

PROJECT NOTES

Project:
Contemporary flat extension
Location: North-west London
Build time:
Apr - Dec 2013
Size: 130m²
House cost:
£825,000
Build cost:
£240,000
(£1,846/m²)
Value: £1.8million

HOMES CONTEMPORARY FLAT EXTENSION

Flat Out

Amit and Meera Unadkat have doubled the size of their ground floor London flat, transforming it into a spacious family home

Words: Karen Darlow Photography: Simon Maxwell

THE QUICK READ

- ⇒ Amit and Meera Unadkat have taken a tiny London flat in a Conservation Area and doubled its size through a contemporary zinc-clad extension
- ⇒ The front elevation of the flat remains unchanged and benefits from original sash windows
- ⇒ Light has been brought into the flat through a combination of rooflights and an expanse of sliding doors, which open out into a central paved courtyard area

Land in north-west London – in fact land in any part of London – doesn't come cheap, so when Amit Unadkat bought a two bedroom flat, with a courtyard garden and side access to a detached garage, with a view to developing it, it proved a shrewd move. That was back in 2011, and since then he and wife Meera have sold the garage (for a cool £90,000) to part-finance an extension at the back of the property.

At around 65m², the ground floor flat was quite small, even by London standards, and Meera and Amit knew they could add value and much-needed space with a well-planned extension. The couple wanted a local architect and so tasked Shahriar Nasser of Belsize Architects with designing a scheme.

"The main thing we wanted was space," says Meera. "And because by the time we did the extension we were a bit more familiar with the area, we knew that what the planners didn't want to see was the obvious brick extension, which I thought was quite unusual. I didn't think they'd like this kind of contemporary design, and to be honest it took a while for us to get used to the idea on the plans, but we love it now."

Increasing the Space

Shahriar's plans were to increase the floorspace to 130m², absorbing an inner courtyard garden and conservatory, converting it into a corridor between the old and new sections of the house.

A new kitchen diner would be created, along with a new bathroom and a neat utility space, not much bigger than a cupboard. A tiny box room (now the Unadkats' 18-month-old son Aarav's room) would double in size, and the zinc-clad back of the new extension would envelop a new courtyard patio, enclosing it as part of the property and giving it an extra sense of privacy and belonging.

"This is a Conservation Area, and comes under Camden Council, so we'd almost been expecting the planners to come back to us and say it was over development," explains Shahriar. "But it got to the end of the two-month period to hear the results and the conservation officer said 'I'm sorry but you're going to have to withdraw or you'll get refusal'." So Meera and Amit took the decision to withdraw the plans, and Shahriar went to talk to the planning officer to find out what the cause of the problem was.

Rear Extension

In order to double the floorspace of the flat, an existing conservatory and inner courtyard garden have been incorporated into the footprint of the extension. The zinc-clad extension was originally rejected by the planners due to its colour – a darker grey was chosen and plans were passed

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Kitchen Diner

The units in the kitchen diner were made by the main contractor (with the help of his father's joinery business, Oxan Furniture), helping to keep costs down. A large rooflight brings in plenty of natural light just where it is needed, while the sliding doors connect the space to the garden





Old and New

Within the flat, some beautiful original features have been uncovered, including original window shutters and fireplaces — the original spaces have been designed to flow seamlessly into the new contemporary extension

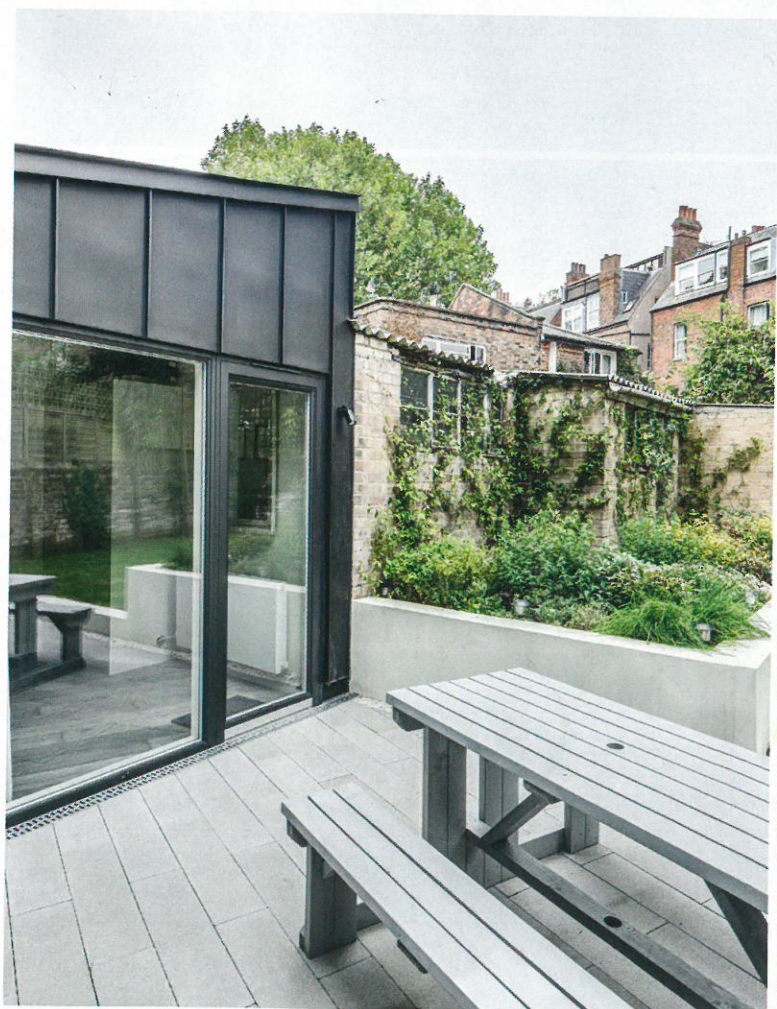
It transpired that the concerns were simply relating to the colour of the zinc, which was planned to be a natural silvery grey in order to tie in with the colour of the slate roof. Shahriar simply re-specified the colour to a pre-coloured dark zinc, and the plans were passed, meaning that in April 2013 the build could begin. Amit and Meera were renting nearby, so were able to keep a close eye on the build and were pleased with how smoothly work progressed. By September 2013 the extension was complete and they could move back in.

A Contemporary Design

The building's unusual design takes into account a half-landing from the flat above, so the ceiling height in one section of the build — the central corridor — had to be lower, but the space and height opens out at the back. The patio doors open on to the courtyard from the new kitchen, increasing the sense of light and space.

Outside, the zinc cladding is weathering well, and it's easy to see why it's a material enjoying increasing popularity. "It's got a ply backing, and then the zinc goes round it. You don't fix to the zinc," Shahriar explains. "It's a timber structure, so it's green and easier to handle and there's not a lot of steel. So a good choice when we were trying to stick to Amit and Meera's budget."

Further savings were made when it came to specifying the kitchen units as the main contractor Chris Milczanowski at Iconpec was keen to construct them for the couple, with the help of his Dad's joinery business, Oxan Furniture.





The design of the kitchen works well in bridging and blending the old part of the flat with the new extension. The kitchen area flows into a dining space which, in turn, is partially open to the original living room beyond and features stunning original features that sit in comfortable contrast to the contemporary nature of the extended section.

The front of the flat looks just as it always did, and the living room and master bedroom both have their original sash bay windows.

The Unadkats were able to make another cost saving here, as in the process of restringing the windows the workmen discovered the original panelled window shutters were intact under a dusting of plaster and a couple of centuries of paint. "We were so pleased about that, as it's a real bonus to find extra period details like this," says Meera. "And we plan to restore the marble fireplace in the living room too, by removing the black paint that must have been fashionable at some point."

Fireplaces, sash windows and shutters aside, this flat is now all about its contemporary details, and by paring just a few extra inches off the new bathroom space, Shahriar has created sufficient space in the master bedroom for a large fitted wardrobe, while in the kitchen diner, rooflights bring in extra light. "Our son's zinc-clad room has a really modern-style narrow window. We keep trying to tell him he lives in a spaceship!" And who are we to disagree? **H** ➔

Bedroom

One new bedroom in the extension has access to the garden, yet remains utterly private thanks to the positioning of the sliding doors



Entrance Hall

The lower level ceiling height as you enter the flat takes into account a half-landing from the flat above — the higher ceiling level of the corridor that it leads on to is made all the more dramatic by the inclusion of a rooflight



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The Project



Shahriar Nasser
Architect

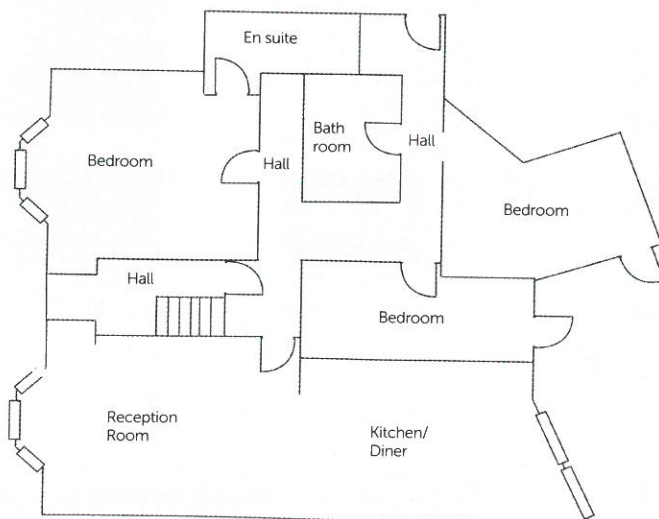
THE ARCHITECT'S VIEW

We were asked to create more bedrooms, as well as additional living space by replacing an old and run-down conservatory. Once we began to look at options with the client, we agreed that more radical changes were possible.

The rear garden had some oddly shaped nooks and crannies, which we enclosed within a new angular rear extension, which stretches into the garden and creates a courtyard-like terrace. Inside, this gave us the freedom to shape the much-needed additional space and we moved the main entrance to the side of the building to improve internal circulation.

Now, new bedrooms and an enlarged kitchen open on to the terrace through full-height windows and doors. These, together with three new rooflights set into the extension roof, bring natural light into every part of the flat. A new kitchen and high-specification bathrooms sit alongside sensitively restored period features in the existing spaces, such as plaster cornices, window shutters and fireplaces. A new dark timber floor and light decorative palette complete the transformation.

The new apartment is larger than would normally be allowed by local planners. Like them, we were keen that it should enhance the original property. The extension's angular plan is mirrored in the roofline, and the extension is clad entirely in dark zinc, which contrasts well with the brick of the original building.



PROJECT TIMELINE

- 2011** Flat purchased
- Feb 12** First planning application submitted
- May 12** Planning permission approved
- Apr 13** Work started on site
- Jun 13** Foundations completed
- Sep 13** Watertight shell
- Oct 13** First fix
- Nov 13** Second fix, final decoration and date occupied

SUPPLIERS

- Architect** Belsize Architects.....
..... 020 7482 4420; belseizearchitects.com
- Main contractor** Iconpec.....020 7228 6574
- Zinc roof and cladding** VM Zinc
.....vmzinc.co.uk
- External doors and windows**
- Rational01869 248181
- Timber floor** Hawwoods01933 418899
- Tiles** Towers Ceramics020 7485 7192
- Light fittings** Basis Lighting
.....020 7284 2040
- Switches and sockets** GET Schneider
- Electricsschneider-electric.co.uk
- Radiators** Stelradstelrad.com
- Sanitaryware** Duravitduravit.co.uk
- Bettebette.co.uk
- Brassware** Grohegrohe.co.uk
- Kitchen and joinery** Oxan Furniture
.....oxanfurniture.com
- Rooflights** Iconpec020 7228 6574
- External paving** Bradstone
.....bradstone.com