



FOREIGN AFFAIRS

AI ARCHITECTS BROUGHT THEIR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND RESPECT FOR DUBLIN'S HERITAGE HOMES TO BEAR ON THE RENOVATION OF THIS CLASSIC LISTED HOUSE

Fact file

ARCHITECTS AI Architects
HOUSE TYPE A large semi-detached Victorian residence on Ailesbury Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4

SIZE BEFORE AND AFTER
Before 443 sq m After 555sq m

BUILD TIME 1 year

BUDGET €700,000

Extending an already large ambassador's residence comes with its own challenges, as well as rewards. The main goal for this impressive project, by Dublin's AI Architects, was to design a comfortable residence that would allow for the comfortable hosting of larger special events, as well as for informal meetings.



REAL HOMES

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In fact, there was more than one objective to achieve through this design. A full refurbishment of the imposing Victorian pile was called for, given that the building was in very bad condition since no comprehensive works had been carried out for more than three decades. Some internal alterations were also needed to improve the flow and internal layout. Most importantly, part of the residence had been used for many years as office space, and the client wished to reclaim this commercial space and convert it into comfortable residential accommodation.

Despite the already-substantial 443 sq m footprint, an extension was also required. The original layout could not be tweaked to accommodate larger cohesive living spaces, so an addition was required. An extra staircase was also called for, as well as a wheelchair accessible lift in order to meet modern day building requirements. This would connect the upper ground floor with the lower ground floor level.



REAL HOMES



The client also requested a full upgrade of the house, to include a smart home system, integrated with security systems. Finally, a new landscape design was created to maximise the grounds of this beautiful Dublin 4 site.

The main challenge was caused by the ultimate, oft-dreaded stumbling block: the property was a protected structure. "As foreign-born architects, we were particularly conscious of the historical value of the house and wanted to preserve as much of its original features as possible," says Wojciech Kordyl of AI architects. "With the help of our conservation consultant, a detailed conservation methodology was prepared. Dublin City Council was also a great help in meeting with us to discuss the project."

The key design method involved renovating the existing house (with the small alterations necessary to accommodate the new layout) and to build a modern extension around it, with two storeys to the side, and a single storey to the rear. It was imperative not to excessively interfere with the existing walls and structure of the house.

The original features of the house were retained. The unusual cast-iron external staircase was renovated and kept in the same position, and in this way, became a pleasing feature as part of the interior of the new extension.



Another big challenge with an old, and listed, building, was how to marry its fabric with the requirements of modern technologies. An intelligent home system and all of its relevant wiring and cabling, had to be integrated without damaging the protected structure. This was achieved by locating almost all of the components of this new system within the fabric of the new extension.

Finally, certain works on the building had to be carried out using the same methods that the original builders would have applied back in the 19th Century. This was despite the fact that the large-span

new extension included plenty of non-standard details and modern solutions.

Research proved to be key for AI Architects. The team consulted with every expert they could find, they pored over specialist publications and liaised with several special consultants.

"In our opinion, this extension and renovation was successful because of the way in which the modern extension has been integrated with the protected structure. All of our clients goals were achieved, and we've received some great feedback from our clients' guests."

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