

'Redesigning our bedroom created space for a larger en suite'

After finding a leak, Emma and Mark Vale made it a priority to update their en suite, and took the chance to increase the room's size

WORDS JO MESSENGER PHOTOGRAPHS FRASER MARR

BEFORE



ORIGINAL LAYOUT

Left The old en suite bathroom was small for the size of the five-bedroom property and had dated fittings that were all boxed in, including a raised shower cubicle



NEW BATHROOM

A Delano Signature Collection Tranquility whirlpool bath, with an 18 whirlpool-jet system and LED lights from Luna Spas, works well with a Gerberit No-Code WC, a No-Code Primo double basin in a Mocca double drawer unit, an Innova illuminated mirror, plus two slim panels of mosaic tiles, all from Instil Design

FACT FILE

THE OWNERS

Emma Vale (left) and her husband Mark, who owns a manufacturing company, live here with their children, Cameron, 17, Laura, 14, and Tazmin, 11

THE PROPERTY

A five-bedroom detached modern house built to a traditional style

THE LOCATION

Chinnor, Oxfordshire

WHAT THEY SPENT

The couple's bathroom project cost around £30,500

We bought this house with the idea of gradually refurbishing it, but we weren't planning on updating our en suite quite so quickly,' recalls Emma. 'However, when we discovered a leak in the kitchen from the shower above, it became a priority.'

Emma and Mark bought the house in June 2011. They were living locally at the time but had outgrown their previous home. They liked the area, though, and didn't want their children to move schools,

so they were delighted when the property came on to the market.

The move wasn't simple, but went to plan. The couple sold their house and, not wanting to lose their buyer, they managed to negotiate a short-term rental on a nearby property while the sale of the new house went through. 'It was a bit of an upheaval, but the rented place had a garage so we stored a lot of our stuff in there and unpacked only what we really needed,' explains

Emma. 'Although it wasn't ideal, at least we didn't lose the house.'

It was the space and layout of the property that appealed to the Vales. Painted in neutral colours throughout, it only needed redecorating. The couple had finished updating the living room and were planning on refitting the kitchen when they discovered a leak from the shower. 'It was annoying at the time, but it meant we had to tweak our plans. In fact, we decided to update the en suite

and the adjoining family bathroom at the same time to get all the mess out of the way in one go,' says Emma.

The en suite had been fitted when the house was built around 20 years previously, but the fussy scheme was old-fashioned. On the recommendation of friends, Emma and Mark asked Martina Landhed of Oxford-based Instil Design to visit them and suggest some ideas. 'Finding reputable tradespeople who you feel you can trust can be a minefield, and when you are

WALK-IN SHOWER

The ceiling above the shower area was lowered by 18cm in order to position the concealed Cifial shower head. Also included were four Vado body jets, a Vado concealed wall-mounted thermostatic shower and a mini shower attachment, enclosed in bespoke glass panels, all from Instil Design, which also supplied the radiator



ROOM SCHEME

Sandstone-effect tiles add interest to the neutral palette, with Fonte Marfil wall tiles and Fonte Marron panels behind the basins. Fonte Moka tiles on the floor and bath add a third tone to the scheme, all from Instil Design



spending a lot of money it's a big risk,' says Emma. 'So that recommendation was perfect for us.'

The en suite didn't flow properly, but the couple knew that it could be fixed with the right layout. 'It felt awkward – you had to walk around the shower to reach the basin,' explains Emma.

The adjoining master bedroom had a run of built-in wardrobes that backed on to the en suite bathroom, with a doorway in the middle. The bedroom was a good size, so Emma and Mark decided to steal space from the built-in wardrobes to create a larger en suite, knowing there would still be plenty of room in the bedroom for new wardrobes. 'It wasn't much of a sacrifice as the wardrobes weren't very attractive; they were only a run of studwork wall with white-painted doors,' says Emma. 'Using the space for the en suite meant we could have a large whirlpool bath and a luxurious walk-in shower built in.'

Bathroom designer Martina's brief for the new en suite was to create a contemporary space featuring understated shades of brown, cream and taupe. The couple wanted to keep the scheme neutral as they hadn't decided on a look for their bedroom. 'By opting for neutral tones we

can easily change the bedroom décor without it clashing with the en suite,' says Emma. 'It won't date quickly either and I can freshen it up with different accent colours to link it in with the bedroom.'

Gaining the extra space along one wall meant the couple could also move the wall adjoining the family bathroom on the other side of the space by 20cm to make the other bathroom a little bigger. 'As well as moving it slightly, I designed the dividing wall to be 20cm thick rather than the standard 10cm so that it would incorporate the frames for wall-mounted WCs in both bathrooms, as well as the related soil pipes and wall-mounted storage for each one,' explains Martina.

Mark wanted a hi-tech feel with lots of luxury fittings and the latest gadgets to make the en suite a relaxing place to unwind after a hard day at work. He had already seen his dream bath on the internet, so he ordered it himself. 'He wanted the biggest one he could find,' laughs Emma. 'It has 18 whirlpool jets and 16 air jets, plus LED lights and two pillows – it really is quite amazing.'

Mark also invested in a KB sound system with 6.5-inch speakers in the ceiling and an iPod docking station to stream either

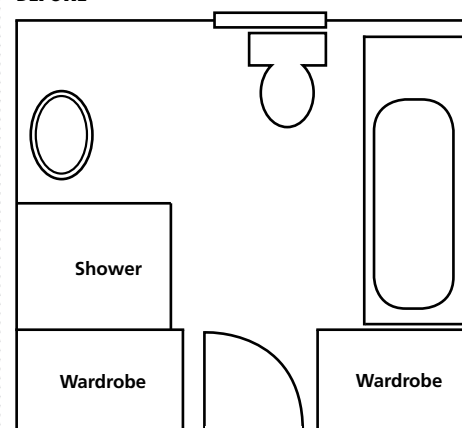
radio or music from an iPhone to give the new space a high-end feel. As part of the design, he asked Martina to include a large overhead rain shower in the ceiling above the walk-in shower, along with four additional side jets. Emma wanted a hand-held attachment too. 'The overhead shower and jets are great if you're looking for an invigorating shower, but not so good if you don't want to get your hair wet,' she explains. 'It's worth having a hand-held one – it's also perfect for cleaning the shower.'

Local builder Kevin Robertson and his team did all the necessary building work and installed the en suite bathroom, completing it in only four weeks. 'We were really pleased with their professionalism and attention to detail,' says Mark. 'They also ensured we had a working shower and WC throughout the build, which was essential with a family of five.'

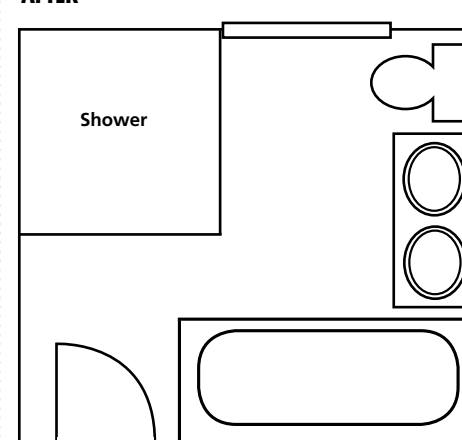
With its sound system, electronic taps, luxury bath and ambient lighting, the new space has been designed for pure escapism and is the ideal retreat for Emma and Mark. 'It was supposed to be a "no kids zone", but it hasn't worked out like that,' says Emma. 'It's such a great room that everyone wants to use it now.'

THE PLANS

BEFORE



AFTER



Knocking through a run of built-in wardrobes in the adjoining master bedroom helped create a larger en suite with space for a whirlpool bath as well as a walk-in shower

THE CONTACTS

Bathroom design Instil Design, 0800 677 1040, instil-design.co.uk
Building work and bathroom installation K Robertson General Builders, 07812 093918
Bath Luna Spas
Sound system Buy Clever Stuff
Blind Tuiss

THE COSTS

Fixtures and fittings	£15,237
Building work and bathroom installation	£10,000
Tiling	£3,137
Heating	£1,038
Lighting	£581
Sound system	£479
TOTAL	£30,472

IN THE KNOW

HI-TECH BATHROOM TAPS

Consumer expert **Jennifer Newton** investigates the latest basin tap designs and what they have to offer

When it comes to fitting a new bathroom, it's worth prioritising your budget on items with moving parts. 'You turn a tap on and off hundreds of thousands of times during the lifetime of the bathroom. It therefore needs to be durable and reliable, so spend as much as you can afford,' says Martin Mongan, UK managing director for Hansgrohe.

TECHNOLOGY FEATURES

Manufacturers have, until recently, focused on improving kitchen taps and shower mixers, but technology for bathroom taps is also improving now. Digital and sensor bathroom taps that include hand-drying are possible but, at £700-£2,000, it will be some time before they are considered standard. There are also taps with a light that changes from blue to red, indicating temperature – but the price tag is high. For example, Crosswater's Water Square basin monobloc tap retails at £315, but jumps to £875 with changing light effect.

SENSOR CONTROLS

Touch-free sensor taps offer maximum hygiene, with water automatically stopping when the user moves away. Tap specialist Hansgrohe now sells Axor basin- and wall-mounted mixer taps operated by sensors, where the temperature can be pre-set – ideal for areas such as cloakrooms. EcoSmart

technology limits water flow to five litres per minute, and the sensor itself saves even more water and energy due to the short run time of 1-1.5 seconds. Dyson has also entered the market with the Airblade, boasting a sensor tap and a built-in automatic hand-dryer, for £980.

DIGITAL REVOLUTION

Bathroom technology at its best, the Grohe Ondus range is controlled via a smart panel that's pre-programmed with preferred temperature, flow rate and duration. Taps can be basin- or wall-mounted, and a co-ordinating shower and bath mixer is available. Colours include Velvet Black, Moon White and Frosted Titanium, but this technology is still costly at up to £2,000.

WATER FILTERS

Perrin & Rowe claims that Triflow is the world's first three-way tap technology, delivering hot, cold and filtered water through a dedicated bathroom waterway. Made in the UK, Triflow taps are designed to reduce heavy metals and particles but let through necessary minerals. Or, try the Country basin mixer, which has a handle to mix hot and cold water and a separate handle for filtered water. David Cole, sales director at Perrin & Rowe, says: 'Opting for a filtration tap ensures clean, hygienic filtered water with the ease of a standard tap.'



Above Water Square Lights monobloc basin mixer, (H)12cm, £875, Crosswater



Above Country basin mixer with filtration, in Pewter, (H)23.5cm, £711.24, Perrin & Rowe



Above Axor Citterio electronic basin mixer, (H)22cm, £1,236, Hansgrohe