

DESIGN | FURNISHING | DECORATION | DETAIL | FOR THE SMALLER HOME

# TERENCE CONRAN

## HOW TO LIVE IN SMALL SPACES



## Case Study

### Family house, London, UK

5:6

1. The front elevation of the house shows the single window that was permitted on the site boundary. The building includes three storeys at the rear, a single-storey at the front, and a courtyard in the centre.
2. A long hallway skirts the central courtyard and connects the front of the house to the main living area at the rear. The bespoke, built-in cupboards in darkened oak that line the hall were designed by the owner.
3. The staircase, also the owner's design, is handcrafted mitred steel plate.
4. The single storey at the rear, the widest part of the site, accommodates the combined living, eating and kitchen area. The flooring throughout is a cross-cut travertine. The furniture is a mixture of contemporary classics, such as the Arco floor lamp and two Mies van der Rohe Barcelona chairs, alongside a number of vintage Danish modern pieces. A sliding glass door provides access to the central courtyard.

**What** Four-bedroom new-build house with central courtyard and green roofs.

**Where** Wandsworth, London, UK

**Problem** The end of terrace site, occupied by a derelict garage, was tight, narrow and tapering. Planning restrictions

meant that no windows would be allowed on any of the boundaries, except at the front.

**Brief** The challenge was to make the best use of every square metre to create a family home, while drawing light into the building.

A further consideration was to incorporate energy-saving features such as photovoltaic panels and green roofs.

**Solution** The planning restrictions for new windows were overcome by arranging the house around a central courtyard that bathes the

interior in natural light. The living area is on the ground level at the rear where the site is widest, with accommodation for the family over two stories at the front. At ground level there is also a study and a guest bedroom. Built-in storage makes the most of the space.



## Courtyard house

In urban areas, with space at a premium, finding a site for a new house can be a problem. For the architect-owner of this four-bedroom house in Wandsworth, London, this was just the start, as he then spent considerable time nursing his project through Local Authority planning stages. The first step was to obtain permission for change of use and then designs were submitted. An early version of the scheme was for a single-storey house. Several versions later, the result is a courtyard design, a home for the owner, his wife and their two children. Single-storey at the rear, it rises to three floors on the street.

Planners stipulated that no windows could overlook the site boundaries. The solution is a central courtyard that spills light in every direction. Additional light comes from a roof skylight and a light well.

Tsuboniwa, hidden courtyard gardens, are a common feature of Kyoto merchant houses. The riads of Marrakech also include central oases of this type. Both traditional patterns were a source of inspiration, as was the way the Japanese maximize small spaces with multi-functional rooms and furniture.





## Case Study

Family house,  
London, UK

5:6 CONTINUED

A narrow, end-of-terrace plot, the site tapers from back to front. The multipurpose living, eating and kitchen area is at the rear where the site is widest. This is accessed by a long, narrow corridor lined with built-in cupboards. At the front, arranged over the upper two stories, are three bedrooms and two bathrooms. A guest bedroom and a study-cum-playroom are tucked away on the ground floor.

Many of the space-saving features were custom made. Furnishings include both classic and contemporary pieces, such as the Danish modern coffee table. The kitchen is in full view of the living area, so for it to bear the scrutiny the upscale design comes from Bulthaup. Warm-toned, cross-cut travertine flooring creates a unifying feature, also repeated as bathroom cladding. The staircase, designed by the owner, is handcrafted mitred steel plate. Green features include high thermal mass, photovoltaic panels and two green roofs.

At the heart of the house, the light-filled courtyard takes pride of place. Containerized plants, chairs by Konstantin Grcic and a Japanese marble lantern complete the minimal furnishing.





**1.** The kitchen, by Bulthaup, includes a stainless-steel worktop that doubles as a breakfast bar. The darkened oak joinery in the hallway was chosen to match the kitchen cabinet doors.

**2.** The courtyard, which is designed to bring natural light into the interior, is situated in the centre of the house. The flooring is a continuation of the cross-cut travertine used indoors. The slatted wooden bench, designed by the owner, doubles up as a pool cover, and the chairs are by German designer, Konstantin Grcic. The extensive use of white render on the exterior surfaces helps to reflect the light.

**3.** The child's bedroom has a bespoke bed designed by the owner. Useful play and storage areas are slotted in beneath.

**4.** This view illustrates the courtyard's minimal furnishing style and sleek metal planters.

**5.** The master bathroom features a deep Corian bath designed by the owner. The compact design of the bath allows space to slot in a glazed shower – both the tap and shower head are designed by Philippe Starck. The walls and floor are made of travertine tiles.



**At the heart of the house, the light-filled courtyard takes pride of place. The plunge pool adds a soothing natural element**



- A** Courtyard
- B** Living/kitchen
- C** Pool
- D** Guest Bedroom
- E** Hall
- F** Study
- G** Grass Roof
- H** Bedroom
- I** Bathroom

