

## FACT FILE

## THE OWNERS

Ruth Bowers and her husband Wayne, an investment manager, live here with their children Megs, 17, Joe, 15, Gus, 12, and Amelia, nine

## THE PROPERTY

A six-bedroom, detached Victorian house

## THE LOCATION

Abingdon, Oxfordshire

## WHAT THEY SPENT

The couple's bathroom renovation project cost around £20,000

## NEW PLANS

Below Ruth (pictured) decided to renovate a bathroom for her three teenage children, which meant planning a practical, easy-to-clean and modern layout



## BEFORE



## ORIGINAL SPACE

Above A lack of natural light, a garish colour scheme and a precariously installed bath resulted in a dark, dated space that the couple were keen to turn into a practical, family bathroom

# 'Renovating gave us the extra space we needed'

Ruth and Wayne Bowers transformed their old-fashioned bathroom into a light-filled, family-friendly design with contemporary fixtures and fittings

WORDS JO MESSENGER PHOTOGRAPHS FRASER MARR

When we started looking for a new home a couple of years ago, we needed somewhere with plenty of space as we have four children and two dogs,' says Ruth. 'As soon as we came across this house, we knew it would be perfect for us.'

Situated in a Conservation Area, the house sits on the edge of a park and is close to the town, so its location was ideal for the Bowers. 'Wayne and I both loved the property, so we snapped it up quickly,' says Ruth.

Set over four floors, there's plenty of space in the house for the whole family. The layout upstairs meant that the couple's youngest daughter, Amelia, could have a bedroom close to them, while on the top floor the teenagers could each have

a bedroom of their own with a bathroom to share between them. 'It means they can have their friends round without there being too much impact on the rest of the house,' smiles Ruth.

Apart from general cosmetic jobs, the Victorian property didn't need too much work to get it into shape, and the Bowers

decorated in white throughout so they could get a feel for the space and decide what changes they wanted to make. 'It was immediately apparent that the

bathroom needed a complete overhaul, and we couldn't wait to get started,' says Ruth.

Decorated in vivid colours, the main bathroom on the top floor of the house felt enclosed and a little claustrophobic. There were also two steel props either side of the bath that appeared to be supporting

the roof. The previous owners had painted these bright red, so they were dominating the space. 'The room was mainly going to be used by our three teenagers, but it was in desperate need of a makeover,' says Ruth. 'It needed to be practical and easy to clean, but I also wanted it to feel relaxing and be an enjoyable place to spend time in.'

Ruth found a picture in a brochure that she liked and this became the inspiration for the scheme. She visited her local Ripples showroom, where one of their designers was able to create a similar design that would work in the space. 'She knew exactly what I was looking for and we decided to keep to roughly the same layout as before, which seemed to work well for us,' explains Ruth.

When the Bowers asked local builder Kevin Robertson to inspect the steel props, Ruth also asked him to quote for the installation of the bathroom, and his company ended up taking on the complete

**With the ceiling raised and new rooflights fitted, the room now feels twice as big**

## SHOWER ZONE

Velux rooflights enhance the spacious feel of the new room. A full-sized door has replaced the existing small doorway – try Jeld-Wen for a similar style. The bespoke enclosure has a ceiling showerhead, Techno deluxe handset and Dukkaboard shower tray, all from Ripples. The Kamo spotlights at the base and Zehnder Atoll towel rail are also from Ripples



## DESIGN TIP

Maximise the sense of space in a bathroom by keeping the design simple and uncluttered – use glass screens, light colours, large-format tiles and big mirrors



## WASH AREAS

Blanco wall tiles provide a crisp, modern finish, while the Gris floor tiles and the original beam warm the scheme. The Flo basin sits on a high-gloss Dansani

Luna vanity unit. Ripples supplied the fixtures and fittings, including the Jacuzzi Turchino double-end bath, bespoke mirror and Block back-to-wall WC



project. 'When Kevin first looked at the props, like us he assumed they were there to support the roof,' says Ruth. 'On closer inspection, however, we discovered that they were actually strapping the weight of the bath and the floor to the roof beam above, as the floor joists weren't strong enough to support the weight of them.'

To rectify this, a new floor had to be installed, and Kevin and his team also ripped out the studwork walls to investigate the steel props. Underneath they found a beautiful, old exposed beam, and when Ruth saw it she agreed to include it in the

scheme. 'It was too lovely to cover it back up again,' she says. 'The builders cleaned it up before treating it with oil. It has added character to the space and reminds us that we are living in a period house full of history.'

**The original beam has added character and reminds us that the house is full of history**

With only one small side window and two narrow windows behind the basin area, the room didn't receive much natural light,

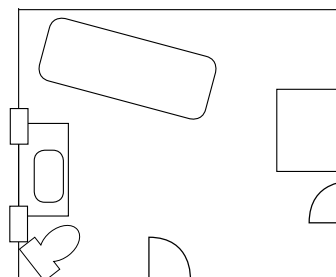
so Ruth asked Kevin whether it would be possible to have Velux windows fitted, which the couple had in their previous home. As the old ceiling had already been taken down as part of the overall building work, Kevin explained that it was possible

to integrate rooflights by fitting a vaulted ceiling, raised up in the rafters, instead of a normal ceiling. 'The windows make such a difference and with the ceiling height raised, the room now feels twice as big,' explains Ruth. 'We also asked Kevin if he could change the glass in the narrow windows from frosted to clear, as the room is on the fourth floor and isn't overlooked. We did think twice about doing this, as it cost £600 for the scaffolding alone, but it was definitely worth the expense.'

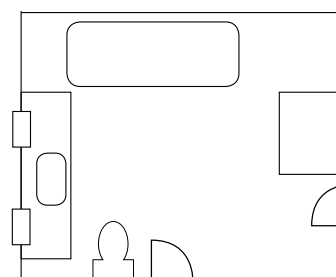
Looking at the fresh, crisp new scheme, it's a far cry from the garish, cramped room with red steel props that prevented the bath from falling through the floor. 'Who would have thought there was so much space in here?' smiles Ruth. 'It's become a room the whole family can enjoy.'

## THE PLANS

### BEFORE



### AFTER



The original space featured awkwardly angled fixtures resulting in a cramped arrangement. To keep down costs, the Bowers avoided changing the layout, but enhanced space with a vaulted ceiling, rooflights and a bright scheme

## THE COSTS

Installation and construction	£7,200
Fixtures and fittings	£4,402
Underfloor heating and tiles	£2,280
Furniture	£2,037
Bespoke shower enclosure and mirror	£1,450
New floor	£1,400
Installation of rooflights	£1,200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£19,969</b>

## THE CONTACTS

Bathroom design, fittings and fixtures Ripples, 0800 107 0700, Ripples.ltd.uk  
Installation and construction K Robertson General Builders, 07812 093918



# My project notes

Learn from Ruth Bowers' experience to help make your renovation a success

## Essential update

'The unusual narrow windows either side of the new vanity unit had been fitted with 1960s frosted glass, which was really unattractive. Replacing it wasn't an easy job because we had to scaffold the side of the house, but changing it has made a real difference to the overall look of the space.'

## My favourite shop

'Despite initially wanting to source everything myself, I ended up buying all the fittings from Ripples. I found the showroom to be a great source of inspiration, plus buying everything from one place meant I didn't have different deliveries arriving at various times. That was a real godsend for us, as the room we were doing up is in the loft.'

## My top tip

'Keep an open mind and be flexible. We had the scheme planned out when we started the project, but this evolved along the way to include the exposed beam, raised ceiling and rooflights. Be prepared to make some changes and compromises as your project progresses. Go with your instincts and you will be pleased with the results in the long run.'

## My best resource

'I scoured brochures and magazines for ideas and inspiration. A picture of a similar shower design to the one we chose was the starting point for the scheme we were looking for, plus it gave our designer a good idea of the look and feel we wanted to achieve in our new bathroom.'



Right Use specialist home-improvement magazines for project inspiration

A bespoke, large mirror positioned between two narrow windows maximises the light available



Above Removing a studwork wall provided space for Ruth's dream bath and the added convenience of recessed shelving for storage

## My must-have buy

'I love the Jacuzzi Turchino bath. It has soft curves and feels like a modern version of a freestanding model. Plus, the double-ended design means the taps are on the side, so we can lie either end without them getting in the way. I'm also delighted with the vanity unit, as I wanted a big enough design in which to hide all the toiletries that accumulate in our family bathroom.'