

Property

Refusing to put view in the shade

SUCCESSFUL architecture sometimes involves a little sleight of hand. When John Duffy Architects was commissioned to build a huge, five-bedroom family home in Dunmore East, Co Waterford, one of the biggest design challenges was underplaying the size of the property.

The location was spectacular — a south-facing, but steeply sloping site with panoramic views of Dunmore harbour — but the fact the house would be visible from Dunmore East and that the views from the neighbouring Killea church were protected meant the house had to be discreet.

Catherine Mara, an architect and a director of John Duffy Design, was the project manager at Dunmore East. "This is a very large house of 780 square metres, so it was hard to get planning," she says. "We had to try and make it look like less, so part of the trick was to terrace it and work it into the contours of the site. By doing this, the bulk of it was concealed somewhat."

On the external approach, the house seems smaller than it is, with only two of the three storeys visible. The front door leads into a tall, spacious hallway on the middle storey. Off this is a lounge, while further along is a very large, open-plan, kitchen/dining-room. This whole area was designed to cater to the owners' wishes to have a fun home where they could hold parties and entertain friends.

Kathy Foley visits a spectacular home in Dunmore East designed to discreetly fit in with its coastal setting

"There is a back-to-back fireplace between that room and the lounge, so it acts as a centrepoint between those areas," says Mara. "The front of the house has three large folding doors that open on to the deck."

Upstairs is home to the master suite, which has its own large en suite bathroom, dressing rooms, Jacuzzi and steam room, along with a concealed terraced and outdoor fireplace. There are two other bedrooms at this level.

Relaxing as the master suite facilities are, the star attraction of the house is the swimming pool, although it is technically in a separate building, which also has a wetroom area, with a double

shower, sauna and changing area.

Clearly, this home required architectural know-how beyond the usual requirements. "We would be well-known for our leisure projects so the fact that we had that experience helped," says Mara. "It was interesting to do it for someone's home, where they wanted that luxury feel, without having to go away and still be part of their community."

Along with the pool area, the house has plenty of other space for enjoyment and relaxation. The lower level is home to a games room, a home cinema and a gym, along with two more bedrooms. Every bedroom in the house has access to an outdoor

space, such as a terrace or patio.

The build went well, says Mara. "As the majority of this house was built around the site contours, there weren't too many unknown or unforeseen issues. A lot of detailing was done during the build to make sure everything worked. The solid oak window system, which involved very large windows and folding doors, came from Austria so we had to redetail and double-check that once it was on site."

It was this detailing work that pushed the project over time by about three months, says Mara, with it ultimately taking 14 months to complete. Other time consuming elements were the

natural limestone at the entrance and the dry stone walling, which was done by a local craftsman.

Those details were a nod towards traditional local architecture, as were the white render, slate roof tiles and green oak used at the entrance and on the balconies.

This is a highly energy-efficient property, with a commercial standard lighting system of long-life LED lights throughout.

"The house is self-sustaining to an extent, with 10 sq m of solar panels on roof providing hot water for the pool and the house, along with a heat recovery system in the poolhouse and a geothermal heat pump," says Mara.



SUNNY SOUTH EAST: John Duffy Architects designed this impressive five-bed house in Co Waterford.