

HOMES & GARDENS®

Push boundaries

THE ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS THAT SHAPE A HOME

**DESIGN
DIRECTIONS**

YOUR GUIDE TO
EXTENSIONS

AN A-Z OF
ARCHITECTS
CURVES IN THE
KITCHEN



MARCH 2024

The roofline
echoes the gables
of the house
in this design
by Eastabrook
Architects

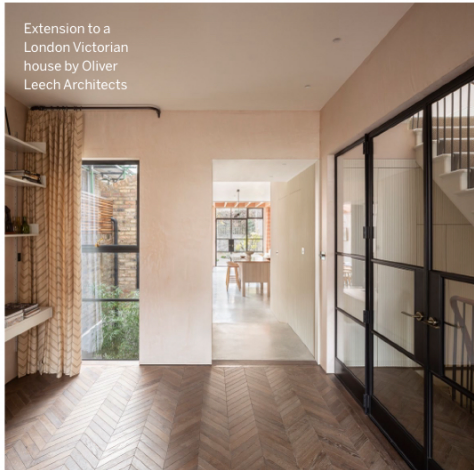


PROJECT ADVICE

Extensions: the facts

The ins and outs of planning an addition
can seem daunting, but our expert guide will
help make the process go smoothly

FEATURE: ARABELLA VOIGENS



Extension to a London Victorian house by Oliver Leech Architects



HollandGreen brought modern glazing to this listed farmhouse

1 THE FIRST STEPS TO BUILDING AN EXTENSION

A firm understanding of the ultimate intention of the extension will help to make decisions about everything from size and window positioning to materials and colours, says Chris Pask, director of architecture and interiors firm Charlton Brown. Also, contact your buildings and contents insurer to inform them about your plans to check what is and isn't covered.

2 WHAT IS PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT?

If the project falls under permitted development rights, it's possible to avoid the need for full planning permission. Generally, single-storey rear extensions can extend out by up to 3m from a semi-detached or terraced house and by 4m from a detached house (based on plans of the building on 1 July 1948). You can also apply for prior approval for rear extensions up to 6 or 8m in length (depending on whether the house is detached or not); these can't exceed 4m in height.

3 LAWFUL DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATES

When extending under permitted development, it's still advisable to apply for a lawful development certificate to document that the project was legal at the point of construction. Once this application is validated by the council, it could take around

eight weeks for a response. Unlike a normal planning application, the council can't refuse the certificate if it complies with permitted development requirements.

4 SECURING PLANNING PERMISSION IN LONDON

If the building isn't listed or in a conservation area (see below), it's still a good idea to talk to the local authority to get pre-application advice, if the extension is remotely controversial in design or size. Also, talk to neighbours to sound them out (before entering into a party wall discussion). Look for a precedent in the area that could mean the project is in good standing. 'Regular dialogue with the local planning officers and use of digital technologies is the key to our successful planning outcomes and the reason for our 100% success rate for new builds and extensions across London,' says the team at Studio Elephant.

5 LISTED BUILDINGS

'The single most important thing you have to do before embarking on a project for a listed house is to demonstrate that you fully understand the building,' says Dr Simon Thurley who sits on the advisory board of RedBook, a consultancy that advises on high-value property projects. 'Normally this is done by commissioning a conservation survey which lays out the history of the building and what is important about it. Ultimately, your conservation

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officer will be concerned to ensure that no harm is done to the significance of the building. However, harm can be traded against benefits, especially those that are seen in the wider context of the whole scheme.'

6 CONSERVATION AREAS

The main hurdles here often involve stringent planning restrictions, with a focus on maintaining the neighbourhood's architectural integrity, explains Greg Walton, director of Studio McW. 'Collaborating closely with local authorities and parish councils, who act as statutory consultees in small countryside conservation areas and make all manner of decisions on issues that affect their local community, and gaining their support gives the best chance of a planning success.'

7 PROJECTS IN SCOTLAND

There are nuanced differences between securing planning for a listed building in Scotland compared with England, explains Matt Loader, director of Glasgow-based architects Loader Monteith. 'Scotland has its own legal system, and planning laws are administered by different authorities. The planning process for listed properties may involve consultation with Historic Environment Scotland, which plays a key role in safeguarding the country's historic environment.' Having said that, Matt agrees that it goes back to understanding why the property is listed and what makes it important: 'Solid research will stand you in good stead.'

8 PARTY WALL NOTICES

Party wall agreements are required if the property shares a boundary with another household (either a wall or an outbuilding), and this is particularly common in an urban context. If the proposed extension impacts on a party wall, or there is a plan to excavate within 3 to 6m of the neighbouring property, then permission needs to be obtained from the affected households before construction begins.

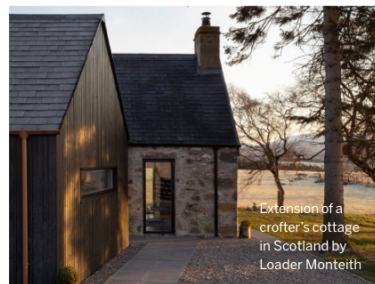
The best approach is to start the process early with open communication, says David Hartley, senior architect at Own London. 'Nobody wants to start a construction war with neighbours.' He advises that a reputable party wall surveyor be appointed to the project team as early as possible. 'This will also identify potential risks to existing structures given the inclusion of the new,' adds Philippa Waldron of CC Construction.

9 BOUNDARY WALLS

Each borough has a limit on boundary wall heights for extensions to protect the impact on natural light to neighbouring properties. In some cases, it's possible to get around this by proposing added wall height in glass, as Studio Elephant did recently for a project in London. 'When combined with daylight and sunlight analysis, we could prove to the council that not only did this meet the minimum requirements for light levels to the neighbours' property but significantly bettered them.'

10 HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

It's hard to generalise as there are so many variables including size, design complexity, location and quality of materials. As a rough guide, expect to pay from £40,000 to £100,000 for a single-storey rear extension rising to £150,000 for a double-storey one, according to Resi Design. For a terraced house, where →





access might be more complicated, it recommends budgeting £1,200 to £3,300 per square metre.

11 SNAGGING PROCESS

It's a good idea to hold back money from the building for a short period of time after completion. This will allow a gap to check for minor faults that need correcting before the project is signed off. The figure varies by project but it's usually between 5 and 10%. It's notoriously difficult to get builders back to fix minor errors or faults once they've been paid in full.

12 DO I NEED THE SERVICES OF A QUANTITY SURVEYOR?

Engaging a quantity surveyor for a cost plan is a 'prudent exercise', says Eamonn Agha, founder of

Huntsmore. 'It's ultimately cheaper to do this at planning stage than having a cost overrun halfway through the build.' It also avoids the disappointment of making unaffordable choices, adds Chris Pask.

13 WHAT ABOUT A STRUCTURAL ENGINEER?

A structural engineer is needed as they will specify and set out all the steel and support structures required, says Eamonn. 'This is the key structural information a contractor will need to both quote for a project and build it.' If the design involves exposed structure, oversized door or window openings or floating corners, a good engineer's advice is invaluable, says Chris.

14 AND AN ARCHITECT?

If the property is listed or in a conservation area then you should use an architect, as they should have a working relationship with the planning officers. For others, it's a question of choice. Architects' fees range from 5 to 12% of the construction costs for design stages, however they play a crucial role. Not only are they trained to make the most of a space but they'll be up to date with construction methods and the latest building regulations. 'As we move closer to an era of low-energy homes, these factors are becoming more important,' notes Sharon Godsmark of EP Architects.

15 WHO MANAGES THE BUILD?

There are three main options, explains Eamonn: ask the architect to act as a contract administrator and design coordinator; hire a project manager to oversee all aspects; or hire a design and build company. The most expensive route is to hire an independent project manager. Appointing a design and project management team (sometimes called the turnkey model) will mean there is cohesion between architects and constructors, who can smooth out problems before they develop on site. 'By leveraging the expertise of a single integrated

"A FIRM UNDERSTANDING OF THE ULTIMATE INTENTION OF YOUR EXTENSION WILL HELP TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT EVERYTHING FROM SIZE AND WINDOW POSITIONING TO THE CHOICE OF MATERIALS AND COLOURS"

CHRIS PASK, director, Charlton Brown Architecture & Interiors

PHOTOGRAPH (BROSELEY) EMMA JOHNSON PHOTOGRAPHY

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team, clients can enjoy a more cohesive and transparent process,' says David Hartley. 'But if these groups aren't independent of each other, it can feel like there's no one representing the client,' cautions Eamonn.

16 FINDING THE RIGHT BUILDER

The oft-repeated advice is to source quotes from two or three builders and be sure to know exactly what is included in the quoted price. Sandy Mitchell, founder of RedBook, likens the process of appointing a team to being a director casting actors for a film. 'Use a contractor with a strong track record in your area and project type,' advises Philippa Waldron. 'Recommendations are important, and gut instinct rarely fails and transcends the cost-quality-time pyramid,' she adds.

17 MODERN EXTENSIONS

'We believe a well-executed, contemporary extension usually works better than a mock period one,' says Simon Griffiths, associate director, HollandGreen. 'With this approach, you are respecting the original property and creating modern additions that are sensitive to the building's identity.' Contemporary extensions to historic homes can be a harmonious marriage of tradition and modernity, agrees David McGahon, director of Studio McW. 'This is particularly apt when the intention is to preserve the historical essence while meeting the needs of modern living.'

18 TRADITIONAL DESIGNS

It's perfectly possible to add an extension that looks immediately settled by using traditional building methods and materials. The key is to find an architect with the skills and knowledge of how old buildings were constructed. The leading classical architect Hugh Pether of Adam Architecture added an extension to his listed cottage. 'Although the new work is only a few years old, it looks as if it has always been there and the whole building has been carefully overhauled to make it more thermally efficient,' says Clive Aslet in *Living Tradition: The Architecture and Urbanism of Hugh Pether*.

19 OAK-FRAMED STYLES

A large part of the appeal of oak frames is the flexibility of design – the construction system can create a wealth of different styles, and they can also be quick to build. 'Oak is often the preferred material for properties with restrictions such as listed buildings,

as it offers traditional construction methods and ages gracefully for a timeless classic extension,' says David Handley, commercial director of Prime Oak.

20 GLASS BOX ADDITIONS

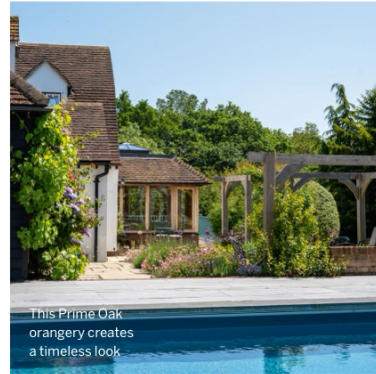
Rooms made entirely of glass create a constant visual connection to the garden. Even in listed houses or conservation areas, planning officers often favour expanses of glazing. 'The simplicity of the design doesn't alter the character of the original building,' explains Dan Smith of glazing specialist Minima Sliding. 'They are regarded as lightweight additions and, as a result, we've had lots of success using our minimal sightline sliding doors in projects in protected areas.'

21 THE RIGHT SCALE

In highly populated areas, complex planning policies and conservation guidelines will inform what can and can't be built. Look at the local authority's →



A contemporary addition to a traditional home by HollandGreen



This Prime Oak orangery creates a timeless look



design frameworks as a first step. In Central London, the scale often needs to remain in keeping with the original fabric of the building and the neighbouring properties, says David Hartley. Be careful with lower-ground floor extensions being too cavernous. 'While adding space and light into a build is a goal, going too deep can result in a structure that feels disproportionate and disconnected from the original context,' he adds.

22 GLAZING CONSIDERATIONS

Any new extension will need to comply with building regulations that specify thermal performance requirements, says Duncan Grover, head of product management at Schüco UK. They state that the glazed areas shouldn't exceed the sum of 25% of the floor area of the extension and the total area of windows and doors that were removed or are no longer exposed due to the extension. 'However, another approach allows you to look at the weighted U-value of all thermal elements, which gives more flexibility on glazing, providing you choose highly thermally efficient systems.' The team at glazing specialist IDSystems anticipates more glazing technology developments to include smart glass that changes from light to dark in response to temperature and micromirror glazing, which provides free solar heat in winter and prevents overheating in summer.

23 CHOOSING ROOF LIGHTS

If you want a traditional design throughout, roof lanterns, orangeries or panellised part-glazed

doors are good options, says Eamonn Agha, adding that 'modern architectural glazing also juxtaposes well with Victorian architecture'. Bear in mind, roughly 30% of heat loss takes place through the frame.

24 GABLED OR FLAT ROOF?

A generous ceiling height can make or break an extension project, believes the team at Charlton Brown. 'Gabled, folded and other pitched roofs can yield unexpectedly tall spaces in an extension that open dramatically, however, their external appearance on single-storey extensions can be clunky if they're not treated with care,' says Chris Pask. 'Flat roofs can be designed to show off their beams to break up an expansive flat ceiling and gain some additional height.'

25 DOUBLE-STOREY DESIGNS

When planning a double-storey extension, the potential increase in cost could be a concern but, as Simon Griffiths explains, it needn't be. 'A significant part of the cost of an extension is the ground works such as laying the foundations, drainage and the slab, so a second-storey extension is cheaper per square foot than a single storey.' It's at planning where the challenges lie, as 'a second-storey extension may create overlooking issues with your neighbours'. In towns and cities where gardens are small, building upwards allows homeowners to expand without sacrificing outdoor space, adds architect Oliver Leech, founder of his eponymous practice.

PHOTOGRAPHS (SCHÜCO) BEN BLOSSOM; (HUNTSMORE) CHRIS SNOOK

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26 CLADDING OPTIONS

Cladding plays an important role in how the new addition can lift the existing building and how it relates to the setting. From wood and stone to metals such as zinc or Corten steel, there are many options beyond brick. Bear in mind the changes that occur as materials age; for example, untreated Siberian larch wall cladding will develop a silvery hue. Sometimes planning restrictions mean the external palette material is limited to what was previously on site, says Oliver.

An innovative material is cork. 'Cladding an extension inside and externally with naturally stained cork achieves all required U-values without the need for additional expanded foam insulation,' says Nimtim Architects.

27 SUSTAINABLE EXTENSIONS

Find an architect with a good knowledge of listed buildings and renewables – the two are often considered not to work together but they do, explains Stefan Pitman, founder of Dorchester-based architectural practice Spase. 'Insulation of the existing building is important and the new and old structures need to be considered differently in this respect. It's essential to consider the insulation and thermal performance of the old building for the renewable heating technology to work efficiently,' he says. 'There are modern high-temperature renewable technologies that can be incorporated in the design where insulation of historic fabric is more problematic.'

28 LOFT CONVERSIONS

One of the most popular ways to create more space, particularly in a townhouse, is to go up into the roof. The associated costs will depend very much on the roof itself, according to the team at Econoloft, who quote Velux-window conversions (which maintain the original shape of the roof) starting from £35,000, rising to £55,000 and more for a mansard roof which changes the shape to allow for maximum headroom.

29 COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

It's crucial to have a completion certificate issued to demonstrate that the extension meets all building regulations when it comes to selling the property – the conveyancing solicitor will need this as part of the paperwork. The build will be signed off once a collection of certificates has been submitted including electrical, gas safe, Oftec (for oil boilers), Hetas (for

wood burners), commencement for unvented hot water cylinders and commencement for any specialist systems, explains Philippa Waldron.

30 SCOTLAND SIGN-OFF

'Obtaining a building warrant (Scotland) or building regulations approval (England) is crucial, but the specific application and approval processes differ,' says Matt Loader. 'In Scotland, the building warrant is issued by the local authority, while in England it's granted by the local authority or an approved inspector. Additionally, Scotland has a unique Certification of Design (Building Structures) process.'



A loft conversion, such as this one by Broseley, is a great solution in a townhouse

