

PROJECT NOTES

Project:

Contemporary extension and remodel

Location:

Leicester

Build time:

Apr 2013 - Mar 2014

Size:

363m²

House cost:

£452,500

Build cost:

£375,000

(£1,033/m²)

Value:

Unknown

HOMES CONTEMPORARY EXTENSION AND REMODEL

Reinvented Villa

If ever proof was needed that contemporary additions can sit perfectly with period properties, architect Nils Feldmann and wife Lisa's award-winning home shows just how it's done

Words: Daisy Jeffery Photography: Jeremy Phillips



New Meets Old

To the front of the property, the Victorian brickwork remains, however a faux garage to the side hides the new extension. The entrance has also been moved to the new extension, with the original Victorian stained glass door still in tact on the left as you enter (below right). In the rear kitchen extension, oversized sliding doors were chosen over bi-folds due to their larger openings and as the couple didn't want many frames. Nils and Lisa did however look carefully to find a company who could supply the large 7.5x2m doors with minimal profiles – these are from Sunflex



THE QUICK READ

- Architect Nils Feldmann and wife Lisa have renovated a Victorian villa, adding two modern extensions to create additional living space
- Wishing to create a clear distinction between old and new, the existing building retains its original period features while the new extensions are placed on a lower level and remain obviously contemporary in comparison
- The property has also been brought up to date in terms of performance and benefits from solar panels, underfloor heating and has been packed with insulation

It can often be a great challenge for renovators looking to undertake an extension and remodel of a period property, however for architect Nils Feldmann and his wife Lisa, their two-year project to bring a Victorian villa into the 21st century has been a triumph — so much so that their builder won an FMB (Federation of Master Builders) Award, as well as Nils winning two RIBA Awards.

The couple purchased the house in August 2012 and knew immediately that they wanted to turn the property back into a family home. The original 1879 house had been split in two in 1924 with the old staircase closed off and then the upstairs flat turned into bedsits in the seventies, accessed via an external staircase.

“We previously lived in a three-bed Victorian terrace with converted loft about 10 minutes away,” says Lisa. “This was a big leap going to a house of this size. We could see that the plot had land and that the house could be extended to the side and rear. Having done two small refurbishments previously this wasn't daunting for us. We saw it as an opportunity where others might have been afraid.”

The Brief

With Nils on board as architect and project manager, the couple spent time assessing where the light was entering the rooms and decided how best to reconfigure the spaces, making a wish list of what they wanted and then what they needed. “I drew up eight or nine different plans as we wanted to work out exactly how we wanted to live in the house and get the orientation of the rooms just right,” says Nils. “I made a model almost like a dolls house, which you can take apart to see the layout on each floor, to take to the structural engineers, planners, and even show the children so they could see how the house would look — it got them excited as they could choose their bedrooms. The model also allowed us to test where the glazing should be.”

The final proposal was a complete remodel with the addition of two modern extensions and a new second storey in the voluminous loft space — along with knocking through to reveal the original staircase which had been hidden behind cupboards for 90 years. “After 90 years to be able to walk up those stairs and turn the house back into a family home was just a wonderful experience,” says Lisa. ➤





Kitchen Diner
Situated in the new section of the home, the large open plan kitchen diner is a great entertaining space, with large sliding doors opening on to the terrace. The worktop, a composite quartz mixture, is from Samsung Radianz Quartz

Formal Living Room

A Westfire Uniq woodburning stove makes for a great focal point in the formal living room in the Victorian part of the house; this space also features the original floorboards. PVCu French doors were removed here and the bay window reinstated to offer a pleasant outlook over the garden



The Build

Work began on site in April 2013 with the couple living in their previous home while the work was undertaken. They were keen to use local suppliers where possible and reuse as many materials as possible. “We made it our aim to source all of the materials as locally as possible, and where certain items were made nearby we would still order from local suppliers,” says Lisa. “We wanted to contribute to the local economy. We also wanted to recycle and freecycle as much as possible. A lot of wood came out of the house and what we didn’t use for firewood we gave to a local carpenter. The old quarry tiles which were originally in the scullery we reused to lay in the cycle store, and the slate we found that was lying on top of the old rainwater harvester we relaid outside the new front door.”

To the front of the property the Victorian brickwork remains, with compressed Rockwool insulation veneered in a red cherry creating the effect of door panels on the faux garage. The rear meanwhile has been clad in insulation and then white render, with the two new additions clad in grey render to signify old and new. A bargeboard was then added to the Victorian pitched roof to add prominence, and a green sedum roof introduced on the extensions.

A modern construction system was used for the floor in the new extensions. The extensions are built in timber; there was no steel involved which made it easy. Recycled newspaper was then blown into the ceiling of both extensions and the walls and floors feature heavy doses of Knauf insulation. Underfloor heating provides comfort underfoot in the new additions too.

“We had to insulate and render the back and sides of the house as it wasn’t possible to keep the brick as it was in poor condition, but fortunately you can’t see this from the road so there was no problem with the planners,” explains Nils.

While carrying out work to the first floor, the couple were reluctant to keep the bedroom ceiling heights as high as those on the ground floor and chose to lower the ceilings to make way for a new floor above. “Our builder James had gone into the loft and could see how cavernous it was and we decided that with the lowered ceilings below it would make way for a whole new floor,” says Nils. “We had envisaged keeping the existing roof structure but we asked James whether there was anything he would do differently and he suggested taking the roof off. All of the roof tiles were removed and a new roof was added which allowed for the attic space to be increased. The tiles were then relaid. All of the sockets and switches in the second storey are now separate so you could turn this space into three separate bedrooms in the future to make it a seven bedroom house. For now though we use it as a large playroom and are going to turn the back half of this floor into a home cinema,” says Nils. Velux windows have been introduced here to bring in natural light and two solar panels are now placed above the windows on the rear elevation, made to look uncluttered.

Getting the Details Right

“For us the project had to be designed to look like one home and not segments, and so the new design of the ground floor allows you

to be able to see into different spaces through glazing and open plan areas, meaning the flow of the house is now brilliant,” says Lisa.

“The front of the house is made to look like there is a garage attached to the side, but if you look closely you’ll see there’s a plinth in front — behind here is actually the bicycle store and pantry which leads into the kitchen,” says Nils. The layout has been reconfigured so you now enter the house from the new extension where you are immediately met with a view through a long picture window leading straight through to the garden.

To the left as you enter the house you are faced with the original Victorian front door, marking the clear distinction of where the old element starts and the new addition begins. The transition from new to old has also been marked by the purposeful introduction of different levels; each time you enter the new area of the house you take two steps down, and the original Victorian house features timber flooring while the new sections feature tiles.

From the front living space in the original house, a pocket door slides away to reveal a TV room for the children (formerly the kitchen) and a downstairs shower room features taupe coloured tiles on the walls laid in a brick bond to mirror the brick exterior. The colour is also replicated in the new kitchen work surfaces.

Working from home, Lisa was keen to have a view of the garden, and the new office in the second rear extension features full-height glazing with sliding doors opening out to the south-facing garden. The new open plan kitchen diner has also been positioned to open out on to the garden through large 7.5x2m glazed sliding doors. ➔

Retaining the Period Features

Nils and Lisa took great care to ensure they saved any period features they could, including the original ornate ceiling rose in the front living room. The original six-panel doors and ironmongery were also kept. The couple were fortunate to find a local craftsman with experience of period properties who was able to replace the cornicing which was crumbling, too.

“A lot of time and money was spent working with the carpenter to get the finest of details right on the original property, but then with the extension everything is simple and streamlined with no cornicing or architraves — the two are very separate,” says Lisa. “We wanted a story for the Victorian house and for it to flow naturally, and so we kept all of the original floorboards and these run throughout the ground floor in this section of the home to create a cohesive flow between rooms. There is then a separate story for the office extension and the kitchen extension.”


A real feature of the home, the original staircase has been carefully restored too. “Where it was closed off and a separate higher landing placed from the external staircase for the upstairs bedsits, the whole top of the original staircase balustrade has been ripped off and so we worked closely with a craftsman to replicate the spindles and balustrade. The staircase was then varnished and you can’t tell which part is 140 years old and which is one year old,” says Nils. “The same varnish was then used on the door knobs upstairs so everything is very consistent.”

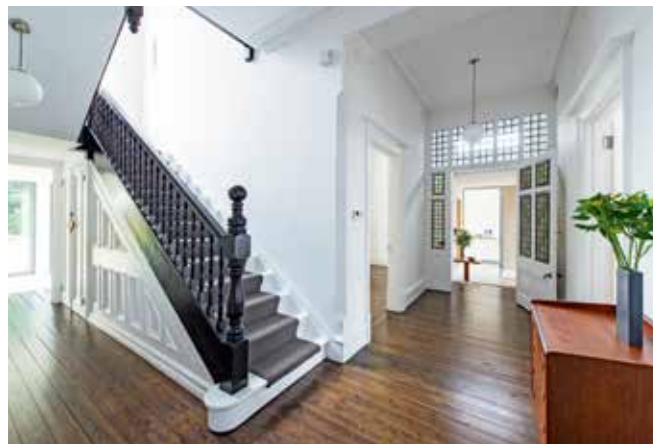
The windows were also changed throughout after the original timber windows had been removed over the years and replaced with PVCu. Now, double-glazed timber units replicate the originals, including the bay window in the formal lounge where PVCu French doors used to open out to the garden. “This adds a real feature to what we think of as a very grown up sitting room – almost like a hotel lobby where people in the house can pass in and out of – and it’s great for sitting down after dinner in front of the log burner which provides a lot of warmth in winter,” says Lisa.

The End Result

For Nils and Lisa, this project really is testament to their hard work and a lot of careful planning. “None of this was down to luck,” Lisa admits. “Nils being an architect had a real vision for how the house would look and I had confidence in him. We got planning within eight weeks, had a good relationship with our contractor and there was great communication between everyone. Our builder James Barby from Rockingham Construction was a real find. We were thrilled that James won an FMB award for the project and James is thrilled that Nils won two RIBA awards for the house.”

The home now measures an impressive 363m² internally excluding the basement, which stores the gas boiler and controls for the underfloor heating and solar panels. “The underfloor heating system is really effective and you can also feel the benefit of the internal insulation. The hot water is then provided for by the solar panels,” says Nils. “We looked at other technologies including wood-pellet boilers, ground-source heat pumps, etc, but these were too expensive. So we spent money on insulation instead.

“It’s a peaceful, happy house to live in — everything works. We don’t regret anything. We set ourselves a budget, allowed for a contingency, and allowed ourselves time to make decisions,” says Nils. “We couldn’t be happier with what we’ve achieved.” 



Top: Retained Staircase

After 90 years hidden behind cupboards, the couple broke through to reveal the stunning original staircase and employed a craftsman to replicate the spindles and balustrade where the top of the staircase had been ripped away in the past. The whole staircase was then varnished, and is now a real centrepiece of the home





HOMES CONTEMPORARY EXTENSION AND REMODEL

The Project



**Nils and Lisa
Feldmann**
Homeowners

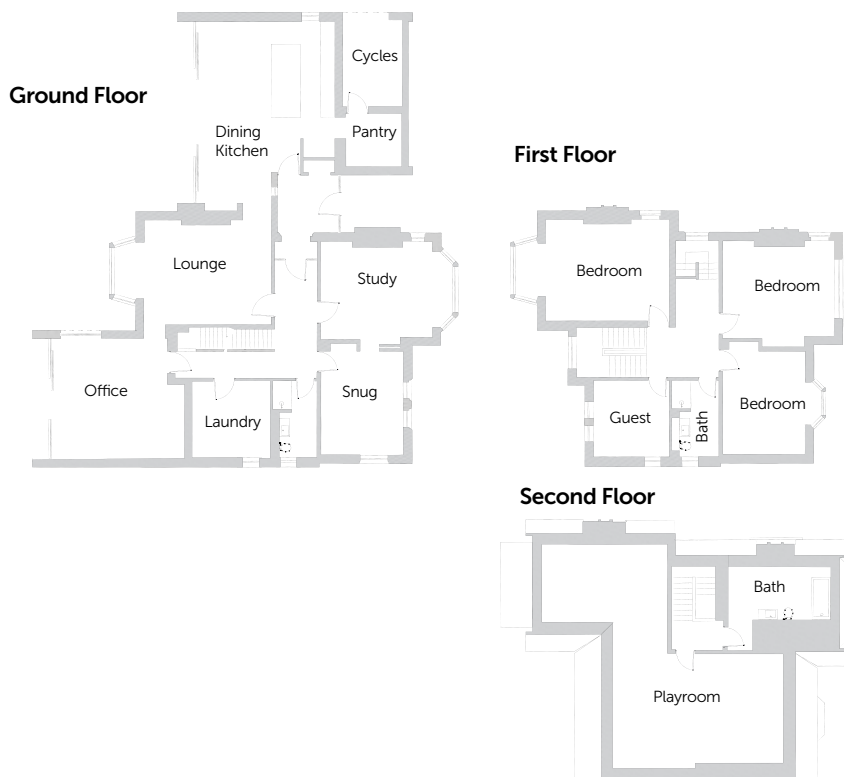
HOMEOWNERS' VIEW

The Victorian room arrangement did not work for us at all – the rooms felt detached from each other and the whole building did not address the garden nor the sun. Now the orientation of the house is towards the garden and there is a seamless flow between the existing rooms as well as with the two contemporary extensions. The new kitchen in particular is strongly connected to the existing lounge at the centre of the house.

We'd recommend spending time in the house you want to alter to understand what works well and what doesn't (especially sun path, views, circulation and storage), before you decide what to change and what to keep. What you want may not be what you need, so imagine a typical day, how everyday tasks are carried out, and then see whether the house is fit for purpose.

Get professional advice and be open minded – don't just copy the look of the images from your scrap book/pin board; understand the character of the property and work with it.

We thoroughly enjoyed the build and to now live in the property that we transformed is wonderful. With a new layout of the ground floor the house embraces natural light and the garden, making it a spacious and modern family home.



SUPPLIERS

- Architect** Feldmann Architects
.....feldmanns.net; 07780 684401
- Main contractor** Rockingham Construc-
tion0116 270 9411
- Timber frames and carpentry**
D J Hensher01858 466285
- Structural engineer** Elliott Wood Partner-
shipelliottwood.co.uk
- Engineered roof trusses and joists**
Harlow Timber Systemsharlowts.co.uk
- Insulation** Knaufknaufinsulation.co.uk
- Insulated floor system** Litecast XT18
.....litecast.co.uk
- Blown cellulose roof insulation** Warmcel
.....warmcel.co.uk
- Roofing membrane** Polyroof
.....polyroof.co.uk
- Sedum roof** Sedum Supply
.....sedumsupply.co.uk
- Sliding doors** Sunflexsunflexuk.co.uk
- Pocket doors** Portman
.....portman-pocketdoors.co.uk
- Kitchen furniture** Häcker Systemat
.....haecker-kuechen.de/en
- Kitchen worktops and splashback**
Samsung Radianz Quartz
.....samsungradianzworktops.co.uk
- Bathroom wall-mounted basins** Alape
.....alape.com/gb-en
- Bathroom taps and showerheads**
Crosswatercrosswater.co.uk
- Plaster mouldings** Aristocrat
.....0116 288 9230
- Woodburning stove** Westfire Uniq
.....westfire.dk

PROJECT TIMELINE

- Aug 12** Property purchased
- Oct 12** Planning application
- Dec 12** Planning permission
- Jan 13** Tender process
- Apr 13** Start on site
- Jun 13** New roof trusses installed
- Aug 13** Extension shells complete
- Nov 13** Plastering complete
- Mar 14** Completion