuel, to play in. “The downstairs layout was very odd looking, with each room on a different level, due to the fact the property was located on a steep, sloping road that created half levels as you walked through the house,” Susan explains. “To access the kitchen you had to walk from the front door, through a dog-leg-style corridor and then down some steps. The kitchen itself was very narrow and over 20 feet in length so it was a very disjointed arrangement.”

Right: The interior of the house is on different levels, as the property is sited on a steep sloping hill, so steps were built to allow access from the hall to the kitchen.

Below: Rational's Atmos kitchen units were chosen to create the understated, linear style that Susan favoured, with handleless door fronts that maintain the clean lines. Matt White Satin surfaces help reflect the light in a north-facing room.

Opposite page: Susan chose coloured-glass splashbacks in a light coffee tone to provide a warm, calm contrast to the crisp white units. "I colour matched the glass with the wall paint and took it just one shade lighter," says Susan.



After two years of living with this layout, Susan and John began thinking about a large-scale extension to add extra living space and to accommodate a new kitchen. However, having liaised with a number of architects and priced up the project, they decided that the cost would be disproportionate to the value of the house so decided just to scale back and look at remodelling the interior instead.

To create an open-plan kitchen-dining-living space, a large dividing wall between the kitchen and living room was removed. "The two rooms were on entirely different levels, but we lowered what used to be the living room by going down into a void under the floorboards that had been previously used for storage," explains Susan. "Although this created a level floor in the open-plan space, there are now two different ceiling heights but this gives the room a very interesting look. We employed a structural engineer to ensure the steel supports inserted were adequate to take the weight of the house."

Two original bay windows were removed and replaced with modern, ceiling-height alternatives with glass doors that access the garden. "The room is northeast-facing so you have a splash of daylight

in the morning, whereas it used to be cold and dark," says Susan. "We also used triple-glazed windows to keep the room warm and it works beautifully."

Before deciding on a kitchen for their new, open-plan space, Susan spent time researching kitchen designers, visiting larger retailers, reading magazines and talking to friends. "I just felt that I was being talked into having a standard kitchen at times and wanted something much more individual. Then I found Kitchen Co-ordination's details in a magazine and spoke with designer Vivienne Warman who was very flexible in her approach and showed me photographs of previous designs and we immediately felt on the same wavelength," Susan remembers.

A modern-style kitchen with clean lines was top of Susan's wish list and she opted for a predominantly white palette with satin glass doors and tall stainless-steel drawers on the base of the island. "I was also keen to add some warm brown tones such as in the dining table and pale-beige glass splashback," she explains. "Brown is such an organic and calming colour and I can add vibrant touches such as flowers when I want to jazz it up a little." ▶



Above: An Elica Space extractor complements the white colour scheme of the kitchen and injects a curved element within an otherwise linear design. A flush-fitting Miele hob echoes the streamlined elements.

The island unit is a solid, simple structure but with a recessed kick plate that gives it an almost floating appearance. "It's a really strong design feature in the room and is packed with additional storage," says Susan. "In fact, the island is my favourite piece of furniture in here; it's attractive as well as functional."

The dining area, meanwhile, is positioned in front of the large windows to take advantage of the garden views. "The high ceiling and huge expanse of glass make it feel quite baronial. When the table is fully extended it reminds me of a time when, on holiday as a family, we sat down to eat in a lavender field in Provence – although in our case it's usually a rainy day in North London, which is far less romantic!" Susan laughs.

A separate chill-out zone and seating area complete with a cosy fireplace has also been added, where family and friends can relax while meals are prepared. The couple do have a large living room at the front of the house, but have found this to be such a lovely social space that they spend most of their family time in here.

With its understated style, the new kitchen-living space fulfils Susan's need for functionality and style whilst also retaining a quiet air of simplicity. "We don't like anything showy and this is quite brave for us. Vivienne encouraged us to step outside our comfort zone and was wonderful at advising us without ever imposing her own views," she enthuses. "Every morning I walk into the kitchen and notice how beautiful the entire space is and appreciate how the kitchen and appliances work so responsively with me; it's just such a joy to be in here."

**KBB**

## SourceBook

### DESIGN

Kitchen Vivienne Warman of Kitchen Co-ordination (020 8958 6262 or [www.kitchencoordination.co.uk](http://www.kitchencoordination.co.uk))

Architect Stephen Coleman (020 7183 7045 or [www.4orm.co.uk](http://www.4orm.co.uk))

### KITCHEN

Cabinetry Rational Atmos range in White Satin Glass from Kitchen Co-ordination, as before

Worktops Caesarstone in Blizzard, sourced through Kitchen Co-ordination, as before

Island Rational Neos range in White Satin Glass with stainless-steel base drawers and Caesarstone in Blizzard worktop, from Kitchen Co-ordination, as before

Appliances Elica Space Extractor (01252 351111 or [www.elica.co.uk](http://www.elica.co.uk));

Single oven, combi oven, hob and dishwasher, all Miele

(0845 365 6600 or [www.miele.co.uk](http://www.miele.co.uk)); Fridge-freezer, Liebherr

(0844 412 2655 or [www.myliebherr.co.uk](http://www.myliebherr.co.uk))

Sink and tap Blanco 500 Zerox sink and Blanco Levos tap

(0844 912 0100 or [www.blanco.co.uk](http://www.blanco.co.uk))

Pendant lights Geoffrey Harris (0808 149 4196 or

[www.geoffreyharris.co.uk](http://www.geoffreyharris.co.uk))

Flooring Porcelain Le Cave matt Crema Mocha tiles, Criterion Tiles

(020 7483 2608 or [www.criteriontiles.co.uk](http://www.criteriontiles.co.uk))

Dining table and sofa Case Furniture (020 7622 3506 or

[www.casefurniture.co.uk](http://www.casefurniture.co.uk))

Dining chairs John Lewis (0845 604 9049 or [www.johnlewis.com](http://www.johnlewis.com))

Fireplace Fireboxx gas fire and trimless chamber by Capital Fireplaces

([www.capitalfireplaces.co.uk](http://www.capitalfireplaces.co.uk)) from Amazing Grates (020 8883 9590 or

[www.amazing-grates.co.uk](http://www.amazing-grates.co.uk))

Windows and doors Supplied by Ideal Combi (01582 860940 or

[www.idealcombi.com](http://www.idealcombi.com))

### COST

Kitchens from Kitchen Co-ordination start from around £12,000