

SMALL SPACE *style*

Rosie Winston has remodelled and extended a tiny derelict former railway cottage, using every trick in the book to create a light and airy home.

STORY DEBBIE JEFFERY | PHOTOGRAPHY GRAHAM GAUNT



IN BRIEF

PROJECT Cottage renovation
PAID £700,000 in 2012
SPENT £250,000
WORTH £1.4m

GARDEN
Stone patio and decking areas create a welcoming garden space, enclosed with brick walls and fencing.

EXTERIOR

New timber windows and a simple grey colour scheme have updated the brick façade of the Victorian terraced cottage. Extending to the rear using frameless glazing and a timber-framed extension has increased the size of the cottage by over 50 per cent.



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When Rosie Winston first viewed her current home in London’s Kentish Town in 2012 it was far from inspiring. Old, tired and dilapidated, the classic two-up, two-down period terrace had originally been built for railway workers at the turn of the century, and had remained largely untouched since the 1960s. “I’d previously been living in an apartment in Primrose Hill, where my children grew up,” explains Rosie. “They now have their own homes, and I decided that I’d like to find a property to renovate for myself. This cottage was in a terrible state with damp, peeling wallpaper and a mouldy kitchen – just ripe for renovation.” Bombed during the war, the house had been virtually rebuilt in the 1950s without any period features, leaving only the original brick façade. “There really was very little worth keeping, so I knew it could be





STAIRCASE

The bespoke staircase incorporates built-in storage, and was designed with a curved wrought iron balustrade and foot-level lighting.

stripped back to a bare shell," explains Rosie, an interior designer with her own company, Clifton Interiors.

The other benefit was that because the house had remained empty for two years before Rosie purchased it the project qualified for a reduced VAT rate of five per cent (see panel). Rosie worked with partner and architect Mark Ruthven to remodel the existing property – dramatically transforming and extending it into a contemporary, light-filled home. The aim was to convert the collection of small rooms and corridors with low ceilings into a free-flowing, naturally lit space.

To this end, the pitched roof was taken off and replaced with a highly efficient mono-pitch structure, offering a dramatic, three-metre-high vaulted ceiling which gives the master bedroom a sense of increased light and volume.

The whole of the ground floor has been remodelled into one open-plan living/dining/kitchen space, from front door to rear garden, and the stair was shifted transversely to form a strong architectural feature, with a rooflight above bringing light into the middle of the living area.

"We included space-saving pocket doors, so that the rooms would appear open, but could also be divided if necessary," says Rosie. "Moving the staircase dictated the layout of the first floor where I have two bedrooms, a utility room and a bathroom."

A relatively large garden enabled the property to be extended to the rear, and planning permission was granted for contemporary glazed additions, which connect the house to the newly landscaped garden.

Overall the property has been enlarged by nearly 50 per cent, with a two-storey partial-width extension and a fully-glazed infill addition. The latter was simply formed by using two panels of frameless structural glass, one for the roof and one for the rear wall.

"There was a small hiccup with planning, because I would have liked more glass at the back of the house," says Rosie. "It meant tweaking the original design to reduce the amount of glazing, so now the glass doors are surrounded by timber-framed walls."

Following demolition and the stripping out of the house, including the roof structure, the entire property was reconstructed to incorporate new timber windows and an elevated mono-pitch roof, finished with a single-ply membrane. "We built the roof up to increase head height and this has made a huge difference," explains Rosie.

Foundations were excavated for the new timber-framed extension, glazed bifold doors were installed in painted grey timber frames to meet planning requirements, and the house has been rewired

VAT concession

Rosie's property had been empty for two years when she purchased it, qualifying the renovation and extension work for a reduced VAT rate which is currently five per cent. This reduction applies to alterations, repairs, hard landscaping and the construction of associated garages, but only applies if the property has not been lived in during the two years immediately before renovation works start.

All eligible materials and labour supplied by a VAT-registered contractor must then be charged at the reduced rate of five per cent. A non-VAT-registered builder must not add VAT to the supply of labour and materials, but will pass on the cost of any VAT they have paid on materials at 20 per cent. A VAT-registered builder will require proof that the property has been empty for at least two years. This can be confirmed by local authority council tax records. Full details may be found in HMRC VAT Notice 708, available via hmrc.gov.uk.

SITTING ROOM

Displaying artwork was a priority for Rosie, and various pieces hang in the sitting room, where low-level cupboards conceal audio-visual equipment.

Suppliers

PROJECT
 Interior designer/project manager
 Clifton Interiors: cliftoninteriors.com
 Architect Studio Mark Ruthven:
 studiomr.co.uk
 Builder Sara-Int Ltd: saraint.com

STRUCTURE
 Windows Greenmark Joinery:
 greenmarkjoinery.co.uk
 Structural glass and rooflights
 Sun Square: sunsquare.co.uk

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS
 Radiators (Sitting room and master
 bedroom) Bisque: bisque.co.uk,
 Other radiators Hudevad: hudevad.com
 Sitting room woodburner
 Scan: scan.co.uk
 Bespoke gas fire (Master bedroom)
 AM Chimneys: amchimeys.co.uk

Bespoke staircase Sara-Int Ltd:
 saraint.com
 Staircase handrail, door handles
 Dragon Works: dragonworksforge.co.uk
 Shutters Shutterly Fabulous:
 shutterlyfabulous.com
 Kitchen cabinets and marble counters
 Robert Timmons Furniture: rtimmons.co.uk
 Boiling tap Quooker: quooker.co.uk
 Blue lias stone paving Ashen Cross
 Quarry: ashencrossquarry.co.uk
 Engineered oak flooring Generations:
 generations.co.uk
 Rosebud bath Castello:
 castellobaths.co.uk
 Bar stools Deconet: deconet.com
 Bathroom flooring Island Stone:
 islandstone.co.uk
 Wall paint Farrow and Ball:
 farrow-ball.com

Ground floor

First floor



Floorplan



**Rosie's
TOP TIP**

"Use professionals to plan the interiors carefully, so that space is maximised without losing out on vital storage."

KITCHEN

Sleek white cabinets were teamed with marble worktops in the extended open-plan kitchen, which opens onto the garden through bifold doors. Lighting was a vital part of the overall design.



and newly plumbed, with underfloor heating in the new elements and radiators elsewhere.

“I sold my apartment and moved in with a friend for eight months while the work was completed,” says Rosie, who took on the role of project manager, employing her usual team of builders and trades. “Fortunately we didn’t need to underpin the house at all, and the front brick façade was in good condition and didn’t require repointing.”

Rosie has built up an impressive portfolio of interior design work over a number of years, including refurbishing the royal areas of the Royal Albert Hall and restoring numerous listed properties in London. Her talents were put to good use when it came to the cottage’s interiors, where maximising light and space were the main priorities.

“It was exciting to be indulgent and design somewhere entirely for myself rather than for clients. I used a simple palette of colours and materials, with plenty of built-in shelving and cupboards,” she explains. “The new staircase with its wrought iron handrail is one of my favourite features, and was designed around two charcoal drawings I wanted to display.”

Pale oak flooring was laid, and white paintwork has been specified throughout. Shutters rather than curtains were fitted for a clean look, many of which are full height with wide slats finished in a soft white shade.



Q&A

What was the high point?

Seeing such a dark and dated property come to life, and having a free hand with the interior design. ...and the low point? All projects have their challenges, and it would be naïve to think that they don't, but I'm fortunate to work with a great team of people which makes everything easier, and ensured that the project came in on time and on budget.

Your best buy?

I love having an instant boiling water tap in the kitchen, and of course all the glass brings in so much natural light.

...and the biggest extravagance?

Opting for an integrated audio visual system was probably an extravagance, but has been worthwhile.

Would you change anything?

In hindsight I may have chosen more expensive iroko rather than cedar for the decking and fencing, but I wanted to stay within the budget.

FIRST FLOOR

The first-floor bathroom features pebble flooring, a bespoke teak vanity unit and a rooflight above the walk-in shower. A pocket door enables the second bedroom/study to remain open plan if required. A sculptural free-standing bath and a bespoke gas fire creates an indulgent setting in the master bedroom.

“I wanted the open-plan kitchen to feel like a continuation of the dining space, so I avoided wall cabinets,” says Rosie, who selected simple white matt lacquered cabinets and an island unit, with luxurious Carrara marble worktops. A teak drop-leaf table may be pulled out for entertaining in the dining area, and an inset wood-burner in the sitting room chimney breast provides maximum impact without taking up any additional space.

“I managed to include everything I wanted, and decided that because there wasn't enough space for a separate bath in the bathroom I would have one in my bedroom instead,” says Rosie, who designed a walk-in dressing area with doors, and a simple bathroom vanity unit, which was crafted out of teak.

The garden has also been carefully designed to serve as an extra room when weather permits, and combines timber decking, blue lias stone paving and exposed brick walls. “Building the extension and connecting the house and garden has been a huge success, and makes entertaining fun,” says Rosie.

“Overall the size of the property has increased from 65 to 100 sqm, and it now feels completely different to the dark, cramped cottage I originally viewed. Working with small spaces is always a challenge, and the key is to choose light colours, natural materials and simple finishes which provide a backdrop for artwork and furniture without making rooms feel cluttered. Now I have a home designed exactly the way I want it, which is fantastic.”