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Professional BUILDER

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**ROOFING, FLOORING
& INSULATION**
What it means to 'U'



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Laying it all on the line!

Room on top – Moduloft has lift off in the home extension market

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Lofty aspirations!

With the scene of the infamous battle of Hastings just down the road, Professional Builder checks out a project that could prove to be one in the eye for conventional loft conversions.



Original bungalow

By rights, Windmill Farm in the leafy East Sussex village of Hurst Green should now be buried under thousands of tonnes of concrete. Certainly not about to undergo the sort of dramatic transformation, rarely seen in these parts since the Conqueror himself pitched up and consigned us all to 900 years of French influence.

Seven years ago, the bungalow stood directly in the path of the proposed village bypass, and was acquired by the Highways Agency. When these plans were subsequently shelved, the property fell into a state of general disrepair, and a return to the open market in 2012 saw it snapped up by local businessman, Jonathan Beattie. He told us: "As you can imagine it was in a pretty dreadful mess; completely overgrown and having suffered a catastrophic flood inside. Yet at the back of my mind I couldn't help thinking that, standing on this huge elevated plot with stunning views over the downs, it offered enormous potential as a family home. The dilemma was how to achieve what we wanted with the least disruption to family life and, of course, at the most competitive price.

"We were clearly anticipating a major renovation project, and the obvious





starting point with a bungalow was to look at expanding the roof area to include extra bedrooms, and en suite facilities for our four children. After viewing several loft conversion companies online my attention was drawn to Moduloft, who offered a factory-built pre-fabricated solution. This could be designed to exactly meet our specifications from the roof covering right down to the choice of bathroom suite and wall tiles. The other plus from my point of view was the proposed speed of erection, and with each pod plastered, fully plumbed and wired in we wouldn't have to schedule in other trades with the inherent time lapses that invariably brings".

Continues Jonathan: "After getting the plans drawn up by an architect, and visiting the factory to understand how the whole thing goes together, the total fabrication process has taken just fourteen weeks, plus another week for the actual install. It's not only proved a good deal quicker but the overall cost has also been a pleasant surprise. Certainly less than the quotes I received for a traditional hand crafted conversion, and that's taking into account the cost of the haulage from the factory in Ripon and the hire of a 100ft reach crane. At the same time we have also avoided not inconsiderable hotel costs by being able to stay in the property throughout the renovation process."

Originally developed to solve the problem of loft conversions when the roof is too low, Moduloft is part of a Yorkshire business founded in 1995, which claims to be the only company of its type to offer the complete design and build modular loft package. MD Tim Benson said: "We take care of every aspect, even the negotiations with the local authorities to ensure that the customer is enjoying the benefits of

their extended home as quickly as possible. In fact, we believe that it can be achieved up to eight times faster than a conventional roof lift".

He added: "Clearly we accept that it won't work in every instance; reasonable access is required to get the artics as near to the site as possible, and the crane lorry is a meaty bit of kit, but so far we haven't encountered too many problems that can't be overcome by the guys at the sharp end. Each module can weigh in excess of 3.5 tonnes so absolute safety and precision is a minimum requirement at all times".

Installation

At Windmill Farm the process began on a Monday morning, with the team stripping off the existing timber trusses and raising the plate by several inches to avoid snagging with existing services and insulation. Because it can be done in stages the exposure to the elements is kept to a



minimum, although heavy tarpaulins are secured as a precaution. By Wednesday they were ready to accept the first module, which was carefully lowered onto the now exposed roof space and bolted into position. A convoy of carefully synchronised deliveries of the remaining four modules meant that, by late Friday afternoon, the complete roof was in place. A couple of extra days to fix the stairs, some minor running repairs, and the Beattie family was ready to enjoy what in just a week had become their dream home.

"I've got to say, from start to finish, I can't speak highly enough of the whole process. When you first see all that heavy plant turn up, and then the lorries coming up the narrow lanes, it looks initially like a recipe for disaster, but these guys really know what they are doing and it has all gone like clockwork", gushes Jonathan.



MORE INFORMATION

For further information about Moduloft use the reader enquiry number 159