

Conservatory addition

'This was cheaper to build than extending'

Emma Cox found a modern design and build solution to create space that's usable all year around, all within her budget

Emma and Ian Cox had been living in their house for nearly 10 years when they realised they'd finally had enough of the poor connection with their garden. 'To try and take advantage of the view, we'd placed two chairs in front of the sliding back doors, but it was always a squeeze next to the dining table, and we couldn't maximise the outlook,' says Emma.

THE PROJECT

Emma initially got quotes to build a small extension which would measure 4 x 3m. However, prices came back eye-wateringly high and the couple put the idea to one side. Instead, they began to research widening the door opening, until a structural engineer's calculations showed the project wasn't viable due to the loft conversion done before.

'At this point, I didn't even consider a conservatory because I thought it'd be too hot in summer, freezing cold in winter and look a bit dated,' says Emma. 'But while I was looking into replacing our existing doors, I came across Ultraframe conservatories. It's a highly engineered thermal-efficient build and designed to be used in all seasons.' A visit to the local showroom

'I love the way our conservatory seamlessly blends with our kitchen and looks more like an extension than a dated add-on,' beams Emma. 'All the glazing has benefited the kitchen-diner too, which is now so much lighter and brighter'



'The Ercol chairs from eBay needed re-webbing and new cushions,' says Emma. 'The fabric was a splash out, but I couldn't resist the pattern. I found a great upholsterer in Preston who did a fantastic job for a great price'

The conservatory was designed to look like a modern extension build. The Ultraframe Livinroof combined with the hupl energy-efficient wall system creates a thermally efficient room, while the narrow wall thickness maximises space inside the room

Intelligent glazing

The pitch on the glass roof faces north and south and is made with dual-purpose glass. It's self-cleaning with a slight blue tint for solar control performance to keep the room cool on sunny days



BEFORE



Step inside...

WHO LIVES HERE? I'm Emma Cox, 53, a writer and author. I live here with my husband Ian, 52, a project manager, and our children, Xanthe, 19, and Kenzie, 17. Our home is a 1920s four-bed semi in Hove, East Sussex, that we bought in 2014.

WHAT WAS UPDATED? We built a conservatory at the back of our house with plenty of glazing to connect with the garden, a glass roof to draw in light, and sliding doors onto the patio.

WHY THE CHANGE? There wasn't enough space in our kitchen-diner to have a dining table and a comfortable seating area, plus the east-facing room lost the light as the sun moved away in the afternoon.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE? The conservatory shell was built in weeks and the whole project was completed to a decorated finish in about two months.

TOTAL COST £37,700

ENERGY-EFFICIENT UPGRADES

GLAZING Replace older double glazing with modern low-emissivity (Low-E) double or triple glazing to reduce heat loss in winter and minimise overheating in summer. Look for windows with warm-edge spacers and argon gas filling. Secondary glazing is an alternative option if replacement isn't practical or affordable.

INSULATION Add underfloor insulation or use thick rugs to help reduce heat loss through tiled or concrete floors. Install thermal blinds or insulated curtains and replace worn window and door seals. Check for gaps around frames, roof joints and where the conservatory meets the house.

HEATING & VENTILATION Install low-temperature underfloor heating rather than big radiators and add roof or trickle vents to manage condensation and airflow. Infrared heating panels are another smart option, as they provide gentle, consistent warmth, which dries surfaces rather than adding moisture to the air, limiting condensation.

'The pitched glass roof makes the room feel voluminous and so light,' Emma observes. 'Ultraframe sells various roof styles and we chose Livinroof because the solid and glazed combination has more of an extension look, which we like'



Lighting the way

With no solid ceiling, arrange freestanding floor and table lamps around seating where light is needed, and consider downlights in pelmets



'We use the room all year around and especially love the ambient evening light we didn't have before'

old back door could remain in place until the building was watertight, although there was a challenging moment to get the floor screed level with the existing floor. 'Our floor fitter used additional self-levelling compound to make the join seamless, so the space looks like one now,' notes Emma. 'The whole build moved at a remarkable speed. The basic shell of the conservatory was watertight two weeks after they began.'

THE FINAL DETAILS

To avoid the upheaval of running a gas pipe to a new radiator, Emma bought a high-spec infrared heating panel. She also sourced a new Habitat sofa on Facebook Marketplace to go with two Ercol chairs from eBay.

'I debated whether to have a wall of botanical wallpaper but decided that less is more,' she says. 'The windows frame our leafy flax and banana plants in the garden, and I decorated with indoor pot plants and dried flowers.' Once she'd chosen the cushions, she picked out the colours in pottery pieces from charity shops and Vinted. 'For such a small addition, this room has made an incredible difference to how we live and the light is wonderful,' beams Emma. 'Who knew a conservatory could look this good!'

building was a conservatory and not an extension, legally the foundations didn't need to be as deep, nor was a soakaway necessary as the roof drain connected to downpipes – and this was where a lot of the cost-saving came in. The walls are built using the hupl energy-efficient wall system – also more cost efficient because the framework is light and the build time is much faster than a traditional build. 'We had one full wall of insulated panels, a low wall at the front, and a structural pier, and they installed everything in a day,' Emma shares.

HIGHS & LOWS

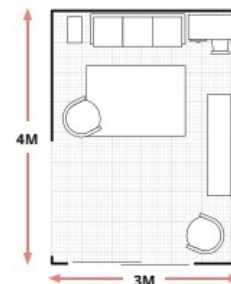
An insulated pelmet runs along the base of the glazed roof to reduce heat loss, but there was a delay when the materials arrived in the wrong size. Handily, the

'I shifted the sofa along to create space for the scaffolding plank desk, which I had made to fit, and I bought the chair on Facebook Marketplace,' says Emma



'I've had this pair of vintage side tables for years. They're lightweight and easy to move around, ideal when we're hosting'

PROJECT BREAKDOWN



THE DETAILS

CONSERVATORY/BUILD	£36,750
INFRARED HEATER	£500
FLOORING	£450
TOTAL	£37,700

Decor shopping list

Geometric Kilim ottoman, £150, Vintage Electrical. Hairpin scaffolding plank desk, £100, TC Industrial Vintage on Etsy. Aubin fabric in Chia, £60 per m, Romo. Madison fabric in Charcoal, £58 per m, Clarke & Clarke. Karndean Distressed Oak flooring, £37.99 per sq m, Best at Flooring. For similar, try Paoletti Keela rectangle cushion, £14, Dunelm. For similar, try Natural table lamp, £19.99, ValueLights. For similar, try Hendricks 3-seater sofa in Emerald Green, £800. For similar, try Homemaker Snug Berber rug, from £39, George Home