



The Finnish Look

In the latter half of 2015, Creative Spaces was awarded the contract to convert the loft of Thomas and Laura's semi-detached 1950s-house...

In the initial meetings, Creative Spaces MD, Luke, met with Thomas and Laura to discuss their requirements and whilst the overall structure and layouts were standard (and within permitted development regulations) the couple had some exacting requirements. Being part-Finnish, the couple had a goal to create a wet-room bathroom, install underfloor heating, and to ideally have a sauna. They also wanted to take advantage of the views over London, have a lot of light in the space and to use every amount of space available in order to maximise storage and create a comfortable family space.

The motivation behind Thomas and Laura's decision to renovate was three fold; firstly they recognised that the roof needed replacing, secondly their family was expanding and they needed additional guest rooms for when their family visited from Manchester and Finland. Thirdly, they wanted a space that would also act

as an upstairs living space for the family with an entertainment area, home office and family bathroom with sauna. With a new baby on the way, the pressure was on for the Creative Spaces team to deliver the project on time and with minimal disturbance to the family. Further to the loft conversion, Thomas and Laura wanted the outside of the house to be overhauled including re-tiling the existing roof, re-rendering the tired outside walls and painting the entire house in and out.

Working closely with Thomas and Laura, Creative Spaces designed a space that worked and responded to a growing family's needs. The in-house team handled all the architectural and engineering details and also dealt with the building control requirements navigating all the red tape on their client's behalf. After a pre-build meeting between Thomas, Laura, our Project Manager and Site Foreman to review the

Creative Spaces construction drawings and works programme, the team started work at the end of October 2015.

By December, all the external restructuring and re-roofing was complete, the loft was water-tight and work began on the installation of a wet-room bathroom and sauna. Installing a wet-room bathroom in a loft space is technically challenging, as it is vital that the room is completely sealed in order to make it waterproof.

Creative Spaces employed the latest technologies available to ensure the new bathroom performed as well as it looks alongside the sauna.

The installation of the sauna also began at the same time as the bathroom, this was specially ordered by Thomas and Laura. As Laura is from a family of Finnish builders there was no shortage of advice in choosing the correct sauna. As the



bathroom units were non-standard sizes and the sauna was bespoke, the design changed along the way to make sure doorways were positioned correctly and tiling was correct. The space we had to put the sauna into was measured to the millimetre and Creative Spaces were able to move quickly to deal with any adjustment needed to ensure it fit.

With regard to the rest of the space, the main challenge (and this was the only technical challenge throughout the project) was changes to the positioning and shape of the stairway, which, had a knock-on effect to the layout. In the initial designs it was always apparent that to make the best use of space in the loft the stairs would be a challenge to ensure it conformed with Building regulations. Through consultation between Thomas, Laura, Luke and the build Foreman the final stair design was a success allowing the couple to retain a large living space but, to also separate office space.

During one of the most critical stages of the build – the staircase installation, Thomas and Laura brought their new son home from the hospital. Thomas said of the experience, 'It was a mostly positive experience. The workmen were great and also extremely accommodating where they could be for our young family. We brought our son

home from hospital on the day that the staircase was being installed and by my count there were 5 workmen inside plus another 7 on the roof throughout that day! They were apologetic for the mess and always very tidy.'

Throughout the build, Creative Spaces ensured that communication was a priority and through regular emails, on-site meetings and Whatsapp groups, everyone felt able to query particular parts of the project as well as have regular updates and meetings. The point was to allow everyone every opportunity to ask questions and discuss ideas; Creative Spaces ensures this level of communication through all projects. We know that plans change and ideas develop throughout a project; our approach is flexibility and assistance to develop the ideas of our clients. In the end, our clients have to live in the space not us, so it must be right!

By the end of January 2016, construction was essentially complete with just snagging and internal decoration to be completed. In February Creative Spaces handed the new loft-space complete with wet-room bathroom and sauna, completely re-decorated house inside and out back to the family to enjoy their new space.

According to Thomas the result is exactly what he

imagined. He said 'Everyone who sees the finish and the space is impressed but, for us, just being able to recreate a bit of family life in the way we know is quite common in Finland (but rare in London!) is the real proof that things worked out well for me. There are a lot of seemingly minor things too that are so important to us as to how we utilise the space; for example we can be sitting in the sauna whilst having full visibility of the children who can play under the two showers in the wetroom. After a sauna we can relax in the living space watching tv or just playing games with the kids whilst enjoying the view over London.' Thomas said that the work has certainly changed the family life for the better; 'As the children are so young we can't leave them unattended but the space allows us all to be together but doing our own thing to a certain extent.'

'We would recommend Creative Spaces and we have done to our friends. I'm hoping we don't have any major building works to do but Luke would be my first call and I'd specifically be asking for the same team of workmen!'

Creative Spaces

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