



Left: In this extension, a 37m² garden room extension is a modern take on the Arts & Crafts aesthetic seen in the main property, drawing on natural materials yet incorporating smart home lighting and automated blinds. Pockets of space are characteristic of this period and repeated in the design; the kitchen is now at the heart of the Edinburgh home. The project is by Oliver Chapman Architects and cost around £137,000

SINGLE STOREY EXTENSIONS

Looking for ideas for a stylish ground floor extension? Jane Crittenden sets out what you need to know at the planning phase, and picks out some stunning designs to inspire your project

Adding a single storey extension is a great way to bring more space and value to your home. It might even be more cost effective than moving to a bigger property! Over the next couple of pages I'm exploring where to start if you're planning a home extension, so you're armed with the right info to get going.

Navigating the permissions

In the main, building a single storey rear extension comes under what's known as permitted development (PD) rights, meaning you can proceed without applying to your council for formal planning permission. Broadly speaking, owners of semi-detached and terraced houses in the UK can extend by 3m, and on detached houses by 4m.

There are some sensible caveats to these rules, however. The new space can't be more than half the size of your land, nor be higher than 4m. If within 2m of the boundary, the eaves cannot be higher than 3m. In the case of a side extension, the size must not be more than half the width of the house, nor be over 4m. Planning permission is needed for a wraparound or front extension.

In England, it's possible to go bigger within PD rules (up to 8m for detached houses and 6m for others) but this is considered a 'Larger Home Extension' and requires Prior Approval from the council. This limited process aims to assess the impact on your neighbours. Also, if the work is near to your neighbour's boundary or along walls you share, you'll need to comply with the Party Wall Act.

Planning permission is needed if you live in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a conservation area, or your home is listed. More information is available on the government's Planning Portal (www.planningportal.co.uk).

It's worth noting, if a project pushes the boundaries in terms of size, design or materials and you're unsure if it counts under PD rights, then you can apply for a lawful development certificate. This gives you the assurance that the project is allowed to go ahead without planning.

Although you can pretty much start building straightaway under PD, make sure you've notified the local council's building control department that work is about to begin. The project will then be inspected at key stages.

Planning your project

The budget, size and your design expectations will all work to determine whether you sketch out a simple plan for a draughtsperson to turn into buildable drawings, or if you decide to invest in the design. Options are to use an architect or architectural designer; alternatively, you can go to a building company with an in-house team of experts.

In all situations, you'll get the best bang for your buck if you spend time working out what you want from your new extension, first. What is your home lacking? What needs improving? How will you use the space? The project might be about bringing in more light, having a bigger kitchen, a better connection with the garden, an open-plan family room, a downstairs toilet, a utility – or all of the above.

Above: The extension on this renovated Surrey bungalow was drawn up by Paul Archer Design, with a 14.5m main steel beam running across the full width to create an uninterrupted space with an expanse of glazing. An internal sliding door separates the front living room with the option to increase the area for entertaining. Including the extension and a whole-house renovation, the total project cost was £390,000

FIND A GOOD BUILDER

Decide if you're going to employ a main contractor (or builder) with a team of subbies, or if you're going to source trades yourself. Once you have a design you're happy with, and you've made decisions about the specification of the project (for example, doors from a DIY shop are likely to be cheaper than those from a specialist supplier), then this is the time to put your project out to tender, which is the process of getting quotes.

So how do you find a reputable builder? The best way is word of mouth – family, friends, neighbours. Look at projects similar in design and materials to your own so you know the contractor has the right experience, and go and see their work. Take care to pay attention to the details as well as the overall structure – a flawless finish is what you want to be living with once the project is done. Ask your contacts about their relationship with the builder and trades, too, as it's wise to work with good organisers and communicators with whom you feel comfortable asking questions, no matter how trivial.

If your architect or designer is local to your project, they are likely to have good contacts. The Federation of Master Builders has an online search tool (www.fmb.org.uk) or take a look at reviews on Checkatrade (www.checkatrade.com). In every case, make sure you've spoken to their customers and checked out their work to be sure they're a bona fide builder.

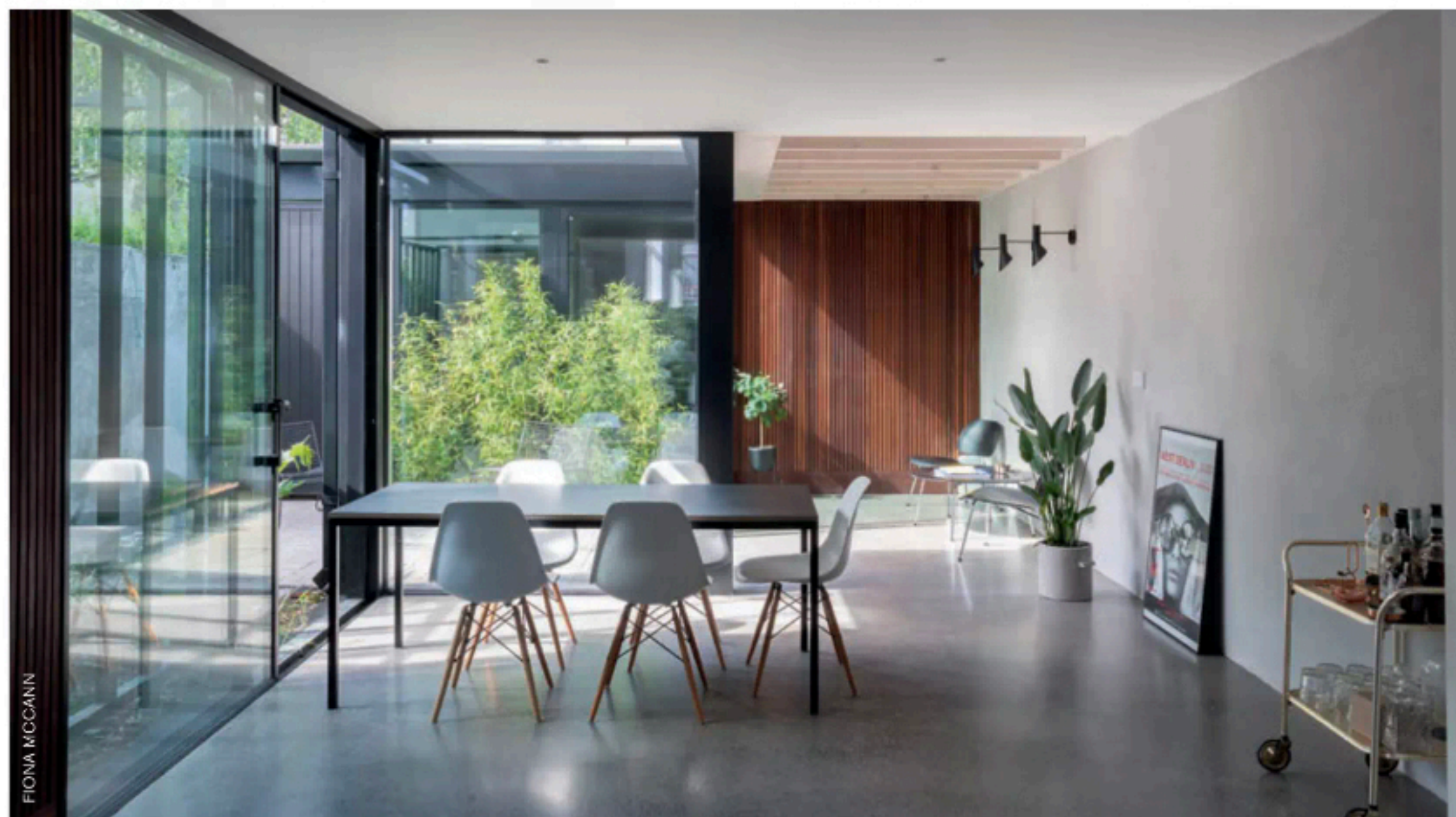


Above: Steps into a lounge in this London rear extension separate the relaxing area from the busy kitchen-diner. The corner window has a double aspect outlook and the pitched roof adds volume, plus rooflights. The 25m² project is by Granit Architecture + Interiors



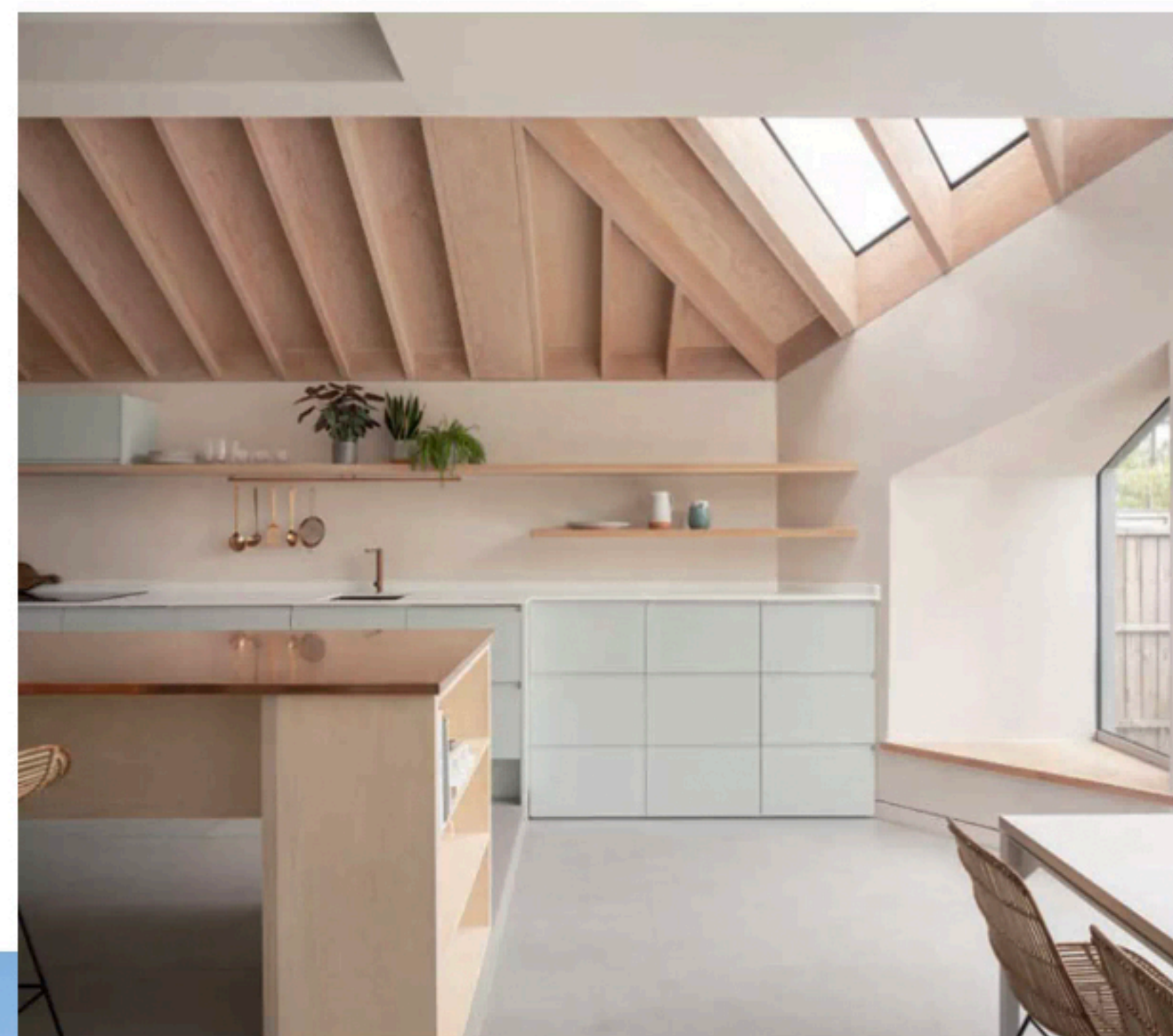
A common approach is to extend a narrow Victorian semi and widen the rear by making use of the (often) redundant side return. In some properties, knocking through an existing kitchen diner and extending beyond creates plentiful downstairs living space – even smaller projects are transformative. An extension can also link two buildings together – a farmhouse with a converted outbuilding, for example. As for the roof, an apex shape creates volume and the opportunity for high level gable end glazing, while a flat roof protects the outlook from windows above.

Emma Perkin from Emil Eve Architects, says that maxing on size is not always the best solution. "We find stepped volumes produce much more characterful and usable spaces, as well as zoning and optimising daylight," she says. "It's not the quantity of space but the quality that counts."



Left: An extended ground floor in this Dublin Victorian terrace created a 5m-high kitchen ceiling with a connection to an enclosed sunken garden for a sense of tranquillity in the city location. An abundance of natural light comes through floor-to-ceiling sliding doors, too. The 125m² extension was part of a whole house renovation by Scullion Architects, totalling around €350,000

FIOMA MCCANN



STALE ERIKSEN

Below: This 50m² extension by Emil Eve Architects has created additional living space, plus a seamless connection between existing rooms and the outdoors. The project cost £208,000



Left: A listed house on the coast in Fife was reinvented by WT Architecture on its seaward side, connected to the courtyard and panoramic views by a pair of highly-glazed frameless extensions up close to the sea wall. The addition creates around 40m² of extra space and the use of copper embraces natural sea weathering



Above: The 14m² angular extension to this London Edwardian terrace was designed by Proctor & Shaw to protect privacy from neighbouring properties while maximising light. A high level window above sliding doors emphasises the sloping contours and improves views to the garden. Inside, stepped levels zone different parts of the room

function as well as aesthetics – a low pendant over the dining table, adjustable task lighting in the kitchen and lamps and dimmer switches in lounge areas. Decoration can help zoning, too, mixing floor types and picking a palette of materials that link areas together.

“Changing floor and ceiling levels breaks up a large space,” says Luke Butcher, director and co-founder of Butcher Bayley Architects. “Since Covid, privacy has become more important, shifting layouts from open plan to broken plan with the flexibility to close and open up areas with sliding walls and doors.”

Lead times for kitchens, utilities and cloakrooms could be longer than usual due to Brexit and Covid, so make sure to plan ahead. You’ll find good deals at places like Howdens, especially if you use a fitter who regularly buys their products as they’ll get a trade discount. Ikea is another affordable option, as is DIY Kitchens, who only sell online. Expect to pay £10,000 upwards for a kitchen.

Underfloor heating is a good option in a big open space but if you’re joining old and new parts together then use a low-profile, floating product, like Nu-Heat’s LoPro or Uponor’s Minitec that can be used across the whole room. In general, prices for underfloor heating cost in the range of £30-£90 per m² and perform best under tiles or engineered wood – just check the thickness. Otherwise, standard radiator prices start at £45.

Build costs

With the price of building materials rising due to shortages caused by the pandemic, Brexit and a surge in house



Above: This mid-terrace extension cost £110,000. BBA Architect’s design opened up a series of small rooms and formed a new open plan kitchen-diner with a window seat and garden views through oak frame glazing and doors

building projects, extension build costs have gone up by roughly 4% since the start of 2020. “Timber has doubled in price in the last 18 months but there are also local variations in material prices and labour,” says Andy Morrell from HBXL, which powers the Build It Estimating Service. “Price rises can be sudden – if a merchant has reached the end of a supply contract at favourable rates, for example. If this occurs between receiving quotes and getting the go ahead, a contractor might seek to recoup the difference through inflation clauses in a customer’s contract.”

Typically, a standard spec 20m² extension (brick and block, flat roof, PVCu windows) is likely to be around £1,950 per m², with a top-notch finish (aluminium, stonework, slate tiles) north of £3,120 per m².

Glazing & doors

Along with wanting more room, one of the main reasons homeowners extend is to bring more light into the home. However, there’s a delicate balance because spaces which previously had direct access to daylight become internal. “The human brain is more alert in natural light so build in options for overhead glazing as there’s more illumination per unit area than from a side window,” says Paul Archer from Paul Archer Design. “Align them with internal openings and position close to the original external wall.”

Bifold doors across the full width of the house give options to be completely or partially open, while larger sliding door panels don’t open as far but have less framework to obstruct the view. Structural glazing can be used to create floor-to-ceiling windows, entire roof

structures or, for the ultimate wow factor, be made into an entire glass room. However, Oliver Chapman, from Oliver Chapman Architects, says you don’t have to go to these extremes to achieve a similar effect. “It’s simpler and more affordable to use a well-made glazing system with ‘frameless’ aluminium or timber frames that have an ultra thin profile,” he says. “In a south-facing orientation it’s important to deal with shading and overheating, too.”

Layout & fit out

Often a rear extension creates new cooking, eating and relaxing areas that need to be zoned yet flow seamlessly into another and out to the garden, as well as tie into existing rooms – this is likely to mean budgeting for internal layout changes. Lighting is key and should be chosen for

Above: Welsh Oak Frame’s oak frame Roundel garden room complements the exposed beams in this listed home. Its curved shape offers 180° views of the garden and is a space that can be used all year around. An oak frame project like this will cost around £45,000-£75,000

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