



ON THE WING

Fluid curves create a bold link between house and sea-view in this extension

THE big idea

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The keen gardeners who own this Torquay property wanted to create an extension that would engage their house with the garden. Set on a sloping site in a natural amphitheatre facing the sea, their Arts & Crafts home had a collection of ad hoc extensions at the rear and a lower floor with inadequate head height. Knowing they wanted something with vim and vigour, they approached local practice Stan Bolt Architect.

“The owners wanted to extend their first-floor living space and create an independent lower annex as a home for their parents,” says Nick Elkins, the project architect. “But we knew that the view was key to the scheme. We had the idea of creating a shard roof that had a vanishing point on it, leading the eye out into the centre of the bay – and the bird’s wing shape does just that.”

As well as creating more space, the extension had to work from several perspectives, framing the views from inside as well as looking good from the garden. The new lower-ground-floor annex is of masonry construction, topped with ring beams that anchor it to the building, above which sits a large terrace with the kitchen/living room extension. But it is the roof that defines this project,

sweeping up and over the glass box living space, linking the annex to the room it enfolds.

“The concept is almost a design of two halves,” says Nick, “as the annex has a sober, almost introverted aesthetic, topped by the sophisticated first floor in glass and timber. The whole thing is crowned by the compound curve of the roof, which swoops up and out to sea.

“It didn’t feel right to just float the roof on top of the glazed box, so we decided to curve it down to connect with the roof of the annex, to link the two elements.”

One key aspect of this project is the empathy with which Nick has treated the existing building, keeping the original Arts & Crafts villa in tact as far as possible.

“When extending an older building it’s important to respect the original structure. These days there’s a lot of emphasis on ‘light-weight’ construction that doesn’t damage or undermine the original fabric; this is very important to our practice,” he says. The extension achieves this remarkably well, as despite its size it has a lightness to it that ensures it feels secondary to the original house.

The bird’s wing was challenging to build and was completely put together by the contractor. Fabricated in timber, it features

handmade laminated beams bonded with glue specified by the engineers. The roof is sheathed in three layers of 6mm plywood, laid diagonally for strength, and is clad with Tecu Gold, an alloy of copper and zinc that will retain its colour for the duration of its life. The gold finish gives an arresting look to the finished extension.

Most incredible of all, the project went through planning without any problems, from submission to approval in six weeks and with no opposition. And while the owners love the finished extension, there have been some mixed emotions locally, although most people enthuse about it. “But it’s good to have a rich dialogue about architecture,” says Nick, “and we’re keen to promote this. We design quality buildings that will outlive us, and it’s important to leave this legacy for future generations.” ●

top tips to take away

- If you are extending a building, respect its design and the methods and materials with which it was built
- Consider innovative materials and shapes. Open the dialogue early with the planning office to see if they are responsive to contemporary design
- An extension needs to look good from the outside as well as the inside