
LOOK BOOK

SECOND EDITION

By ELEPHANT & THESE FOUR WALLS

A showcase of inspirational Bristol homes

from leading independent
estate agent elephant and
lifestyle blog These Four Walls





“Many people are still discovering our business for the first time. They’re often intrigued by our approach and want to know all sorts of things – not least why a company selling homes is named after an animal”

INTRODUCTIONS

Alec Jupp

Director - elephant estate agents
www.elephantlovesbristol.co.uk



Since putting together our first Look Book in 2015, we have been overwhelmed by the positive feedback that we have received from far and wide.

The first 1,000 copies

disappeared in no time, and many of those who enjoyed the first edition have asked when the next one will be coming along. Well, here it is! We have again teamed up with Abi Dare from interiors blog These Four Walls to showcase a selection of inspiring Bristol homes marketed by elephant over the last year, and this time we have also included a raft of practical tips to help you make the most of your own property.

This second edition comes hot on the heels of elephant's fifth birthday, finding us in a mood that's both celebratory and reflective. After half a decade we feel embedded in the Gloucester Road community, but many people are still discovering our business for the first time. They're often intrigued by our approach and want to know all sorts of things – not least why a company selling homes is named after an animal! The simple answer to that is that we wanted

our business to stand out. But we didn't want it to stand out for its name alone. Matt and I set up shop in 2011 after 10 years working for a range of companies in Bristol and London, and this experience helped us to form the 'elephant way'. In short, we wanted to consistently offer unrivalled customer service.

We are under no illusions at elephant: moving home is a stressful business. When we founded the business we spoke to many people who had recently bought and sold property, and they reeled off a list of things that had frustrated them in their dealings with estate agents. This helped us to shape our core values – values which we have instilled in our team and which we stick to, day in, day out. We recently conducted a customer survey and asked people to state the three words which best described their elephant experience. We received more than 200 responses, and the most frequently cited words were 'honest', 'friendly' and 'helpful'. We believe this is because we deal with each person as an individual and care deeply about their move. So, despite our company name, we're proud to know that our clients recognise and appreciate our very human approach to selling homes.

Matthew Bailey

Director - elephant estate agents
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Well, here we are in 2016, celebrating five years of business. It's been a very exciting journey so far, and my overwhelming feeling is one of gratitude – gratitude that we

live and work in such a dynamic and thriving city as Bristol (and in particular the areas surrounding Gloucester Road and Whiteladies Road), and gratitude that we have such a fantastic team. Katy, Alys, Tom and Nick have been integral to our success and provide an excellent service, receiving fantastic feedback from clients and buyers alike.

At elephant we're often praised for the quality of our photography and the way we present our properties. Whilst we're proud of these comments, it's the home owners who deserve the credit. We're fortunate enough to be invited into people's homes on a daily basis, and we're often wowed by their dedication and attention to detail. We're inspired by our clients and their homes, and this is what led us to first launch our Look Book in conjunction with These Four Walls.

Interior design and property renovation are subjects that are close to my heart, and I get very excited when I see properties that are a little bit different. In an area where many houses look very similar, it's always refreshing to see people showing off their creative juices with a bespoke extension, some bold decoration, an unusual refurbishment or even a full-blown self-build project, and you'll find examples of all of these over the following pages. It's also interesting to see vendors

consistently achieve better-than-average results by preparing their property for marketing, and so in this edition we have included advice on measures that can make a real difference. We have also ventured into the garden – an area that's often

overlooked in home renovations – with tips from local landscape designer Karena Batstone on how to jazz up outside spaces.

We hope you enjoy the second edition of the Look Book. If it inspires you to make any changes to your own home, we have a business directory of talented architects, tradespeople and surveyors who are on hand to help. And if you have any questions or would like impartial advice relating to property issues, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

“Vendors consistently achieve better-than-average results by preparing their property for marketing”



A word from **THESE FOUR WALLS**

INTERIORS INSPIRATION FROM BRISTOL AND BEYOND

Abi Dare

www.thesefourwallsblog.com



Bristol is the city that I've called home ever since I first moved here for university in 2001. I love its laid-back soul, its creative spirit, its rich variety of neighbourhoods, its green spaces, its buzzing waterfront, and its unique mix of edginess and elegance. Every time I've tried to move away I've soon bounced back, and I now can't imagine living anywhere else.

It was Bristol that inspired me to create These Four Walls back in 2014. What began as a blog about the huge range of wonderful interiors on display in this corner of the UK has since branched out to cover design, travel and lifestyle the world over, but my passion for this beautiful city hasn't diminished. I get very excited whenever I have the chance to feature local homes and businesses, and I'm delighted to be involved once again in elephant's Look Book.

The homes showcased over the following pages are as diverse as Bristol itself. Some are sleek sanctuaries decorated in calming whites and greys; others eclectic family homes bursting with colour. There are small homes filled with innovative space-saving solutions, large homes designed for open-plan living, centuries-old homes that have evolved over the decades, and brand-new homes that encompass the latest technologies. Although they differ in style, size and age, all are an imaginative blend of form and function – not only beautiful to look at, but comfortable and practical to live in. And all are intensely personal spaces that reflect the lives and loves of their owners, demonstrating that homes are not just a place to live, but an expression of our identities and beliefs.

I hope you find them as inspirational as I have.

A practical and stylish family home in Bishopston

This 1920s Bishopston house demonstrates how period properties can be converted to suit modern life without losing any of their original character. The owners purchased the building from an elderly lady who had lived there since childhood and then lovingly renovated it from top to bottom. They built a two-storey extension to the rear and reconfigured the ground floor, creating an open-plan kitchen-diner and family room, along with a utility room and a downstairs toilet. They also installed bi-fold doors to connect the indoor and outdoor spaces, and converted the loft into an additional bedroom with an ensuite bathroom.

Throughout, the house has been decorated in soft, neutral shades such as duck-egg blue and dove grey, creating a bright, contemporary feel while showcasing period features such as tiled hearths and carved fireplaces. Cushions, splashbacks and carefully chosen accessories are used to add pops of colour, and a pair of oversized houseplants provide additional interest in the lounge. There's also lots of clever built-in storage, including bespoke cabinets in alcoves, a multipurpose shelving and TV unit in the family room, and a window seat encompassing drawers and laundry baskets in the master bedroom.





IDEAS TO BORROW

Think about how you use your home and look at ways to make the space work for you. Even if you don't have the time or budget for major projects such as extensions, you can make a big difference by moving doorways and removing non-supporting internal walls.



IDEAS TO BORROW

Keep walls neutral and use accessories to add interest. You can then change the look of your home easily and cheaply, simply by swapping colours and patterns. You'll also make your property more marketable should you ever decide to sell.



IDEAS TO BORROW

Think about converting awkward nooks such as bay windows and alcoves into storage. It's a great way to maximise unused, hard-to-furnish spaces, and it can be very cost-effective.



Focus on...

open-plan kitchen-diners

The kitchen is the hub of the home, and the rise in open-plan living means more and more people are choosing to create kitchen-diners – sociable rooms that work equally well for eating, entertaining and everyday living. In fact, recent estimates suggest that one in three British homes now has a kitchen-diner, and that a third of all work carried out to period properties involves knocking down the internal wall between the cooking and dining spaces.

A well-designed, multipurpose kitchen adds an instant wow factor to your home and can significantly increase its value. To give you some ideas, we've rounded up a selection of inspiring examples from elephant's books.



The best open-plan layouts define the function of each area, meaning you can flow from one activity to another. The kitchen units of this Victorian house are set back from the dining table, which sits in an extension constructed over the building's side return, creating neatly zoned spaces. Grey-painted floorboards and white walls are used throughout to ensure they feel cohesive.

Freestanding wooden units with stainless-steel accents add an industrial edge to this striking kitchen. The dining area sits in a conservatory at the end and has a more rustic feel, but the use of continuous flooring connects the two spaces.



This sleek white kitchen uses an island unit to divide the cooking and living areas, while also providing additional storage and worktop space. Bar stools and a trio of pendant lights create a sociable focal point at the centre of the room, and a skylight brings in additional light. The blackboard wall provides a fun way to keep track of busy family schedules.

See page 4 for a full tour of this beautiful home.





Built-in banquette seating maximises space in this narrow room. Cushions create an informal atmosphere, and a half-height wall separates the table from the hustle and bustle of the kitchen while ensuring that everyone can interact. Low-hanging lights, bright prints and a change in flooring lend further definition and interest to each area.

See page 16 for a full tour of this beautiful home.

Blue wooden units, a range cooker and rustic tongue-and-groove panels add a cosy farmhouse feel to this kitchen-diner – proof that open-plan living can work even in more traditional homes.





Even if you don't have the funds to knock through walls or build an extension, you can create a dining area within your existing kitchen. This galley layout has full units down one side only, leaving room for a table on the other; open shelving ensures there's still plenty of storage. The white-gloss cupboards bounce light around the space and make it feel larger than it is.





Small- *space* *I living at the* *Hay Store*

This compact Montpelier mews house is proof that you don't need a mansion to create an eye-catching and comfortable home. Set just off buzzing Cheltenham Road, it's only 2.3m wide and a little over 10m long, yet it encompasses a kitchen, a shower room, a living and dining area, a log store and a raised sleeping platform. It also includes a bevy of innovative features designed to make the most of the compact floorplan.

As housing shortages and a desire to downsize mean ever-increasing numbers of us are moving into small homes, the Hay Store's former owners Nick and Ellie tell us about life in what must surely qualify as one of Bristol's narrowest houses.



Can you tell us a bit about the house's history?

It's had many uses over the century or so that it's been standing, but it's likely to have started life as a barn for the hay that fed the carriage horses belonging to the wealthy households on nearby Ashley Road. We were only the second owners of the Hay Store as a house. The previous owner was a local architect, Sally Daniels of Tangent Studio, who converted the building from a derelict shell, using it initially as a gallery before adapting it to be her home.

What made you fall in love with it?

Few people fail to fall in love with the Hay Store, although not everyone could live there! It's a charming building, imaginatively converted by a great architect. It was designed so that you can always see almost the entire length of the interior, which means it never feels claustrophobic despite the tiny dimensions. That openness is a rare thing for a house of its size. We also loved being able to heat the whole place with only a small wood-burning stove.

How much work did you carry out?

We completed the conversion of the building by replacing the single-ply barn door with a more substantial version, adding a shower, insulating the floor space downstairs and upgrading the

kitchen. We also removed a metal grille that had served as the kitchen ceiling and the floor of the living space above, replacing it with a large sheet of glass that was apparently a leftover piece of bombproof glazing from a skyscraper in Canary Wharf.

And you installed some clever space-saving features...

Yes – we added hinges to the plywood panelling that covers the stud walls, creating slim-line but very handy cupboards for tools and the like. We also installed hatches in the floating floor on the lower storey, giving us large spaces for storing bigger items. And we found that open shelves above the worktop were the most effective use of space for our copious kitchen supplies.

What inspired you?

The original conversion was very thoughtfully done, and the layout chosen very deliberately, so that was the key inspiration. We also inherited a lot of furniture, which set the tone for our interior scheme. As for practical inspiration, we became keen enthusiasts for small-home living as soon as we moved in, and we amassed a library of books on the subject.





What was the Hay Store like to live in?

It was a joy to live in – cosy in winter, and cool and bright in summer with the upstairs stable door open wide. Despite its small size, it was also a great space for hosting, and we often fed large groups of people. We loved the location, too – it was quiet and peaceful, yet just a few yards from the shops and cafés of Picton Street and the bars of Stokes Croft.

What was your favourite corner of the house and why?

The window seat at the back of the first floor conceals a bath. Watching TV from the tub, with the fire going

and the internal chimney warm, was a real pleasure.

Finally, do you have any advice for others looking to make the most of a small property?

Spend some time living in it before changing too much. You'll soon work out what should go where and how you could maximise the space available. Also, we learnt from experience not to over-engineer space-saving solutions – you often see neat storage ideas on websites and in magazines, but they generally rely on expensive hardware. Often a simpler solution with cheap components will work just as well.



A dash of Gallic style in St Andrews

There's a touch of French chic about this stylish St Andrews home. The bedrooms are decorated in fresh whites and blues, with pretty toile-de-jouy fabrics, white shutters and velvet chaise-longues that wouldn't look amiss in a Provençal manor. The bathrooms are particularly beautiful: the master bathroom has a claw-foot slipper tub, the ensuite comes with a striking encaustic-tiled floor, and both have traditional fixtures and metro tiles that echo the house's Victorian origins. Throughout, decorative mirrors, restored stained-glass windows and original fireplaces add further period elegance.

But that's not to say that the house lacks contemporary elements. There are vibrant modern artworks, striking geometric-print cushions, and unusual details such as bird-shaped drawer handles. The snazzy kitchen-diner pairs built-in bench seating with industrial-style lighting, and the combination of untreated wood and black edging lends an eye-catching look to the cupboard doors. There's also a sprinkling of iconic designer pieces, including metal Tolix chairs, angle-poise lamps and a mid-century modern plywood chair by Charles and Ray Eames.





IDEAS TO BORROW

Invest in statement furniture that will last for decades to come – and don't be afraid to mix pieces from different eras to create a personalised look.



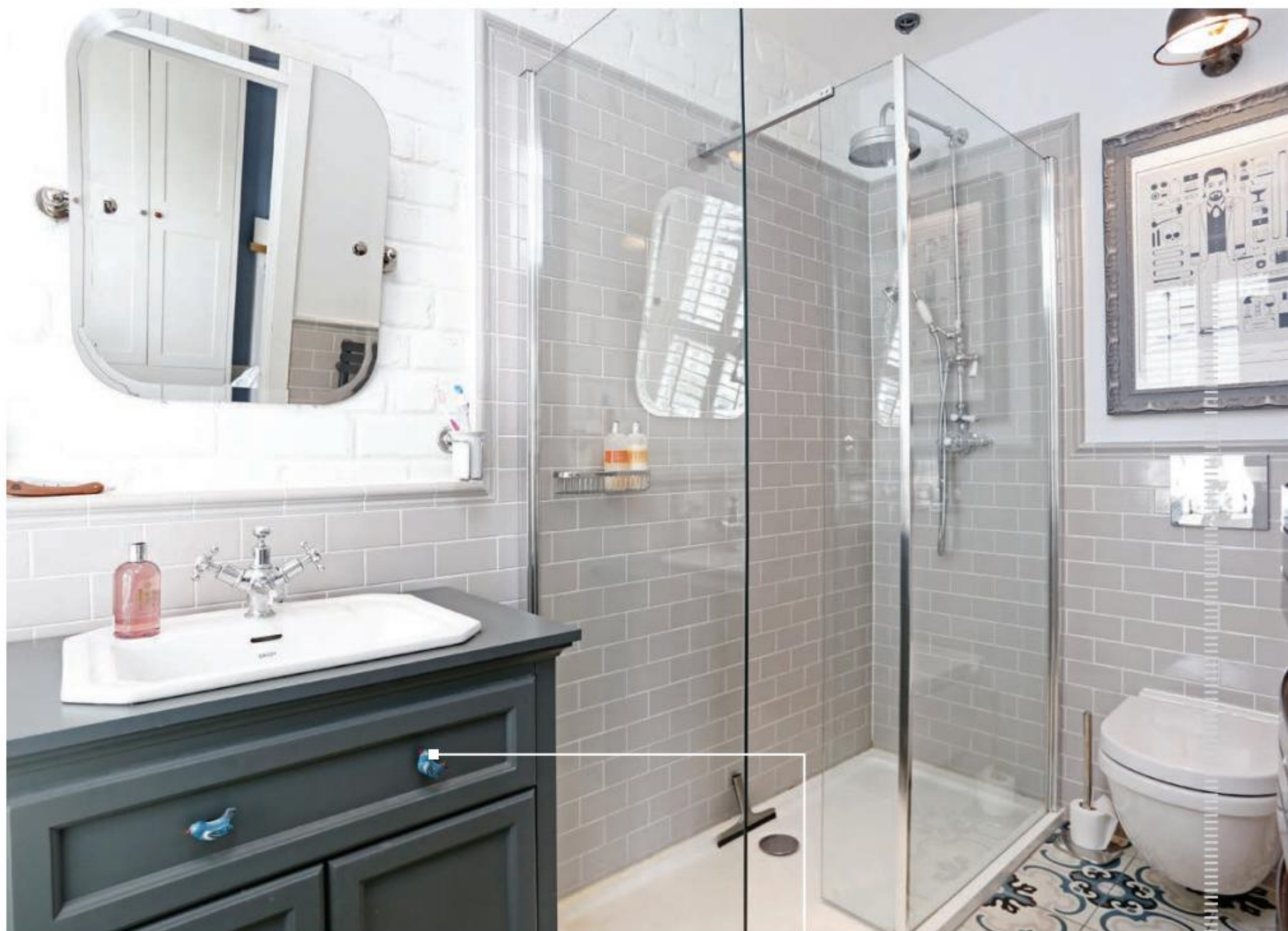
IDEAS TO BORROW

Use pattern and colour to build different ambiances in different rooms – perhaps soothing floral patterns and muted shades in bedrooms, and bolder options in reception rooms.









IDEAS TO BORROW

Don't forget the finishing touches. Small details such as door knobs and floor tiles can have a major impact on the overall scheme.

A colourful and creative house in Bishopston

This Victorian terrace is packed with personality. The walls throughout are white and grey, but every room bursts with colour thanks to vibrant artwork, vintage signs, and patterned cushions, throws and rugs in every shade of the rainbow. The furniture is an eclectic mix of mid-century modern chairs, salvaged tables and rustic dressers, often painted in bright hues such as sky blue, apple green, mustard yellow and postbox red. Dotted throughout are repurposed finds from flea markets, junk shops and reclamation yards, as well as industrial-style wall lamps and pendant lights.

The heart of the house is the vast kitchen-diner, which is flooded with natural light thanks to large skylights and bi-fold doors. The feel here is relaxed, with mismatched dining chairs, shelves and dressers brimming with books and plants, and low-slung couches arranged around a wood-burner – ideal for informal family meals and lazy weekend mornings. Even the kitchen units have quirky elements, including tongue-and-groove panels, curtains in place of cupboard doors and a rail for hanging pans.





IDEAS TO BORROW

Use varying textures to create a cosy feel. Drape sheepskins over sofas, cover chairs with throws, and soften tiled floors with rugs.



IDEAS TO BORROW

Experiment with unusual uses for furniture and accessories. Step ladders can become shelving units, office filing cabinets can make excellent bedside tables, and old metal buckets can hold logs for the fire.



IDEAS TO BORROW

Have fun with colour and pattern. Don't be afraid to pair clashing prints or mix bold shades.



before & after

A stylish small-space makeover in Cotham





LEFT: Before. ABOVE: After

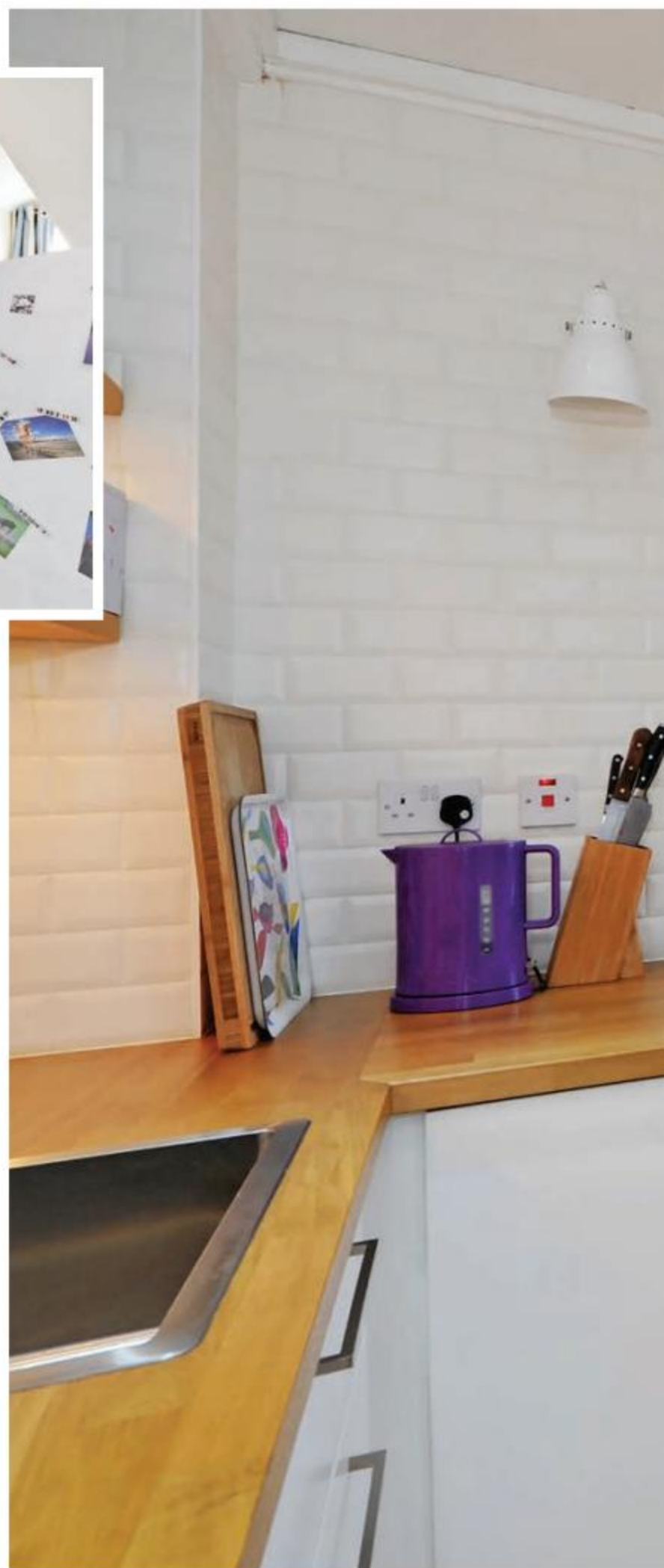
This top-floor flat shows how easy cosmetic changes can transform a home from dated to delightful. Throughout, tatty carpets have been pulled back to reveal beautiful stripped floorboards, making the small, sloped-ceiling space feel much larger and airier.

Clever furniture positioning has improved the flow of the living room, and the L-shaped sofa and moveable Eames side chair provide adaptable seating that works equally well for entertaining and relaxing in front of the TV. Bespoke shelving has been built under the eaves and above doorways, maximising every inch of space. ➤



The original kitchen layout has been retained, but new cupboards, wooden worktops and stainless steel appliances have brought it bang up to date. Replacing wall-hung units with shelves has made the room feel much more open, without losing any storage for pots, pans and utensils. Metro tiles and white doors help to bounce light from the window into the living area opposite.

The bathroom has also been given a sleek new look with a contemporary white suite and a striking hexagonal floor design. White tiles ensure the space feels bright, but grey grouting and a brick-effect pattern give them a distinctive, eye-catching edge.





TOP LEFT: Before
ABOVE & RIGHT: After



Focus on...

luxurious bathrooms

It may often be the smallest room in the house, but the bathroom is a big-sell area. Good bathrooms are much more than sanitised, utilitarian spaces; they're calming retreats where you can enjoy some much-needed pampering at the end of a busy day.

Here are a few tips to help you transform your bathroom into a spa-like sanctuary, no matter what budget and square footage you have to play with.

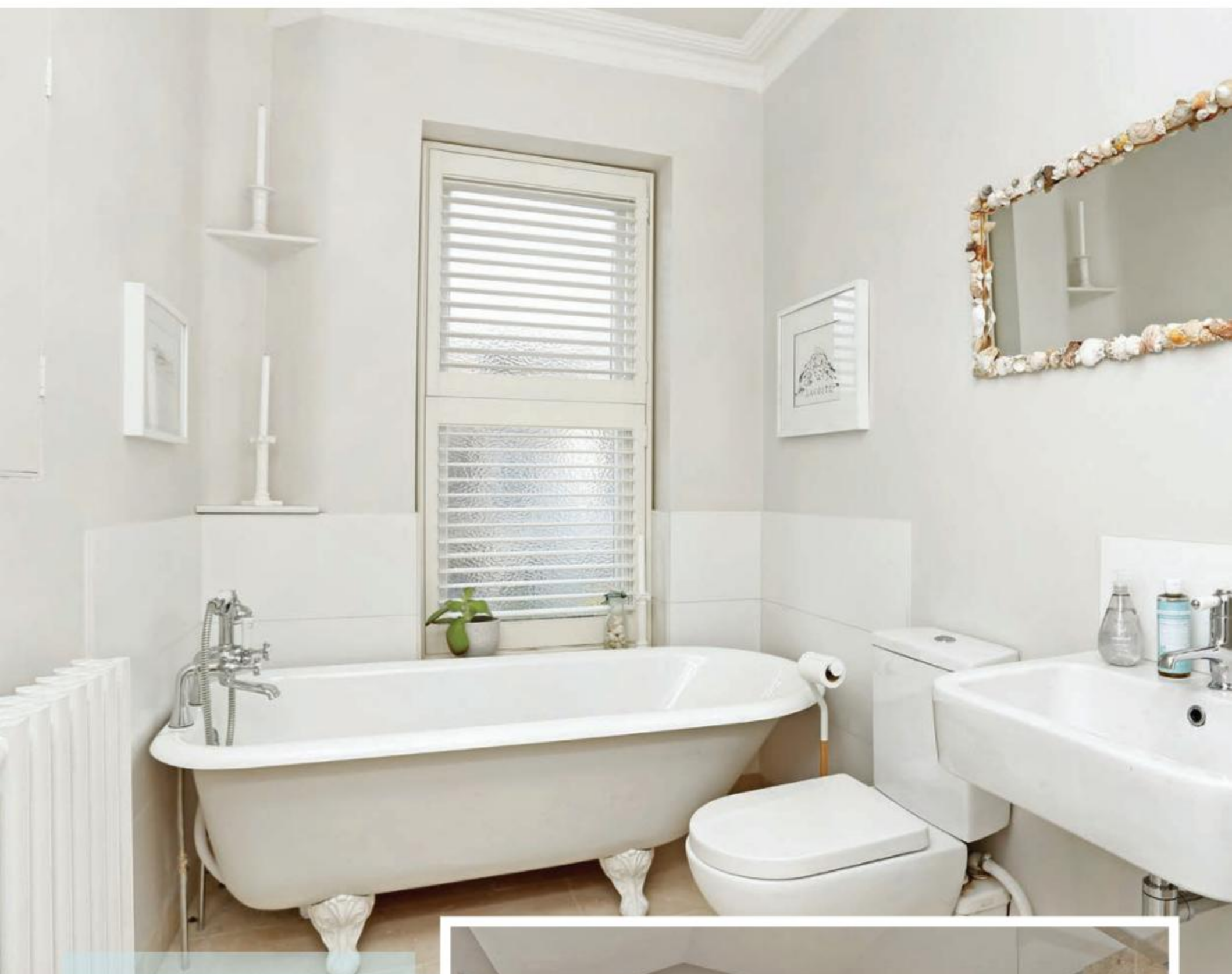
Maximise storage to keep your bathroom looking clutter-free. This sleek grey-and-white bathroom in St Andrews has a built-in cupboard under the sink, providing a handy place to stow away spare shampoo bottles and the like.

Create a sophisticated, eye-catching look with a monochrome colour scheme. The black metro tiles in this Horfield bathroom produce a dramatic contrast with the white walls and suite, and the use of varying sizes in the shower and on splashbacks adds further interest.





Consider using the same tiles on the floor and walls to create a decadent look; this can also make your bathroom appear larger than it is by blurring the lines between surfaces. A chandelier, a golden candelabra and an oversized mirror add further opulence to this slate-clad Bishopston example.



If you want a calming feel then try decorating your bathroom in whites and creams. Even the accessories are white in this airy St Andrews example, and the shell-encrusted mirror adds a touch of coastal chic.



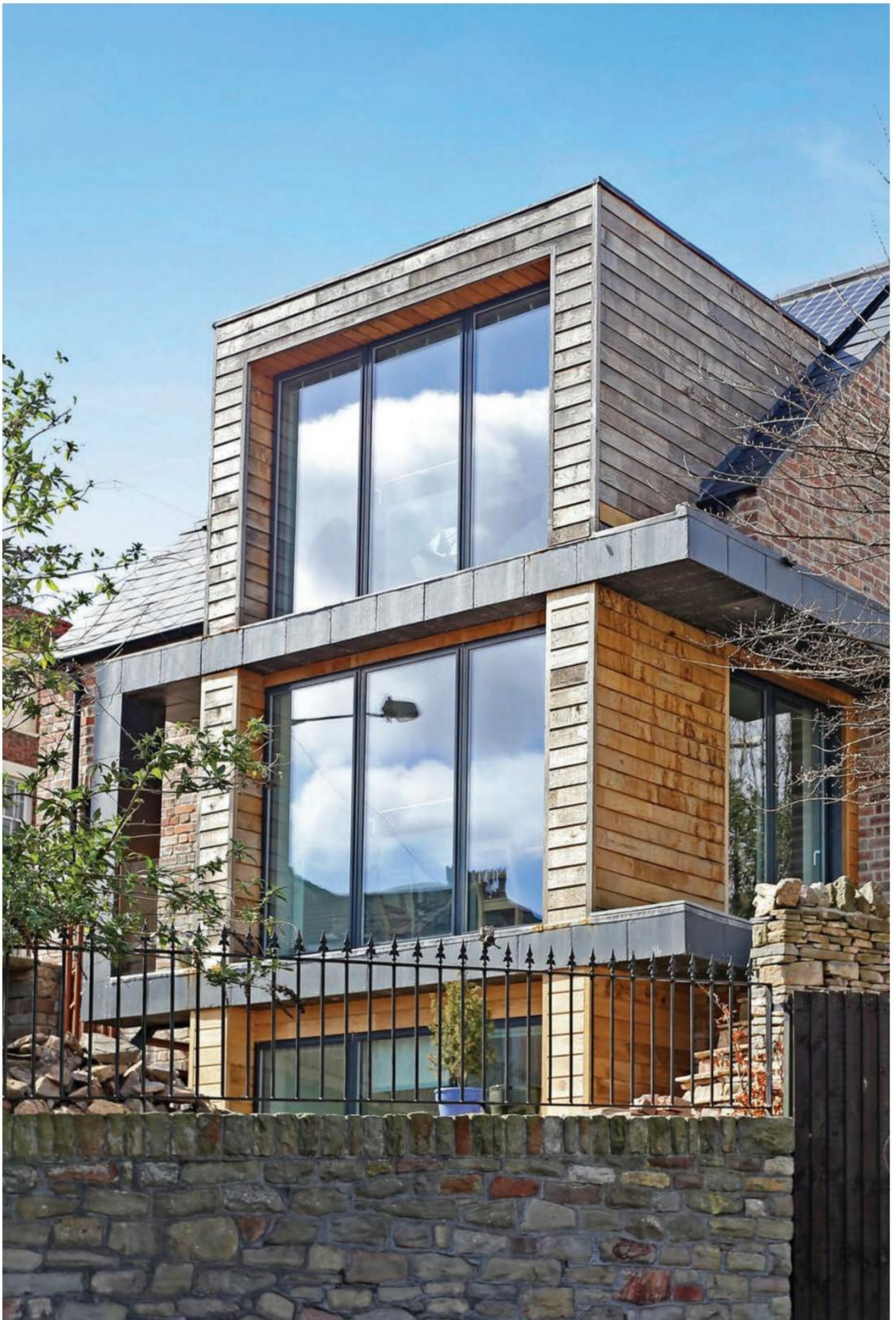
Think about window dressings. Shutters are an excellent option for bathrooms as they provide privacy without blocking out natural light. They also work with all sorts of looks, from contemporary décor to the more traditional scheme on display in this Bishopston home.



Take inspiration from this Horfield house and create a striking yet easy-to-adapt bathroom by pairing a timeless suite and classic white tiles with colourful accessories. When you want a change, you can transform the entire look with nothing more than a new set of towels, a couple of prints on the wall, or a different stool.

Finally, remember that baths needn't be confined to the bathroom! The owners of this Horfield house have installed a freestanding claw-foot tub in their master bedroom – a treat which is often found in boutique hotels and which is becoming increasingly popular in the home. After all, what could be more indulgent than enjoying a long evening soak before rolling straight into bed?







A self-build eco house on Ashley Hill

Architect Robert Elkins has turned an awkward corner plot on Ashley Hill into his dream home, managing the entire process from design to build. The results are stunning. From the outside, the house is a striking fusion of glass, stone and timber cladding; inside, it's flooded with light thanks to banks of floor-to-ceiling windows. It's also packed with innovative features that make it environmentally friendly, cost-effective and extremely comfortable to live in.

We asked Robert to tell us more about the inspiration behind the house, the benefits of eco design, and the highs and lows of his self-build journey.



Please can you tell us a bit about yourself and your background?

I'm an architect and I run a building firm. I grew up in Chippenham and spent many years trying to avoid the West Country, until I visited a friend in Bristol six years ago and fell for the city. After that, I never really left!

What motivated you to build the house?

A desire to create better than I could buy. There is no way my wife Hannah and I could have bought a house like this in this location.

And what inspired the design?

Bristol, with its idiosyncratic blend of styles and its human scale. We borrowed ideas from everywhere – even the sheds in the Ashley Hill allotments!

Why was creating an environmentally friendly house so important to you?

Minimising waste on all fronts is fundamental to our ethos. It doesn't mean living with less, but it's a simple and pragmatic formula that leads to all sorts of savings, as well as helping the planet. When you consider the cost and environmental benefits, you wonder why anyone wouldn't want to build an eco house!

What eco features does the house have?

It uses passive solar design with exposed thermal mass, which means it attracts and stores solar heat in winter and rejects it in summer. It also has passive ventilation and very high levels of insulation, enabling fresh air to circulate without letting heat escape. We installed triple acoustic glazing and low-energy lighting throughout, and we used lots of natural and reclaimed materials – including old bike handlebars, which we turned into a stair rail! Finally, we conducted lifecycle assessments to look at the house's environmental impact at





all stages, from the initial build through to future repair and maintenance.

Were there any highs and lows during the build?

To be honest there weren't many lows, although we did experience three months of solid rain when we wanted to install the flat roof of the garage, which obviously hampered the process. There were lots of highs – too many to single out, really – but I always enjoyed talking to people who stopped to ask about the house as they wandered past, and sitting down in the sun to drink a beer after a hard day's labour! And now, living in the house on a daily basis is a major high.

On that topic, what is it like to live in?

Amazing – warm in winter, cool in summer, and very light and airy. And it fits our daily life perfectly.

What's your favourite corner of the house?

Hmm – that's like asking about your favourite memory of a trip! There are so many corners that I like for so many reasons. During the day I like to sit by the window at the top, watching people go by as I work, and I like the office for its serenity. I love spending time on the roof terrace in the evening as it catches the last of the sun, and our double-sided breakfast bar is wonderful in the mornings as Hannah and I can sit and talk over breakfast.

What advice would you give to anyone thinking of building an eco home?

Do it! Do lots of research and think about things, but then just take the first step, work out what you need to do next, and keep doing that until you have a house – it's the best way, really. There's no denying that the process is hard sometimes, but it always comes good in the end.





A light and bright flat in Cotham

This Cotham home may be small, but it still packs a punch thanks to some very clever decorating tricks. White is used throughout, creating a bright and airy feel and ensuring that one room flows seamlessly into another. The kitchen is particularly ingenious, as the units have been positioned so as not to block any natural light from the full-height sash window in the corner.

The pale walls provide a perfect backdrop for a few well-chosen pieces, including a smart grey sofa that's been jazzed up with bright cushions and colourful buttons. The film-style floor lamp acts as a striking focal point, and carefully selected artworks are grouped into clusters for extra impact. In the bedroom, birch-print wallpaper from Cole & Son is used to create a feature wall without overpowering the otherwise-calming space.

IDEAS TO BORROW

Make a statement with lighting. An unusual lamp or an oversized chandelier can have as much impact as any piece of furniture.





IDEAS TO BORROW

Use white to create the illusion of space and light. If you have a particularly small or dark room, try covering the walls with a light-reflecting paint.





IDEAS TO BORROW

Have fun experimenting with innovative wallpapers. There are all sorts of designs on the market nowadays, from eye-catching birds and butterflies to trompe l'oeil effects designed to resemble tiles, marble and exposed brick.

A stylish Bishopston semi with vintage touches

The owners of this four-bedroom house took it back to its bare bones before transforming it into their dream abode. They started by extending the rear-facing rooms to create an open-plan kitchen-diner, making the most of the south-westerly aspect with large patio doors. They also installed new radiators, commissioned bespoke storage, and added a smart bathroom that pairs a sleek white suite with striking slate tiles.

Perhaps most impressive is the attention to detail on display. Among the house's star features are the wide wooden floorboards, and the owners

searched far and wide to match the boards used in the extension to the originals, eventually finding the correct size in a soon-to-be-demolished pub in Wales. Their rich colour is offset perfectly by the pale grey kitchen units, white walls and marble worktops.

The furniture throughout the house is kept fairly minimal to create an airy, uncluttered feel, but there are dashes of vintage in the armchairs and lamps. There's also a hint of decadence in the oversized gilded mirrors which adorn the dining area, lounge and landing.





IDEAS TO BORROW

Pay attention to the details. Taking time to source the right floorboards or the perfect shade of varnish can have a huge impact on the overall look and feel of your home.





IDEAS TO BORROW

Keep accessories to a minimum and focus on adding a few standout pieces – large mirrors, eye-catching artwork or even unusual lighting.

Consider how to use contrast to create a striking look. Pair dark floors with pale walls, or matt units with sparkling countertops.

Focus on Garden design



Karena Batstone
Garden Designer

The garden is an extension of the home – a place where many of us spend much of our valuable leisure time. It's an area that's often overlooked, but by treating it as another room and applying the same care and attention as you would to the interior, you can create wonderful spots for alfresco dining, lounging and entertaining.

Award-winning garden designer Karena Batstone (recently described by *Elle Decoration* as a “modern-day Capability Brown”) shares her tips for crafting outdoor spaces that are both beautiful to look at and practical to use – whether your plot is a tiny city courtyard or an acre of rolling lawn.

Function before furniture

Just like you would when planning the rooms inside your house, start by making a wish list of how you want to use your garden. You might want to have an outdoor kitchen or fireplace, a vegetable garden, a climbing wall, a boules court, a sculpture garden... or simply a pleasant outdoor patch where you can chill out.

The best seat in the garden

Next, think about where you want to linger in the garden space. Which corner gets the sun? Where are the best views? If your garden faces north, then the sunniest spot will be at the end of the garden.

Adaptable spaces

Versatile elements will help to extend the use of your garden. I often use retractable shower-proof sails, storage benches on casters, and vine-

clad arbours that double as climbing frames and fixing points for swings and lanterns. When not in use, fire pits can be covered with tops and used as coffee tables, and sandpits can be concealed below decks.

Screen and reveal

Urban plots tend to be small, but most will have a view beyond the boundary that can be “borrowed” and integrated into the garden experience. Similarly, there will be eyesores that need screening. I tend to use trees and pleached hedges (hedges on stilts) in city gardens. Don't assume that the screening element should be at the boundary - it's often best to position this within the garden and compose the spaces around it. Gardens that unfold – that conceal and reveal themselves and invite exploration – often feel larger than those which you can see all at once.

Re-use and recycle

Before you get the diggers in, look at the materials and existing plants in the garden. Can any be reused or replanted? Don't waste your budget lugging unnecessary materials on and off the site. If you want to play with the levels then try to reuse the excavated soil, perhaps in raised beds. You can be creative here: I recently designed a milk-bottle meadow – a vertical garden made up of 350 recycled plastic milk bottles. Pots don't have to be terracotta!

Engage all the senses

The best gardens not only look great but also smell great, sound great and feel great! Hang feeders from your trees and fill your garden with birdsong; plant nectar-rich flowers for the insects; enjoy the perfume of lilies and cut grass (my favourite!); and plant swathes of feathery fennel plants for general stroking.





A multi-purpose garden with dining and lounging areas



An arbour which doubles as a climbing frame



A seating area positioned to capture the sun



A pleached hedge divides different areas of the garden

Night-time drama

In my city garden, tall fountains of grasses brush against prickly thistles, dainty flowers of blue clematis dangle from the birch trees, and curly tendrils of grape vines wrap around anything within reach. These contrasting textures provide rich opportunities for different lighting effects that vary the mood of the garden after dark. If you have an outdoor socket then experiment with a plug and play system, which doesn't require installation by an electrician. With a string of moveable spike-mounted spots, you can up-light, cross-light and backlight, playing with light and shadow to create dramatic silhouettes. Avoid glare by sticking to candlelight on dining tables.

The joys of water

I love to use water in gardens, particularly in calm, reflective pools which attract wildlife. Even the tiniest urban garden will have room for a simple water-filled dish to cool the atmosphere (and the wine!) and act as a focal point-cum-bird bath. Gently falling water can muffle the hum of nearby traffic.

Down to earth

So much of successful gardening is linked to the soil. If you find yourself with a garden full of builders' rubble and dust, dig it out and start again with fresh soil. Keep the soil in good condition by topping it up with compost. If you have room to make your own from raw kitchen waste, even better.

Which plants? Which place?

Garden design is a high art form because gardens are always changing. How a plant looks at the garden centre is not how it will look in a couple of weeks' time, let alone in a couple of years. So yes, planting design can be daunting. For the novice gardener, my advice is to plant with strength and purpose by using fewer varieties and repeating them across the garden to unify the space. Try to plant for year-round interest, using bulbs to bring the garden to life early in the season. Gardening is supposed to be fun, so don't be scared to experiment!





Planters made from recycled milk cartons



A pond designed to attract wildlife

Planters filled with herbs and flowers



Beautiful Bristol Gardens

1. Lanterns and bird feeders dangle from the branches in this beautiful garden.

The assortment of blooms and trees provides colour, fragrance and texture.

2. Repeated palm trees create a striking look in this garden. Decking defines the seating area, which has built-in benches that double as storage. There's also a moveable fire pit to provide ambiance and warmth when entertaining.

3. Here, clever slatted fencing provides privacy without

completely obscuring the view of neighbouring plots, making this garden appear bigger than it is. There are also two seating areas, providing sunny spots to linger at different times of day.

4. The seating area is placed at the far end of this garden to catch the best of the sun. A path links it to the house, ensuring an easy flow through the space.

5. A sail shades this patio seating area, and can be repositioned easily as the sun moves around during the day.



3



1

2





4



5



When garden designer Flora McArthur first bought this St Andrews property, the plot was dingy, sparse and unloved, with a battered lawn and concrete steps; now it's an alfresco oasis that encompasses a dining area, a vegetable patch and swathes of flowers, with raised beds zoning the different spaces.

Flora explains: "I wanted to create a bold and stylish design with a strong structural feel, softened by naturalistic planting. The fern- and horta-flanked pond became the focal point, with a 'floating deck' for sunbathing or just watching the fish and damselflies darting about. I also built a timber arbour to frame the black sandstone terrace, and covered it in vines which provide shade from the sun. Timber and black

gravel steps lead around the garden, past the terrace and down; it's a journey through texture and scent.

"The restful green palette is punctuated with dramatic colours at different points of the year; there's always something interesting to look at. In winter, the strong outline of the garden has its own contemplative beauty. But my highlight of the year is definitely the Japanese water irises in May and June – they're such an exquisite blue.

"The garden has evolved over the years, as gardens do – they're ever-changing spaces that you can play with. At first it was somewhere for us to chill out as a couple; now, it's a place where our children can grow up alongside their own pocket of nature."

Focus on...

spaces for kids

Decorating children's rooms allows for endless creativity, whether you're preparing a nursery for a new arrival or a playroom for a rapidly growing brood. These fun yet practical spaces show how you can let your imagination run wild.

Striking digital wallpaper, porthole-shaped stickers and painted rivets create a wonderful under-the-sea theme in this Bishopston bedroom. A crab-shaped floor cushion, a cuddly octopus and a starfish-patterned rug complete the look.

Sophisticated grown-up furniture scaled down to their size will delight children. This St Andrews playroom is kitted out with a chic Eames-style table and chairs, providing a handy corner for painting and drawing. The tepee creates a fun play area that can be moved between rooms as needed and the fox-shaped rug is the perfect finishing touch.



White and grey are perfect gender-neutral shades for nurseries. This St Andrews example is jazzed up with a cat-print blind and illustrations from popular children's novels.



This Bishopston home shows how a raised bed can be used to maximise space, providing a useful nook for a desk, toy boxes, bookshelves or bean bags.



Pink gingham curtains, floral bedspreads and a pretty butterfly garland create a vintage country look in this girls' bedroom in Bishopston. Restricting colour and pattern to accessories means the scheme can easily be tweaked as the occupants grow and their tastes change.



Wall stickers, painted drawer fronts and a ceiling mobile add splashes of primary colour to this baby boy's bedroom in St Andrews. The display boxes provide an eye-catching way of keeping books, toys and nappy-changing essentials to hand.



Bunting and bright framed posters are an easy way to personalise an otherwise-neutral scheme, as this St Andrews bedroom demonstrates.

Fun touches for kids don't have to be restricted to the inside. This St Andrews garden features an oversized blackboard nailed to the fence, allowing for hours of outdoor creativity.



Grey and white dinosaur-print wallpaper creates a striking feature wall in this Bishopston nursery without overpowering the soothing space.





before & after

A tasteful transformation in Bishopston

You might recognise this beautiful Bishopston home, as it appeared in the first edition of the Look Book. The formerly rustic cottage has since been given a sleek new look by its current owners, and it's a wonderful example of a property evolving to suit the lifestyles and tastes of its occupants.

Throughout, farmhouse yellows and time-worn pine shelves have been replaced with smart greys and elegant antiques, and windows have been dressed in mid-century modern prints. A lick of slate-coloured paint and a new clean-lined suite have transformed the bathroom, even though its layout remains largely unchanged.

Before (below) & After (left)





Before

Most striking, though, is the swish new kitchen. A cleverly designed single-storey extension provides additional space for cooking and entertaining without stealing much square footage from the garden. It's topped by a glass roof lantern that floods the room with light, and connected to the space outside by large French doors.

The glossy grey units, white resin worktops and glass splashback add a contemporary edge, and the recessed ceiling lights and low-hanging pendant lamps provide ambient and task lighting that can be adapted to suite any mood.





After (Left, above and right)



IDEAS TO BORROW

Experiment with interesting ways to showcase collections. Stack books horizontally, cluster items by size and colour, or hang open-fronted display boxes from walls.





A calm yet cosy St Werburghs abode

There's a wonderfully homely feel about this three-bedroom terrace in St Werburghs, which is decorated in an array of calming greys and browns. The contemporary white kitchen is softened with wooden worktops, brick-effect tiles and open shelves, and the farmhouse table is surrounded by mismatched chairs. Every centimetre of space is maximised: dark walls and a clever corner sofa create a snug sitting area under the stairs, and a roll-out island unit set into the former fireplace provides additional storage and worktop space.

Varying textures (leather, wool, wood) add warmth to the lounge, and there are subtle splashes of yellow in the curtains and cushions. The unusual mirrored armchair and industrial floor lamp act as focal points, and books are grouped by colour to create an eclectic display.



IDEAS TO BORROW

Create a cohesive scheme by choosing one colour palette and sticking to it throughout your home. You can add interest by layering contrasting textures, or by selecting different accent colours for different rooms.



IDEAS TO BORROW

Don't let empty fireplaces go to waste. Install bespoke storage, fill them with logs, or create interesting arrangements of flowers or candles.



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