

RENOVATION

DIARIES

GEORGIE COLERIDGE COLE TAKES
ABSOLUTELY ON HER JOURNEY AS SHE
BUYS AND SELLS HER WANDSWORTH HOME

WEEK
05

THE LAWYER

Now we're under offer the spending starts. Our seller wants to move fast so we are going to be massively up against it. First stop: lawyers. We used Ruth Edwards at William Sturges when we bought our Tonsley house because as we were told by a friend at the time, she, like her name, is ruthless. I remember my husband trying to negotiate her fees first time round and she politely told him if he didn't like them, he could go elsewhere. He said he liked her style and said that we'd go ahead. We line up Ruth to do battle once again. We um and ah about whether to get a survey - the vendor has made it clear that unless it's about to fall down the price is the price, but given the amount of structural work we're doing, we decide a full survey is the only way to go. What comes back can only be described as a tome. TA is surprisingly unfazed about the volume of work and calmly tells me that old houses are all the same. However, needless to say dodgy roofing and damp mean that the spreadsheet is worked a little harder.

application as soon as we exchange.

We find a great architect called Tony Long at Design Matrix who is hot on detail and TA and him soon see eye to eye. We're removing steel, adding steel, raising roofs and knocking out chimney breasts, so we need drawings and structural plans (so that's a structural engineer too - more £££s) for not only planning but also so we can provide our prospective builders with a detailed spec to quote against. 'Getting builders to quote ad hoc will not do,' I'm told by a friend who has done it before. 'On Tuesday you'll want four spotlights in the

bathroom and by Thursday it will have doubled...' Good advice and to be sure we're comparing apples with apples, we spend considerable time putting together a very detailed spec, listing everything from where we want sockets and radiators, to kitchen and bathroom layouts (#somanymoredecisions) and finally come up with an eight page word document. TA is delighted whereas I am convinced any builder will run a mile. Guess it's better to be thorough - I did once get a builder to pick up and change every pebble he'd put down in my garden because they were too small...

THE NEW HOUSE



**'IT'S ALL A BIT
DEPRESSING TO
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PRETTY LITTLE
HOUSE'**

THE OLD HOUSE



WEEK
06

SPECULATION

Survey sorted we now need to find an architect, get builders to quote, pick a builder, find a party wall surveyor and get everything together to submit our planning



WEEK
07

CALL IN THE BUILDERS

It's all a bit depressing to think about leaving our pretty little house – the first property we bought and one that's completely 'done' versus one that needs everything doing. Builders wise, where to start?? I wanted to use Wandsworth based father-and-son team Tim & Charlie Rowland Clark (aka posh builders – the type you'd like to have in your house) but they're booked up already so I send an email to local mothers I know asking for recommendations of good, honest, reliable and reasonable builders. We meet a few. Some that speak English, some that don't. Some that subcontract, some that don't. We deliberate between Nick Jepp who is recommended by our estate agents and a lovely Polish guy but given how green we are when it comes to this kind of project we play it safe and go for Nick. Nick is not the cheapest option but judging by his glowing references his work is good, and he is honest and reliable. Plus everyone says he's fast. He and I are going to get on famously.

WEEK
08

CONTRACTS EXCHANGED

A few weeks have passed since going under offer and we are inching towards exchange. When we have to push it back a week due to a hold up on our buyers side, we're

'WHO SAYS WANDSWORTH HAS A STEREOTYPE?'

told the vendors will put the house back on the market if we haven't exchanged by Monday night. A VERY stressful weekend goes by at a snail's pace. Frustratingly, it looks as though Monday might pass without any progress until out of nowhere I get an email from our estate agent and lawyer telling us we have exchanged! TA and I vow to start the austerity measures tomorrow, crack open a bottle of pink Laurent-Perrier and pick up a Wagamamas takeaway to celebrate.

The next day our planning application goes in. Planning takes a minimum of 8 week and all being well we can start work as soon as we complete (cue me popping down to the Town Hall and hunting down someone helpful who will take pity on a potentially homeless young family!). Once planning is in, it is on to party wall awards, more money and anxiety, as stories of party wall awards holding up projects for months are not a rarity. We need a party wall surveyor and to top it off, a party wall award on both sides. Each side, if they choose, is entitled to an independent surveyor paid for by us so we put a very friendly note through their doors asking if we can pop in and say hi and cross our fingers they will save us money and we can all go with the same surveyor. Thankfully the neighbour on our left is hoping to do some work

themselves soon and on our right they are super nice and basically 'us' but five years on: a family with two children and the same age gap who moved from the Tonsleys because they needed more space.... And who says Wandsworth has a stereotype?!



Editor & Founder of **SheerLuxe.com**. **Georgie Coleridge Cole** has lived in Wandsworth pretty much all her life. Four years ago she and her husband (aka 'TA' - The Accountant) bought a three bedroom house in the popular Tonsleys adjacent to Wandsworth Town. Now a mother of two, she's moving to the other side of East Hill and taking on a project to create their forever home. This is the diary of her journey...

NEXT TIME

Completion, Bathrooms & Kitchens!

LAWYER: Ruth Edwards

(williamsturges.co.uk)

Builder: Nick Jepp

(elevationltd.com)