



# Contemporary redesign project

Catherine Taylor's house had been a construction company's office, but she has put her own elegant stamp on it to create the perfect family home

WORDS VICTORIA JENKINS PHOTOGRAPHS FRASER MARR



A palette of pistachio, taupe and hazel creates a relaxed space with paint shades from Little Greene. The Jan Cavalle tables are from Designcall, while the patchwork rug is from a local shop – for a similar style rug, try Funky Cowhides



**Above** Catherine didn't want plain white walls in the rooms as she thought it made the space seem cold, so she resolved to use warmer shades

**Below** GP & J Baker cushions in Corelli Lime Taupe and Harlequin's Arkona Pistachio & Hazel complement the leather sofa from B&B Italia



**FACT FILE**

**THE OWNER**

Catherine Taylor, a garden designer, lives here with her children, Elliott, 19, Max, seven, and Scarlett, two

**THE PROPERTY**

A modern six-bedroom detached house built in 2001

**THE LOCATION**

Esher, Surrey

**WHAT SHE SPENT**

Catherine bought the property for £1.65m and spent £178,800 on the redesign. It's been valued at £2m

**H**aving lived in the dry desert state of Arizona for five years without a blade of grass and then in south London's Wimbledon with just a tiny garden, Catherine Taylor knew what she expected of her next property. She found it when she viewed a new build house in 2007 that was surrounded by two acres of lawn.

The large garden was perfect for her two boys, Elliott and Max, to play football in, as well as a great space for her dogs to run around. Its five enormous oak trees at the foot of the garden clinched the deal as far as Catherine was concerned, as she could envisage a wonderful tree house in one

of them. 'Not just for the children, but for me as well,' she says.

There was also a fair-sized indoor heated swimming pool – eight metres by four metres – plus a changing room, sauna and wetroom. 'I could see what fun we could have with it all,' says Catherine.

Although it had good proportions, the house had been used as an office for a construction company, never a family home, so it lacked all personality. All the rooms were big, including six double bedrooms each with its own en suite.

However, the décor was rather bland – all magnolia walls and cream carpets.

'What struck me as soon as I walked through the door was the central staircase ►



A porch with two glass double doors, painted in Dulux Night Jewels, has replaced a solid wood door to create more light in the hallway

**Right** The staircase, with its dark stain finish and red runner, wasn't to Catherine's taste and made the hallway look very dark, so she had it painted white

**Below** The property lacked storage for a family home, so Catherine had a large understairs cupboard built by Hyperion Bespoke Carpentry and had it painted in Little Greene Joanna to match all the walls



Catherine didn't need to change the scheme in the kitchen, apart from updating it in two neutral Little Greene shades: Acre on the walls and Stock on the units. For similar kitchen units, try the Classic Collection design from John Lewis. You'll find similar contemporary dining chairs in the Bontempi Casa Collection from Mac & Mac interiors

in the hallway. Although impressive, it was stained a reddish-brown, which together with a red runner made an unattractive combination,' she says. 'It was a real contrast, compared with the rest of the house, with its white décor.'

The effect wasn't helped by a solid wood double-front door, which prevented any natural light entering the hallway.

'When I was looking for a new home I had envisaged buying one with a dream kitchen, but it didn't happen like that. This one was typical of a new build – white and

**DESIGN TIP**

Before you replace a kitchen, consider whether you can **update** your existing one. Transform the **look** by painting the units, changing the door and drawer fronts, worktops and handles, or re-use the units in a new **configuration**

‘The kitchen was typical of a new build with its rather boring shade – but nothing a coat of paint wouldn’t cure’

rather boring,’ says Catherine. ‘There was nothing wrong with it – nothing a good coat of paint wouldn’t cure. So that was where I compromised.’

One of the first things she decided to do was to pull up all the cream carpets and replace them with oak flooring throughout the house. ‘It instantly warmed up the

rooms, plus it’s hardwearing and I think more practical when you have children and pets,’ she explains.

Then she turned to interior designer Jaqui McCarthy of Designcall for advice as the important job at that time was designing and decorating a nursery ready for the expected arrival of baby Scarlett.

‘I had some walnut furniture that had been used in Max’s room, but was unsure how to make it work for a girl,’ says Catherine. ‘Jaqui created a lovely nursery by painting the walls pink and hanging curtains with pennants and pompom trim.’

Initially, Catherine only wanted help with the new nursery and sitting room, but the ►

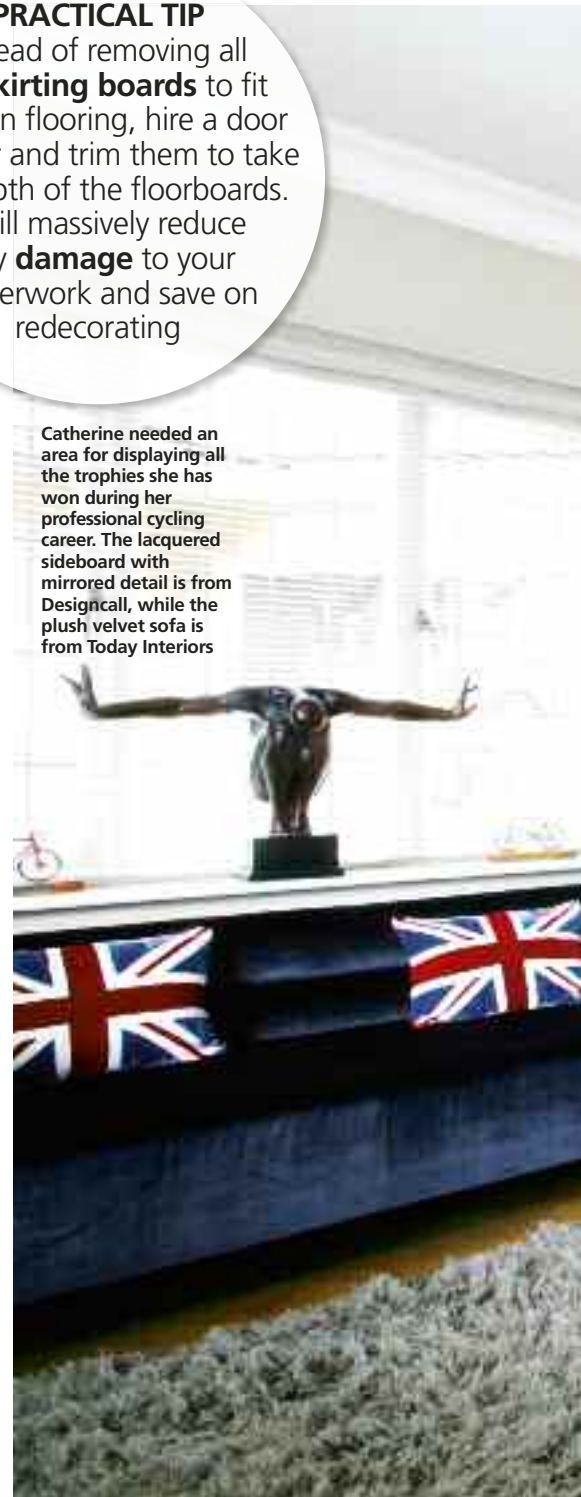


**Above** Max wanted a rainbow feature in his playroom, but designer Jacqui couldn't find the right fabric, so she stitched various pieces of bright fabric together, which works perfectly

**Below** A feature wall was created by simply using a big world map – for a similar map, look at Easy Art's wide range. For a similar table and chairs, try the Bjursta/Norrnäs range from IKEA



**PRACTICAL TIP**  
 Instead of removing all the **skirting boards** to fit wooden flooring, hire a door trimmer and trim them to take the depth of the floorboards. It will massively reduce any **damage** to your plasterwork and save on redecorating



Catherine needed an area for displaying all the trophies she has won during her professional cycling career. The lacquered sideboard with mirrored detail is from Designcall, while the plush velvet sofa is from Today Interiors

project grew and Jaqui continued to work on almost all of the rooms. As there was virtually no family storage in the house, Catherine had a large cupboard area built under the stairs, which had been left open and unused. 'Now it's the perfect place for everyone's bags, shoes, buggy, vacuum cleaner and so on – all hidden behind doors,' she explains. The work continued with Catherine replacing the fireplace in the sitting room with a marble design, which she sourced



## ‘I put in wooden flooring throughout to warm up the space – plus it’s more practical for children and pets’

from Chesney Fireplaces, then the decorators started moving through the house following Jaqui’s interior design brief.

‘After Scarlett’s nursery, the next thing to be painted was the reddish-brown staircase – it was a simple change yet it made such a dramatic difference,’ says Catherine. ‘Jaqui

used the palest of taupes – flowing on from the neutral Hammock shade by Little Greene which was used on the sitting room walls – and this has lifted the dark feel of the hallway. It also has a new oak handrail, plus a silver grey carpet.’

China blues and greys were used in the

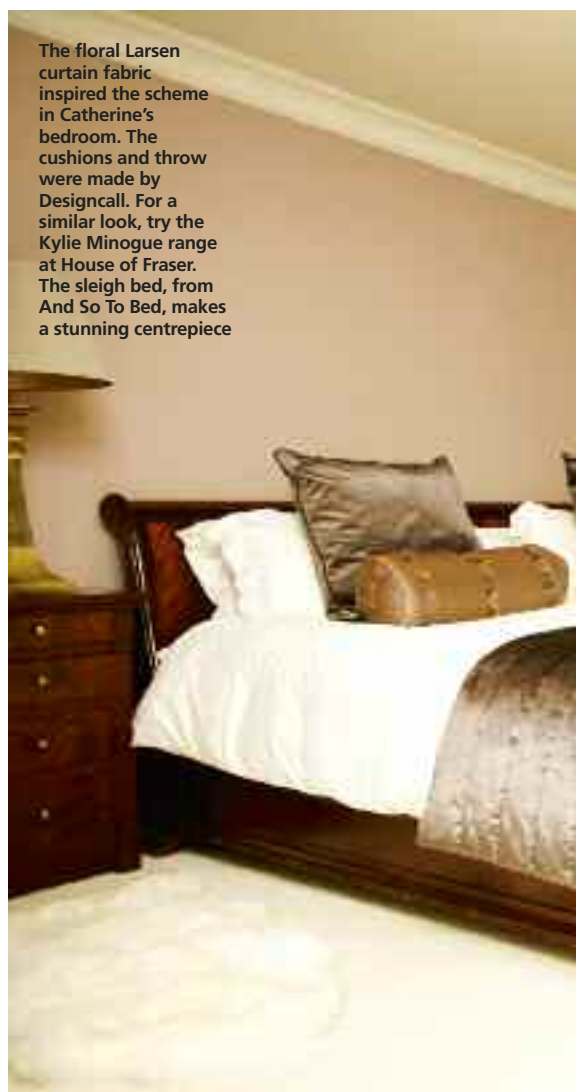
hallway and on the landing – for curtains, artwork and an antique chair.

‘I love colour and I’m amazed at how well Jaqui’s choices have worked in the house. My bedroom, for example, is decorated in crushed silk – it’s beautiful and very soothing,’ says Catherine. ▶

A French style has been created in the guest room with its calming mix of greys and neutral embroidered fabrics from the Eleni Collection by the Voyage Fabric Company. For a similar mirror to this on the landing, try the Elton starburst from Linea at House of Fraser



The floral Larsen curtain fabric inspired the scheme in Catherine's bedroom. The cushions and throw were made by Designcall. For a similar look, try the Kylie Minogue range at House of Fraser. The sleigh bed, from And So To Bed, makes a stunning centrepiece



Catherine was happy with the sanitaryware and limestone tiling in her en suite. For a similar vanity unit, try the Polo at Bathstore. For similar limestone tiles, look at the Cathedral range at Fired Earth



The walnut Simon Horn furniture in Scarlett's nursery creates a good contrast with shades of rose and ivory. The wall colour is Secret Shell by Little Greene, while the curtain fabrics are by Harlequin & Biggie Best





**DESIGN TIP**  
Plan your **decorating schemes** as an interior designer would by creating a **mood board** for each room. Always view the boards together to ensure the themes, colours and textures work together **coherently**

## ‘I love colour – Jacqui’s interior design scheme has worked so well’

There was only one real low point for Catherine and that was when the hall and landing were being repainted.

‘It was a huge amount of work, but it seemed to take a very long time, and as the staircase is central to the house it caused a lot of disruption when we were trying to move around,’ says Catherine.

Once the decorating was finished, Jacqui replaced all the brass and plastic light switches, sockets and door and window handles throughout the house with contemporary brushed chrome ones.

Jacqui then turned to the finishing touch, which was changing the double-front doors in the hallway for an enclosed porch and installing two new sets of double doors, composed mainly of glass to lighten up the entire space.

The high point, literally, of the redesign was having the tree house built in the

oak trees in Catherine’s huge garden.

‘It’s big enough to hold at least 12 people,’ says Catherine. ‘There is a spiral staircase, two rope bridges, three decks, a trapdoor and, inside, a flatscreen TV and sofa bed. All Max’s parties revolve around it – so far we have held Indiana Jones, Star Wars and Peter Pan-themed parties in there. It’s great.’

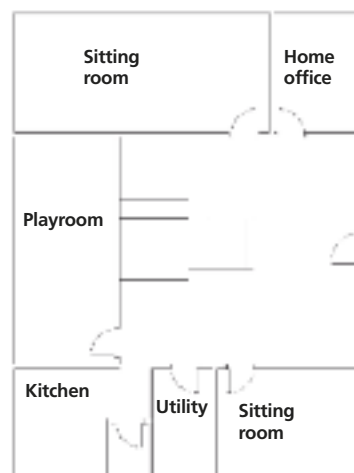
Now the work is complete, how does Catherine feel about the new look?

‘I love the house as it’s peaceful and not at all overlooked and it backs onto countryside, where we can ride our bikes and walk the dogs. It’s the perfect family home now,’ she says.

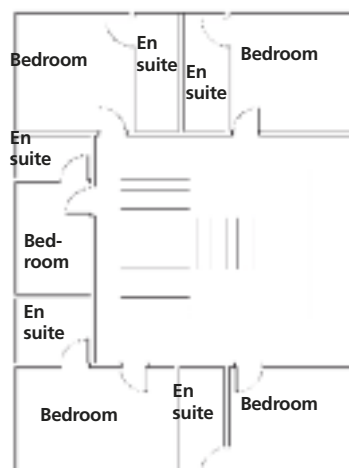
‘The only thing I’d like to change is the access from the kitchen to the garden,’ she adds. ‘I’d like to open it up – at the moment we have to go through the utility room and garage, but it’s next on the list.’

### PLANS

#### GROUND FLOOR AFTER



#### FIRST FLOOR AFTER



Catherine Taylor’s new home lacked personality as it had only been used as an office, so she redecorated and reconfigured all the rooms to make it a perfect family home. She also added a tree house for her children

### COSTS

Walls and flooring	£37,800
Electrics and window hardware	£11,000
Porch (building)	
Carpentry (incl stairs)	£22,000
Decorating (incl labour and materials)	£40,000
Furniture and soft furnishings	£16,000
	£52,000

**TOTAL £178,800**