

# Move or Improve?

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**52**

**PAGES  
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PROJECTS!**

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the size of  
our house'**

**'I converted  
a bedroom  
into a family  
bathroom'**

**'Extending our  
terraced home  
has added  
£90,000 to  
its value'**

**'We now use  
our garden as  
an extra room'**

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► Before & afters ► Floorplans  
► Project costs ► Buyer's guides

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■ How to build a dream





Space was key for Declan and Jozer when they bought their new home

**BEFORE**



## WHO LIVES HERE

**Owners:** Jozer Calara, 30, and Declan Burke, 29

**Professions:** Banking and research

**Type of property:** Ground floor apartment in a terraced house

**Location:** Balham, London

**Moved here since:** May 2006

## PROJECT PROFILE

**Complete garden redesign**

**Build route:** Garden designer

**Build time:** Four weeks

**Valuation at start of project**

**(2007):** Around £370,000

**Cost of project:** £25,000

**New valuation (2008):** £411,000

## COST BREAKDOWN

**Decking:** Around £6,300

**Plants:** £4,500

**Outdoor furniture:** £3,000

**Lighting:** £3,000

**Maintain:** £1,000

**Tools:** £700

**Storage unit:** £1,500

**ADDED VALUE**  
**£16,000!**

“We can now use our garden like an extra room”

When Declan Burke and Jozer Calara bought their ground floor flat, its garden needed work to make it the low-maintenance, sociable space they were after

Faced with a bland expanse of lawn at the back of their flat, Declan and Jozer were desperate to enhance the view and make more of their outdoor space. However, their initial ideas soon changed once they took on an experienced garden designer.

‘When we were looking to buy a flat a couple of years ago, we desperately wanted one with a garden,’ explains Declan. ‘I grew up surrounded by countryside so, living in London, I needed at least some green space.

‘We didn’t touch the garden until about a year after we moved in. It was pretty uninteresting with a large expanse of grass and a small decked area, which measured around 5x16m in total. We don’t have a separate dining room in the flat so our main motivation was to create an area that we could use for entertaining, but also one that wouldn’t need too much maintenance – we knew we wouldn’t have a lot of spare time to spend working out there so it needed to be able to look after itself. ►

Wire cages were concreted in place for plants to climb and cover as they mature





## Create a relaxing space

✓ Form private areas enclosed by trellis and climbers such as sweet peas and passion flowers. Light will still be able to come through but you'll still have privacy.

✓ Adding a focal point to your space, such as a sculpture or fountain, or even a wigwam of runner beans, helps the eye to rest on one thing and not flit about, creating the perfect place for rest and relaxation.

◀ The eye-catching water feature is a focal point in the garden. A similar, right-angled, handmade, stainless steel model at 115cm high will cost you £1,101 from FeatureDECO

'We decided the best route would be to hire a garden design company so it could plan and organise the work for us. We basically scoured the internet and came across Earth Designs. The transformations on its website were incredible, so we got in touch.

'After our first meeting with designer Katrina, our ideas did change. We initially thought about laying new turf and creating a larger seating area. She came back to us with two designs – one along those lines and a far more adventurous one that seemed a far better solution. There was no lawn to maintain, but loads of interest with decked walkways through planted sections, a water feature and plenty of tables and chairs. We just decided to go for it.

'The work only took about four weeks to complete with three people on it making a lot less mess than we had expected. Luckily there's access at the bottom of the garden so nothing had to be carried through the house. Earth Designs organised everything, from the plants and decking to the installation of a power supply for the water feature.

'Katrina suggested that we go for more mature planting to create impact straight away.

Of course this meant we had to increase the budget, which was originally £22,000. The decking made a huge difference and was definitely the right decision. There's a mix of seasonal plants so the garden will look good all year round. We planted evergreen shrubs and spring and summer flowering plants such as lavender, peonies and montbretia. The decking is hardwearing and won't need constant maintenance, and cubed stools were constructed from railway sleepers.

'The view from our living room has been completely transformed. The 6ft high water feature is the main focal point and your eye is drawn to it. We've added wire cages, which will eventually be covered in jasmine and honeysuckle. A mix of plants and spotlights means we can use the garden late into the night.

'The finished garden is more than we had hoped for. As well as entertaining friends and family outside to eat breakfast and now the children have an extra room of the house. A few plants have to be replaced because they've been eaten by foxes but there's very little else to do, which is exactly what we were looking for.

### PROJECT CONTACTS

Design and build Earth Designs:  
www.earthdesigns.co.uk 020 8521 9040



BEFORE

# Garden project



BEFORE



**LIVES HERE**  
 ers: Tara Walsh, Peter Niland and their  
 ter Eve, 4  
 sions: Company directors  
 of property: Four-bed detached house  
 ion: Wanstead, London  
 here since: 2000

## PROJECT PROFILE

**Garden redesign including  
 home office**

**Build route:** Garden design  
 company

**Build time:** 2-3 months

**Valuation at start of  
 project (2006):** £1,200,000

**Cost of project:** £52,000

**New valuation:** £1,300,000

### COST BREAKDOWN

**Garden office:** £22,000

**Planting:** £8,000

**Pathways:** £3,000

**Water feature:** £2,500

**Lighting:** £4,000

**ADDED VALUE**  
**£48,000!**



The outbuilding by Garden Lodges is Peter's new home office – the wood and glass finish helps it blend in well with the garden

“We transformed our garden and added a home office”

Having updated and extended their family home, Tara and Peter set their sights on improving their large garden with a play area, an entertaining space and home office

Tara and Peter Walsh employed a garden designer to re-work their outdoor space. They didn't want to radically alter the layout but needed help prioritising their needs.

‘We'd extended our house up and out,’ Tara explains of their four-bedroom house in Wanstead, so next on the list of improvements was the garden. There was nothing drastically wrong with it, but the lawn was always cluttered with the children's toys, and the

patio by the house was small and had seen better days. With the new sliding doors from the extension leading onto the patio, we wanted to make more of it.

‘Neither of us are keen gardeners, so we knew we'd have to employ a garden designer. Luckily, a friend recommended Earth Designs so we didn't have the stress of finding one ourselves.

‘We had a consultation with Katrina from the company, who then started working on plans. ►





## Garden project



The new garden space is now just as modern and attractive as the extended family home, with space for entertaining, playing and working.



► The new design by Katrina at Earth Designs included a path between the enlarged patio and the outbuilding. Katrina devised a series of tall archways made from chunky wooden posts at intervals along the path, with a stainless steel water feature at the end to form a stunning focal point

However, in the meantime I went to a property exhibition and saw some fabulous glass outbuildings designed by Garden Lodges. Peter works from home and we'd been considering ways to create an office away from the main house, so one of these seemed perfect. I went back to Katrina and ask her to incorporate this into our design.

'It's actually worked brilliantly. The original patio has been replaced by a larger one using sandstone slabs. A matching path leads from there, down the left-hand side of the garden to a circle of paving in front of the office. At first, I

wasn't convinced and thought it may just look like a path to nowhere, but with the stainless steel water feature positioned at the end, it really does draw your eye and create interest.

'There's still a large area of lawn but the children now have their own play area. It's at the back of the garden and divided off from the main lawn with a wide flowerbed. Katrina moved some of our existing Sky Rocket conifers to help screen off this part of the garden. I also got a large climbing frame for the children's area, which was inspired by one I saw at a hotel we'd stayed at. I searched for the company that made

it on the internet and it delivered and assembled the frame on site.

'Earth Designs project managed all the work for us and consulted with Garden Lodges to coordinate the build. We have access at the rear of the property so we weren't disrupted much. There was very little that we had to do, it all went very smoothly. There were up to three people from Garden Lodges working on the home extension and three more working on the garden so it took about 2-3 months for the work to be completed.

'Although Katrina ran all the ideas past us, we were happy to let her get on with it. We have a little expertise when it comes to gardening, but we relied on her to come up with a plan that would work for us and be low maintenance.

'We've had one summer with the new garden but now it's more mature, we're looking forward to enjoying it this year. It's a cliché, but a well-designed garden really is an extension of your home. Downlighters on the posts and spotlights in the beds mean we can be out there late in the evening. It caters for all our needs – the children, an office for Peter and an social area.

'I'd certainly recommend using a garden designer. It's just like using an architect for an extension – you're paying them for their ideas and experience.' 🏡

### PROJECT CONTACTS

**Design and build** Earth Designs:  
[www.earthdesigns.co.uk](http://www.earthdesigns.co.uk) 020 8521 9040  
**Home office** Garden Lodges:  
[www.gardenlodges.co.uk](http://www.gardenlodges.co.uk)