

CONTACTS

Architects

- Zombory-Moldovan Moore (020 7251 8888; www.zmma.com)
- Imago (020 8969 1895; imagoarchitects.com)
- Mae (020 7704 6060; www.mae-llp.co.uk)
- RIBA (www.architecture.com)

Loft Companies

- Absolute Lofts (0800 243048; absolutelofts.com)
- Top Flight (020 8566 8686; www.topflightlofts.co.uk)
- Loft Conversion Warehouse (020 7245 1150; www.loftconversionwarehouse.com)

Staircase companies

- Bisca (01439 771702; bisca.co.uk)
- Complete Stair Systems (01794 522 444; completestairsystems.co.uk)

Official planning information

- www.planningportal.gov.uk

'WE NEED A LONDON CRASH PAD'

THIS progressive, yet sympathetic rooftop extension pays homage to the traditional concept of a house above the shop. It was built by Mae architects for client Gary Rowland, his wife Olivia and their two young daughters. "I bought the commercial building to house my design studio in the late Eighties," says Gary. "Back then we would never have thought about living in Hoxton. But when we started a family and moved to Norfolk we needed a crash pad in London near the office and the area had changed quite a bit by then."

Originally, Gary had hoped to use a prefabricated system craned on to the roof. He researched one called the M-house, which Michael Howe from Mae had worked on, but after much probing they realised that it would be faster and cheaper to construct a single-storey timber frame and studwork rectangular



The 1,080sq ft of living space includes this large living area, which doubles as an office space for Gary Rowland

Room at the top

box on site. First, though, a steel raft suspended above the existing roof had to be installed to bear the weight of the extension and provide a base to strap the lightweight frame on to.

Once built, the timber frame was insulated, sheathed in plywood and clad in glass. The roof is made from fibreboard, partly because of its lightweight properties, but also so that it could support a rooftop terrace.

Finally, a large glass sliding door on the south, street-facing end of the building was installed

to provide access to the terrace at the front (a setback was stipulated by the planners).

Internally, the 1,080sq ft space is divided into a living room that doubles as an office space, a simple kitchen, a bathroom and two bedrooms with a connecting corridor along one side. "The space is designed around our personal needs," says Gary. "It is light, open and very low maintenance."

The house took a year to build but three years to push through planning. "We didn't have to



A large window slides back to reveal a small private terrace (left)

The "crash pad" sits above the design studios in Hoxton that Gary bought in the Eighties (right)

Pictures by Mark York

'It is so quiet, we wake up thinking we're in Norfolk'

buy airspace because I own the building. But we did have to get permission from all the freeholders and tenants in the adjoining buildings and pay to put scaffolding in their airspace, which took quite a lot of patience, time and money. The scaffolding costs alone came to £30,000."

Gary set the original budget at £250,000 and ended up spending £280,000.

"It's not bad for a two-bedroom flat," he says, "I've had agents say they could sell it for £600,000." In the past three years Gary has noticed many more rooftop extensions being built in the area.

"It's still incredibly quiet," he says. "Sometimes we wake up and think we're in Norfolk."

