

BLENDING *old &* new

Discover how combining traditional architecture with contemporary updates can enhance the character of your home *Words Beth Murton*

Whether you're planning to redesign a period property, add a modern extension to a traditional house or restore original features to boost your home's character, successfully mixing old and new designs can be a difficult balancing act. Get it right, however, and you can create a unique space that embraces modern living while also respecting the building's historic roots.

Decorative ceiling roses, cornicing, panelling and original fireplaces are some of the most sought-after features within a period home and they can make a dramatic backdrop to more modern updates, such as contemporary furnishings, pendant lights or bold colour schemes. If these architectural features have been removed or are damaged, look at reinstating them with salvaged items or bespoke reproductions. If any pieces of the plasterwork details are intact, a specialist restoration company will be able to take a mould of the original and use this to create an exact replica. Take a look at companies such as Locker & Riley (01245 322 022; lockerandriley.com), which operates →

« Go for modern glazing

When Cousins & Cousins architects (020 7482 4009; cousinsandcousins.com) was asked to design an extension to this Victorian house in Hackney, London, the firm wanted to show that modern architecture can work in harmony with traditional housing. Elements from the original property, such as bricks from the demolition process and the former bathroom window, have been reused, maintaining the character of the house. On the ground floor, a large frameless window gives this two-storey design a contemporary edge. The project cost £150,000.

Open up spaces

Altering the layout of a period home to create a more open-plan feel that is better suited to modern living is often a key part of a renovation process. A good example is this whole house renovation of a five-storey, early Victorian home in west London by Stiff + Trevillion Architects (020 8960 5550; stiffandtrevillion.com). A new opening between the two principal rooms on the ground floor is fitted with glazed internal doors designed to replicate the style and configuration of the external ones at the rear of the space. This is a replica of the original design and cost around £7,000.



Kilian O'Sullivan; David Vintner

Sympathetic facelift

Lipton Plant Architects (020 7288 1333; lparchitects.co.uk) redesigned the layout of this Victorian mews house to create a more efficient use of space, demolishing the interior of the building and retaining only the facade. The London stock bricks were restored and repointed, bespoke sash windows replicate the originals, and new lead flashing and Welsh roof slates mimic the period style. The £400,000 project has created a modern building that maintains a strong connection to its past.



throughout the UK, or L Grandison & Son (01721 720 212; lgrandisonandson.co.uk) based in Scotland and the north of England.

While it's easy to see the appeal of these period features, when combined with more traditional room layouts featuring a series of small spaces, the overall effect can be at odds with the desire for flexible, open-plan living. Finding successful ways to expand the space without stripping away the character is therefore key if your aim is

to maintain a sense of the property's original style. When creating new openings between ground-floor spaces, for example, consider installing traditional-looking glazed doors or go more modern with a sleek pocket door system – try Eclipse (01476 565 497; eclipse.co.uk). Each solution will ensure the redesigned layout maintains a sense of its original configuration.

Adding extra space presents an opportunity to fuse elements of the old →

MUST VISIT

Salvage yards

Source period fixtures from one of these top suppliers

» Wells Reclamation Go here for: Stone and interior fittings

The family-run site in Somerset has a huge stone yard, plus an indoor emporium of period goodies. (01749 677 087; wellsreclamation.com)

» Beeston Reclamation Go here for: A one-stop-shop

This extensive yard in Cheshire is a veritable treasure trove, with lorry loads of new items arriving daily. It has more than a million bricks in stock, plus a huge catalogue of architectural items. (01829 260 299; beestonreclamation.co.uk)

» Cox's Yard

Go here for:

Unique interior pieces

Based in Moreton-in-Marsh, this established centre specialises in reclaiming and re-using timber joists and beams to make doors, tables and storage units. (01608 652 505; coxsarchitectural.co.uk)

» Yew Tree Barn

Go here for: Bespoke creations

Set in a massive nineteenth-century farm building, Yew Tree Barn combines reclamation with artisan studios, including an on-site blacksmith. (01539 531 498; yewtreebarn.co.uk)

» Lassco

Go here for: A great day out

You could spend hours in any of Lassco's three yards (two in London – Ropewalk is pictured below – and one in Oxfordshire). You'll find everything from the sublime to the ridiculous, plus each venue has an on-site restaurant. (lassco.co.uk)





Retain existing character

Simon Whitehead Architects (020 7183 1063; simonwhitehead.com) integrated some of the key existing features into this new addition to a Victorian semi-detached home in London. The timber French doors that previously led out to the garden now connect the kitchen-diner to the more formal living areas at the front of the property. The London stock brick walls have been left exposed, while glazed sections in the roof link the extension and the house. The project cost £130,000, including fees and interior fit out.

building with contemporary designs. Think about the combination of materials that will be used, such as an extension built with reclaimed bricks, but fitted with modern frameless glazing, or one separated from the original building by a band of structural glass, clearly marking the junction between old and new.

Externally, a traditional facade can provide a striking contrast to an updated modern living space hidden from view behind the front door. Renovating traditional windows or installing reproduction designs, such as elegant timber sash windows with decorative glazing bars, can be one of the best solutions for reinstating a property's character, particularly if the originals have been replaced with inappropriate uPVC versions. Specialist companies such as The Sash Window Workshop (01344 868 668; sashwindow.com) or Ventrolla (0800 378 278; ventrolla.co.uk) can repair original windows or make new bespoke timber →



William Ecksley; Anna Slatford

« Choose bold colour

A great option for updating a traditional staircase, this project by interior designer French Stef (07525 369 603; frenchstef.com) shows how the use of colour and pattern can draw attention to the main feature of the space. As the staircase had to be moved to improve the layout of the detached Victorian property, it was replaced with a new oak design that replicates the style of the original with traditional spindles and balustrades. Painted in railings by Farrow & Ball and set against handmade encaustic tiles from Spain in the hallway, it's now a striking centrepiece. The new staircase, which stretches from the basement up to the second floor, cost around £14,000.

Recreate decorative details >>

When amalgamating this ground- and first-floor flat, Stephen Fletcher Architects (020 7637 1244; stephen-fletcher.co.uk) used a specialist company to replicate the elaborate plasterwork, such as the ceiling roses and cornicing. The sleek kitchen units built into the alcoves either side of the fireplace have been designed to blend into the background, allowing the proportions and character of the room to shine. Part of a large-scale renovation, this project cost £350,000, including the interior fit out (excluding fees and VAT).



replacements to replicate the period styling of the property's original frames.

Although different in both style and scale, the common element to the projects featured here is that they ingeniously combine old and new, clearly demonstrating that the two can work in harmony to create a strong sense of style and identity. Rather than fighting against the possible limitations of the original buildings, the architects and designers have embraced the traditional architecture, materials and features, injecting new life and character to these homes. **GD**

<< Mimic period style

This semi-detached house built in the Twenties Modernist fashion displayed none of the art deco details that are usually so prevalent on similar properties in this part of Twickenham in London. To enhance its character, 3s Architects and Designers (020 8332 9966; 3s-ad.com) remodelled both the interior and exterior, creating a series of contemporary spaces behind the updated facade. New deco-style windows and a crisp white-rendered finish combine with the curved lines of the loft dormer and rear extension to give this previously ordinary-looking home an injection of character. The project cost £350,000, excluding fees.

Bruce Hemming; Alastair Nicholl