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second chances

The grass is always greener, they say. And, in this case, the grass was the problem. Joan and Dermot Foster's grass was indeed green, but there just wasn't enough of it at their Blackrock home. "Our children were growing bigger, and our back garden just wasn't big enough. It was really the catalyst that started us house hunting."

Two years ago the couple viewed many different properties but failed to fall in love with anywhere as much as they had with their current home, which they'd bought in 1994. The requirements of a couple are very different from those of a family with a pair of seven-year-olds, so, rather than leave an area and a building that they loved they decided to undertake a serious renovation project.



Because their home is a listed building they had to engage the services of an architect to get planning permission, but Joan and Dermot already had solid ideas on how things should change. "When you live in a house for years you get to see its faults and flaws, as well as its strengths," explains Joan. "We knew how best to utilise the light and how to reinvent the space as a real family home."















Work began in September 2008 when the family moved out for six months – which turned into nine – and the builders began to strip the house back to a shell. Joan got rid of all their furniture, bar three antique pieces, and the builders set about installing dry lining, replacing doors and windows, adding solar panels and completely updating the electrics.



The glamorous living room looks picture-perfect, so it's reassuring to hear it's the family's regular sitting room. Honey-toned oak parquet was a clever choice of flooring, sympathetic to period features yet delightfully contemporary. The Duresta sofa, ottoman and armchair are hugely elegant and comfy, while the rich splashes of aubergine inject immediate warmth and opulence. With a dazzling chandelier from Hicken Lighting, statement mirror, and marble fireplace from Belle Cheminée it's easy to see why this is a favourite room for the Fosters to relax in. (Doors lead out onto a private terrace fashioned from glass that's both spacious and daring.)





One of the biggest jobs was moving the kitchen to the first floor, where they knew it would benefit from lots of natural light. "When we first moved in the kitchen was actually on the first floor, but at the back of the house. We decided to move it to the basement, where we installed a beautiful McNally kitchen, thinking it would be perfect. The problem was we loved the kitchen so much we that hardly used any of our reception rooms upstairs, which seemed a shame."

The new kitchen was fitted upstairs once again, this time at the front of the house in a larger room, with wonderful natural light that streams in from front and rear sashes, supplied by Nordic Windows. Reflecting Joan's love of classic-contemporary, the units are Sematic, cream and clean-lined, and there's a mix of Liebherr, Siemens and Miele appliances. The statement clock over the induction hob was bought locally in Harriet's House, its grand size taking full advantage of the high ceilings. The flamed granite worktops feel cool to the touch and boast amazing tones and texture. Leather stools from Marie's Corner make the island the perfect place for relaxed family meals.

