

THE GOOD PEOPLE OF BLACKROCK-BASED STERRIN O'SHEA ARCHITECTS DIDN'T HAVE TO TRAVEL TOO FAR FOR THEIR LATEST PROJECT – A MAGNIFICENT EXTENSION OF A CLONSKEAGH HOME WHICH IS NOW BURSTING WITH LIGHT.



WORDS Select Interiors  
PHOTOS Marie-Louise Halpenny

# LIGHT FANTASTIC



With the dark evenings of winter now behind us we live each day in hope of rising temperatures and brilliant sunlight. A room never really shows its potential until bathed in light and having denied ourselves the pleasure of open-plan design for generations – believing such ambition was maybe best kept for warmer climates – the past decade has seen a pleasant trend develop towards the Irish embracing the possibilities of natural light, and creating both architecture and interiors around it.

*Select* recently clapped eyes on a jaw-dropping example of this genre in one of south Dublin's most pleasant patches of suburbia, Clonskeagh. There, Sterrin O'Shea Architects (SOSA) had been engaged by a client to create a home-extension that would reinvigorate what was a fine house to



[Above]  
The kitchen was designed by SOSA  
and made by Langrell Kitchens

begin with, but one that needed to be dragged into a new era. Here, Sterrin O'Shea brings us through what she and her team did in order to create this superior structural revival of a family home.

"The existing house for this project was a well-built, large detached family home, however the ground floor plan was a major issue for the client as it was undersized and poorly laid-out. The first impression was somewhat of a disappointment as the existing entrance hallway was long and narrow with little or no natural daylight and the existing stairs seemed to dominate it. The main living room was also an issue primarily due to its north-facing aspect but also as a result of door and radiator positions which impeded furniture layout.

"In addition, the study was too narrow and had an oversized fireplace which again made this room difficult to furnish. It was principally because of the existing kitchen/dining room that the clients called in the experts. This was the room where the family congregated most

often yet it was under-sized and had little or no relationship with the lovely south facing garden. The client wanted us to help solve these problems. They issued a clear brief of what it was they had hoped to achieve for both their budget and tight program. The proposed works did not require planning permission which helped with the program as the client needed the construction work to take place over the summer months and to be complete before the school term recommenced.

"Our proposal involved both a new extension to the rear and redesign of the existing ground floor. The aim of reorganised plan was to create three clearly defined spaces: a formal living room, an entrance hall/study area and an open plan living/dining/kitchen. The existing kitchen extension, which had a pitched roof and only one window, was demolished to allow for a new modest extension. This connected back to the main house to create an L-shaped light filled open plan kitchen/dining/living room. This new room had a large



## [Left]

Long gone are the 'disappointing' first impressions, with SOSA's design bathing the home in light

picture window which framed the view of the garden and was flanked by two narrow opes to allow natural ventilation. A three-part folding iroko and glass door was designed to allow direct access from the dining area to the side patio where the sun set in the evenings.

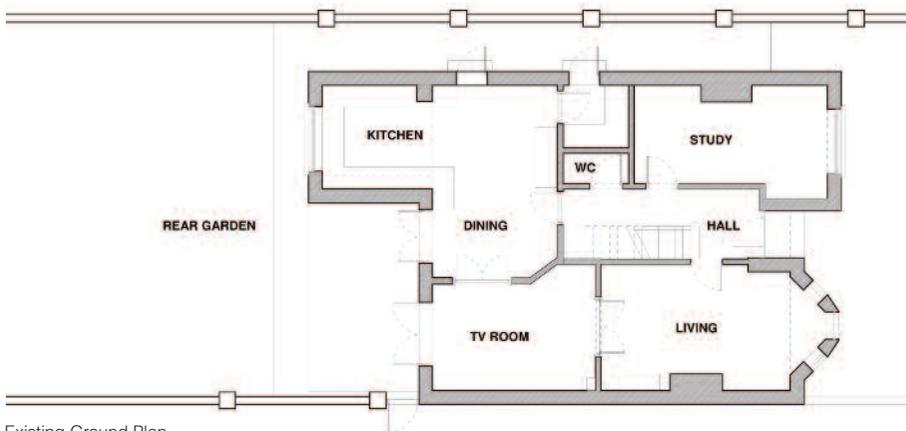
"The utility, WC and other services were retained in their existing locations to reduce costs but were cleverly concealed behind new oak veneered panelling and secret doors. This oak-clad box was in the darkest part of the plan but more importantly separated the study from the rear extension. Cloakroom storage was concealed within the box on the study side whilst the fridge and freezer were concealed on the kitchen side. Continuous strip lighting was hidden behind the pelmet at ceiling level on all sides which washed the ceilings with mood lighting and also emphasised the form.

"The dark narrow hallway was transformed using simple cost-effective methods such as painting the mahogany entrance door and stairs white but also with the introduction of a large floor to ceiling sliding door/panel. This replaced the existing wall between the study and the hallway and allowed for a larger more impressive hallway or a separate study depending on the client's need. This sliding element also hides shelving /filling unit when open.

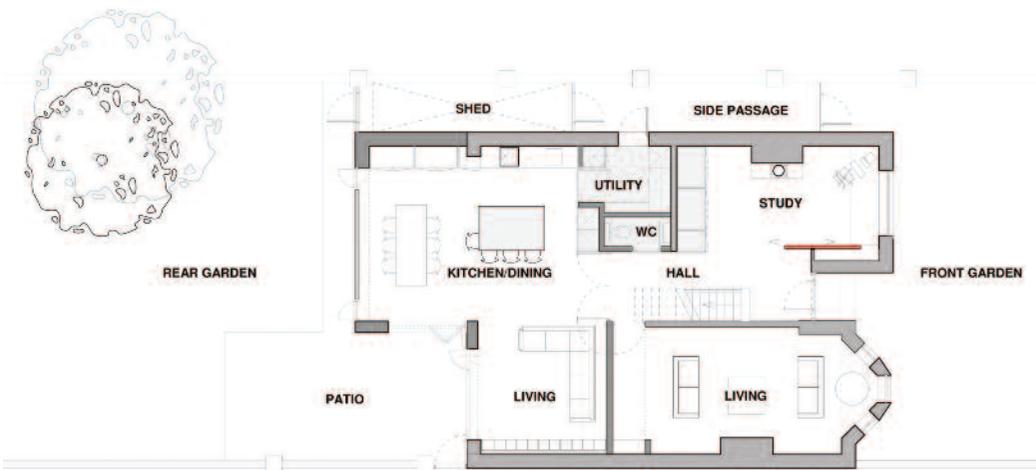
"The existing living room was enlarged as requested by the client but as our architect had some concerns about the implications on the room's proportions, a new alcove was introduced opposite the new entrance to aid this. Floating shelving was fitted to the new alcove to house a piece of sculpture which was top lit. The alcove echoes the bay window at the opposite end of the room. The main living room door was relocated and replaced with a glazed door which allowed borrowed light from the bright rear extension via its matching glazed double doors. The reconfiguration of this room allowed for the furniture to be laid out symmetrically around the fireplace.

"Elsewhere, the kitchen which was designed by SOSA was made by Langrell Kitchens and comprised of sprayed MDF handle-less doors and white silestone counters and splashbacks. The stone to the island was cantilevered on two sides to allow seating for the entire family. The honed limestone floor by Antica was carried from the hallway/study, into the rear extension. It also extended into the utility room and WC. The only area where the stone was not used was in the original living room where timber was specified for warmth given its function and orientation.

“ THIS REPLACED THE EXISTING WALL BETWEEN THE STUDY AND THE HALLWAY AND ALLOWED FOR A LARGER MORE IMPRESSIVE HALLWAY OR A SEPARATE STUDY DEPENDING ON THE CLIENT'S NEED. ”



Existing Ground Plan



Proposed Ground Plan

“Externally, the vertical iroko cladding which matches new iroko windows and doors was carried across the brick facade of the existing house to give the impression that the extension extends beyond its form and unites the functions inside. It is capped with a pressed aluminium trim. The cladding also extends across in the other direction and conceals a secret gate to a new shed built in the side passage. The shed’s location here eliminated the need for a stand-alone type in the garden which would have taken up valuable lawn space and would have been unsightly when viewed from the rear extension. The cladding stops short of the actual ground level and is proud of a black rendered plinth to distinguish the new addition from the existing house and garden.”

## INFORMATION

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