



An initial planning submission, with a bedroom right across the first-floor elevation, was scaled back – with Milena now feels, a better result



▶ All the windows were replaced with thermally efficient double glazing. Milena is ecologically minded and this reduced both her environmental impact and heating bills

▶ The original rear extension was demolished and the house extended on two storeys, with full-width French windows on the ground floor (far right)



# ‘Extending my 1950s semi has transformed it into a contemporary open-plan home’

Not wanting to move, Milena Pizzamiglio decided to redesign her three-bedroom house to get the space and light she wanted



## WHO LIVES HERE

**Owner:** Milena Pizzamiglio  
**Profession:** Retired  
**Property:** Three-bedroom 1950s semi  
**Location:** Dedworth, Windsor, Berkshire  
**Lived here since:** March 2006



## PROJECT PROFILE

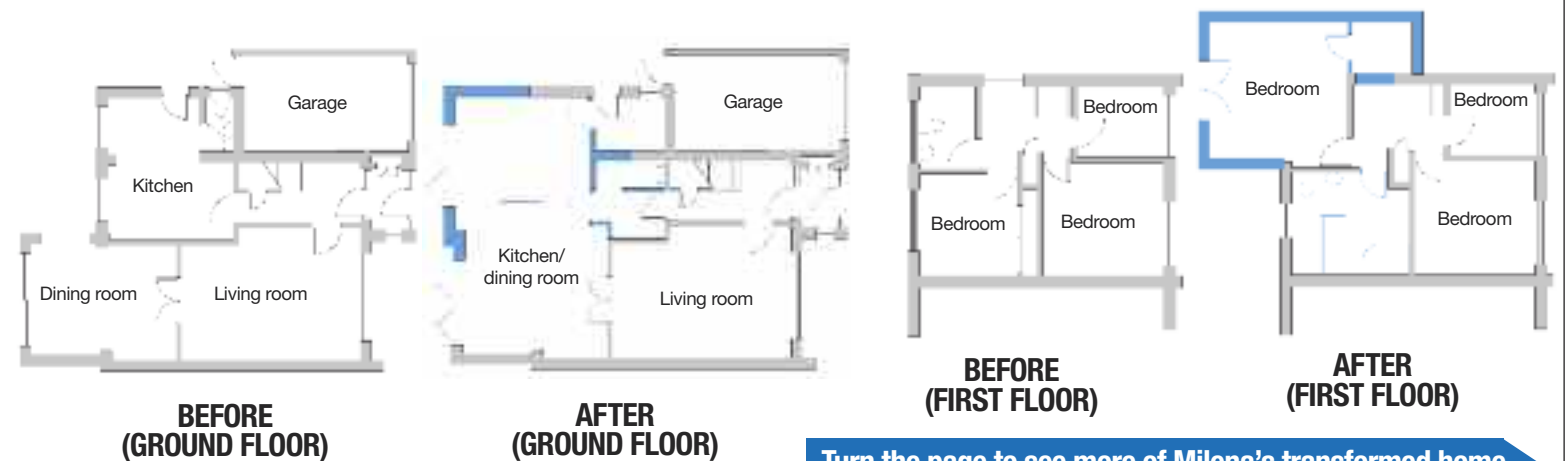
**Rebuild of single-storey extension and new double-storey extension**  
**Build route:** Architect and main contractor  
**Build time:** May to December 2007  
**Valuation at start of project (2007):** £290,000  
**Cost of project:** £180,000  
**New valuation (2008):** £500,000  
**Added value:** £30,000

### COST BREAKDOWN

**Drainage:** £2,700  
**Electrics:** £7,200  
**Underfloor heating:** £3,200  
**Plumbing:** £5,500  
**Windows/doors:** £11,000  
**Kitchen:** £20,000  
**Bathroom:** £8,000  
**Utility room:** £4,600  
**Other building works:** £112,000  
**Tiles:** £4,200  
**Carpets:** £2,000  
**Bamboo flooring:** £500

- Earlier ground-floor extension demolished
- New full-width extension added, with half-width second storey
- Kitchen and dining room created as extensive open-plan space
- Designer kitchen fitted
- French windows installed – two with folding/sliding doors onto garden on ground floor, one with Juliet balcony on first floor
- Green measures: double-glazing throughout and solar panels on roof
- Living room knocked through into dining area
- Bespoke shelving constructed on one wall

## HOW THE DESIGN WORKS



Turn the page to see more of Milena's transformed home



Appliances are hidden in tall white units behind sliding/folding/rotating doors, while the bespoke corian worktop conceals the cooker exhaust



The ground-floor kitchen, dining and living spaces are unified with a neutral colour scheme



The white spray-lacquered shelving was purpose-made along with all the joinery by the contractor, D'urberville. The designer Tulip table and Pantone chairs are from Geoffrey Drayton



Frustrated by her cluttered, dated kitchen, Milena opted for a complete remodelling and modernisation

**M**ilena Pizzamiglio took her time when it came to the meticulous planning of her ideal home for a quiet retirement. On the simple but beautiful white bespoke shelves in her new open-plan living space are several neatly labelled files. These are full of the research she did, over several months, on the various products, furniture, fittings and fixtures that inspired her large-scale extension and refurbishment project.

She had decided that simply moving to a bigger or superior property wasn't an option, but she had very specific ideas of what she wanted. She had been living for a year in her three-bedroom, one-bathroom 1950s semi in Windsor, Royal Berkshire, when she realised it would be virtually impossible to find the perfect home to suit her needs at a price she could afford. Instead, she decided to invest her savings in transforming her existing home.

It was important for Milena to find the right designer for the extension and refurbishment.

'Initially, I approached a local architect who presented me with a very middle-of-the-road scheme,' she says. 'I wanted something a little bit more special.' Then, researching online she came across Inspiration Architects, whose work she liked the look of. 'We met for a chat and I immediately knew that we were on the same wavelength. So I decided to go with them.'

The planning process took a little longer than expected, as Milena's neighbours raised an objection to the architects' first submission. They felt that the proposed two-storey

extension all the way across the house, replacing the existing one-storey one and with a new bedroom directly above the kitchen and dining room, came too close to their property and would block their light. The architects reduced the size of the bedroom and resubmitted; the scheme was then approved. Although at the time this issue caused a delay, in hindsight Milena says she feels the scaled-back design actually works much better.

With the plans in place, contractors were hired and the existing single-storey extension

was demolished and its larger replacement built. Above, the master bedroom was now extended on only one half of the elevation. 'With regards to the design downstairs, I explained that I wanted an open-plan kitchen and dining area,' says Milena, 'As I feel it creates a friendly, relaxed environment.' The new extension was connected back to the living room via a large square arch, allowing all the spaces to flow seamlessly into each other.

Natural light floods in through the extension's rear wall, which is comprised almost entirely of ▶



Designer furniture creates a stylish yet comfortable living room, with a colour scheme in neutrals incorporating subtle, modern patterns. The painting above the fireplace conceals a plasma TV



A large new opening between the existing living room and extension allows the space to flow



The master bedroom enjoys a view of the garden through French doors onto a modern Juliet balcony

glazed sliding/folding doors. 'I had wanted the whole rear elevation to be glazed. Unfortunately, however, we were restricted structurally and so had to have a central column,' Milena explains.

The bespoke white spray-lacquered shelves lining an entire wall showcase Milena's large collection of books and sculptures. 'I had to sit and measure every book to make sure they all fitted!'

There are no radiators in the house now, much to Milena's relief. 'The problem with radiators is they dictate how you furnish your rooms,' she says. After more careful research, she found a company called Discrete Heat that supplies a product,

Thermaskirt, where the heating is hidden behind the skirtings round the perimeter of the room. This avoids the situation of hot and cold spots; rather than steel, the technology uses an alloy

**'I wanted to do my bit for the environment and received a £400 grant towards solar panels'**

that has been proven to be more efficient at heat distribution. Although underfloor heating was an option, creating the right base for it in the existing areas would have been laborious and costly, so this was ruled out. Also, unlike underfloor heating, the clever

Thermaskirt system responds in minutes rather than hours. It is also eco-friendly – suitable for use with renewable energy sources such as heat pumps and solar panels.

Milena had her solar panels installed on the south-facing aspect of the roof. 'I wanted to do my bit for the environment, so in the first instance I approached the Energy Saving Trust, which sent me a list of approved installers.'

'I also received a grant of £400 towards the panels,' she says. 'They are not quite enough to power the whole house in the winter months, but in the spring and autumn, the panels alone seem to provide enough energy for day-to-day things like showers, washing-up and so on.'

Milena had very clear ideas for the layout and aesthetics of her kitchen, and she worked closely with the designer, Applewood of Newbury. Hardly any of the essential kitchen appliances are on view. There are tall, sleek white units ranged along one wall and the

doors on these pull back neatly using sliding, folding and rotating mechanisms appropriately called The Theatre by the kitchen manufacturer, Alno. Behind these sits a bank of appliances, including an integrated double oven, the fridge-freezer and a microwave. 'I didn't want to have too many things out and on show,' explains Milena. 'So everything is concealed behind doors.'

In the centre of the kitchen is a bank of glossy walnut-veneered drawers that form an island unit. Its stepped white corian worktop accommodates a gas hob, integrated sink and breakfast bar. 'I'm a small person, so I wanted the hob at a certain height,' Milena says; Alno produces a variety of unit heights to meet the various ergonomic needs of different users. ▶

## Finding the right architect

- 1 A talented designer will come up with ideas you may never have thought of and help secure planning permission and Building Regs approval without forcing compromises upon you. Start by searching for as many candidates as possible – ask friends and family, search [moveorimprove.co.uk](http://moveorimprove.co.uk), the Royal Institute of British Architects ([www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)) and the British Institute of Architectural Technologists ([www.ciat.org.uk](http://www.ciat.org.uk)).
- 2 Don't get hung up about qualifications: relevant experience with projects of a similar scale and style is more important. Create a shortlist of those whose work you like most, then discuss your specific requirements over the phone to get an idea of likely costs, fees and availability. You need a designer who you feel really understands exactly what you want.
- 3 An initial meeting will usually be free of charge. Make sure you discuss the level of service you need – planning drawings only, planning and Building Regs drawings, or full service – their fees, expenses and your available budget. Arrange to view a previous project of theirs and to meet a previous client who is willing to give a reference. Make sure you have a formal agreement in writing.



Milena sourced her bathroom fittings from Villeroy & Boch, and the floor and wall tiles are from Spacers in Maidenhead



Wallpaper-print tiles from Porcelanosa have been used to create a feature wall contrasting with the white sanitaryware

When asked why she didn't install a hood over her hob, Milena explains that she finds most cooker hoods and exhaust fans quite domineering and unsightly. Instead, she found a hob by Bosch with an integrated exhaust fan that emerges from the cooker surface at the push of a button.

Stepping from the new extension into the living room, there's a marked contrast from the cool white walls and off-white floor tiles in the dining area behind to the warmer tones of

bamboo flooring and lightly patterned beige wallpaper found here. Milena's love of designer furniture is evident in the classic Eames lounge chair and ottoman positioned to face the front windows, and the glass coffee table from Tonelli. Here again is another hidden feature: with the flick of a button on a remote control, an unassuming oil painting above the mantelpiece slides back to reveal a flat-screen TV 'The television is yet another thing that I don't like to look at around the house!' says Milena.

Upstairs, the new master bedroom features full-height sliding doors with views onto the garden. The décor has been kept minimal and stylish. In the bathroom, Milena opted for a feature wall for the centrally placed sink area, with eye-catching wallpaper-print tiles. Elsewhere there are neutral tones and classic white sanitaryware.

Although in the end Milena did go over her initial allocated budget, by doing so much research and sourcing materials and products herself, she saved on the markup her builder would have charged her. And most importantly, she maintained the high quality she desired. 🏠

## Skirting profile radiators

✓ A skirting profile radiator combines skirting board and radiator into one. They can be added onto an existing warm-water central heating system or powered by electric heating elements.

✓ Like underfloor heating, skirting radiators are unobtrusive and leave maximum flexibility for furniture

layout. They spread warmth evenly as they run round the entire room. Unlike underfloor heating, skirting radiators respond rapidly to changes in demand and so are more responsive.

✓ Some skirting radiators have a decorative upper profile; others are square topped so you can fit a softwood or MDF profile for

a period look. They are powder-coated in white as standard, but you can choose any RAL colour, or paint them with radiator paint.

✓ Installation costs considerably more than for conventional steel radiators, but less than for underfloor heating. A skirting system is also easier to retrofit in a renovation situation.

### PROJECT CONTACTS

**Architect** Inspiration Architects:  
www.inspiration-architects.com

**Bathroom design** Inspiration Interior Design:  
01635 523 226

**Contractor** D'urberville Ltd: 01635 860 048

**Kitchen design** Applewood of Newbury:  
www.applewood-kitchens.co.uk

**Energy Saving Trust** 0800 512 012  
www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

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