

Sliding doors

Character and practicality combine in this three-storey home, thanks partly to its elegant Japanese-style sliding doors

Report: Emma Morris Photography: Nick Keane
Styling: Tamsin Weston Illustrations: Peter Davies

Energetic, recently retired John Fenton and his wife Angela found a home that suited them perfectly in terms of situation, but there were a few things inside that they desperately wanted to change. The four-bed, three-storey house sits within a gated complex on the site of an old manor house in a quiet spot near Amersham, so John and Angela decided to refurbish the property before they moved in. "They had used gold and brown heavily patterned tiles and huge basins in the bathroom. There was also a small, dark kitchen area and a tiny study next to it, plus lots of pattern all over the house, so we ripped it all out and started again," says John. It took four months to transform the home before the couple moved in.

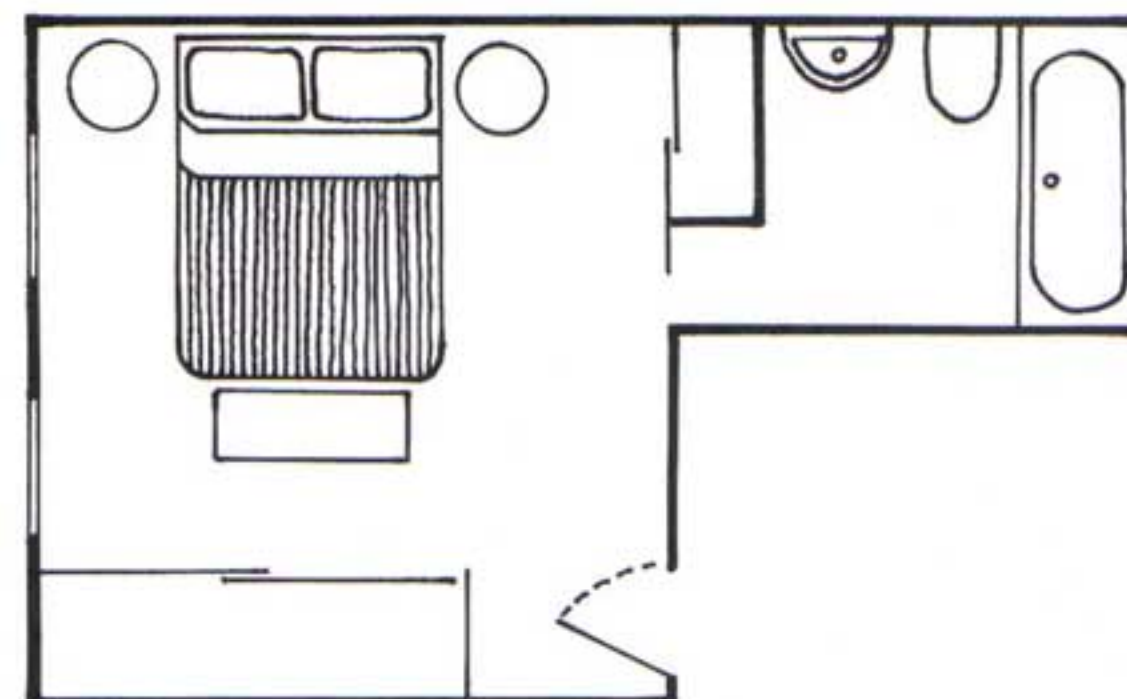
A clever addition is a glass sliding door, recalling the traditional Japanese rice-paper shoji screens, which separates the kitchen, becoming a feature in itself

Buckinghamshire. Twelve homes inhabit the seven leafy acres complete with tennis court. "We love the area – it's got great transport connections and we can lock up and go away knowing that our house is safe," says John.

The previous owners were an older couple with traditional tastes,

The kitchen area, located on the first floor, used to combine a smaller kitchen and a boxroom that was, "no use for anything – it was tiny," according to John. They decided to turn the fourth bedroom situated on the ground floor into a more useful study and a walk-in wardrobe area, and knocked down the wall





Above: The bathroom is decorated in calm, neutral colours, and is a far cry from the over-patterned and cluttered space it had been before **Top:** The Keuco mirrored cabinet makes the room feel bigger and brighter and conceals valuable storage space for small items

COST

A similar kitchen would cost £45,000. A similar bedroom would cost £9000, and a similar bathroom £14,000

CONTACTS

KITCHEN

Design Veritas (01753 481500 or www.veritas-designs.co.uk)
Units N60 in Velvet Oak veneer, Miele (01235 554455 or www.miele.co.uk)
Steam oven, single oven and combi-microwave Miele, as before

Taps Doric in pewter finish, Franke (0161 436 6280 or www.franke.co.uk)
Sink Campus D-200 in Cristalite in Onyx, Schock (01772 332710 or www.schock.de)
Light above breakfast bar Fabbian, Enlightenment By Design (01494 432020 or www.enlightenmentbydesign.sagenet.co.uk)
Painting behind breakfast bar Jeffrey Kroll (www.krollog.com)
Accessories Red vases and storage jars, House of Fraser (0870 160 7270 or www.houseoffraser.co.uk)

BEDROOM

Design Veritas, as before
Bed and bedside tables Harrods (020 7730 1234 or www.harrods.com)
Wardrobes designed by Veritas, as before
Ottoman bespoke
Curtains Peter Knight (01494 675561 or www.peterknight.co.uk)
Accessories Chenille squares cushion, Next (0845 600 7000 or www.next.co.uk); Chocolate sequin and brown cushions, Linea Home at House of Fraser, as before; Notebooks, Barbara Wiggins Designs (020 8691 8660 or www.barbarawiggins.co.uk)

BATHROOM

Design European Bathrooms (01494 434349 or www.europeanbathrooms.com)
WC and basin Jacuzzi (01782 717175 or www.jacuzzi.co.uk)
Bath Villeroy & Boch (020 8871 4028 or www.villeroy-boch.com)
Brassware Hansgrohe (0870 770 1972 or www.hansgrohe.co.uk)
Floor and wall tiles Porcelanosa (0800 915 4000 or www.porcelanosa.co.uk)
Mirrored cabinet Keuco (01442 865220 or www.keuco.de)
Towel rail Acova (01252 531207 or www.acova.co.uk)



view and light that streams in through the large window during the day. The glass light above creates a more intimate atmosphere in the evening.

The kitchen packs in a lot without feeling crowded. The coffee machine, steam oven and combination oven are built-in at an ergonomic height for ease of use. "I love using the coffee machine but have to be careful I don't get carried away and use it too often because too much caffeine isn't good for you," laughs John. There's a space-efficient tambour cupboard in the corner and a magic corner unit below uses the potentially wasted area.

The master suite upstairs has a calm, Japanese feel, thanks to the cherry wood furniture and a similar sliding door to the one used in the kitchen. The picture above the bed, which the couple picked up in an art shop, adds a splash of colour and character into an otherwise neutral scheme. Rounded bedside cabinets and the beautifully curvy bespoke bench at the foot of the bed work together to soften the look. A television is hidden in the well-organised bank of wardrobes, while the bathroom hides behind another sliding door.

There's a sense of purity in the bathroom area, which is clutter-free and functional. The bath slots neatly into the space on the far wall under the window, and there are handy tiled surfaces for ornaments and toiletries under the window and along the wall behind the WC and basin. A mirrored cabinet maximises the light and provides storage space for small items. Tiles are light in colour and the wall tiles stretch all the way to the ceiling, enhancing the sense of space.

The Fentons are extremely happy with the result, which has brought their home firmly up to date, and made it a much more user-friendly space. "There's nothing we'd change about it – I'm even impressed with the little details such as the soft-closing doors on the kitchen cabinets," says John as he heads off for a game of golf just up the road.



Top and far left: Matching sliding doors hide the entrance to the ensuite bathroom, and more wardrobe space to the side of the bed **Left:** The curvy drum-shaped bedside cabinets echo the curves of the bench at the end of the bed

Q&A: HOMEOWNERS

What's your favourite part of the kitchen?

"I love the soft-closing doors and the breakfast bar area. We tend to stay there once we've finished eating, sitting with a glass of wine watching TV. We spend a huge amount of time there because it's so comfortable," says John.

"I love the visual effect from the blend of materials: the wood, stainless steel, glass and worktops all work really well together. If you sit a plant behind the sliding doors, it casts a shadow and looks lovely, too," says Angela.

Worst part of the process?

"When they knocked everything down in order to redo it all, it frightened us! It took four months to finish everything," says John.

Do you have any tips for other homeowners?

"We'd recommend the underfloor heating in the kitchen and bathroom – it is very comforting for the toes in the winter!" says Angela.

"When you undertake something like this, be prepared for it to look worse before it looks better," says John.



Above: The couple had the bench at the foot of the bed made especially for the scheme. The cushion on top was covered with material to match the bed head **Below and right:** Sliding doors on the front of the wardrobe opposite the bed are similar in style to those at the entrance to the kitchen. A television is hidden inside

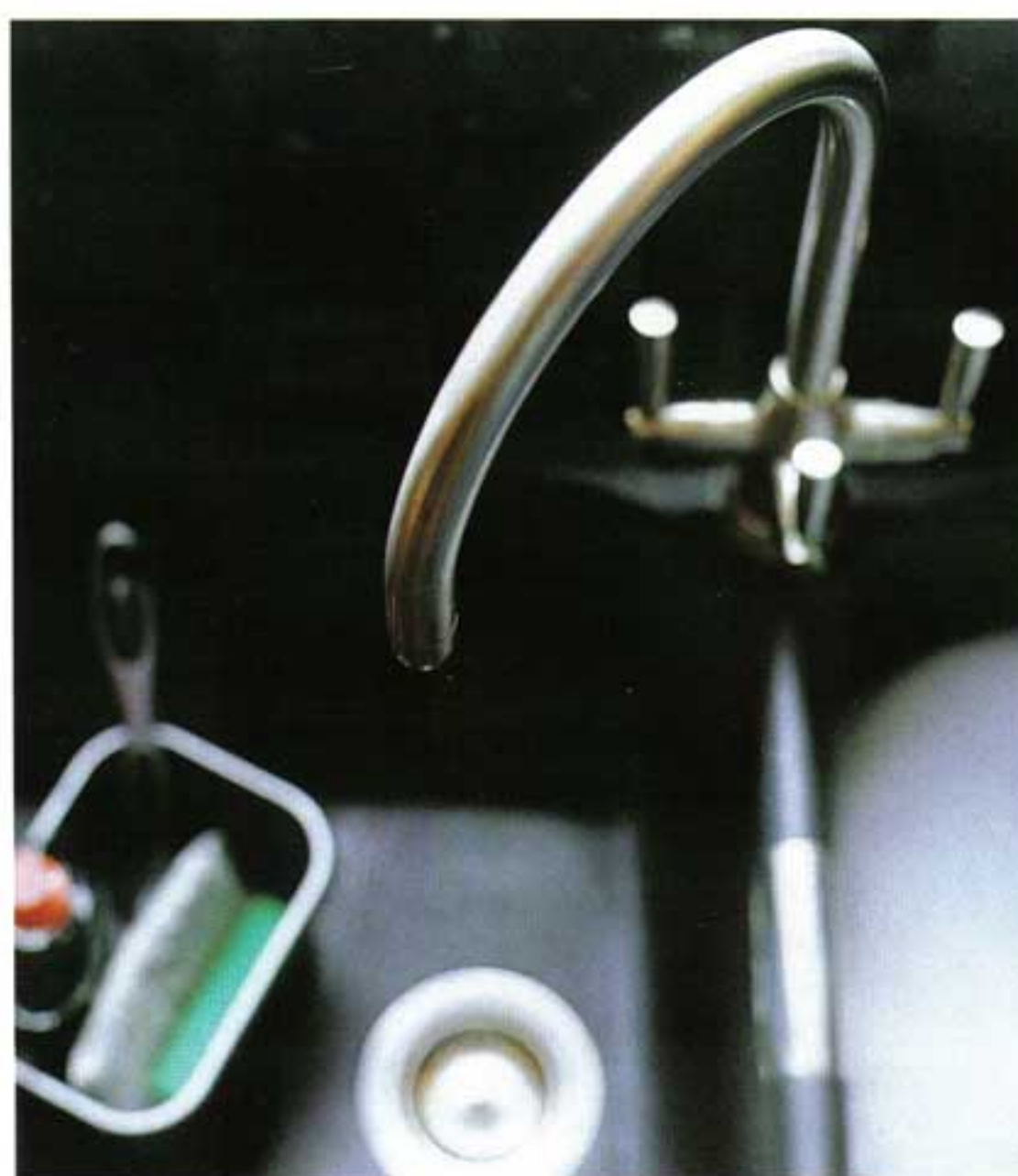




between the old kitchen and boxroom to make enough room for a kitchen-diner. The result is a spacious kitchen that is well laid out.

A clever addition is a glass sliding door, recalling the traditional Japanese rice-paper shoji screens, which separates the kitchen, becoming a feature in itself and allowing light to diffuse into the rest of the house while also saving space. The idea for this stems from the cherry wood bedroom furniture that John and Angela had bought. It sparked the imagination of designer Mark Darvill from nearby company Veritas, who came up with a Japanese theme for the Fenton's refurbishment.

The kitchen's breakfast bar has been a great success. John and Angela find they use it all the time, often lingering over a glass of wine and watching TV there once they've finished dinner, and enjoying the

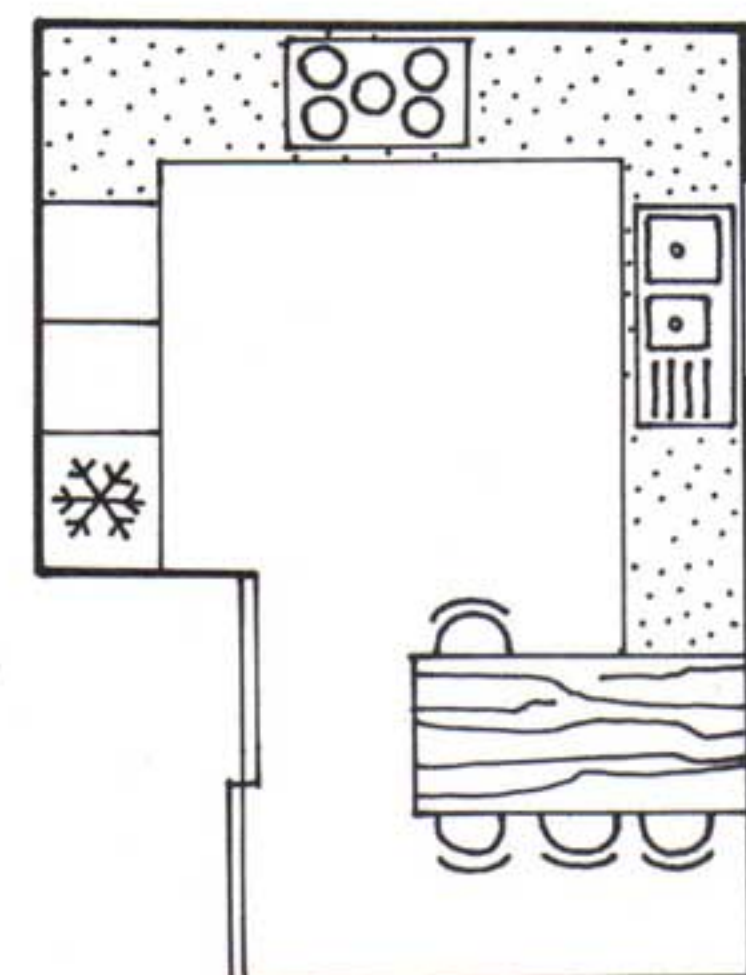


Top left: A bank of units houses the Miele coffee machine, steam oven and combination oven, and hides the fridge-freezer **Top right:** The sliding doors give a Japanese feel to the space, but are also practical, because they free up the space that's normally needed for a conventional door

Middle left: The Miele five-ring gas hob blends well with the dark worktop and splashback behind, and the single oven sits neatly below **Middle right:** The dark sink complements the worktop, and a simple, elegant monobloc tap underlines the minimal look

Bottom left: The frosted glass front of the wall-mounted cupboard above the worktop gives it a lighter, more decorative feel in contrast to the more functional units elsewhere

Bottom right: The lighting above the breakfast bar area can help to create a more relaxed, intimate mood in the evening



Push back the sliding door to enter the kitchen, and you see the breakfast bar, where John and Angela spend a lot of time

