

# Generation game



Family ties and a determined approach brought **the Gibbons** closer together in their bid to create a cosy, characterful new home

WORDS **IFEOLUWA ADEDEJI** PHOTOS **KATIE LEE/POTTON**

Above: The red brick and pantile finish was specified by the planners to ensure the house would fit into the local setting

**W**ith four renovation projects already under their belts, Teresa and Terry Gibbons decided it was time to build their own bespoke home from scratch. “When you renovate, you never quite get what you’re looking for,” says Teresa, who feels their new house meets all their aspirations. “It’s very comfortable and is in a wonderful setting.”



## THE GIBBONS FILE

**NAMES** Terry & Teresa Gibbons  
**OCCUPATIONS** Engineer & retired  
**LOCATION** Lincolnshire  
**TYPE OF BUILD** Self build  
**STYLE** Classic rectory  
**CONSTRUCTION METHOD**  
 Timber frame  
**PLOT SIZE** 0.25 acres  
**LAND COST** Already owned  
**HOUSE SIZE** 191m<sup>2</sup>  
**PROJECT COST** £240,000  
**PROJECT COST PER M<sup>2</sup>** £1,257  
**TOTAL COST** £313,000  
**BUILDING WORK COMMENCED**  
 February 2014  
**BUILDING WORK TOOK**  
 One year



In fact, their plot had been in the family for years. "We finally decided to build on it so that we could be closer to Terry's parents, who are just next door, and help look after them," says Teresa.

The couple knew that self building would be a real labour of love, so Terry took a sabbatical to allow him to get hands-on with the project. With a background in engineering and plenty of family and friends to call on for support, he was able to complete a significant amount of the work himself – although the Gibbons opted for a timber frame package to take care of the main shell of the house.

The couple's renovation experience had also furnished them with the skills required to bring their ideas to fruition.

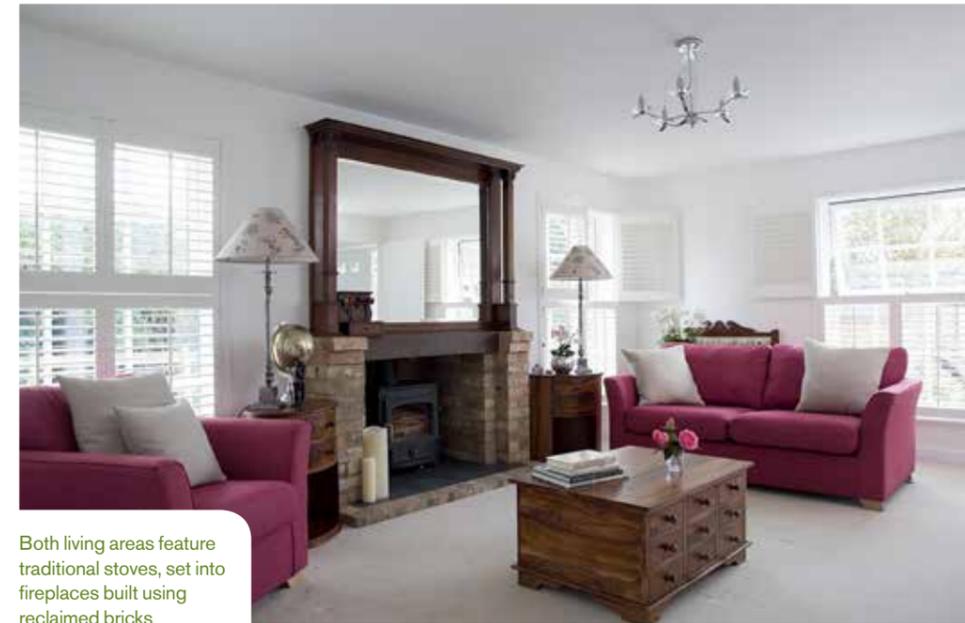
### Choosing a style

Terry and Teresa had very clear notions of what they wanted to achieve with a self build project, and over the years they'd drawn up a number of sketches to shape their vision. "We'd actually been to several architects. The problem we'd found with some of these professionals was that they had ideas they wanted to sell – but they

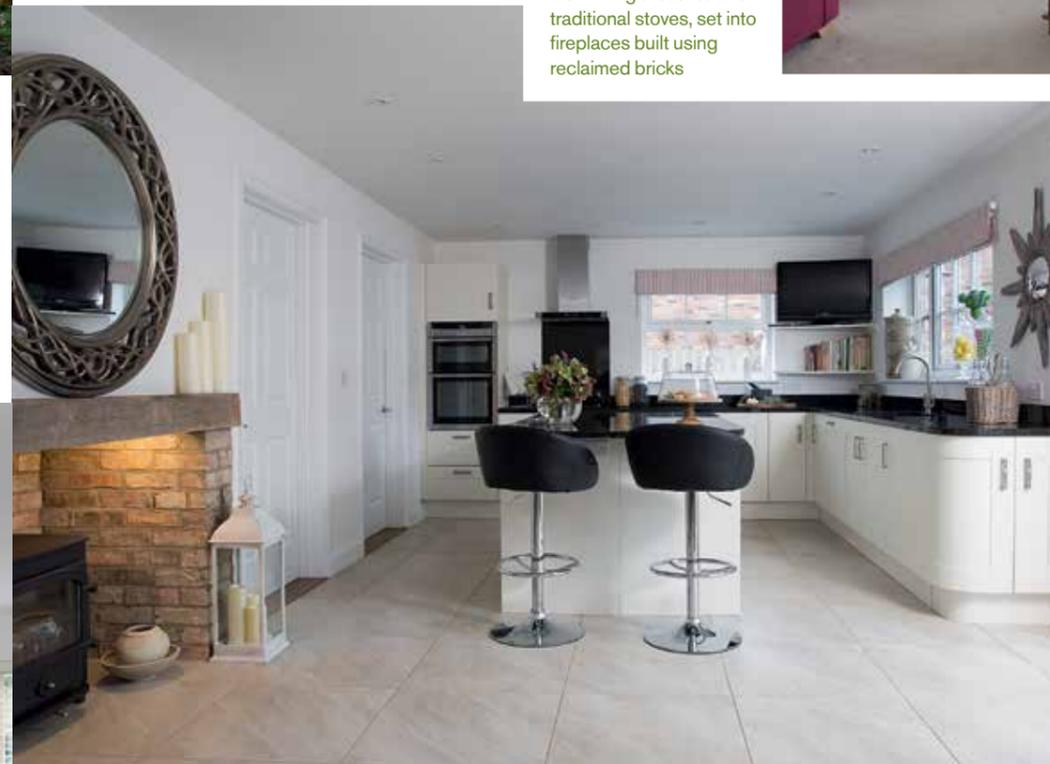


The open-plan kitchen-diner is complemented by antique furniture the couple has collected over the years

*"We started the planning process by speaking to our local authority and simply asking them what we could build"*



Both living areas feature traditional stoves, set into fireplaces built using reclaimed bricks



### Practical planning

The couple took an inclusive approach to securing consent for their project. "We started by speaking to our local authority and asking them what we could build," says Teresa. "We also showed them the house styles we liked." The Gibbons met with the planners several times to discuss their scheme, which ultimately proved fruitful as the project was approved in just 12 weeks.

The only aspects that took a little longer to rubber stamp were the roof and wall materials. The planners wanted the couple to incorporate red pantiles and facing bricks – both of which Terry and Teresa liked, as they would help the house blend in better with the local vernacular. However, this was at a time when

just weren't what we wanted," says Terry. The Gibbons ultimately decided to work with specialist timber frame manufacturer, Potton, to come up with a suitable scheme. They had actually visited the company's show homes centre several years prior, but had chosen to put off their dream at the time and renovate another property.

In 2013, the couple paid the firm a second visit and were pleased to find the team was very accommodating of their design aspirations. They both liked the company's Papplewick design but wanted to make some alterations to it. "Potton were great because they came up with some very good ideas," says Teresa. "We sat with Tom Allen for several days and he was brilliant – making various changes to suit us. He suggested optimum positions for the windows, for example, and placing an alcove on the landing upstairs."

Teresa was particularly delighted with the fact that they were able to match the design of the house to the furniture that they already owned. "The scheme we created really suits our style, so we've been able to keep our collections of antique pieces," she says.

bricks were in short supply. "We were struggling to actually get hold of the units," says Teresa. "The builder's merchants managed to track something down that the planners were willing to approve." This was a big relief, as otherwise the job would have been held up.

### Digging in

In February 2014, the Gibbons sold their existing property and moved in with their daughter and son-in-law, who lived around 45 minutes away from the site. The couple quickly signed up their son-in-law, who is a farmer and groundworks contractor, to help get the work started. They were lucky to hit bedrock at a depth of 1.5m – perfect for the foundations for their timber frame. "This part of the project was pretty straightforward, as the ground in this area doesn't move like it does in a lot of places," says Terry. "It meant that we were able to put down the footings fairly quickly."

Once these were in place, the Potton timber frame went up in just three weeks. The panels are packed with solid insulation and taped

## WE LEARNED...

**PLAN THE HOUSE** carefully and think about how you are going to accommodate any existing furniture you want to keep.

**IF YOU HAVE TIME** to project manage the scheme, do so: you'll be able to keep a much tighter rein on your budget.

**TRY TO INVOLVE** the local planning department from the very beginning, as they're much more likely to be amenable to your proposal if they feel engaged.

**PACKAGE COMPANIES** can offer a wealth of experience and solutions to suit your project. Working with Potton helped make the house work better for us, as they came up with ideas we wouldn't have even considered otherwise.

**MAKE SURE DELIVERIES** are tightly scheduled and managed, as the slightest delay can have a significant impact on your construction programme.



up for airtightness, ensuring a warm and cosy structural envelope. "I made sure every gap was sealed: if a contractor drilled a hole, it had to be filled," says Terry. Internally, a 50mm cavity was left before the plasterboard finishes – creating a service void for easy installation.

With Terry taking on the bulk of the work and Teresa project managing, they recruited specialist trades only when they were

required. "We found a really good bricklayer through one of our previous neighbours," says Terry. "They'd had some work done and the tradesman did such a good job that I asked for his contact details. It turned out he was retired but still did little bits." The Gibbons managed to persuade him to take their project on. "He really enjoyed working for us because we pretty much left him to it and he did an



excellent job," says Terry. "I've seen some really poor brickwork over the years and if it happens to you, you can't hide it, it's there forever. So we were very fortunate to find a reliable contractor."

At times, the Gibbons also enlisted builder Tom Merchant for his expertise and the fact he had a lot of useful contacts. "Along with my son-in-law, he helped me to set out the footings and put the roof on," says Terry. "He also knew a really good electrician."

### Getting hands-on

Teresa focussed on sourcing plant and materials at the right times to keep the project moving, and as a result the scheme progressed well. "Doing most of the work ourselves meant we could keep a very close eye on the budget," says Teresa. "I knew how much everything costed, from the tiles and bricks to the bathrooms and kitchen."

As a result of her diligence, the couple can count the number of issues they had during the build on one hand. "Of course, there were still moments when I wanted to tear my hair out," says Teresa. "When you're on a budget you really do have to be careful where you spend and you can't afford to make mistakes."

Once the house was weathertight, Terry completed the majority of the plumbing and underfloor heating (UFH) installations himself. Being so involved meant that he had to take a year off work, but he preferred to do so rather than employing someone else. "This way I was able to pay really close attention to detail; and now I know exactly what's behind every single wall," he says.

The pair feels that installing UFH (powered by an air source heat pump) in the house was one of the best choices they made. "It gives you an even temperature throughout, and although we have radiators in the bedrooms, they're never on because we simply don't need them," says Terry. The Gibbons went for a quick-drying, self-levelling liquid screed, which they were able to walk on the very next day. "It's great over heating pipes because it fully encases them and doesn't have air gaps," says Terry. "It's also a dream to tile over."

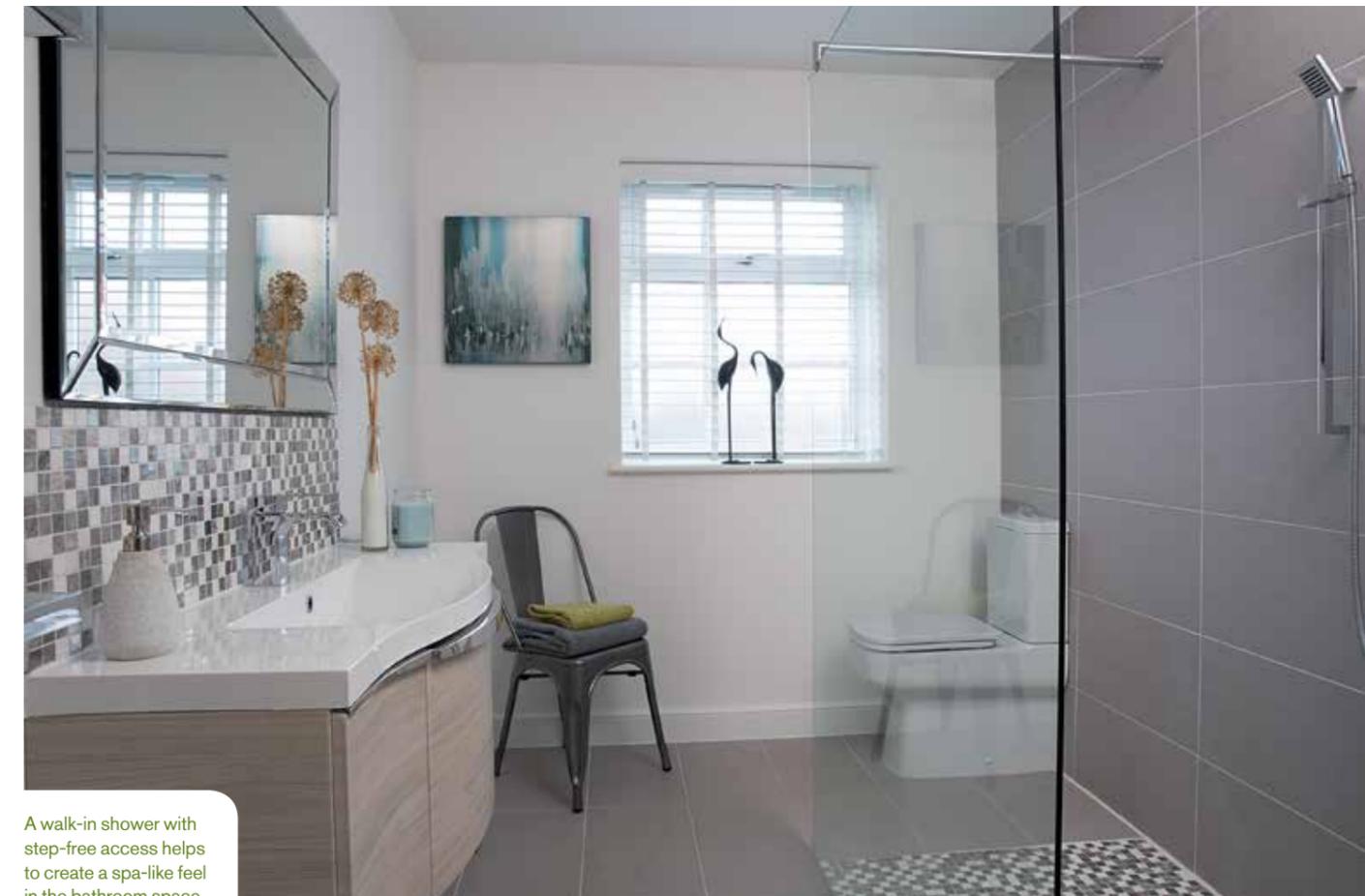
### Bright ideas

Despite taking such a hands-on approach to their project, the main fit-out was finished in a very respectable 12 months. The couple couldn't wait to move into their new home and both agree that their favourite space is the kitchen-diner, which features large windows that establish an appealing connection with the garden.

"In our previous properties the rooms always felt small and disconnected, but here even when it's dark outside it feels light and airy," says Teresa. Artificial brightness is provided by LED bulbs throughout the property, and the Gibbons have found running costs

to be very low. "We have 18 downlighters in the kitchen-diner running at just 4.5 watts (W) per fitting," says Terry. "So it works out at less energy than a single old-style 100W incandescent bulb."

There's no doubt this couple relished their self build journey, and with their adventure now complete they are enjoying every inch of their new home. "I would definitely build again, because you just can't imagine how much satisfaction it gives you," says Terry. "You learn so much as you go along."



A walk-in shower with step-free access helps to create a spa-like feel in the bathroom space

closer look

# Creating a cosy home...



The Gibbons have used renewable technology to create a comfortable, low-energy environment with minimal running costs. The principal tech is an air-to-water heat pump (ASHP) powering underfloor heating (UFH). The 16kW system from Panasonic captures warmth in the outside air, which is then concentrated via a heat exchanger and transferred into water (stored in a cylinder). This is then typically used to deliver space heating, but can also supply or pre-warm domestic hot water for taps, showers etc.

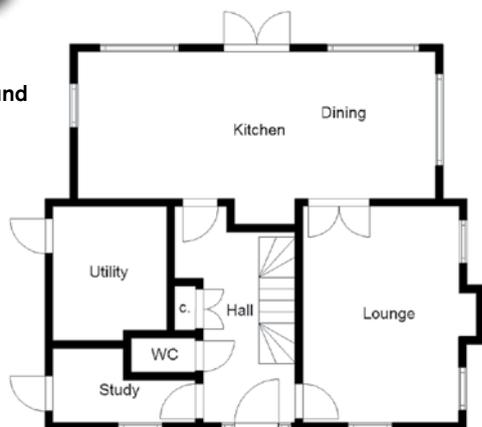
“The ASHP unit is working extremely well and is very economical,” says Teresa. “We have the UFH set to 19°C, which means the floor feels lukewarm and the living spaces are gently heated. We hardly use the two stoves we’ve installed because the main system is so efficient.”

The couple also benefit from cashback via the government’s Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), which pays out a fixed tariff for every kW of energy the ASHP generates.

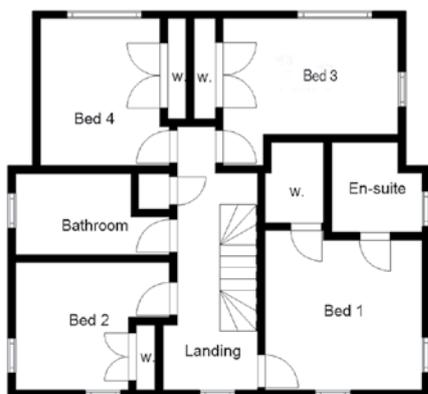


## Floor plans

Ground floor



First floor



House plans re-created using Build It 3D Home Designer software. [www.buildit.co.uk/3dsoftware](http://www.buildit.co.uk/3dsoftware)



## TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m <sup>2</sup>	Cost %	Total cost
Professional fees	£31	3%	£6,000
Preliminaries & site preparation	£63	5%	£12,000
Foundations	£105	8%	£20,000
External walls	£115	9%	£22,000
Timber frame	£440	35%	£84,000
Roof structure & covering	£73	6%	£14,000
Plumbing & heating (incl. bathroom & kitchen)	£199	16%	£38,000
Electrics	£52	4%	£10,000
Joinery & fittings	£42	3%	£8,000
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£73	6%	£14,000
Decorating	£21	2%	£4,000
External works	£42	3%	£8,000
<b>Grand total</b>			<b>£240,000</b>

## Useful contacts



DESIGN & TIMBER FRAME PACKAGE **Potton** 01767 676400 [www.potton.co.uk](http://www.potton.co.uk) GROUNDWORKS **Philip Green, Ashling Plant Contractors** 07789 040922 **BUILDER Tom Merchant** 07977 210033 **PLUMBING D&J Plumbing** 01945 871257 [www.dandjplumbing.co.uk](http://www.dandjplumbing.co.uk) **CARPENTRY Nick Barns** 07727 193028 **AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP Panasonic** 01344 853182 [www.aircon.panasonic.eu](http://www.aircon.panasonic.eu) **BRICKLAYER Tom Wilson, Cowbit** 07765 760545 **BRICKS, KITCHEN & BATHROOM Buildbase** [www.buildbase.co.uk](http://www.buildbase.co.uk) **ROOF TILES Travis Perkins** [www.travisperkins.co.uk](http://www.travisperkins.co.uk) **LIQUID SCREED Direct 2 Site** 0845 071 0188 [www.direct2site.org](http://www.direct2site.org)