



**IN BRIEF**  
**PROJECT**  
 Extension & remodel  
**LOCATION** North London  
**COST** £875,000 in 2011  
**SPENT** £250,000,  
 plus fees and VAT  
**WORTH** £1.8 m+

# Stacking up

Stacking and stepping four extensions around a semi-detached Georgian home has created an exciting new layout for Tim and Lama Moss.

STORY: **DEBBIE JEFFERY** PHOTOGRAPHY: **FRENCH + TYE**

**W**hereas most people build extensions to add space to their homes, Tim and Lama Moss had a somewhat different brief. Their semi-detached Georgian property stands within a Hackney Conservation Area and had been extended by previous owners, which made further additions tricky.

“We weren’t able to make the house physically much larger, as there was already an extension to the rear,” explains Tim. “The challenge was to make it feel bigger, and opening up the full height of the stair was one of the key ways to achieve this. Now, every time we walk down the stairs, we love the openness of the hallway and stairwell.”

The couple had purchased the three-storey brick property in 2011, before their daughter Layla (now six) was born. After selling their previous property, Tim and Lama had viewed several potential houses while living in a rented flat for six months. Their search for a larger family home with a garden finally paid off when they found the tired fixer-upper, which required extensive modernisation.

“We fell in love with this house because of its location and potential,” Lama explains. “It was liveable, but there

## EXTERIOR

Externally, the project has been designed as four brick blocks that have been stacked and stepped around the existing Georgian building. New flat roofs are covered with natural sedum and swift boxes have been installed in the side elevation, which welcome these rare birds every year.



were dark, awkward corners – especially in the hallway, where you were immediately greeted by the toilet door as you walked inside. The space just didn’t flow and there were low ceilings, with limited storage so that our old kitchen was always cluttered. The shower leaked water through the living room ceiling the day after we moved in and we rarely used the rear conservatory as the plastic roof leaked and it was freezing in winter.”



"We chose the least radical of the designs internally, because we felt it was the most practical for our lifestyle."

The couple had never previously undertaken renovation or building work, although they had always wanted to tackle a project. "Our drive wasn't financial," Tim explains. "We wanted to create our own space and make the best use of every room in the house."

Initially, Tim and Lama refitted their bathroom and replaced all the draughty single-glazed windows with double-glazed timber sashes, which were approved by the conservation officer. In 2017, they began interviewing architects, determined to make some major changes to the building's layout.

"We walked around the area and found architect and builder hoardings outside properties, which we then looked up online," says Tim, who researched previous local planning applications as part of the process. "After visiting various websites and making a long list of practices, we met four architects at the house."

"George Bradley, of Bradley Van Der Straeten Architects, seemed to completely understand what we wanted and had experience dealing with Hackney Council. When the practice had a party, inviting old and new clients, we were able to meet the staff and speak to others who had worked with



## BUILD

A former extension to the property resulted in an awkward internal layout, which didn't really work for the Moss family, who moved out during the works.



**GROUND FLOOR**

**FIRST FLOOR**

**SECOND FLOOR**

### FLOORPLAN

Demolishing the rear conservatory made way for a new kitchen/diner on the ground floor, leading off from the original sitting room. The staircase has been relocated into a new side extension and storage space added in the hall, together with a WC. On the first floor is a bedroom, family bathroom and new study extension, with two bedrooms on the floor above.

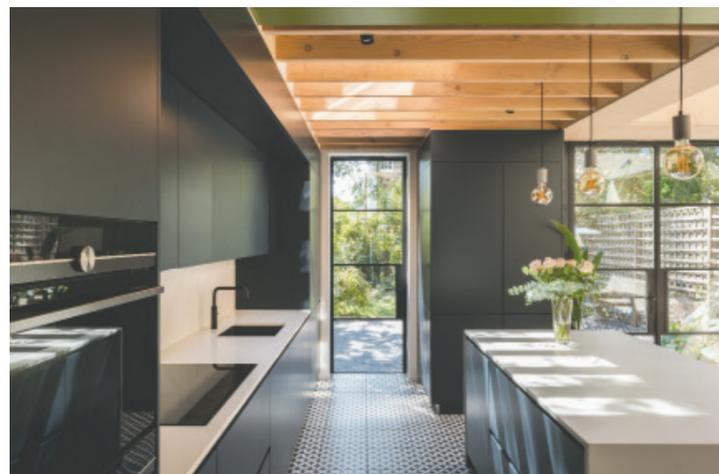


**KITCHEN**  
Original spaces, with traditional coving and Georgian proportions, contrast with the strikingly contemporary kitchen extension. The new kitchen overlooks the dining space and is set underneath an exposed timber joist ceiling.

them. After that, our minds were made up that we had found the right match for our project.”  
The couple put together a broad brief, to open up the existing space and make the interiors feel less cramped – especially the hallway. A desperate need to reduce clutter made storage a priority and it was important to retain the character of the existing building, in contrast to contemporary new additions.  
The practice produced three quite different concept sketches, which Lama and Tim considered. “Ironically, we chose the least radical of the designs internally, because we felt it was the most practical for our lifestyle,” says Lama.  
Building a triple-height stairwell in a new side extension would allow the stairs to be relocated, with an open-plan ground-floor kitchen/diner to the rear contained in two stepped brick boxes, and a new first-floor study above.



**ROOF LIGHT**  
The distinctive sloping plywood sides of the roof lights open out to the view and the plywood theme is continued on one wall face, with fitted storage and a long bespoke dining bench.



“Gaining planning permission wasn’t particularly easy, because of our location, and the planners wanted the new extensions to be built from London stock bricks to match the original house,” says Tim. “They also reduced the size of the study, but this gave us space for an additional window up the stairs, which we love.”  
Following a tender process, a building contractor was appointed and the family moved into rented accommodation for the duration of the building work. “One day we came to the site and our house was just an empty shell with no back wall or staircase,” says Lama, who works in IT. “Some of the old bricks were salvaged from the demolition and mixed with new London stocks to create a seamless blend between the old and new elements.”  
Flat roofs on the brick and block extensions to the rear are covered in sedum, which provides a natural habitat for wildlife and improves the view from upper

“The house flows better, feels more spacious and is far more bright and airy.”

windows. “We’d visited various shows and exhibitions in the run-up to the build, and had seen a sedum roof kit, with sections supplied in trays which could be easily carried up a ladder and installed,” Tim explains.  
The existing roof eaves are home to a family of swifts, so swift boxes have been inserted into the upper walls of the new extension to provide additional space for these annual visitors. “The ground floor was dug out to install underfloor heating, so the whole house was a building site and it would have been impossible to live there during the project,” says Tim, who also works in IT. “The builders started in January 2019 and were still finishing off when we moved back in.”  
One of the most dramatic changes is the new two-storey side extension at the front, which is unassuming from the street but creates enough space for a triple-height staircase with a handcrafted oak handrail that sweeps up all three storeys.  
Two new vaulted roof windows fill the dining area with natural light and their sloping plywood sides bounce light and open out to the view, making it feel even more spacious. The plywood theme is also continued on one wall, with fitted storage and a long bespoke dining bench.  
“We added to our mortgage to cover the work we knew we’d need, and included a contingency sum,” says Tim. “The roof lights proved too heavy to lift into place by hand, and the crane was an additional £1,000, but overall, we were fairly close to the original figure.”  
The new kitchen overlooks the dining space and is set under an exposed timber joist ceiling, behind



**IN DETAIL**

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|--|---|
| <p><b>PROJECT</b><br/>Architect Bradley Van Der Straeten Architects: b-vds.co.uk</p>                 | <p><b>Kitchen 'Feature Beatrice' floor tiles</b><br/>British Ceramic Tile: britishceramictile.com</p> |
| <p><b>STRUCTURE</b><br/>Glazing Fabco: fabcosanctuary.com</p>  | <p><b>Ply tapered dining table</b><br/>Unto This Last: untothislast.co.uk</p>                         |
| <p><b>Green roof</b> Green Rooftops: greenrooftops.co.uk</p>   | <p><b>Boiling water tap</b><br/>Quooker: quooker.co.uk</p>  |
| <p><b>Roof lights</b> Maxlight: maxlight.co.uk; Roofmaker: roof-maker.co.uk</p>                      | <p><b>Furniture</b> Viaduct: viaduct.co.uk</p>  |
| <p><b>Roof membrane</b> Sarnafil: sarnafil.sika.com</p>  | <p><b>Bespoke swept handrail</b> Haldane UK: haldaneuk.com</p>  |
| <p><b>Sliding pocket doors</b><br/>Eclisse: eclisse.co.uk</p>  | <p><b>Wall tiles</b> Fired Earth: firedearth.com</p>  |
| <p><b>Swift boxes</b> Ibstock: ibstockbrick.co.uk</p>  | <p><b>Cork floor</b> The Colour Flooring Company: colourflooring.co.uk</p>                            |
| <p><b>Clay pavers</b> Vande Moortel: vandemoortel.co.uk</p>  | <p><b>Taps</b> Aston Matthews: astonmatthews.co.uk</p>  |
| <p><b>FIXTURES &amp; FITTINGS</b><br/>Herringbone oak flooring Jordan Andrews: jordanandrews.com</p> | <p><b>Thermostats and doorbell</b><br/>Nest: store.google.com</p>                                     |
| <p><b>Haecker kitchen and Silestone worktop</b><br/>Admo: admo.co.uk</p>                             | <p><b>Reclaimed fireplaces</b><br/>The Architectural Forum: architecturalforum.com</p>                |
| <p><b>Kitchen 'Bristol' pendant lights</b> Heal's: heals.com</p>                                     | <p><b>Tube radiators</b><br/>The Radiator Centre: theradiatorcentre.com</p>                           |
|  | <p><b>Downlights</b> Mr. Resistor: mr-resistor.com</p>  |

**HIDDEN LIGHT**  
Behind the timber joists in the ceiling is another roof light.



which is another roof window. This casts dappled light through the beams, and the south-facing garden can be reached from both the kitchen and dining areas through Crittall-style glazed doors of black aluminium.

"I was hesitant about having a beamed ceiling in case it felt low and oppressive, but it's now one of my favourite features because of the way light filters through," says Lama. "The angled roof lights mean you can see the whole sky and are always aware of the weather – it actually feels as though you are outside."

Bradley Van Der Straeten Architects offered suggestions of materials and fixtures throughout the project, many of which Tim and Lama adopted for the house. An initial concept sketch had shown a dark kitchen and the couple took this as a starting point, choosing deep blue cabinets with contrasting white Silestone worktops.

Along the corridor linking the hallway and kitchen, doors conceal a cloaks cupboard, clothes drying space, utility cupboard and a downstairs toilet with a unique arched ceiling.

"Having so much extra storage has totally changed the way we use the house and our architects considered every detail, right down to measuring the vacuum cleaner to make sure it would fit," says Lama.

"Fitting pocket doors between areas is another space-saving idea, which allows us to alternate between having open-plan and cosier rooms. We may not have technically added much floor space, but now the house flows better, feels more spacious and is far more bright and airy."



### FINAL WORD

#### What was the high point?

Seeing the glazing going in and experiencing the dappled light in the kitchen through the roof lights.

#### ...and the low point?

Trying to rationalise the various floor levels and materials to make one smooth transition required millimetre-perfect calculations.

#### Your best buy?

We love our boiling water tap, which also delivers filtered cold water instantly.

#### Biggest extravagance?

The single, curved handrail that runs from top to bottom



of the stairs. It makes a great statement on entering the property and ties together all three storeys of the house.

#### A top tip?

Keep note of every expense on spreadsheets, which are easy to use once set up and pull together information into a simple format.

#### STAIRS

Switching the stair and opening it up to create a triple-height volume, connecting all levels, has dramatically improved the entrance to the property.

#### LOUNGE

Natural light floods into the new extension and existing sitting room, where a reclaimed fireplace and oak parquet floor have been installed.

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