



The desire to improve rather than move led to Lucie Young taking on an inspired conversion of the roof space above her flat into a luxurious, boutique hotel-style bedroom suite with every inch of space carefully considered ▷

Words: **Ysanne Brooks** Photography: **Pixangle**

# Lofty ambitions

↪ While not placing a door at the base of the stairs was an expensive choice, as it meant installing a sophisticated sprinkler system to meet building regulations, it helps provide continuity between the living room and the loft space, as does the way similar colours, textures and materials are used throughout.

↑ Although the flat is fairly compact, the living room is still big enough to contain a sofa and a bespoke table and bench. The walls are painted in Ammonite to keep everything light, while the panelling behind the TV is in Mole's Breath, both by Farrow & Ball.

Finding the perfect flat in London can be tricky at the best of times – so when two sold together as a job lot come onto the market, not investing might be seen as foolhardy. For Lucie Young, owner of bespoke property service Light Intervention, purchasing the two flat conversions in a Victorian house on a pretty, tree-lined south west London street definitely seemed too good an opportunity to turn down. Lucie lived in the ground-floor flat while extensive renovations of the first floor were carried out and then, when works were finished, moved upstairs, making the smaller top-floor flat her home and renting out the ground floor. While delighted with the existing space's redesign, Lucie knew the top-level one-bedroom apartment with small shower room could be improved upon and so, 18 months after the initial work finished, she embarked on another big building project – this time converting the loft space above the flat into another bedroom and a larger bathroom. Here, she explains more about the project and how it completed her home and the property's transformation...

#### What was the driving force behind the project?

Of course, adding another bedroom was key – but I have to admit, having a proper big bathroom with freestanding bath was probably most important to me. The original renovation included creating a lovely walk-in shower room, but I desperately wanted a decent-sized bathroom with a tub. It seemed obvious to utilise the loft space by converting it into a master bedroom and allocating plenty of space for a generous bathroom.

#### Did you employ an architect or designer?

I designed the space, as there were some quite specific things I wanted. I didn't want a standard or boring loft conversion, so creating the design myself seemed to be the best way to achieve something to suit my needs. I consulted architects – one drew up my final plans – and construction firm Simply Loft, who I had worked with on projects before, came on board for the build.

#### How easy was it to make best use of the space?

Lofts notoriously have tricky design features such as sharp corners, awkward sloping ceilings, chimneybreasts, and eaves. One of the most important things to me was to utilise the area as efficiently as possible. The space isn't huge and although a spacious bathroom was important, I didn't want the bedroom to feel like an afterthought. The bed with built-in headboard design with shelves behind means it sits neatly into the eaves and at the same time makes the most of that void behind it, through shelving down the side which doubles up as a bedside table. It also meant I was able to add reading lights. Bespoke storage was essential to get the clean-lined look with efficient interiors to make best use of every inch. For me, less is more when it comes to the décor – I hate fussy interiors so the design I specified looks simple, cosy and is functional without being cold or cluttered. ▶



↑ As the space itself isn't huge, Lucie wanted everything to be as sleek as possible, including the barely there bespoke built-in cupboards and the recess. This allows the TV to sit almost flush with the wall and conceals unsightly cables. Opening the ensuite's large pocket door gives the loft a boutique-hotel feel.

→ Bringing in natural light was hugely important to Lucie, so she invested in the biggest pair of Velux windows she could comfortably fit into the space and painted the walls in Strong White by Farrow & Ball to help keep the room bright.



### How did you achieve such a sense of light and openness?

I chose the biggest Velux windows I could have and they, along with the sash windows in the bathroom, help bring in a lot of natural light. I have to say the loft's orientation is just perfect. It's beautiful both in the morning and evening. However, one of the design's most important parts is the large mirror-clad pocket door. When closed, it helps reflect light around; when open, you get the double aspect from the windows either side of the space. Living here on my own, I don't really need privacy – having the pocket design means I can just pull it back, essentially creating one large room for a boutique hotel feel. I was very particular about the runner system – as I didn't want the door to rattle about in it, so I did a lot of research about the best mechanisms. The smooth, quiet result is definitely worth the extra effort.

### What inspired the decorating scheme?

I prefer a pale, calming palette, so both the bedroom and bathroom are mostly greys and soft whites. For an accent of colour, I added brighter cushions and artwork I can update when I feel like a change. I wanted a country-style element, too, hence the bedroom's traditional radiator, the bathroom panelling, and the wooden shutters.

The exposed brick wall on the stairs wasn't on my original plans, but when the builders stripped it back it looked so good I decided to keep it.

Since the bathroom was such a driving force for the project, getting the right tub was crucial. I took my time and invested in a Millbrook design from The Cast Iron Bath Company. They offer a service to spray-paint the outside in the colour of your choice. I picked Farrow & Ball's Cornforth White to match the wall panelling.

### How important was it to achieve a sense of flow from the floor below?

A key part of the design was the living room downstairs not being cut-off by a door, so it seems to flow into the loft. It made the build a little more complicated – and expensive – as building regulations required I install a sophisticated Automist sprinkler system, which can be retrofitted easily and complies with fire safety rules.

The décor echoes the downstairs colour scheme, including details such as the panelling in the sitting room and bathroom to create a sense of continuity. I used the same carpet on the stairs and in the bedroom, and the colour of the downstairs wood flooring matches the bathroom's wood-effect tiles. Plus, the sash window in the loft matches those in the rest of the house.

### How long did the conversion take?

Including drawing up the plans and getting planning permission, which I did myself, it took about six months, with the build taking around four. Unfortunately, due to a few hiccups – including a leak from the roof – it took a little longer and ended up going over Christmas. Some of it was also due to me being detailed about what I wanted, and there was really bad weather which was out of our hands. That said, the builders were superb. I'm a real perfectionist and can safely say their finish is amazing. Deciding to have the space open plan was costly, but worth every penny. Not only does it have the wow factor while giving me the luxurious bathroom I craved, it's changed the whole flat for the better. ▶

→ The mirrored surface covers the entire pocket door which, when closed, helps give the illusion of more space and light. Behind the bath, the panelling is deeper to conceal the plumbing and forms a narrow shelf for accessories as well as Lucie's vintage mirror.







← Neat storage was important, so a bottle shelf in the shower was a must-have. "I hate scrabbling around the floor trying to find shampoo," admits Lucie. It's complemented by recessed shelving above the wall-hung WC.

↓ The wall panelling gives the bathroom a subtle country feel Lucie wanted to achieve. Painted in Farrow & Ball's Cornforth White, as on the outside of the cast-iron bath, it adds a little depth of colour against the walls, which are finished in Strong White, also from Farrow & Ball. Although the floor appears to be wood, it is in fact hardwearing Rye Harbour porcelain tiles by Fired Earth.

## GET THE LOOK

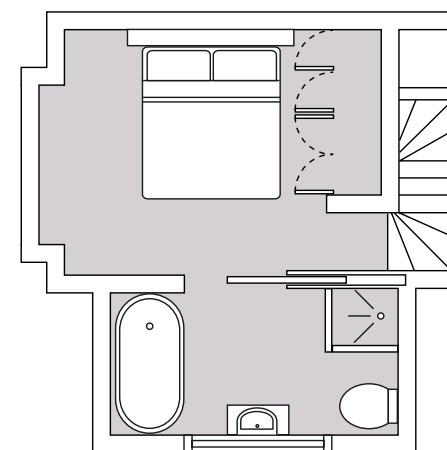


- 1** Classic radiator in Pure White, from £340.80, Bisque. [bisque.co.uk](http://bisque.co.uk)
- 2** Batello freestanding bath, £1799, Pure Bathroom Collection. [purebathroomcollection.co.uk](http://purebathroomcollection.co.uk)
- 3** Trevarno window mirror, W81xH100cm, £225, Oka. [oka.com](http://oka.com)
- 4** Kentfish Town Grey metro tiles, £19.95 per sq m, Walls and Floors. [wallsandfloors.co.uk](http://wallsandfloors.co.uk)
- 5** Double Classic cotton quilted bedspread in white, £60, Soak & Sleep. [soakandsleep.com](http://soakandsleep.com)
- 6** Meadow flowers rectangular cushion cover, £15, Dekoria. [dekoriam.co.uk](http://dekoriam.co.uk)
- 7** California Collection smooth hardwood shutters in White Smoke, from £220 per sq m, California Shutters. [californiashutters.co.uk](http://californiashutters.co.uk)



## THE PLANS

Converting the attic provided enough space for a generous master bedroom and bathroom suite with bespoke fitted storage solutions, making the most of every inch of space.



## SOURCE BOOK

### DESIGN

**Loft extension build** Simply Loft (0800 917 7571 or [simplyloft.co.uk](http://simplyloft.co.uk))

### BEDROOM

- Headboard and shelving** Bespoke by Simply Loft, as before
- Bed** For similar try Dreams (0800 652 5090 or [dreams.co.uk](http://dreams.co.uk))
- Bed linen** The White Company (020 3758 9222 or [thewhitecompany.com](http://thewhitecompany.com))
- Bedside lights** Garden Trading (01993 845 559 or [gardentrading.co.uk](http://gardentrading.co.uk))
- Throw** For similar try The White Company, as before
- Bespoke cushions** Cole & Son fabric (020 8442 8844 or [cole-and-son.com](http://cole-and-son.com))
- Radiator** Budget Radiators (01436 897509 or [budgetradiators.co.uk](http://budgetradiators.co.uk))
- Windows** Velux (01592 778225 or [velux.co.uk](http://velux.co.uk))
- Blinds** Velux, as before
- Carpet** Collins & Downes, Trade Carpet (020 8247 3891 or [tradecarpet.com](http://tradecarpet.com))
- TV** For similar try Panasonic ([Panasonic.co.uk](http://Panasonic.co.uk))
- Mirror** For similar try round copper wall mirror, Maisons du Monde (0808 234 2172 or [maisonsdumonde.com](http://maisonsdumonde.com))
- Wall paint** Farrow & Ball (01202 876141 or [farrow-ball.com](http://farrow-ball.com))

- Built-in wardrobes** Simply Loft, as before
- Door runner system** SDS London (020 7228 1185 or [sdslondon.co.uk](http://sdslondon.co.uk))

### EN SUITE

- Sanitaryware** Heritage Bathrooms (03300 268503 or [heritagebathrooms.com](http://heritagebathrooms.com))
- Vanity unit** Heritage Bathrooms, as before
- Bath** The Cast Iron Bath Company (01723 585896 or [castironbath.co.uk](http://castironbath.co.uk))
- Brassware** Heritage Bathrooms, as before
- Shower cubicle** Simpsons, Crosswater (01322 422743 or [crosswater.co.uk](http://crosswater.co.uk))
- Wall tiles** Fired Earth (0845 366 5661 or [firedearth.com](http://firedearth.com))
- Flooring** Fired Earth, as before
- Wall paint** Farrow & Ball, as before
- Mirror** For similar, try Oka (03330 042042 or [oka.com](http://oka.com))
- Shutters** Shutterly Fabulous (0800 9700 800 or [shutterlyfabulous.com](http://shutterlyfabulous.com))
- Lights** Fritz Fryer (01989 567416 or [fritzfryer.co.uk](http://fritzfryer.co.uk))

### COST

A similar loft conversion would cost around £65,000 KBB