



Peckham Glass Box

Peckham, London

Architect : Unagru Architecture Urbanism
Structural Engineer : VARA Consulting Engineers
Contractor : Custom Property Improvements Ltd
Photographer : Attilio Fiumarella

Completion Year : 2018
Area : 70 sqm
Budget : < £100,000

Peckham Glass Box is a contemporary extension of a Victorian terrace home, located in London, UK. Our client needed to extend their home to make room for their young family, by adding a side and rear extension it offered the additional living space they needed on the ground floor. We introduced glazing to make the interior as bright as possible, as this was a key issue with the existing house. With low ceilings the property felt dark and claustrophobic, bringing light into the home was a critic aspect of the design.

The Backstory

Unagru were approached by Tom and Helen to help with the remodelling and expansion of their Victorian terrace house in Peckham, London. Although the existing house was very well presented the family were starting to outgrow it, especially since to arrival of their second child. As the family they did not want to move, so they were keen to look into ways to improve their existing home to meet their changing needs.

The two main aspects the client wanted to resolve were to add additional living space to the house, and to transform the kitchen into a spacious, open plan room, flooded with natural daylight. The placement of the existing kitchen was located in the centre of the house and was blocked by the utility room from natural daylight, making it dark and uninviting and isolated from the rest of the house.

Our plan added a side and rear extension, with a large glazed 'box' off the rear elevation, designed as a frameless glass box, to achieve maximum brightness. This created space to reimagine the home, opening up the rear of the house to deliver the much-desired spacious kitchen at the centre of the house.

To draw the much-needed daylight into the home there we introduced the full glazed rear elevation, additionally a large skylight runs the full length of the side return which brings the light into the centre of the home. These interventions have transformed the house, delivering the bright living space the clients desired.

The clients were also keen to include a play area for their young children within the living space, so they could easily watch them whilst cooking, so we creatively brought this element into the extension by creating a playroom zone within the 'glass box' overlooking the garden, with much needed bespoke storage that doubles as a large window seat.

The Project

In our designs the ceiling height line become a predominant element. We wished to preserve the original design features of the home, for aesthetic reasons as well as the financial impact on the design. Additionally we felt the ceiling height offered a continuity of perspective, in order to widen the perception of the space.

The side extension takes the home up to the party wall, transforming the once dank, underused outside space into an internal, open plan dining area for the family to enjoy. A large skylight runs the length of the new space, drawing light in this area and a contemporary kitchen has been located at the heart of the house, enjoying the views of the garden and connection to the dining and rear living spaces.

Mirrors and changes in the floor finishes give the illusion of a courtyard between the old and new spaces. Through careful positioning of full-length mirrors on the party wall, the rear garden's green and light are reflected into the rest of the home. This increases the brightness and colour, also it creates an effect of otherness.

The rear extension is designed as a contemporary, frameless glass box, this achieves maximum brightness and connectivity with the garden. The space has been completed with bespoke, low level, window seats following the line of the box. This offers a place to sit and enjoy the space, it also is designed as additional storage which is essential for a young family.

The side extension takes the home up to the party wall, transforming the once dark, underused outside space into an internal open plan dining area for the family to enjoy, with a large skylight overhead. The rear extension is designed as a contemporary, frameless glass box, achieving maximum brightness and connectivity with the garden. The space has been completed with bespoke, low level, window seats following the line of the box. This offers a place to sit and enjoy the space, it also is designed as additional storage which is essential for a young family.

Challenges

The rear of the home is now a large open plan space, with a large contemporary kitchen at the heart of it. The distinctive, bespoke, blue kitchen has a large island unit positioned to enjoy the views across to the garden and connect with the living space. The side extension has been created as the dining zone, with a large family table positioned adjacent to the kitchen.

One of the main constraints with the original space was the low ceiling height, making the space feel oppressive. We looked into how we might be able to solve this in an easy and cost effective way. We initially had hoped to be able to lower the floor level, but after investigating the existing foundations they were found to be too shallow, which did not allow for the extra headroom without a very expensive and time-consuming challenge in structural design. We resolved the issue through careful redesigning, expressing the consistency of the ceiling level by extending it through to the garden to visually incorporate the outside into the living space, giving the interior the open feeling the clients were after.

Through careful negotiation with the neighbour we were able to gain a few, valuable centimetres to the width of the extension. This was achieved by pushing the party wall onto the property boundary, with the neighbour's consent, this amendment to the design gained extra width for the large skylight, crucially drawing more light internally.

With the existing ceiling level we were able to enhance the feeling of space through simplicity in the design, opted for pale interior colours, avoiding the use of spotlights (except in the kitchen zone) and aligning the ceiling line to the glazing and the garden. These simple design changes have created a warmth to the home, enhanced by the natural texture of timber flooring under the sunlight.

Our last concern with the layout of the extension was the distance between the kitchen and garden, with the playroom / sitting room placed at the rear of the property it could create a barrier if designed badly. Through the open plan design, large glazing to the rear, large skylights above, it has brought the much needed visual connectivity between the kitchen and the sky and outside.

Design Resolution

The project did slightly overrun in time, but due to the good relationship between client and contractor an agreement was met to cover an additional month rent, which the client gladly accepted after seeing the quality of work, the wait was well worth it for the end result.

Whilst onsite the clients arranged for the contractor to do additional works in the house, including a refurbishment of the bathroom, two bedrooms and creating bespoke storage solutions.

In the end, even though the project had lasted slightly longer than we had hoped for and some areas had needed additional work, the completed project is a huge success and most importantly the clients are extremely happy with the result.

The glass box extension is now the heart of the home and the centre for the life of the family, allowing the parents to cook, chat and eat while the children can play in the brightest area of the house.

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