

A modern makeover

Couple's honeymoon plan ensured they married the old with new... in fine style, writes **Tommy Barker**

Pictures: **Denis Scannell**



The dream scheme: This fully modernised house shows the versatility of a large integrated living space.



The rear elevation of extension showing integration with deck and garden.

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FINOLA and builder-husband Kieran McCarthy planned their own home extension with rose-tinted glasses — on their honeymoon. Glad to report, the vision for their 200-year old suburban home was safely delivered, and is now home to their young, growing family.

Their original home was a compact 900 sq ft terraced cottage in one of Cork City's lovely old suburban lanes. Now, after a recent investment, it's doubled in size to 1,800 sq ft, and has also correspondingly zoomed up the style stakes.

It's now a decent-sized three-bedroomed home, with two-storey extension to the rear built in timber-frame (primarily because all materials had to come through the mid-terraced house) and the back half of the ground floor is that much-vaunted, and family-friendly, informal open plan kitchen/living/dining space, opening to garden and decking.

Along the way, the entire original dwelling got tweaked and twisted, with front door and stairs moved to the side to make for a larger front room, while old features, such as the chimney, old stone walls and deep window recesses were kept and enhanced to keep the place 'grounded' in its roots, despite lots of other wall knocking. The end result is a bit of Tardis, the house opens out and grows, and grows, completely unexpectedly from its modest-seeming front elevation.

Although a civil engineer by training, and now a builder by profession with his own company, KMC Elevation, active in the house-building sectors, Kieran admits "a project such as this is very difficult to price. The most

essential ingredient here is adequate contingency provision and constant budget management".

Managing risk and getting costs and values right is part of what Kieran does for his daily crust as, in recent years, he's become a big fan of the 'design-and-build' ethos, where aspiring homeowners buy into a full package to ensure a cost-assured end result.

Popular in the likes of New Zealand, design-and-build works as a sort of one-stop shop where budget is agreed first and foremost with a builder who buys into the ethos, and they then work with the client and designer/architect/surveyor to a fixed-cost design.

"We're pricing as the architect is drawing," says Kieran, who's based on Monahan Road and has worked with some of the city's top architects in this manner.

He brings in a quantity surveyor at the start, building in contingency along the way, and the 'concept to completion' process includes all design (including applying for planning permission) project management and build services (see www.kmcelevation.com).

This method of working back from price/budget cuts out a number of steps along the way and avoids situations where various interested parties can have competing interests, financial and otherwise. It can also cut 40% off a project's timeline, eg on the tendering process.

It means the contractor — such as KMC Elevation — takes ultimate responsibility and risk, while the client gets price certainty. Clearly, though, it depends on a significant element of trust between a quality builder and a client. ■



Above: The old stone walls of the house are shown in certain areas while below, a clever corner TV unit made by Kieran McCarthy includes a grille for the concealing the digital box.



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