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ARCH angels

Nicola Thomas of ARCH angels on the changing use of rooms and gardens

This week, Nicola Thomas talks about how the way we use our homes has changed.

Over the past 50 years the way we live in our homes has changed dramatically. Gone are the days when the ground floor of every good suburban home was made up of a lounge, dining room, separate kitchen and back garden. Fifty years before that you might also have had a living room or even a drawing room which you only used when the most esteemed guests came calling.

Once upon a time a summer evening would see mother in the kitchen, father tending the vegetable patch in the garden and the children playing in the street until dinner, then the family would all sit around the one television to watch together. The modern family crave, open-plan living, light and space. Multi-functional rooms for work, rest and play. 32 per cent of British homeowners have knocked down their walls and liberated their unloved dining rooms, and 12 per cent have invited their kitchens to join the party.

Outdoor living

What's more, influences from foreign holidays and Aussie soap operas mean that we have an appetite for outdoor living, barbecues, patio heaters and even the odd hot tub. Our gardens have become an extension of our homes – an additional room for entertaining family and friends. As our own individual lives change, our appetites for this type of living increase. Take this bachelor pad in Brighton. When the owner of this property married, the newlyweds wanted a space which they could entertain friends and raise a growing family.

In this property we fitted sliding folding doors to give access to a glorious patio – perfect for informal alfresco meals and responded to the client's request for modern open-plan living. The old garage which had previously housed a pool table was transformed into two double bedrooms and we were even able to provide the family with a luxurious wetroom. The cost of this project, including all work, fees and materials was less than £100,000 but a recent valuation delighted the owners being £225,000 more than the previous valuation – a clear profit of over £125,000.

Richard Zinzan and Nicola Thomas are founders of ARCH angels Architects, a local, Brighton-based approachable practice specialising in environmentally conscious and cost effective architecture. We work closely with you to maximise your space and provide beautiful buildings.

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