

**PRESS ENQUIRIES**

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KnoxBhavan

PRESS RELEASE

LOVE WALK II

03/2024

Knox Bhavan has completed a deep retrofit and extension of an early Victorian villa in Love Walk, in the Camberwell Grove Conservation Area of south London. The renovation preserves the elegance of the period property whilst adapting to all occasions, with walls opening up to accommodate socialising; it creates a warm low-energy home, where the clients can age-in-place.

Love Walk II is the architects' second house retrofit on Love Walk; Knox Bhavan renovated another house on the street in 1995, and the success of the project led to their appointment in 2019 to design and realise this low-carbon scheme. The retrofit futureproofs the house, making it energy efficient, and specifies hard wearing and self-finishing materials, so that it is inherently low maintenance. The scheme has added light, airy and easily adaptable living accommodation which sits comfortably alongside the original house.

The house had been altered repeatedly over its lifetime: the original building, comprising the north-most section of the front elevation, three sash windows wide, had been extended south, along with post-war additions including a bay window and rooms behind, and an exposed breezeblock garage. To the rear was a collection of poorly built inner rooms with cramped headroom under a leaking mono-pitch roof. The clients were intent on modernising the energy use and heating systems to deliver an environmentally responsible home, and Knox Bhavan's strategy to reduce embodied carbon was to re-use and retrofit as much of the existing building possible. The modern single storey extension, differentiated by its red slender steel columns and green aged copper-clad brise soleil, has been deftly integrated into the Victorian house with its imaginative use of space, colour and materials.

On entering the two-storey house, a reconfigured curved staircase flooded with light from two directions replaces the former staircase. To the left and right, cleverly designed jib doors fold back the walls and open up the entire ground floor, creating more space for parties in the present and wheelchair access for ageing-in-place in the future. The doors open onto a living room facing the garden, and a study lined in bespoke joinery. Walking from the entrance, under the staircase, you pass from the old fabric into the new heart of the house: the longroom, a contemporary kitchen/dining/living space that extends westwards and opens onto the garden. It features a dramatic glazed sliding wall designed to dissolve the boundary between inside and out. Level garden access embeds the house into the landscape.

A steel and timber composite structure to the longroom extension has been designed with extremely thin steel sections. Strengthened by the carbon-sequestering Douglas fir joists and laminated veneer lumber (LVL) roof deck, the embodied carbon in the roof structure is minimised whilst achieving a highly efficient structure. Complementing the red steel columns is an aged copper-clad brise soleil that prevents the glazed longroom from overheating. It is cantilevered off of a green roof, which has become a haven for bees and bugs, and supported by Douglas fir joists. The underside of the joists is recessed to take a lighting track that provides flexible lighting to the home's new hub.

A rooflight brings more light into the kitchen, with winder-operated vents set into the upstands to allow heat and cooking smells to be purged naturally, and a wood burner provides a focal gathering point in living space to the rear of the extension.

To the south of the front elevation, the breezeblock garage has been replaced with a two-storey extension in brick to match the existing, set-back from the main elevation in compliance with the planning constraints of the conservation area. The existing brickwork was retained as far as was practicable. Where walls were removed due to structural issues, the bricks were cleaned and reused for garden boundaries. A new highly insulated floor has been laid on a Cemfree slab, a cement-free alternative to conventional concrete that reduced the embodied carbon of the concrete by 80% when compared to traditional mixes. The previously draughty floor and scarcely level floors are now heated by an air-source heat pump, and run out level into the garden.

The house, while retaining its history and period details, has been updated to modern standards with double-glazed sash windows installed into re-used sash boxes. The roof to the main house has been retained, renovated, and insulated, and a photovoltaic array helps to power a new air-source heat pump, delivering low-carbon heating and hot water.

The project has contributed to the development of KBe, Knox Bhavan's in-house carbon calculator tool for benchmarking all projects. The system drives carbon savings in current projects by analysing and communicating the carbon cost of the design, material specification, environmental measures and construction techniques to help the practice make savings and set goals for the future.

Adopting this approach, Knox Bhavan have been able to convert a period house into a warm and environmentally responsible home, which can run exclusively on electricity. When the on-site generation is included, the house uses just 33.5 kWhr/m²/yr including electric car charging, which meets the 2030 target set by the RIBA Climate Challenge.

The house has been shortlisted for an RIBA London Award. Winners will be announced in spring 2024.

Ben Hair, Project Architect, Knox Bhavan, said:

"Love Walk II is a case study in the challenges and opportunities of achieving low carbon, energy efficient design while working with and respecting historic building fabric. The project is a deep retrofit combining heritage with heat pumps to deliver a home that sits comfortably in the conservation area and offers solutions of how to build in the context of a climate crisis."

Ann Kenrick, commissioning client, said:

"Around eighteen months since we moved in, we are still constantly uplifted by the extraordinary light throughout the house, the ease with which we can use all the spaces, the practicality of the layout and the beauty of the finishes - the staircase and the study shelving are just examples of this. The house is both airy and spacious in the summer, but cosy and welcoming in the winter. We have hosted several parties with wonderful feedback from family and friends and are looking forward to celebrating our eldest daughter's wedding this summer."

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**Notes to editors:**

Client:	Private
Location:	Camberwell, London
Practical completion:	June 2022
Site area:	527m ²
Gross internal area:	250m ²
Architect:	Knox Bhavan
Project architect	Simon Knox, Ben Hair
Structural engineer:	Structure Mode
Services engineer:	Paul Bastick Associates
Quantity surveyor:	Ian Thomson & Company Ltd
Contractor:	McGovern Design and Build
Photographs:	© Edmund Sumner

KnoxBhavan is an award-winning practice established in 1995 by Simon Knox and Sasha Bhavan. Collaboration is a central driver, and all projects, including one-off houses, public buildings and conservation projects, demonstrate a fascination with materials and sensitivity to the environment as well as a commitment to craftsmanship and simplicity of form.

Described as “one of the most award-festooned small practices in the UK” by Blueprint Magazine, Knox Bhavan has won numerous awards; most recently, March House (2020) was winner of a RIBA South Award and RIBA South Sustainability Award 2023, and the Manser Medal 2022. Threefold House in London won a RIBA London Award 2023 and is currently longlisted for the RIBA House of the Year 2024. Pembury Pool is shortlisted for an AJ Architecture Award 2023.

The practice has developed an expertise in designing future-proofed homes which are custom-built for clients facing physical challenges, examples include: The Little Big House, Hertfordshire (2023), Crowbrook, Hertfordshire (2013), and Holly Barn Norfolk (2006), all designed to accommodate wheelchair use.

Projects in development include: The Pond, a ‘Warhol-esque’ studio for a Grammy-winning music producer in Peckham; a new home for the arts organisation Peckham Platform on Peckham Square; and a circular design case study, dismantling and relocating their former studio at Bushey Hill Road, Peckham, to be re-erected as a carers’ space on a residential site in Kent.

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