



# *Copper Cottage*

Architects team31 explain the rationale behind contemporary interventions to a traditional Luxembourg village house.



The owners of this 19th century cottage in a small village north of Luxembourg decided that they would retire there. The house, as it was, had the charm of an old cottage but did not offer the required comfort for a main residence. The attached barn was being used as a garage and shed and the idea was to transform this huge empty volume into a new living room with a kitchen - and to alter the existing cottage as little as possible.

Various considerations influenced our design. The existing cottage has very small windows which give uninteresting views of neighbouring buildings, roofs and streets. The owners wanted views of their own property, gardens and the landscape. The existing stairs in the cottage were narrow, too steep and considered to be dangerous. It was decided that they should be replaced with wider and less steep staircases for safety and comfort.

Photo: Paulo Lobo - Luxedit

As the cottage will now be used by older people wishing to spend the rest of their lives there, it seemed obvious to design the layout in preparation for potential future mobility issues. As a result, it was necessary to locate a kitchen, living room, office, sanitary facilities and sleeping rooms all on the ground floor of the building, whilst retaining the possibility of a second, independent living space in the cottage. From an architectural point of view, we considered it necessary to clearly define the new parts of the building and the existing 19th century building. The owners wished to retain the authenticity of the existing cottage, which was probably built between 1805 and 1820.

### Designers' Response

Working with the interior designer, our analysis of the owners' proposal rapidly revealed that the barn was not big enough to accommodate the new living room and kitchen. Moreover, there were not enough windows on the facade to allow sufficient light into the living room and they did not offer the desired views of the landscape and the property. It was therefore obvious that an extension was necessary. In accordance with the wishes of the owners, the forms of the new volumes signal a contrast between our way of living now and the way we lived some 200 years ago.

As a result, the old and the new are interrelated - yet provide a contrasting effect. The transition from old to new does not operate on one precise borderline but rather by the effects of transparency and sightlines from old to new and vice versa. The new, very large plate glass windows open the perspectives up to the more set back location of the cottage. The old cottage has been kept in its original



Photo: Paulo Lobo – Luxedit



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state (almost), with its configuration of small rooms, low ceilings and exposed beams and old stone and parquet floors.

The facades and roofs of the new volumes are characterised by a covering of copper – used here as a modern material. It is both rustic and modern, and with a visual appearance that develops in sympathy with the rural setting in the north of the country.



Photo: team31

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**Architects:** team31 architecture office (Folmer/Rodesch/Weyland) [www.team31.lu](http://www.team31.lu)  
**Interior Designer:** Laurent Biever  
**Copper Installer:** KALBFUSS GMBH  
**Copper Products:** TECU® Classic and TECU® Zinn

*“Copper – rustic and modern...  
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the rural setting.”*



Photo: Paulo Lobo - Luvedit