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BUILT-IN STORAGE

Case study 3: a loft conversion with a light well to brighten the stairs

THE CHALLENGE to convert the pitched roof of a Victorian property into a spacious and contemporary home office

FAST FACTS



Owner Elizabeth Porter (left) lives with her husband, Mark, and their son, Alexander, ten, in London.
Architects Curtis Wood Architects (020 7664 1400, cwtimewoodarchitects.com)
Contractor CK Bespoke Refurbishments (07956 412178, ckbespoke@refurbishments.co.uk)
Cost £54,000 for construction, plus £1,000 for the bespoke built-in storage.

Why did you decide to convert the loft?

When we bought the house 10 years ago we did a lot of work on it. We never got it quite right, but we were both working full time and just ran out of steam. Then I fell pregnant with our son, Alexander, who's now two, and we needed more space. It gave us the impetus to build up into the loft.
How did you find an architect?
 We found Curtis Wood Architects through an architect search on the Riba website.
What was the space like before?
 It was just an empty, pitched-roof space, reached through a trap door

with a pull-down ladder.

What brief did you give?

Off-the-peg loft conversions tend to be very formulaic, but we wanted something special. We asked for decent head height on the stairs and for the space to be light and open.

Any problems with planning permission?

The house was built in 1890 and is in a conservation area so there were strict planning regulations. At the back we had originally asked for French doors, leading out onto a roof terrace, but the conservation laws specified sash windows. At the front we were only allowed one small opening. The roof material also proved contentious as, despite wanting slatted wood, we had to choose between slate and lead. We chose lead as cheap slate looks nasty.

How long did it take?

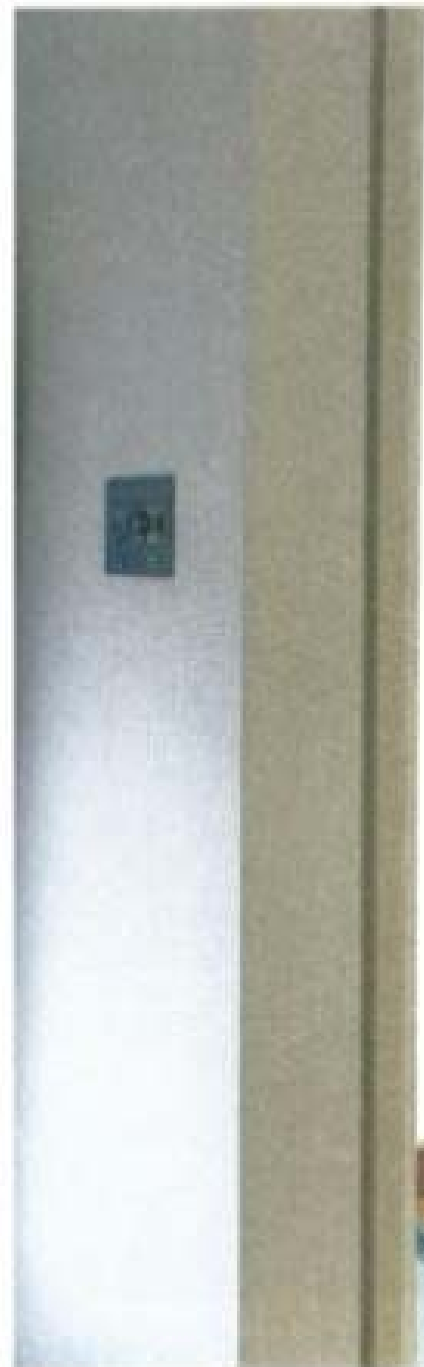
It should have taken 14 weeks but we had a disaster with our initial builders.

How much space did you gain?

In the loft 25 sq m, and 6 sq m for the new stair landing.

How do you use the new room?

It's a study but there's also a sofa bed so it can double as a guest bedroom,



When converting a loft, it is essential to consider including some form of storage. Building under the eaves is a smart way of maximising space in conversions with a sloping roof, as the limited head room makes this part of the room difficult to use for any other purpose. Alternatives to built-in storage are low-level sideboards, chests and freestanding boxes that can be fitted into the space. For more ideas, see our storage directory on page 121.

What do you most like about the design?

I love the use of glass and the way the architects have created a light well at the centre of the house. The skylight, with a glass floor directly beneath, allows light to penetrate down to the second floor. The whole house feels more open and spacious.

What type of wood is the floor?

Oak. We like it so much we're considering putting it down in the rest of the house.

Did you specify built-in storage?

Yes. We decided on a bespoke solution and our builder, Kevin, fitted the cupboards in under the eaves. Kevin made the cupboards from MDF with a sprayed cellulose paint finish and touch catches. They integrate well into the rest of the room.

Is there anything you would do differently second time round?

We'd move out until all the work was complete and we'd hire a project manager. The design is perfect, though, especially the skylight, which reminds me of the work of the artist James Turrell. =

Main picture: the light well brightens the heart of the house. From left: the exterior betrays little of its interior remodelling; the finished office. Top right: storage under the eaves



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