

Sixties re-dressed

This mid-century house has been transformed into a fabulous 21st century home. **Sharon Dale** reports. Pictures by **Louise Bates** and **Ruth Preston**.

Ruth Preston's home in Leeds is often mistaken for a new-build and yet its contemporary good looks are a clever masquerade. The property has its roots in the late 1960s but a major makeover has transformed it into a house that is perfect for modern living.

Buying the mid-century home was a radical departure for Ruth and her husband Andy who had always preferred period properties. "We loved the old house we were living in but it wasn't quite big enough and it didn't have the open-plan living space we really wanted," says Ruth.

"We got an architect round to see if we could extend it and alter the layout but it was obvious it wasn't going to work so we started house hunting."

The couple, who have three children, surprised themselves and everyone else by choosing the well-loved but dated 60s house. "It is in a great location with lots of amenities, good schools and plenty of space for the children and the dogs. I could see it had potential to give us everything we wanted and more," says Ruth.

The family got the keys in the summer of 2019, just before the pandemic hit and first on the to-do list was hiring an architect. They chose Mesh Architects, based in Chapel Allerton, as director Ian Collins specialises in giving old buildings new life.

"They were brilliant. We needed our hands holding with this project because we had never done anything like it before," says Ruth. "They did the design and they also helped us find a good builder."

Along with extending to the front and rear, one of the main priorities was

creating a view of the back garden that could be seen as you walked through the front door. To that end, what was a series of small rooms on the ground floor were combined to make an open-plan living space. There is also a separate utility room, snug, bedroom, bathroom and a playroom.

Upstairs, what was three bedrooms, a bathroom and an attic is now four bedrooms, two with ensembles, and a house bathroom.

The front of the property is clad in larch with black zinc on the new dormer and round the front door. What was the garage is now a side entrance with a dog shower and the rear of the property features a wall of glazing across the ground floor and new, contemporary dormers on the first floor.

"My dad is an architect and he couldn't comprehend why we didn't just knock the old house down and start again and he had a point because at one time, we were left with just two walls standing," says Ruth, who adds that the pandemic made life doubly difficult. "We were living in rented accommodation and we were both working while trying to homeschool the children and on top of that we were trying to manage the house project."

Sourcing materials and fitting out the interiors proved to be another challenge. "I managed to go and see the kitchen once and almost everything else we had to buy online," adds Ruth.

Hard though it was, the end result has been worth it. The bespoke property and its clever layout now suits all the family's needs and it is filled with natural light



OPENED UP: The sitting area with a wall painted black to disguise the TV and cladding hiding a secret door to the snug; inset, one of the bathrooms with an Alape basin.



SHINING IN: This row, from left to right, the open-plan living space is filled with natural light thanks to the wall of sliding glazed doors; the house at the front is unrecognisable from its former incarnation; Ruth and Andy's twin daughters in one of the five bedrooms.



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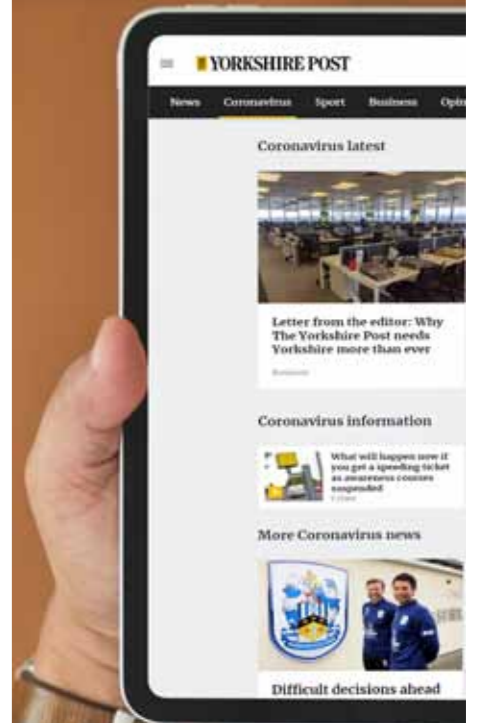
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