

— old home — NEW HOME



When John and Katie Langley moved into an old farmhouse in Perthshire they began a journey of transformation. Kate Forster traces the story of how they created a cosy, modern family home.

Photography by Douglas Gibb

The story of John and Katie Langley's home is one of love.

It was in 2004, just after getting married, that they bought their 80-year old farmhouse in rural Perthshire – and it was appropriate, given the timing, that they fell in love with the traditional stone built property at first sight.

Not only were they looking for a family home, but they also saw the potential for converting the outbuildings into a holiday cottage and offices to use as the base for their family construction and civil engineering business, JML Contracts Ltd.

After two years in the farmhouse and the arrival of their first son (and expecting their second), John and Katie decided that it was time to undertake a serious extension and increase not only the amount of bedrooms, but also the living space needed for their growing family. High on the agenda was to create a large kitchen and dining area that would accommodate their large family gatherings, work get-togethers and entertaining.

Katie reflects on the extension decision, "We immediately fell in love with this house for so many reasons: its location, traditional

stone built architecture with accompanying character and grounds; the ability to create an additional revenue from the outbuildings with our holiday cottage; and also the space to build an office for our business.

"However, it was a reasonably aged farmhouse and with that there are the draughts, lack of appropriate insulation and space limitations for a modern family.

"Our construction business specialises in building with Structural Insulated Panels or SIPs. Until this point we had only worked on newly built properties constructed in SIPs, but with our knowledge and expertise in the product and the help of a specialist architect we decided this would be the ideal technique to use for our extension. We wanted more space, a modern layout and a more thermally efficient home which would reduce our energy bills going forward. However, we still wanted to maintain its traditional look and to appear as a seamless continuation of our home.

"As we had finished the conversion of our outbuildings to a holiday cottage and offices for our business, we decided to move into the cottage while we carried out the works.

"This was ideal as it meant we were on site to oversee works and could ensure that our timing plan was met.

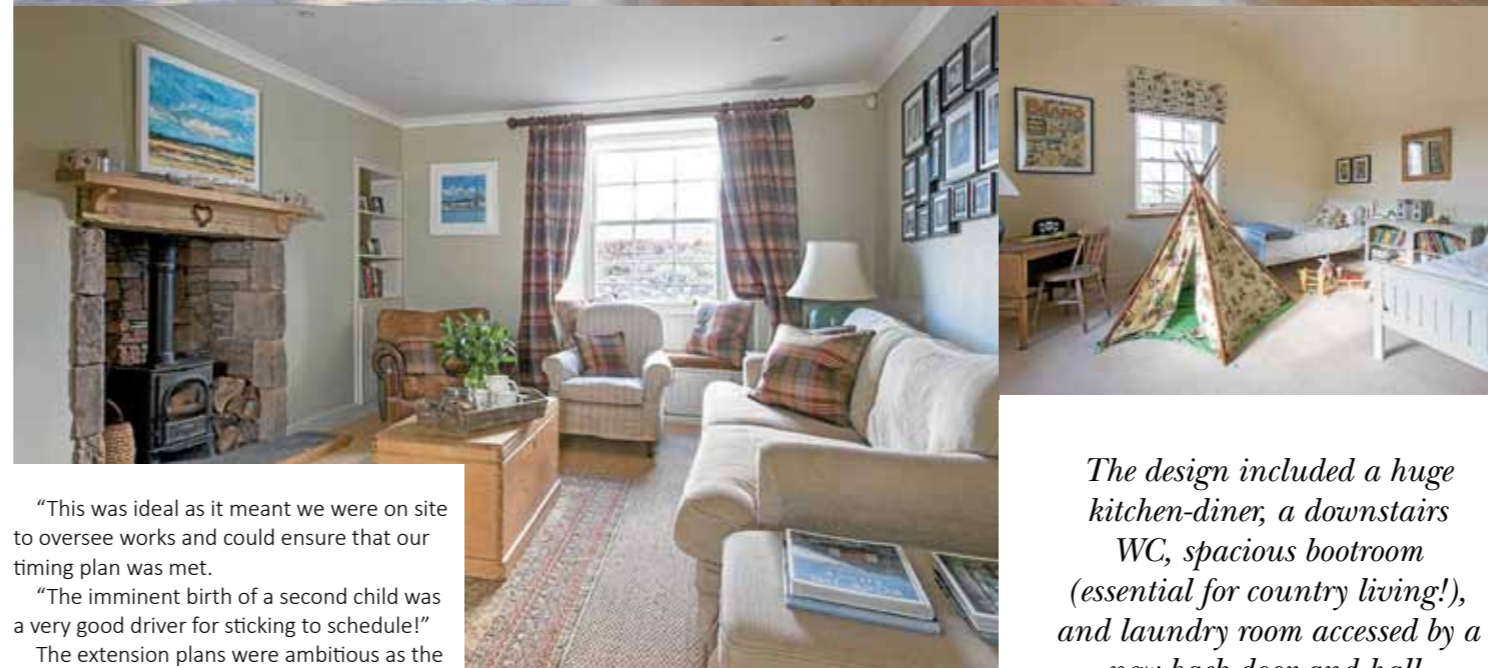
"The imminent birth of a second child was a very good driver for sticking to schedule!"

The extension plans were ambitious as the couple planned to double the size of the original house. However, being housebuilders themselves they appreciated that the majority of the cost of an extension is in its foundations so it made sense to build above and create as much extra living space upstairs as downstairs.

Katie recalls: "We knew we had to move out to carry out the works so we decided the only way to do it was all at once!"

The architect for this project was Kerry Smith, of Kerry Smith Architects, in Angus. Kerry was briefed to design an extension which included the extra living space desired, was in keeping with the house's original architecture and to allow for it to be built in SIPs so that Katie and John could have the thermal efficient living space they longed for.

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The added benefits the self-build has brought to the family life are huge. Not just from a warmth and space perspective, but also the flexibility the extension has allowed them.

Katie says: "I love the fact my boot room and cloakroom are all at the back door so the kids can dump their kit there. The luxury of the extra space downstairs and bedrooms for all the children has been brilliant.

"It has meant we now throw a lot more parties and work gatherings!"

The family notices such a difference that they tend to use the older, original part of the farmhouse less often, as the temperature

change and draughts are noticeable. All the family bedrooms are in the new extension with the spare rooms in the original part.

They also installed underfloor heating throughout the downstairs extension but the excellent thermal efficiency of SIPs means it has never been turned on.

The heating bills have shrunk dramatically and with an Aga heating much of the kitchen-diner, they even find themselves opening windows to let the heat out!

Katie explains: "We do find that we use the new part of the house so much more as the heat difference is noticeable. We ensured that the key living areas were incorporated into the new parts of the house, and the guest rooms and more formal living spaces are in the older part.

"We wanted to maintain the house's traditional feel so we still have our open log fires in these areas, but there is no need for extra heat in our new extension. The extension answered our brief fully, providing us with the extra, modern living spaces we required for the family and thanks to the SIPs method we have ensured that our energy bills are kept to a minimum.

"In fact, we were so happy with our house extension that we built a garden room two years later and loved it so much that we extended our building business offering to include luxury JML Garden Rooms!

"Our garden room gives us an additional outdoor space which is cosy for year round use, sound proofed (for the noisy boys), and perfect for opening out to enjoy the summer days too."

Let's just hope this summer delivers on the sunshine front!

