



VELUX®

A FOREVER HOME

Refurbishment of an
Edwardian House
in Tynemouth





A PERFECT NEIGHBOURHOOD

The recent history of the ancient settlement of Tynemouth, located at the mouth of the river Tyne, is closely linked to the opening of a railway line connecting the sea town with nearby Newcastle in 1847. The place grew fast and the Victorian and Edwardian-era neighbourhoods dominate the town's image to this day. Shortly after two railway lines were connected and a new station was built, three Edwardian-style semi-detached villas were constructed on larger-than-average plots. The house was built in 1902 by William Balls, father of Norah, a well known women-rights activist, honoured with a blue plaque on the property's gate. After the Balls family moved out, the villa became a vicarage until 1980, then another two changes of owners until in 2020, when Carly and Andrew swapped houses with the former inhabitants.

Tynemouth became a desirable location thanks to its picturesque qualities and proximity to Newcastle. Carly and Andrew already lived in a listed building in the area so understood the challenges and potential of moving into an Edwardian-era home. When they decided to buy the property, they contacted Spence & Dower to begin planning.

"Around one-quarter of our projects are heritage single-family houses. In the first step, we analyse the house and highlight the unique qualities that should not be lost in refurbishment."

Tim Bailey, RIBA Architect, Spence & Dower



Although not all architects' proposals were realised in the first phase, the process helped the homeowners reflect on the qualities of the space. They decided that opening up the kitchen to create a family-friendly dining area was the first priority - next to bringing in the daylight to the staircase and the bathroom.

"We are the fourth family in 120 years to inhabit the house and plan to stay here forever."

Andrew, homeowner

Carly, Andrew and their sons on the beach, a few minutes' walk from their house.





TRANSFORM WITH CARE

Houses constructed during the Edwardian period tend to have more closed facades than those built during the Georgian and Victorian eras. Electric light became a standard fixture in apartments so the windows became smaller, corresponding with the need for privacy typical for the period.

Edwardian houses were constructed based on pattern books, which gave several options for roofs, stairs, bannisters and windows. They were built along streets with decorated front facades, so contemporary extensions were usually built in the rear gardens.

Carly and Andrew's house has a generous front garden facing north and a long back garden with a garden house bordering a narrow lane, which was historically used as the kitchen entrance.

The clients preferred maintaining a large garden and were very conscious of the role of daylight in the interior. After analysing a couple of options proposed by Spence & Dower, they decided to upgrade the area in the attic instead of constructing a new structure in the garden as some of their neighbours had done.

The wish for roof openings came early in the design process. The Covid crisis interrupted the planning, so the house owners proceeded independently. The family came across the Heritage Conservation Roof Windows when looking through a VELUX brochure. The photographs featured an Edwardian house that looked not unlike theirs, so they immediately felt it was the perfect fit. Tim Bailey agreed with their choice of windows as the appearance perfectly matches the historic house and the interior.

"One needs to find solutions that respond to modern sensitivity while cherishing the quality of Edwardian architecture, which once housed families with very different living habits and mindsets."

Tim Bailey, RIBA Architect, Spence & Dower

Not only has the desired amount of daylight in the rooms changed since Edwardian times, but also how spaces are being used. The kitchen is no longer where staff prepare meals from scratch in a place often separated from the rest of the house because of noise and strong smells, but a meeting point for the entire family.

Today, cooking as well as eating together are essential parts of family life, so Carly and Andrew decided to knock through from the kitchen to the dining room and create one spacious family room that looks out onto the garden.

The drawing room, facing the street, remains a formal entertaining area. They painted it an elegant dark blue, which contrasts with the lighter tonality of the south-facing rooms. Carly and Andrew chose colour schemes to suit the historical interiors and meticulously restored the original ceiling roses and wall friezes.

"We chose VELUX Heritage Conservation Windows for the top floor. They work well with our Edwardian house, which borders a conservation area."

Carly and Andrew, homeowners



"We started wanting to create a family room, kitchen and dining room and then worked our way up the house."

Carly and Andrew



HOW WE LIVE TOGETHER

"We don't ask our clients what rooms they wish for, but encourage them to talk about their everyday life habits and find out together what layout matches them best."

Tim Bailey, RIBA Architect, Spence & Dower

Changes to kitchen and dining room layouts are a top priority for many of today's owners of Edwardian houses. Another is the refurbishment and addition of bathrooms, ensuites and dressing rooms. Although the Edwardian period marked the birth of the modern bathroom - with tiles, freestanding bathtubs and fixtures not unlike our own - the challenge is to provide the washing and showering facilities required without affecting the elegant proportions of the rooms.

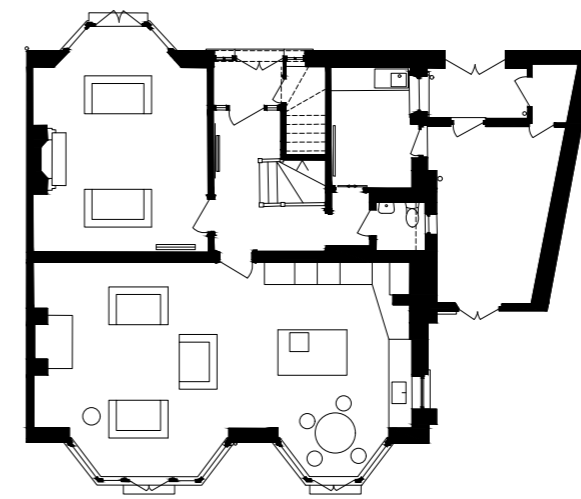
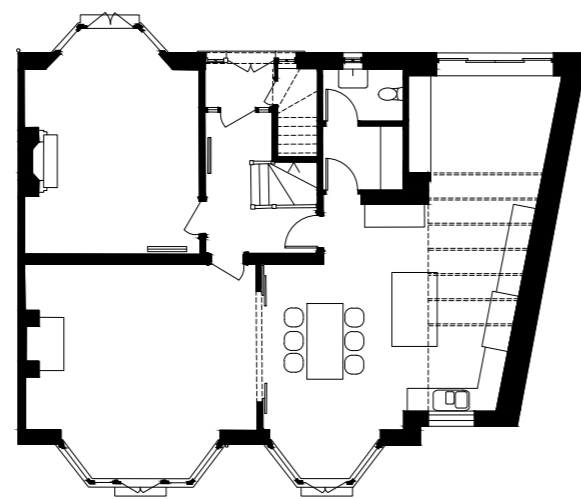
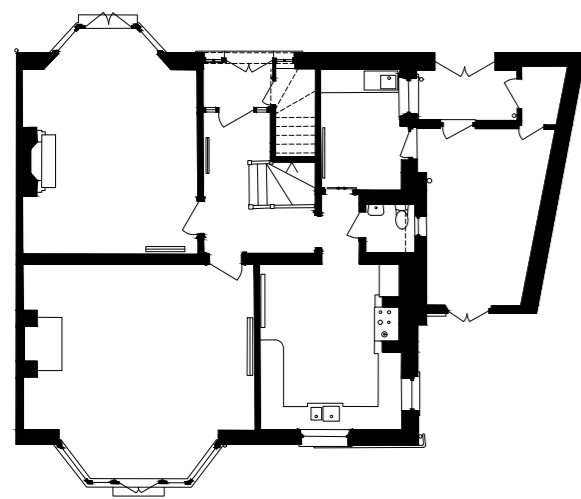
To create their spacious bathrooms, Andrew and Carly decided, rather radically, to reduce the number of bedrooms. Although the house had a bathroom on each upper floor, the spaces did not match the family's present or likely future needs.

On the first floor, a bedroom on the south, rear side of the house was converted into to an en-suite dressing room and bathroom. The existing narrow bathroom was refurbished and is now also accessible directly from the remaining guest bedroom overlooking the garden.

The second floor houses bedrooms for Andrew and Carly's two boys, a guest bedroom, and a refurbished, now ensuite, bathroom upgraded by a large VELUX roof window. The en-suite ensures privacy for the boys into the future. Two more VELUX roof windows have helped turn the staircase and dark, gloomy corridor into a bright and friendly playing area for the children.



In addition to the rooms on the upper floors, the lounge on the northern side of the ground floor remains a separate space, providing a quiet environment. Reducing the number of bedrooms in the house has had no detrimental effect. It is a clever design that reimagines every room on every floor for modern family life while maintaining the elegance and spirit of Edwardian domestic architecture. From cooking, washing, working from home and entertaining to playing, relaxing and sleeping, there's room enough here - and more.



Ground floor, from the left: before the refurbishment, as proposed by Spence & Dower, and the built in-between option.

Although Andrew and Carly decided to integrate the kitchen into the dining area and family room without opening up the load-bearing wall and chimney, they haven't given up on the idea of the annexe conversion. Currently, the annexe houses a gym. Work on the house is ongoing, given that the family see this as their forever home, they have plenty of time.



Above: Top floor, before and after the refurbishment. What used to be a gloomy and stuffy bathroom has become a light-filled, well ventilated shower room for the boys. Two VELUX Heritage Conservation windows bring daylight deep into the house. The homeowners have plenty of ideas about how to enhance the space further. Below: First floor, before and after the refurbishment. Carly and Andrew decided to sacrifice one bedroom to create a bright shower room and an en-suite dressing room. The additional windows on the garden facade, as designed by Spence & Dower for the planning application, will further enhance the rooms in the future.

The VELUX supplier and installer on the project was NECS Building Group of Blaydon-On-Tyne. 'Given the age and design of the Tynemouth property, the Heritage conservation roof window's slim-fit, low profile and glazing bar made it the obvious choice,' says managing director Andrew Kerr. 'It is in keeping with the architecture and complies with all the design requirements for listed and historical buildings.'

“Once any project is complete, we like to forget about it – in the best possible way! On this one, the product’s guaranteed quality and durability meant the job and materials were of the highest standard. We like to work with VELUX because we know the windows will give clients many years of satisfaction.”

Andrew Kerr, managing director, NECS Building Group



“The principle of the top daylight was set early in the design process, as the clients wished.”

Tim Bailey, RIBA Architect, Spence & Dower



East facade with section through the annexe. Above: existing, below: as planned by Spence & Dower. The restoration of the dark woodwork on the gable to match others on the street has been postponed to the next project phase.

South (garden) facade. Above: existing, below: as planned by Spence & Dower.

The creation of another bay window, where the family's dining table now stands, has been a very successful idea. The new element blends easily into the facade. The homeowners had the wonderful idea to use the similar windows as the existing bay windows, as well as recycling the window sill from a window that was replaced.

Additional facade and roof windows, as proposed by Spence & Dower, are marked in light grey. These additional openings would boost daylight in the first floor rooms, while the row of VELUX windows would convert the dark attic into a cosy space for star-gazing and an additional playing area for the boys. Andrew and Carly are planning these works for the future.





"Having the windows in the hallway has allowed all the natural light to flood the space. We knew it would be game-changing as soon as they cut the gaps for them because suddenly you could see out where previously you were looking at a ceiling."

Carly and Andrew, homeowners



Above: North facade of the house, before and after the refurbishment. In grey, the planned extension of the annexe.


Left: Photographs from the construction site. Under the bathroom window visible structure of the protruding roof, which became valuable storage space.



**"The bathroom was just a box room before.
There was no natural light at all in there.
Now it's the lightest room in the house."**

Carly, homeowner





"It was important that we could open the bathroom window for ventilation. The fitting height is perfect for the winder, which is quite traditional. Our VELUX Heritage Conservation windows look like anything that would have been there originally."

Carly, homeowner





GOOD OLD HABITS

The rising awareness of ecology and thus energy-saving, paired with cost consciousness, inspires people to look back at the clever features of the historical houses.

Thick walls, which retain the heat whilst also protecting from extreme heat waves, have again become a desired construction method. Luckily, most brick walls are thick, as additional insulation on Edwardian houses is costly and often endangers the meticulously designed elevations.

Zoning a house in the cold months is an excellent way of saving energy without any additional costs. The chamber-like structure of Edwardian homes facilitates heating different zones of the house at different times, according to each family's habits. Solutions like infrared heating, responding to the movement in the house and warming up the air rather than the building mass, can be seen as an equivalent to a fireplace.

The changing climate makes it necessary to protect the interiors from overheating, even in England. At Carly and Andrew's house, the north-facing VELUX windows never catch direct sunlight and allow for an efficient airing of the entire property as the hot air rises. The manual winders on the heritage line windows encourage a hands-on approach to overheating and ventilation.

The south-facing bay windows let the sun deep into the room during the cold season.







THE GARDEN HOUSE

"It's nice to have a quiet and peaceful place where visiting family can come and stay."

Andrew, homeowner

Andrew and Carly enjoy entertaining guests and often organise events at home. A guest house on the garden's south edge provides space for visiting family and friends.

Garden houses are a common feature in Edwardian housing. They adjoin walled alleys that run between the main streets and were historically used for deliveries. Many have been turned into sheds – but not Andrew and Carly's.

It took six months of planning to find the right layout and materials for their garden house. A friend helped with the plans and submissions.

The tiny house has been upgraded with three large VELUX roof windows – they were installed before the couple discovered the Heritage Windows line. The windows sit on the north side of the roof, while solar panels are planned for the south side.

"The house is hidden behind dense foliage, ensuring full privacy even with the open double doors, yet it's still flooded with light – it's what VELUX does with rooms."

Andrew, homeowner





PROJECT DATA

Client:	Private
Location:	Tynemouth, UK
Architecture:	Spence & Dower together with the homeowners
Year:	1902 (construction); 2022 (refurbishment)
Photography:	Tony Ellis, Andrew Lawrence

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