

# CHARACTER BUILDING

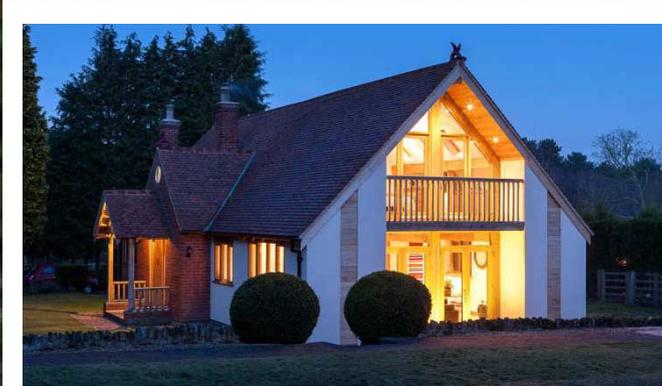
Adding a two-storey oak-framed extension has given Carl and Wendy Gibson's 1950s dormer bungalow a new lease of life.

**W**hen Carl Gibson purchased a 1950s dormer bungalow in 2007 he was attracted by the secluded one-acre plot rather than the four-bedroom property which stood on it. The green belt site is accessed via a short farm track and edged by woodland and open fields, but the bungalow itself was less appealing.

"There was no bathroom upstairs, just a ground floor shower room, and the south-facing conservatory was only suitable for drying washing because it was freezing cold in winter and too hot in summer," Carl explains. "The plot demanded a nicer house, and after living there for a few years we decided to spend some money on improving the design."

Planning permission for a single-storey extension had already been obtained by the previous owner, and Carl and his wife Wendy invited several oak-framing companies to visit the site and discuss ideas. "They wanted us to knock down the bungalow and start again, but £425,000 seemed like a lot of money to have paid for a building plot, so we decided to work with what was already here," continues Carl.

Following extensive research the couple contacted three local designers, including Paul Day of PD Architecture – a practice of chartered architectural technologists offering services across the East Midlands. Not only was Paul's design





### **Totally transformed**

The unremarkable 1950s dormer bungalow had four bedrooms and a conservatory which was never used. An oak-framed structure was used to form the feature gable end, the entire roof was refurbished and all the uPVC windows have been replaced with natural oak. The internal layout was also rearranged to move the main entrance to the centre of the property.



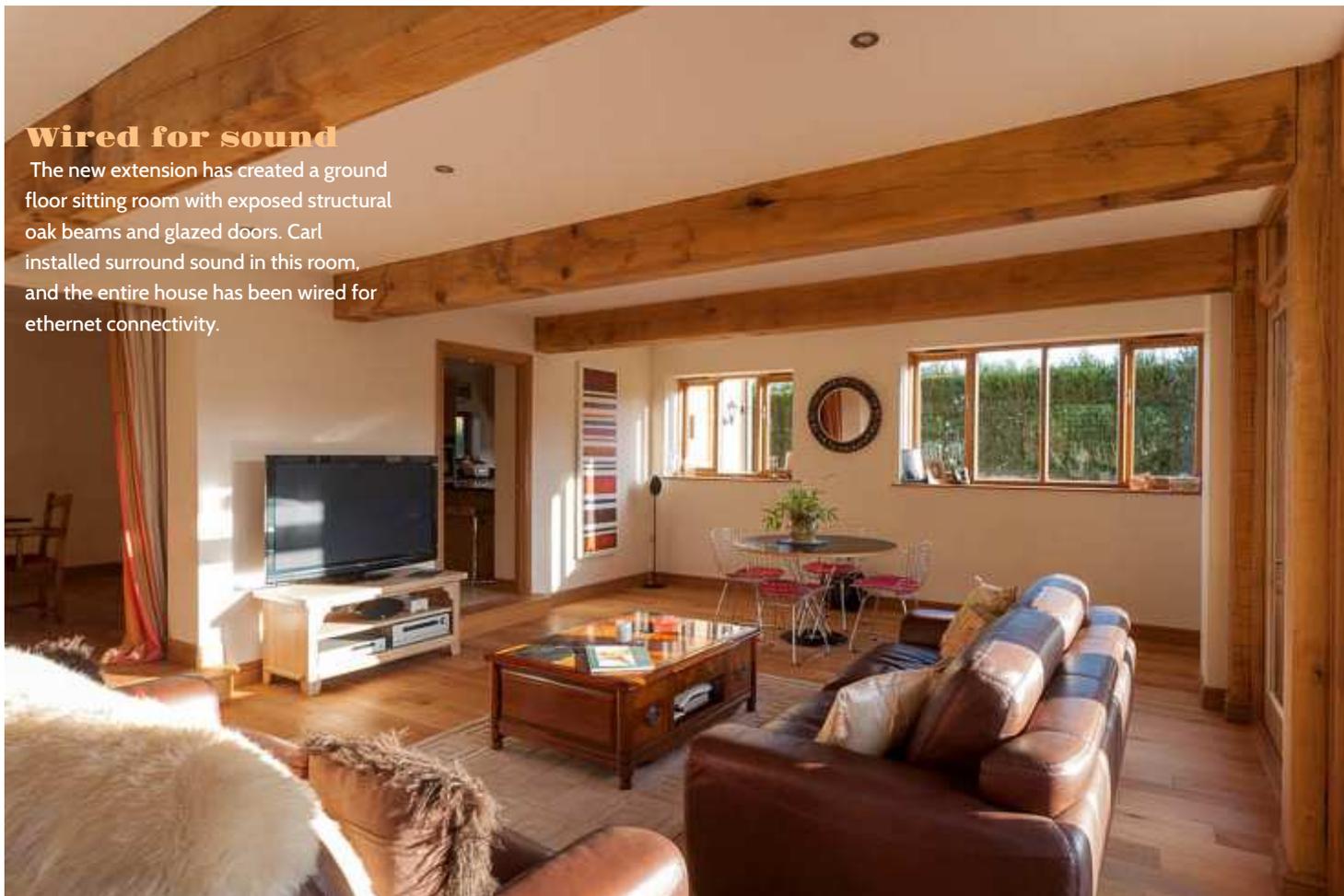


**Cosy dining**

A new log burner provides a cosy focus in the dining area.

**Wired for sound**

The new extension has created a ground floor sitting room with exposed structural oak beams and glazed doors. Carl installed surround sound in this room, and the entire house has been wired for ethernet connectivity.



the most exciting, but his fees were also extremely reasonable,” says Carl. “The other two designers were suggesting flat roofs and cedar cladding, but Paul translated what we wanted rather than imposing his own taste.”

A one-and-a-half storey pitch-roofed extension was proposed, which would accommodate a new principal bedroom on the first floor with a ground floor sitting room, accessed from both the dining room (previously the lounge) and kitchen.

The original pine staircase has remained in the same position but a new doorway beside the dining room fireplace enabled the main entrance to be relocated to the centre of the new façade. This creates a more balanced, symmetrical appearance, and the sturdy oak porch ties in with new oak-framed windows, which were installed throughout.

Upstairs, the new vaulted main bedroom in the extension opens onto a covered balcony, enjoying elevated views over neighbouring fields. This freed up one of the existing bedrooms to be divided into a family bathroom and a principal en suite. A further double bedroom has also been constructed above the kitchen, replacing a storage area and creating a spacious five-bedroom property measuring 220 sq m.

“One of the biggest surprises was that our planning application was approved immediately, with no objections,” says Wendy, who works as a translator. “Our neighbours had applied several times for a two-storey extension and had been refused, so we weren’t particularly hopeful. The fact that our design continues the existing ridge height definitely helped the application.”

**Revamped kitchen**

The old lounge is now the dining room, with sliding doors opening into the new living room. Oak cabinets and granite worktops were chosen for the revamped kitchen.





## Carl and Wendy's top tips

Do your research – comparing like for like on the roof tiles saved us over £5,000. Make sure your structural details are sorted before quotes are in: some beams had to be increased in size and wind-posts needed to be included, all leading to additional cost. And choose the right architect – don't be bamboozled by pretty sketches and arty websites!



### Vaulted bedroom

Engineered oak flooring has been laid in the new vaulted principal bedroom, which opens onto a covered balcony through doors in the glazed gable end. LED lighting was utilised throughout the extension. A new family bathroom was created on the first floor with a round window and a sunken double corner bath.

Wendy and Carl continued to live on the ground floor of the property throughout the build, which was completed by a small local company following a tender process. "It was very dusty living here, and we probably should have moved out, but our builder was great," says Carl. "He was really interested in the project and came up with several suggestions of his own."

The old conservatory was quickly demolished and footings were excavated for the extension. Floor levels in the new sitting room were dropped in order to accommodate the structural oak beams without compromising ceiling heights upstairs.

A masonry structure was adopted to improve the thermal mass of the property and bring the project in on budget, with structural oak beams and purlins exposed internally and lightly oiled. Externally, the blockwork walls have been finished in ivory self-coloured render, in contrast to the existing brickwork, with slim decorative oak strips running down the new gable wall to either side of the balcony and glazed doors.

I didn't want to pay for structural calculations before planning permission was granted, but holding back on this

proved to be a mistake because the oak beams in the sitting room had to be increased in size to 200mm by 300mm," admits Carl. "Additional wind-posts were also required in the side walls of the extension, which needed to be made to order, and work stopped for four weeks while we waited for these to arrive – by which time the weather had changed for the worse."

The original roof tiles on the bungalow were replaced with clay tiles to match the extension, and three dragon finials inspired by Wendy's Chinese heritage add the finishing touch. "We didn't want to try to match the old roof, because the tiles were ugly and the join would have been too obvious," she explains. "We had a huge number of sample tiles to choose from and decided to go with machine-made ones as we really couldn't tell the difference and they were several thousand pounds cheaper than the handmade versions."

Additional insulation, over and above Building Regulation requirements, was specified for the extension, and insulation levels were also improved in the existing house. "The insulation is extremely effective as we've never used the upstairs underfloor heating and very rarely need to heat the lounge," says Carl.



## Extension

South-facing glazing takes advantage of the open views and maximises passive solar gain, but is shaded from the high summer sun by the balcony and overhanging roof, which cast shadows over the glazed area. Rooflights provide rapid ventilation to the first floor of the extension, as do the glazed doors in the ground floor sitting room.

A 4kw PV solar panel array was sited in the garden on a bespoke framework, which faces south for optimum performance. "We didn't want to ruin the roof with solar panels, but it was difficult to find anyone to undertake an off-roof installation, and we hadn't realised that we needed to get planning permission," Carl explains. "The panels have already generated more than £3,000 of electricity though, so payback should be quite fast."

The Gibsons investigated a variety of other 'green' technologies, and have also made provision for a grey water system, with pipes already laid to catch rainwater run-off and return it to the house for flushing toilets and washing clothes.

"Living on site during the build definitely had its advantages, and I took pictures every day between September 2011 and March 2012 to record the various stages," says Carl, whose company offers online educational resources. "It was a particularly cold winter, though, and the patio doors in the old lounge had been replaced with temporary studwork, so we kept the woodburning stove constantly lit to try to keep warm."

Despite a major water leak and delays caused by the wind-posts the project came in close to budget at around £150,000. Once the main building work had been completed in March 2012 Carl and Wendy had a five

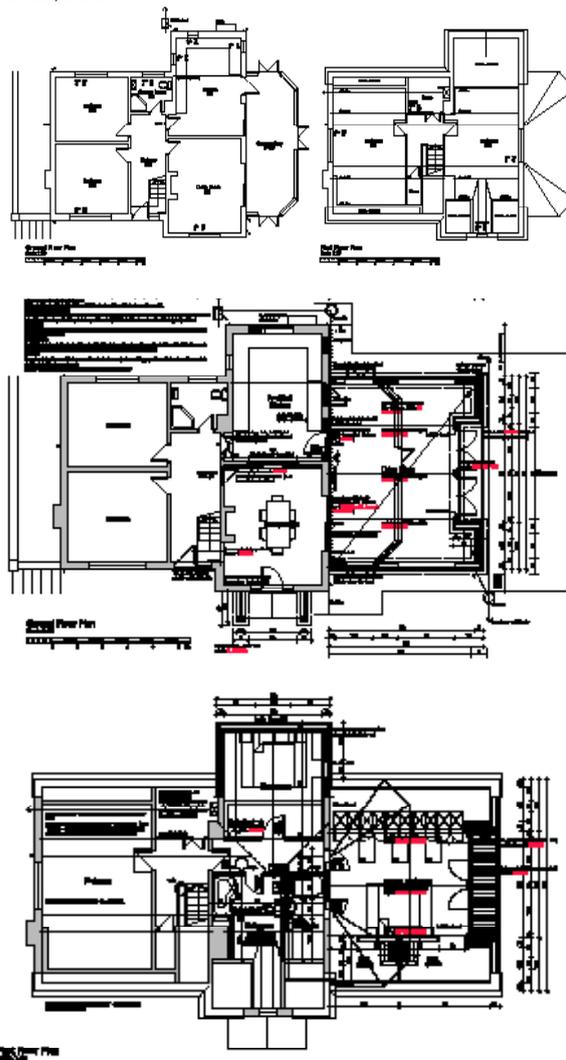
month break before making a temporary kitchen in one of the bedrooms and spending an additional £25,000 remodelling their kitchen over the summer.

This included digging out and insulating the floor to ensure seamless levels between the kitchen and neighbouring dining room. "We laid travertine flooring in the kitchen and fitted oak cabinets with granite worktops," says Carl.

"The builders laughed at our love of oak, because we chose oak flooring, doors and windows, which complement the beams and add instant character. The extension has virtually doubled the size of the house and has totally changed the way we use the space. Now we have a home we really love, where we want to stay."

### THE BOTTOM LINE

Wendy and Carl paid £425,000 for the original bungalow and spent around £175,000 extending and upgrading the property, which is currently valued at in excess of £625,000.



### Floorplan

The existing dormer bungalow has been extended sideways with a two-storey oak-framed extension containing a sitting room and a first floor main bedroom. One of the upstairs bedrooms has been divided to create a bathroom and a principal en-suite; a double bedroom was built over the kitchen and the entrance has been relocated so that a new oak porch opens directly into the dining room.



### Home truths

#### What was the high point of the project?

Obtaining planning permission at the first attempt; coming home to see the gable end erected, and learning that we could fit a luxurious corner bath in our modestly sized main bathroom were all high points.

#### ...and the low point?

Discovering a major water leak (unrelated to the build) after laying the lounge floor was a real low point. There were also delays waiting for wind-posts to be fabricated.

#### What was your best buy?

The chimney pots were free – they'd been left as rubbish by the previous owner at the side of the garage and were perfectly serviceable.

It was great to discover that they complement the roof tiles perfectly. ...And your biggest extravagance?

Using oak (including all new windows to replace perfectly serviceable uPVC) probably increased the project cost by over 30 per cent and provided a constant source of amusement for our joiners, who often left us notes about our love of oak.

### Contacts

#### PROJECT

Design PD Architecture: [www.pd-architecture.co.uk](http://www.pd-architecture.co.uk)

Building contractor D W Ball: [www.dwball.co.uk](http://www.dwball.co.uk)

#### STRUCTURE

Roof tiles Marley Eternit: [www.marleyeternit.co.uk](http://www.marleyeternit.co.uk)

Joinery (doors, window frames, beams etc) Hammersmith Ltd: 01773 743441

Sun tunnel Velux: [www.velux.co.uk](http://www.velux.co.uk)

Cast aluminium guttering Yeoman Rainguard: [www.rainguard.co.uk](http://www.rainguard.co.uk)

#### FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Finials Roof Dragon: [www.roofdragon.com](http://www.roofdragon.com)

Kitchen Kitchen Connections: 0115 986 5655

Underfloor heating Polypipe: [www.polypipe.co.uk](http://www.polypipe.co.uk)

Sanitaryware and heating suppliers Plumbing Trade Supplies: [www.ptsplumbing.co.uk](http://www.ptsplumbing.co.uk)

Oak flooring Elka: [www.elkaflooring.com](http://www.elkaflooring.com)

Lighting (master bedroom and entrance hall)

After Dark Lighting: [www.afterdarklighting.co.uk](http://www.afterdarklighting.co.uk)