



The front of the property is designed to match the original building; a new garage and porch entrance increase the original size by half

Gatekeeper's *glory*

A derelict former gatehouse has been sensitively transformed into an energy-efficient home with contemporary-style interiors

WORDS NATALIE FLAUM PHOTOS LAWRENSON & GREBBY

After 30 years of living in a large Victorian villa, with their children now grown up, design consultants Tania and Donald Stewart felt it was time to downsize. "We were rattling around in a large six-bedroom property, on the verge of despair because we couldn't find a suitable house on the market in our area," says Tania. "This was until I noticed a little lodge for sale." She immediately got on the phone and arranged a viewing.

The former gatehouse was built towards the end of the 19th century and became the lodge of Clayton Park House, which was demolished by Sir Arthur Sutherland to enlarge the gardens of his own home, Mansion House. The building survived and is a historic landmark located in the Jesmond conservation area in an area of outstanding natural beauty surrounded by mature trees.

Inside, the ground floor layout included a reception room, galley-style kitchen, one bathroom and two bedrooms. "It had been rented for years and was currently empty. It was one of those buildings where the rooms felt colder than the temperature outside," says

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THE STEWART FILE

NAMES Tania & Donald Stewart
OCCUPATIONS Design consultants
LOCATION Newcastle upon Tyne
TYPE OF PROJECT Renovation
STYLE Contemporary
CONSTRUCTION METHOD
 Timber frame & brick
PLOT SIZE One acre
HOUSE SIZE 249m²
PROJECT COST £454,329
PROJECT COST PER M² £1,825
BUILDING WORK COMMENCED
 August 2015
BUILDING WORK TOOK
 12 months
CURRENT VALUE
 £1,000,000



The rear of the property features expansive glazing, which helps to create a light-filled interior

Dark grey spray-painted units and Silestone Lyra worktops create a contrasting scheme in the kitchen. The dining area features a mix of contemporary and antique furniture

Tania. After deciding to go ahead with the purchase, everything fell into place at the right time. "We exchanged on selling our previous home and buying this house at the same time," she adds. "We were only moving one street away from where we used to live, so we didn't need to worry about fitting into the neighbourhood." While the purchase may have been straightforward, the project ahead of them wasn't, as the couple faced many difficult obstacles to update the lodge while respecting the heritage of the building.

Starting point

Tania and Donald hired architect and good friend Nick Midgley, who they'd worked with before, to put together new plans for the property. The revision included a new porch entrance, garage and extension with a pitched roof that would be subservient to the main building. The scheme also featured a new staircase, three additional bedrooms with dormer windows and a balcony on the first floor. Only two of the original walls and the chimney were to be retained, with the rest of the structure being demolished – so although most of the house is new, the project still technically fell under the renovation bracket.

The style of the original building dictated the design, which needed to look the same from the roadside. "Nick attended every appointment with the council and conservation officers," says Donald. "We went to four pre-planning meetings over the period of eight months prior to the application process, which meant we were able to make the appropriate design adjustments to ensure it would all pass through without problems."

The property's position in a conservation area, surrounded by listed mature trees on adjoining parkland, also presented challenges. "It was a drawn out process from the beginning because we had issues before we could even start construction work, leading to



unexpected costs," says Donald. The presence of protected trees meant the couple needed to bring in a specialist consultant to complete a full survey and produce a method statement on how they intended to protect the roots. "Newcastle is riddled with old mine works, so we needed another survey to ensure there were no disused shafts below us. Deep holes were drilled for soil samples to be sent away," adds Donald. "We spent thousands before we even began construction – I'm sure this is an issue many self-builders face."

Innovative approach

Donald got in touch with construction firm JD Joinery and Building Services after reading about an award-winning Passivhaus they'd worked on. "Knowing they'd have the right mindset, technology and experience to create our dream home, I sent the firm's managing director, Joe Dixon, an email and he phoned me back within an hour. We met the following week," he says. "Joe was so enthusiastic about

our project and we negotiated a budget for his team to subcontract all the works. We have nothing but praise for the entire team."

To ensure root protection of the listed trees adjacent to the site, Joe and his team had to consider a specialist solution for the foundation design. "We employed construction methods and skills that kept land disturbance to an absolute minimum," says Joe. "We suggested a floating table top slab set on augered piles, which has the potential to disturb less than 5% of the ground whilst also being cost effective. The piles were just 150mm in diameter, which meant minimal damage to nearby tree roots; they were used for the new slab foundation and underpinning of the retained part of the structure. The piles have the advantage of tying all the fabric together so we didn't require any deep excavation."

Donald and Tania spent a week clearing the overgrown back garden ready for the builders. "We didn't want to burn the waste so we bagged it all up and took it to the local dump," he says.

The build begins

Tania and Donald lived in a rented house nearby for the duration of the works and avoided adding storage costs to the project by using its roof space to stow away items. "When the build started, lots of our friends walked past in shock when the property was reduced to two walls – but it all went back brilliantly," says Donald.

One of the planning stipulations was that an original feature of the building – the unusually tall chimney – had to remain in the new design. This was not ideal for the high energy standards associated with the Passivhaus principles the pair wanted to aim towards. "It was inappropriate to have a working chimney, but all the same it had to be put back exactly as it was," says Tania. "It actually began to wobble when the builders started using the pile-driving rig, so for health and safety reasons it had to be taken down brick by brick, retained, cleaned and then reinstated," adds Donald. "We had stonework recut for the collars on the top of the chimney."



Window shutters provide privacy in the living room

“We feel a great sense of pride at what we've achieved”



The structure's toughened glass balustrade allows the light to flow throughout, adding a contemporary feel to the space



The spare bedroom features modern furniture, sliding doors to the balcony and soft grey walls creating a relaxing backdrop

WE LEARNED...

EMPLOY A QUANTITY SURVEYOR

to put together a tender document for your builder. Ours worked with the architect's specification to ensure no legal disputes would take place, which helped to put our minds at ease.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE how much it will cost to get out of the ground. We faced fees that we hadn't anticipated involving tree roots and potential mine shafts under the property.

EMPLOY A GOOD ARCHITECT – ours was the hero behind our story. Nick Midgley is extremely experienced and attended all conservation and planning meetings with the council, making it a smoother process for us.

In favour of using local companies and tradesmen for the project, Donald hired specialists in their field for the roof and brickwork. “David Bell, who's known as the brick doctor, worked to ensure the facade matched the two walls we'd retained,” says Donald. “We also used a wonderful roofer, Alan Lyall, who was fantastic and a real craftsman – the covering looks as though it's always been there.”

For Donald, one of the most trying aspects of the build was getting the utilities connected. “Every time we contacted the companies to make an inspection they had to make an appointment for a site survey which (if we were lucky) would be in a fortnight's time, otherwise in six weeks,” he says. “This applied to gas, electricity and water – and that's before I made 43 phone calls to our internet provider to reinstall all the appropriate lines.”

Positive experience

After spending two-and-a-half years in rented accommodation, Tania and Donald moved into their new airtight home in the summer of 2016. “Our previous house was like a sieve with leaded windows and breezes coming in at all angles; we'd often need to wear two jumpers to stay warm,” adds Donald. “Our cat Elvis has a tunnel rather than a cat flap to make sure we don't lose any heat.”

The home's energy-efficient features include triple-glazed sliding doors in the kitchen and a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system (MVHR), which allows a fresh supply to come in while stale air is extracted from the house. Kingspan and super quilt insulation fill the double plasterboarded walls and underfloor heating sensors work to detect and regulate the temperature throughout the dwelling. The garage acts as an engine room, hosting the boiler, MVHR unit and controls for all tech equipment.

Donald and Tania spend most of their time in the kitchen and breakfast room. “We love the large glazed doors that open onto the garden, which makes it a lovely place to be,” says Tania. “Donald is

particularly good on the finer details, so we didn't have any disagreements about the build. We were here day and night inspecting the progress and loved watching it all evolve. The entire neighbourhood and everyone who passes by praises us on what a great job we've done; we feel a great sense of pride at what we've achieved. Our home is super comfortable and very light.”

The high-quality result was even recognised by the LABC in its annual Building Excellence Awards for the Northern Region, as it scooped the winning prize for the Best Extension or Alteration to



The spacious master bedroom ensuite is located in the eaves, featuring a walk-in luxury shower, bath, twin basins WC and bidet

an Existing Home category. “We gave the project a great deal of thought and worked very closely with our architect Nick – he and I are like-minded souls,” says Donald. “Our intention was to achieve a standout, contemporary dwelling full of forward-thinking, sustainable features, incorporating the Passivhaus principles of low-energy consumption throughout the building's fabric. Creating a bespoke home can be an incredibly frustrating process, as you can't control outside forces – but it's very rewarding once you've finished. We loved our project and would do it all over again in an instant. I'd like to buy a plot of land on an empty beach on the Northumberland coastline and build a contemporary home overlooking the sea for our children and grandchildren to enjoy.”

closer look

Combining traditional looks with good energy performance...

Specialists in the field of conservation area architecture and energy-efficient construction techniques, architect Nick Midgley and Joe Dixon of JD Joinery and Building Services were the creative minds behind this project. "Combining a historic building with new and often demanding methods of energy-conscious building required strong teamwork and a high skillset from our team, and we are delighted with the end result," says Joe Dixon. Donald adds: "We wanted to create an energy-efficient building and invested in conserving the heat that we generate rather than technology that is evolving and improving year by year. The environmentally-conscious design, although not fully Passivhaus, means the running costs of the property are very low."



Energy-efficient build

Floor plans



House plans re-created using Build It 3D Home Designer software. www.buildit.co.uk/3dsoftware

TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m ²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries/demolition	£71	4%	£17,717
Foundations	£260	14%	£64,654
External walls & windows	£389	21%	£96,844
Roof structure & covering	£269	15%	£66,990
Internal walls	£231	13%	£57,449
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£67	4%	£16,700
Joinery & fittings	£170	9%	£42,335
Plumbing & heating (incl. bathroom & kitchen)	£141	8%	£35,217
Electrics	£83	5%	£20,778
Decorating	£27	1%	£6,577
External works	£117	6%	£29,068

Grand total £454,329

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT & BUILD DESIGN **Nick Midgley Design** 01422 255818 www.nickmidgleydesign.co.uk BUILDING CONTRACTOR **Joe Dixon JD Joinery and Building Services** 01912 855568 www.jdjoineryandbuilding.co.uk DEMOLITION SERVICES **Thompsons of Prudhoe** 01661 832422 www.thompsonsprudhoe.com FOUNDATION ENGINEERING/PILING WORK **Roger Bullivant** 0845 838 1801 www.roger-bullivant.co.uk BRICK SUPPLIERS **Brick Services** 0191 414 5031 **Dave Bell (The Brick Doctor)** 07721 633651 ROOFING **Alan Lyall Roofing** 07860 774 996 SLIDING DOORS **Internorm** www.internorm.com WINDOWS & DOORS **Rational** 01869 248181 www.rational.co.uk STAIRCASE JOINERY **Claremont Joinery** 0191 477 6398 www.claremontjoinery.co.uk ELECTRICAL WORK **DMG Electrical** 01914 140 403 PLUMBING & HEATING WORKS (AND MVHR) **Hewitt's Plumbing** 01388 663109 www.hewittplumbing.co.uk KITCHEN DESIGN **Simply Bespoke Interiors** 01670 733633 www.simply-bespoke.co.uk BATHROOM DESIGN **Aston Matthews** 020 7226 7220 www.astonmatthews.co.uk FLOORING **Havwoods** 01524 737000 www.havwoods.co.uk TILES **Westerhope Tile Centre** 0191 214 0336



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