

Daring to design for the teens in your life

When youngsters grow into teenagers, their accommodation needs change, so what can you do to adapt your house and turn it into a teen-friendly environment?

Emma Cullinan

A few short years after building their mews house near the canal in Dublin 4 in 2003, architects Eva Byrne and Gerard Carty were already planning an extension.

The open-plan kitchen and living area on the ground floor was perfect for a family with young children. As anyone with babies and toddlers knows, being able to keep them in sight and entertained while getting things done takes some bumps out of the parenting road.

But Byrne and Carty knew that when their two youngsters grew into teens they would require a hang-out of their own in the house.

"Teens like to feel that your house is a house where people can come," says Byrne. "A space where everything can happen... we flung ideas about. That's what architects do."

One plan for accommodating teens involved splitting the long living/kitchen/dining room, running from the courtyard at the front of the house to the garden at the back, but this could have shut off the dual-aspect and flowing family time together. "I've always really enjoyed the ground floor: having light from both sides," says Byrne.

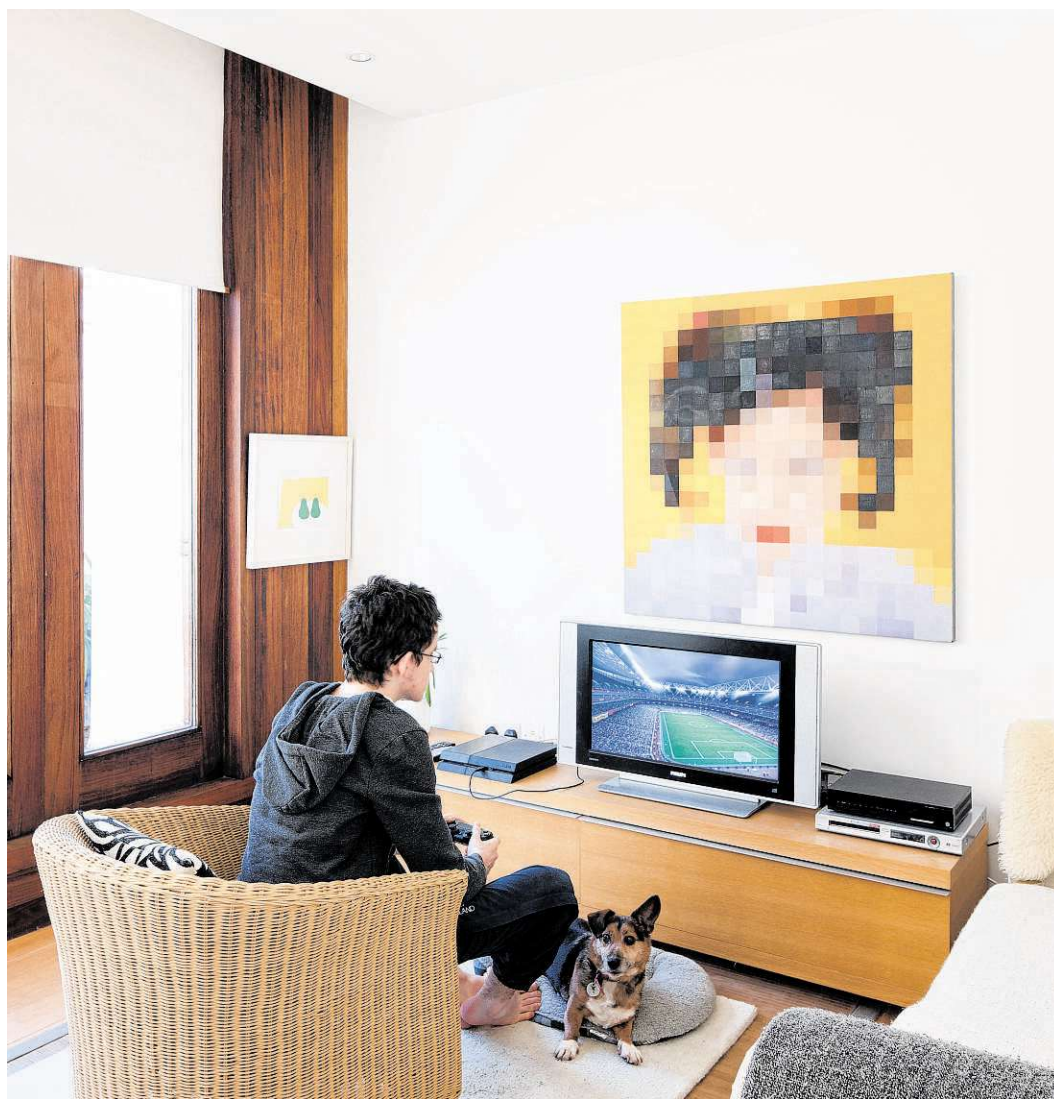
While the couple were happy to put the television and internet up in the teen space, some activities have stayed downstairs – evidence of family gatherings in the sitting room include a harp played by the couple's daughter Vita, double-bass by son Oscar and a piano, played by Eva.

So the only way was up. The parents decided to depart their bedroom on the first floor, and the small office beside it, and create an extension on the roof comprising bedroom, en-suite shower-room and a tiny office.

Having got planning permission for the add-on in 2007, the job slipped away with the crash. "We wanted to borrow money to do it," says Byrne. "But then everything fell apart. No-one was lending."

She also says that, despite people thinking it's easier to get a builder during the recession, that's not the case as there is so much uncertainty as to whether contractors or suppliers will go out of business. "People say builders are cheap then, but I'd say be careful who you choose."

The work was eventually done last year by Jens Kuechenmeister, who had built the original house. His work is very accurate, says Byrne. "Things line up and are perpendicular," she says, which is not al-



■ Oscar in the new teen space which opens onto a south-facing balcony. PHOTOGRAPHS: PHILIP LAUTERBACH



■ Vita in her reconfigured bedroom which now has a dressing table



■ The new office beside the parents' bedroom in the new roof extension



■ One of the teenager's bedrooms in the extension and (right) the exterior of the house



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ways the case with others. "The spirit level is not always out," she smiles.

The family moved out and, during daily visits, Eva watched their home come apart and become exposed when the roof came off. "When you let builders in the door it's amazing how quickly it reverts," says Byrne.

"When the house had been pulled apart, and the extension not yet begun, we thought, what have we done? This became a builder's yard," she says, indicating the kitchen and living room.

The project also involved reconfiguring their son and daughter's rooms at the back of the first floor and taking down the wall between the front bedroom – at this level –

and the small room beside it to create the teen hangout (complete with fold-out bed).

The natural light here is intense and turning the two into one room that spills onto a south-facing terrace, makes sense.

"It is exciting to revisit a design and hone it," says Byrne. "The wall [between the bedroom and office] didn't feel right. The sail cloth over the terrace turns this into another room in the summer."

Configurations

The couple's new bedroom above – reached via stairs that took the place of a former en suite – also takes in the same expansive southern-sky light and they've add-

ed solar panels to the roof here to reap rays.

Much of the built-in storage is in birch ply and painted MDF – "I love it; it is so reflective" – while the bedroom floor is in oak and the bathroom floor is pale-blue cushion-backed vinyl.

The bathroom – with sky-light above the shower – is in light-reflecting pale: "I love a white bathroom – it makes me go weak at the knees," laughs Byrne.

"I would love to build a new house again. It is like having a baby – you forget. I love all the planning – of the storage, all the little bits, that's the joy. I enjoyed doing Vita's room the most; planning how all the bits go together."

This involved incorporating a dressing table (meeting teen needs again), desk, wardrobe and other storage.

"It's amazing what you can get out of a tiny space."

Those details and configurations are the things you don't always see on design programmes and in photographs, says Byrne, but they are a huge part of the design and can take a lot of work.

"It's been great. It really has transformed our lives," she says. "We had a goal and – after going through all that – we have something that suits our needs."

Eva Byrne offers advice on how to make the most of homes, see houseology.ie



Glenasmole, Brighton Road, Foxrock, Dublin 18
Asking Price €2,500,000 **BER E2** View by Appointment

Exceptional, period residence of outstanding character located on a prime, secluded site on Foxrock's premier road • Set amidst secluded, landscaped gardens 0.54 acre/0.22 ha approx. with outdoor swimming pool, courtyard and garage • Glenasmole built c.1890 features gracious accommodation of elegant proportions extending to 344 sq.m / 3,700 sq.ft. approx. • rec hall, drawing/dining, living, family rm, cloakroom/wc, kit/b*fast, util, shower rm. Upstairs: 4 double bedrooms (master ensuite & dressing room), bath, guest w.c., 2 large attic rms • BER No. 106084767.

Beirne & Wise



76 Dundela Park, Sandycove, Co. Dublin
Asking Price €635,000 **BER E2** View Saturday Sat 12.30pm - 1.30pm

Extended family home (116 sq.m / 1,248 sq.ft) in this most sought after location • lovely southerly 80ft rear gardens • hall, 2 reception rooms, kitchen/breakfast room, guest wc, 3 bedrooms, bathroom, Garage • GFCH • Further potential to enlarge (subject to planning permission) • BER No. 105990121.

6 Hawthorn Manor, Blackrock, Co. Dublin **BER E1**
Asking Price €385,000 View Saturday 11 - 11.30am

Townhouse situated in this small cul-de-sac setting 78 sq.m / 839 sq.ft approx. • kitchen, living/dining, 3 beds, ensuite, bathroom • electric heating • car parking • southerly rear garden • BER No. 105989610.

11 Marino Park, Mount Merrion Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin **BER C2**
Asking Price €725,000 View by appointment

Stunning townhouse in small exclusive development off Mount Merrion Avenue • bespoke interiors with top quality finishes throughout including an Italian kitchen and stylish bathrooms • south facing rear garden • off street parking • hall, living, kitchen/dining, utility, guest w.c., 3 bedrooms (1 ensuite), bathroom • 131 sq.m/1,410 sq.ft approx. • BER No. 106176506.



12 Belmont Gardens, Donnybrook, Dublin 4
Asking Price €875,000 **BER G** View Saturday 12.30pm - 1pm

Charming 1930's bay windowed home with a private south west facing garden • cul-de-sac setting • excellent location • Accommodation: hall, living room, dining room, kitchen, 4 bedrooms, bathroom, guest wc, extended garage. 121 sq.m / 1,302 sq.ft approximately • potential to extend subject to planning permission • off street parking • BER No. 105994958.

31 Adelaide, Strand Rd, Sandymount, D.4 **BER C3**
Asking Price €425,000 View Saturday 11.30am - 12 noon

Stunning, modernised and extended house in exclusive private gated dev • ent lobby, kit/living/dining, family rm, 2 double beds, bath, attic space • GFCH • garage • 85 sq.m / 916sq.ft excl. attic 11 sq.m/118 sq.ft approx. • BER No. 106155781.

Craiglea, Gordon Avenue, Foxrock, D.18
Asking Price €1,250,000 **BER E1** View Saturday 11am - 12pm

Impressive, detached residence of generous proportions • close to N11/QBC, LUAS & Foxrock Village • ent hall, drawing room, living room, study, kitchen/breakfast/family room, guest wc, utility, 5 bedrooms, (master with ensuite & dressing room) • 255 sq.m / 2,730 sq.ft approx. • private gardens • BER No. 100567817.