



Project Profile

Project: Extension to rear of 3-bed house in Portmarnock, Co. Dublin.

Existing Floor Area: 24sqm

New Extension: 22.5sqm

Cost: €65k

Design Process: 6 weeks

Construction: 7 months

(Allow 4 months if the builder was on it full time)

“We Improved Our Kitchen with Family DIY!”

The Harvey family have created the ultimate ‘family’ living space by doing most of the renovation work themselves...

Pat and Connie Harvey purchased their detached, three bedroom house in Portmarnock as a new build in 1993. Over the last 17 years, they have modified the kitchen and made a number of general renovations, which Pat, a plumbing & heating engineer by trade, managed. However, two years ago they embarked on their biggest project – to extend the rear of their

property and create a large integrated living, kitchen and dining space. When most people think of extending their homes, they generally consider the rear at ground floor level because it presents fewer issues with structure and planning permission. However, it can eat into your garden, which was a sacrifice the Harvey’s were prepared to make. Son Cianan, a builder

and joiner by trade, was appointed contractor; Pat managed all the plumbing and heating work himself and Connie, with daughter Caitriona, designed and sourced the interior fixtures and fittings. “The project was a real family affair,” says Pat. “A family friend was also the architect and another did the electrics work.”

The couple wanted to create a bright, airy kitchen-living space that was functional, comfortable and easy to manage. It needed to be spacious for family and friends to gather and provide all the luxuries of a modern home without making existing pieces of furniture look out of place. “The dining table was one of the first pieces of furniture we bought so I wanted to keep it,” says Pat. “In a modern glossy kitchen it could easily look out of place, but Connie was confident she could design a space where



everything would fit right in and feel like a home rather than a show house!”

To achieve the living space that Pat and Connie wanted, architect and friend, Joe Fallon had to consider the existing orientation of the kitchen and dining room. “This property enjoys sun to the rear, which makes it an ideal location for the main living spaces,” says Joe. “However, the poor orientation of windows and doors here meant the sun shone straight across the back of house and never entered these rooms.” Although the extension would effectively double the size of the current living space, it was important it didn’t add to existing problems by further blocking natural light. “A badly designed extension could easily force the existing kitchen and dining room areas into darkness by focusing all light at the edge of the new extension,”



he adds, “so to reduce the possibility of this happening, we firstly knocked the dining room through to the kitchen and proposed longitudinal windows of 2.1m high to the east wall.” Joe then designed a mono-pitch roof on the extension, which would be orientated to take full advantage of the sun’s path. At the tip of the slope, a fully glazed L-shaped wall allowed maximum light through, while two Velux roof windows penetrated light into the central living space. The result was a large open planned space flooded with natural light that could be zoned for better living.

Generally, open planned living spaces are designed to enhance light, make better use of space and promote sociability within the home. Whilst you don’t require planning permission to knock through walls, it may be required if you increase the square footage of the area, as Pat and Connie have done. To make the process as straightforward as possible for the Harvey’s, Joe designed the extension so it didn’t exceed 40sqm - the maximum allowance for Exempted Development in ROI. In NI, the allowance is 70 cubic metres, which sounds a lot, but in reality it’s a measurement for ‘volume’ and not area, so the space would be equivalent to a 4mx5m single storey extension.

Once the design drawings were agreed with Pat and Connie, Joe’s involvement in the project ended and a structural engineer was appointed to ensure every stage complied with current Building Control regulations. A schedule was then drawn up between Ciaran and his parents, where he coordinated the project. “We weren’t too concerned about a completion date,” says Pat, “because we knew

Above: Two-tiered granite worktop from Caffrey Stone, Drogheda, (0)41 983 1805, www.caffreystone.com

Opposite: The mono-pitch roof is orientated to take full advantage of the sun’s path.

Ciaran had other work on and we wanted him to be flexible so he could do both.”

Although glazing was an essential element in fulfilling Pat and Connie’s brief for more natural light, it was the organisation and specification of materials within the new space that would facilitate the flow of light and utilise the space more effectively. For instance, to accommodate the proposed mono-pitch roof on the single storey extension, they needed to reduce the size of the middle window on the first floor bathroom. Pat and Connie didn’t want to compromise the amount of natural light here, so they fitted a Velux roof window to →

Issues with Existing Space

- Poor light – the kitchen, dining and living rooms were dark and unwelcoming.
- The separate dining and living rooms were under-utilised and disconnected from the kitchen.
- Ground floor utility room was dark and had no direct access to outdoors.
- Ground floor WC was dark and small.

Architect’s Brief

- Extend the rear of the house to create one large open-planned ‘living’ space, incorporating the existing kitchen and dining rooms only; the ‘living room’ to be retained as a more formal or private space.
- Capture the path of the sun and flood the new integrated living space with natural light.
- Connect the rear garden and provide a separate door from the utility room for accessing the washing line and bins.
- Extend and convert the ground floor WC into a user-friendly shower room.
- All work to fall within Exempted Development.



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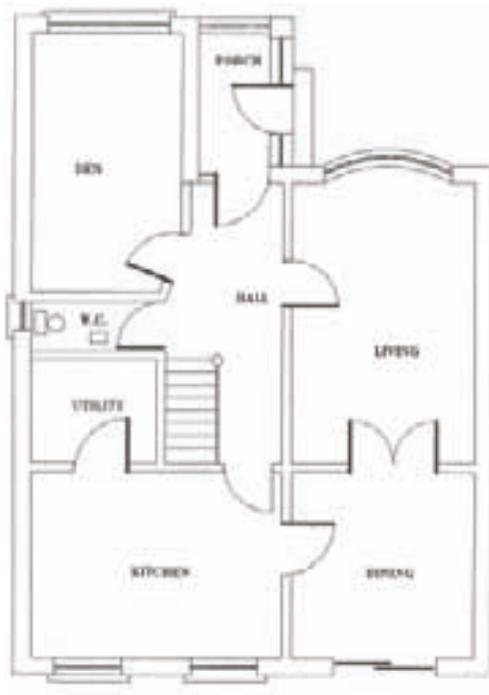
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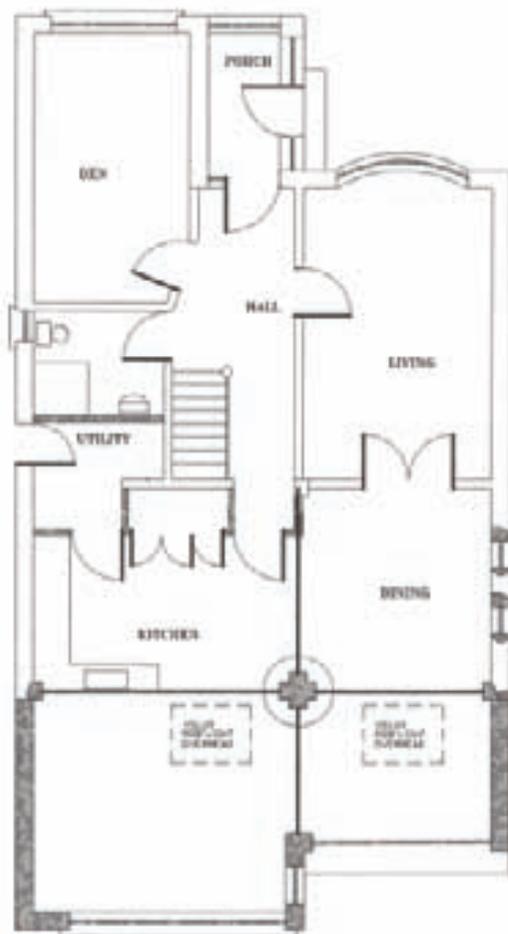
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Above: Existing ground floor plan



Right: New ground floor plan showing extension

offset any loss. They had also toyed with the idea of designing one wall of the extension as a full length sliding glass wall, but discarded this when they considered the impact it would have on the placement of furniture. “We didn’t want to waste any space,” says Pat, “and if the entire wall was a door, we would have to keep it free from furniture in order to access the garden. Our main priority was to create a bright, practical living-cooking space, and we could do this with more flexibility using French doors”.

In an open planned layout you need to consider noise and clutter from general household chores, like laundry, which can be unattractive when guests are visiting. For this reason, the utility room was deemed essential, but modified to include direct access to the side of the house where the bins and washing line are located. Previously, access was through two rooms, the main kitchen and dining room, which was impractical and not conducive to entertaining guests. Another issue was the general size of the utility room, which could be smaller following the extension of the kitchen. This incited a move of the boundary wall, enabling the conversion of the adjacent WC into a modern shower room. The access doors to the middle of the house remained unchanged, leaving a formal living room and casual den as places to retreat. →



Pat and Connie wanted the new space to reflect their lifestyle choices, so their thoughts quickly turned to specifying materials that would enhance their standard of living. Practical considerations included space heating, accessing the higher panes of glass for cleaning and the general layout of the kitchen. Being a plumbing and heating engineer, Pat wanted to lay Underfloor Heating, but had to reconsider the extent of this. “Laying it throughout the entire space would have meant digging up the existing floors, which could have been messy and not really essential to heat the space. So I decided to upgrade the existing gas boiler, fit long tall radiators to the central pillar, which kept surrounding walls free for furniture, and lay Underfloor heating in the extension part only. We then zoned the whole area so

Above and right: The contrasting tones and styles, together with the custom-made doors and units, give the new living space an air of distinction.

Below: The central pillar conceals essential plumbing pipes, while the recessed shelves visually transform it into an architectural feature.

energy wasn’t wasted.” Combined with high levels of roof and wall insulation, Connie’s decision to fit the highest U-value glazing, meant comfort would be optimal. The new window frames contributed to this also, with white uPVC fitted inside to complement the décor and timber effect used externally to complement frames already there. Connie also opted for a ‘self-cleaning’ coating on the glazing, which works in tandem with rain to disintegrate dirt and wash it away; and instead of standard roof windows, she specified Velux Integra, which is an automated system that can be programmed to open/close depending on the weather. It’s also touch sensitive, which means it automatically closes when it rains!

Pat and Connie were investing heavily in creating their perfect space so they didn’t

want any element to compromise their efforts. This even extended to the design and position of the RSJ (structural support beam) which supports upper floors when internal walls are removed. They can be invasive with a drop of around 300mm to 400mm, so Pat’s solution was to push it up so the joists ran into it rather than on top of it. This decision provided the best use of space and gave Connie the right foundation upon which to design her kitchen. Rather than purchasing an ‘off the shelf’ model from a showroom, Connie worked with Ciaran on sourcing carcasses, selecting timber to hand-craft the doors and of course, find the right piece of granite which would tie everything together. “We didn’t go out to plan something unusual,” recalls Pat, “it just happened to be the way things unfolded when Connie was addressing the best use of light and space”.

Sadly, Connie passed away last year following a sudden illness, but her legacy is this family-centred living space, which successfully merges contrasting elements such as old and new, comfort and style, modern and traditional – all as she had planned. On the cabinet doors, walnut and ash are used side by side to embrace existing furniture and introduce a contemporary element, which Ciaran further enhanced with hand-crafted internal doors from solid walnut. He also transformed the central pillar, which was necessary to conceal pipes and wires from the first floor bathroom, into an architectural feature with recessed shelving. The exquisite granite worktops from Caffrey Natural Stone help neutralise the contrasting tones with its speckled effect, while the island’s two tiered countertop provides a comfortable seating area for young and old. The island is also fully equipped with mod cons, including pop up sockets, a dual sink and a highly efficient water purification system, which improves the taste and overall quality of water by removing impurities such as lead, chlorine and dissolved salt. “Connie and I couldn’t see ourselves or her elderly mother clambering onto fancy high backed chairs around an island so her solution was perfect. It mightn’t be to everyone’s taste, but that wasn’t the objective,” says Pat.

Brushed aluminium downlighters and wall switches continue the contemporary feel, alongside Neff and De Dietrich appliances, which convey a message of quality and care. The entire floor was given a superior finish with Italian porcelain tiles, which visually open up the expanse of the area and beautifully contrast the dark timber decking that is visible beyond the French doors. The result is a seamless negotiation between inside and outside. The couple’s decision to use frosted vinyl on the new internal doors also managed the view from outside.

When everything has the potential to be



ARCHITECT'S PERSPECTIVE

"Some home owners feel they can't afford the design element of an extension and instead move forward with stick-on rooms that interfere with the functionality of their home. Pat and Connie's motivation to capture natural light gave me scope to design a space that would not only add value to their lives, but to their property as well. Spending 'time' discussing their ideas, assessing how they live and mapping the orientation of light around the existing space meant the final design, structure and size of the extension would enhance their living space, not just give them more of it. Whilst glazing was important for maximising solar gain, it was the location, angle, and dimension of windows and doors that ultimately fulfilled the brief. They weren't looking for something stylish or modern; they simply wanted an improved home that would enhance their lifestyle and give them pleasure to be in. Being actively involved in the project allowed them to achieve this and more..." **Joe Fallon**

exposed, as in an open-planned layout, storage becomes an important consideration.

Integrated appliances, space-saving larders and even wall and ceiling speakers, which Pat had networked into the extension, play their part in creating a clutter-free zone.

Connie was a keen gardener and wanted to enjoy the experience from inside too. The fully glazed panels facilitated this, so it was important that both the interior and exterior didn't disappoint the eye! "Building the extension meant we lost half the rear garden, which Connie had spent a long time growing up," explains Pat, "so what was left was muddy and unattractive." Connie thought paths and hardscaping looked too industrial so to achieve a picturesque view from inside the house, the couple planted

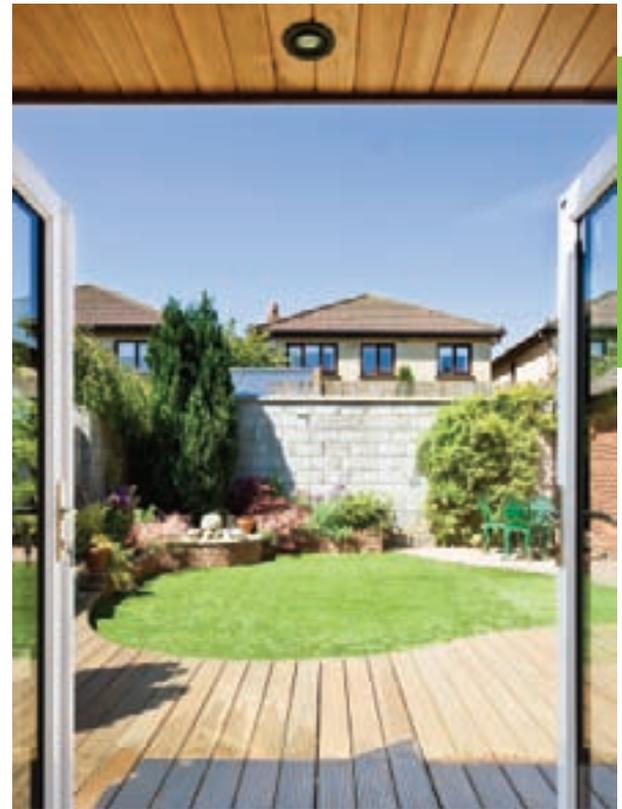
PAT'S ADVICE

"When renovating a family home, I believe time and effort adds value. It's Important to get it right first time than spend twice as much fixing it later on. By keeping the project in the family and doing a lot of the work ourselves, I'm sure we saved money, so this allowed us to indulge in other things that maybe we couldn't have afforded."

shrubs and flowers in existing beds, laid a large chocolate coloured decking area and a synthetic lawn instead of sown grass. "This meant the garden was practical, functional and manageable year round; and looked great from inside and out," says Pat. The existing shed was screened off, downlighters fitted to the extra wide fascia and LEDs recessed into the decking and internal flooring area around the glazing. This provided ambience at night.

"The exterior of the extension was originally designed to be Knapp plaster, but Connie and I wanted something warmer. We'd seen Cedar cladding used on Joe's house and thought it would work well with the scheme Connie was developing inside the house. It was more expensive than plaster but the result is far superior." If Canadian Red Cedar is left to age, it can turn almost black/grey in colour, so Pat soaked the timber in oil to enhance the warm tones. He admits he will have to do this periodically if the warmth is to be maintained.

Pat and Connie's perception of a better living space focused primarily on maximising natural light. From this developed a better use of space, inside and out, improved functionality and a more welcoming environment for their family. They didn't want to confine themselves or the design with a budget; and were lucky to have their son as the builder to make sure they received the best value for everything specified. Had the project been tendered to an external source, it might have been completed within four months. However, Pat feels they wouldn't have received the quality, attention to detail or satisfactory pride that comes with doing the work yourself. "Even my daughter stepped in to help me lay the Underfloor



Above: Synthetic grass provides a maintenance-free lawn!
www.sanctuarysynthetics.ie

heating on the day the screed arrived for the floor," says Pat. They lived in the house throughout the project which was messy he admits, but it gave them the opportunity to respond to issues instantly, not that there were many; and of course, enjoy the comforts of home, which was the motivation for carrying out the improvements in the first place. Everyone in the family played their part in the project, and although Connie is no longer with the family, her spirit is very much alive in the family home. ■

SourceBook

Architect

Joe Fallon Design, (0)1 450 5471 or (0)87 256 6808, www.joefallon.com.

Joe offers a free consultation with a follow up design package costing €1800 (incl. design drawings and a qualified engineer to sign-off each stage.) Complimentary landscape design is also offered.

Trades:

Construction & Carpentry

Harvey Wallbanger C&C, (0)85 72 18540, harveyire@gmail.com

Plumbing & Heating

Pat Harvey, (0)87 225 0639

Electrician

Michael Fallon Electrical, (0)87 8348160, abbeyelec@eircom.net.

Kitchen

Units from H-Line Kitchens, Dublin 11, (0)1 8110894; Ash Shaker & Walnut Flush Doors from Collier Kitchen Supplies, Dublin 11, (0)1 8423555. Fittings & Accessories from Frank Flanagan Fittings, Dublin (0)1 844 8400. Granite Worktop Caffrey Stone in Drogheda, (0)41 9831805, www.caffreystone.com

Glazing

Fairco Windows & Doors, (0)1 833 9143, www.fairco.ie

Grass

Sanctuary Synthetics, Naas, (0)45 895233

Decking

Noyeks Newman, (0)1 844 3500

Photography

Gareth Byrne, www.garethbyrne.com

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