

# EXTREME TRANSFORMATIONS

BEFORE



The original 1970s brick-built house had concrete roof tiles, faux leaded windows and ugly dormers



Gabled dormer windows replace the harsh, flat 1970s ones

New painted timber windows, clay roof tiles, a wraparound veranda and pretty porch give the house an American feel

## From 1970s nightmare... to American dream

Claire and Matt Podesta added an inviting wraparound veranda, gabled dormers and a new porch to turn a boxy house into a US-style family home

### Take the 60-SECOND TOUR

#### THE PROPERTY

A detached, four-bedroom, two-storey American-style house in Marlow, Berkshire.

#### WHO LIVES HERE

Claire and Matt Podesta, with their three children Eliza, 11, Minnie, nine, and Freddie, four. Matt owns a bespoke furniture company and Claire is a graphic designer.

#### WHAT THEY DID

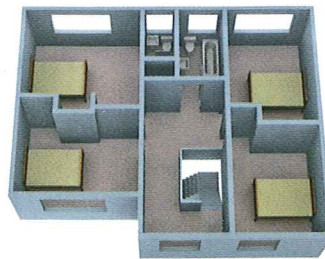
The couple reworked the internal space and gave the building an

#### American-style exterior makeover.

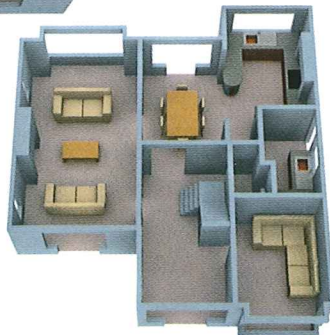
New painted-timber windows and patio doors have been fitted, a pretty wraparound veranda was added to create instant character, while peaked dormers and a porch give it more visual interest. The grey concrete roof tiles have been replaced with red clay ones.

#### WHAT IT COST

The original house cost £850,000 and the couple spent £105,000 revamping it. The property is now worth around £1.5million.



◀ **FIRST FLOOR**  
The layout of the first floor has remained unchanged, with four bedrooms, one with an en-suite bathroom, and a family bathroom



▶ **GROUND FLOOR**  
The old kitchen and dining room were knocked together. A utility room is next to the kitchen, family room and loo lead off the hall. A veranda wraps around the living room

FEATURE DEBBIE LEFFERY PHOTOGRAPHS DARREN CHUNG PLANS PERSONA-ID

When Matt and Claire Podesta first viewed their new house, they weren't put off by its run-down condition. Inside, the rooms were nicotine stained, while the garden was surrounded by a screen of giant leylandii trees, making it feel dark and claustrophobic. Worst of all, the exterior was a 1970s mess of mismatched metal windows, concrete roof tiles and ugly dormers. But the couple, who had renovated houses before, were confident they could turn the boxy house into a fabulous home.

'Originally we thought that we would need to extend,' says Claire, 'but when we knocked together the kitchen and dining room as a short-term solution, we found there was more than enough space.'

This decision freed up additional money to spend on the exterior makeover, and the couple planned to disguise the unattractive building with

some clever American-inspired ideas. Matt spent hours drawing up the design, which required no planning permission as everything the couple wanted to do fell within permitted development rights. 'One of the greatest challenges was changing the windows, which were a mixture of different sizes and styles,' says Claire. 'We chose hand-made painted timber frames and replaced the dormers with gables surrounded by weatherboarding.'

The most stunning addition is the veranda, which wraps around one corner of the house. The original porch has been replaced, too, with one built from new green oak with glazed double entrance doors and a pitched roof.

Work began in November 2008 and took six months to complete. 'Now you can barely see any of the original exterior brickwork and it looks and feels like a completely different house,' says Claire. 'The American look is far softer and more appealing, so we feel we've given the place a new lease of life.'



Matt's company, Podesta (podesta.uk.com) made the wooden kitchen units



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