

CASE STUDY

PLANNING AHEAD

After many years of planning, Steve and Rebecca Arthur recently replaced their tired dormer bungalow with a new timber-framed house designed to adapt to the family's changing needs.

Story: Debbie Jeffery Photography: Potton/Rebecca Arthur

“We were living in a small 1930s semi, and needed to upsize when our first child was born,” explains Rebecca Arthur. “Steve and

I had no previous building experience, but we were keen to build our own house because we knew we could reclaim the VAT, so when finding a plot proved impossible we bought a rundown bungalow which we planned to demolish and replace with a new home.”

The couple purchased the 1970s chalet-style bungalow back in 2002, and began to consider how best to redevelop the half-acre site. “We wanted to build a timber-framed house, and ordered brochures

for kit homes from America and Scandinavia, but the designs just weren’t quite right,” says Rebecca, a wine professional. “Saving money for the build was one of the main reasons why we delayed starting, but then we just got used to living there.”

Years passed and the couple’s two sons – Dan, now 15, and Will, 14 – enjoyed the freedom of growing up in the dated bungalow. “We replaced the heating and put in a new kitchen, but other than that we spent the bare minimum because it was always supposed to be temporary,” says Rebecca. “It was a great house for kids, because we didn’t really care what they did to it!”

As time passed the poorly insulated bungalow fell further into disrepair and desperately needed

Exterior

The New England-style home is clad in fibre cement weatherboarding which, along with uPVC windows and a slate roof, ensure that the exterior of the new timber-framed house is low maintenance. A single-storey sunroom opens onto a terrace to the rear of the house.



In brief

Project

New timber-frame house

Location

Hertfordshire

Plot cost £340k in 2002

Spent £379k

Worth £925k+



new windows throughout. After receiving a quote for £45,000 for replacement windows Steve and Rebecca knew that the time had come to finally demolish the property and build the replacement house they had already planned in their heads.

Steve first learnt of Potton through a fellow airline pilot, who had built with the timber frame company and was extremely pleased with the end result. "Like many others, we had this complete misconception that Potton only supply Tudor- and Georgian-style houses," Steve explains.

"After meeting with a Potton self-build consultant we soon realised that this wasn't the case, and that they are completely flexible when it comes to the design – allowing us to create something totally bespoke."

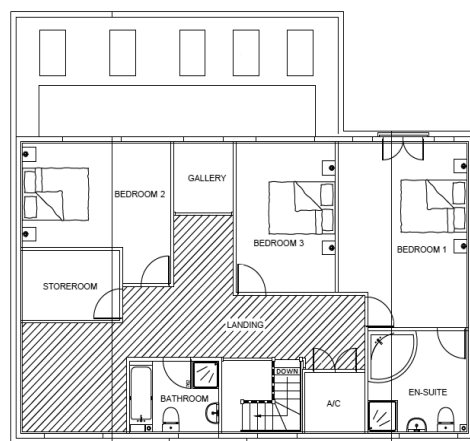
The Arthurs liked the idea of building a New England-style home, clad in weatherboarding, but as their plot is surrounded by chalet-style homes they assumed that planning permission would only be granted for a similar design. They therefore chose to build into the roof, with sloping ceilings which reduced usable living space on the first floor.

Unfortunately, the initial design exceeded the couple's budget, so they worked with Potton and the planning consultant on a redesign to ensure the house still incorporated all the features the family wanted. This was achieved by slicing two metres from the ground floor and taking the design from a chalet bungalow to a full two-storey house, which has been future-proofed by including a bedroom and bathroom downstairs.

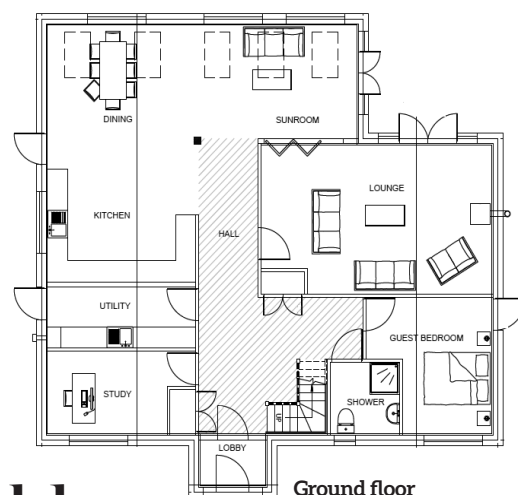


Speedy build

The timber frame was supplied by Potton, arriving on a lorry one evening. The ground floor was up the following day, with the first floor installed the day after.



First floor



Ground floor

Budget breakdown

Timber frame, stairs etc.....	£111,581	Flooring.....	£17,270
Planning and surveys.....	£3,603	Electrics.....	£12,093
Project management.....	£25,870	Carpentry.....	£24,265
Demolition.....	£10,000	Decorators.....	£7,158
Foundations.....	£26,800	Log-burner.....	£4,176
Scaffold.....	£2,660	Plumbing.....	£16,977
Slates and roofing.....	£18,344	Landscaping.....	£27,838
Bricks.....	£3,737	Portaloos hire.....	£1,056
MVHR.....	£4,429	Drainage.....	£6,110
Fibre cement cladding.....	£11,235	Utilities connection.....	£8,220
Kitchen and appliances.....	£8,340	Screed.....	£2,500
Wooden bifolds.....	£1,918	IKEA wardrobes and sofas.....	£4,050
Plastering.....	£13,385		
Bathroom fittings.....	£5,399		
		TOTAL	£379,014

In detail

PROJECT

Design Potton: potton.co.uk
Site survey etc CHQ Partnership: chq-architects.co.uk
Demolition, pre-build works, landscaping Bell Groundworks: 01767 260641
Site and build insurance, 10-year warranty Self Build Zone: selfbuildzone.com

STRUCTURE

Timber frame, insulation, staircase Potton: potton.co.uk
uPVC windows supply and installation A and B Glass: abglass.co.uk
Cedral fibre cement weatherboard cladding Cedral: cedralsidings.com
Bricks Ibstock Brick: ibstock.com
Roof slates Cupa R12: cupapizarra.com/uk

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Sanitaryware Ideal Standard: ideal-standard.co.uk

Kitchen DIY Kitchens: diy-kitchens.com

Internal bifolds Vibrant Doors: vibrantdoors.co.uk

Taps Bristan: bristan.com

Kitchen floor tiles Karndean: karndean.com

Wet-room floor Polyflor: polyflor.co.uk

Flooring supplier Melbourn Flooring: melbournflooring.co.uk

Boiling tap Quooker: quooker.co.uk

Stove Charnwood: charnwood.com

Sanitary fittings Doble Bathrooms: doblebathrooms.com

Shower surrounds Mermaid Panels: mermaidpanels.com

Bathroom mirrors Powerful Vision: illuminated-mirrors.uk.com

Water softener BWT: bwt-uk.co.uk

Showers Aqualisa: aqualisa.co.uk

MVHR Regavent: regavent.co.uk

Underfloor heating NuHeat: nu-heat.co.uk



Kitchen/ dining

Bifold doors open the kitchen/dining space into the sunroom, creating one large space when required. The open-plan sunroom area is brightly lit by glass doors and roof lights.





REBECCA'S TOP TIP

“A large landing and spacious hall really make a house feel sumptuous if you can afford to allocate the space.”

“I don't really like completely open-plan living, to be honest,” says Rebecca. “We wanted a house with plenty of space and light where we could have parties, but also with the option to close off individual rooms.”

Rebecca's idea was to incorporate sliding folding doors at the dining end of the kitchen, with a similar arrangement between the sitting room and their single-storey sunroom on the back of the house.

Small details were carefully considered, such as the large airing cupboard, and a hatch between the kitchen and utility room for the easy movement of shopping and laundry.

A site survey was organised, followed by a pre-planning application, which led to the detailed approval being passed without amendment. Through Potton the couple were introduced to project manager Shaun O'Connor, who has acted for many clients and who lives in a Potton home himself. The first task was to demolish the existing bungalow in May 2016, including the poorly constructed 1980s roof extension.

“Demolition revealed just how awful the wiring and plumbing were, and how the sliding doors in the lounge had been installed without a lintel so that the whole structure was bowing,” Rebecca recalls. “It was at this stage that we knew we'd made the right decision to pull everything down.”





“Finally we have the house we’d been dreaming about for all those years, and we don’t have to face any more DIY.”

The old bungalow had been long and thin, and was located just a short distance from the neighbour’s boundary, but its replacement has been positioned more centrally on the plot and was designed without side windows to prevent overlooking.

The groundworks and foundations were finished, and a brick consultant recommended by Potton visited with a variety of samples for the plinth – which was eventually matched to an existing brick-built double garage on the site.

Once this was completed the Potton team arrived on site to erect the structural timber frame. “Seeing the frame go up was amazing,” says Steve. “It arrived on a lorry one evening and by the next the ground floor was up, with the first floor erected the following day. One man then went up and down a ladder and fixed all the plasterboard extremely quickly.”

Fibre-cement soffits, weatherboarding and fascias were specified for a low-maintenance finish, and the roof has been clad in natural slate. The Arthurs were to regret delaying the installation of

Final word

What was the high point?

Seeing the scaffolding come down was a high point, and we moved in on December 23 and had a house-warming party the following day, which was fantastic. Every time we go away we come home and the house still smells new.

...and the low point?

Our electrician didn’t install any phone sockets at first, despite them being on the plan and quote.

The best buy?

A Panasonic electric



Japanese toilet seat in our en suite, with a water jet and blow dry, which cost £150. They can cost £1,000 in the UK, but Steve travels a lot with his job and bought it in Hong Kong.

...and the biggest extravagance?

The sanitaryware is all Ideal Standard, and our boiling water tap was a bit of an extravagance, but we shopped around and bought everything online.



Sitting room

A wood-burning stove has been installed in the sitting room, which may be completely closed off from the rest of the ground floor.



their wood-burning stove at this stage, because the hole that was required in the wall and cladding had to be cut later, taking additional time.

Luck was on the family's side throughout the eight-month build, however, as they were able to live at Steve's father's house in a nearby village. "The weather was very kind to us and caused no delays, and the contractors we used were excellent, especially the carpenters. They made a fantastic job of the oak flooring and hanging the internal bifold doors," says Rebecca, who visited the site on a daily basis to take photographs for her blog about the build.

She designed and ordered the kitchen herself, and the carpenters then fitted it over two days. "We love the boiling water tap and the underfloor heating, which has been installed throughout the house," she says.

"We also have a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system, which was recommended to us because the timber frame is so highly insulated and well-sealed. It has summer and winter settings, and a kitchen booster for when we're cooking, so there's never any condensation and it doesn't feel stuffy because air is constantly circulated."

Having set a target to complete the house by Christmas 2016 the family decided to go ahead and move in on December 23, with just a small amount of work still outstanding. They have buried a biscuit-tin time capsule underneath their glazed sunroom, which has become a favourite place to sit and relax, and plan not to move again.

"We designed the layout to be flexible so that we can continue living here into old age, with disabled access to the ground floor bedroom and wet room, and space for installing a lift," explains Rebecca.

"After waiting so long to build our own home, and putting so much thought into every detail, we're now completely settled and so glad we finally took the plunge. It took us longer to start than we originally planned, but finally we have the house we'd been dreaming about for all those years, and we don't have to face any more DIY."