

Double-up

The **Bradstocks** transformed their bungalow into a family home on the smallest of budgets, thanks to Adam's relentless work ethic and Karla's endless patience

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THE BRADSTOCK FILE

NAMES Adam & Karla Bradstock
OCCUPATIONS Builder and landscape designer & client relationship manager
LOCATION Felbridge, Surrey
TYPE OF BUILD Renovation & extension
STYLE Arts & Crafts
CONSTRUCTION METHOD Timber frame
PROPERTY COST £375,000
HOUSE SIZE 211m² (original bungalow 97m²)
PROJECT COST £200,000
PROJECT COST PER M² £948
BUILDING WORK COMMENCED January 2011
BUILDING WORK TOOK Five years
CURRENT VALUE £800,000

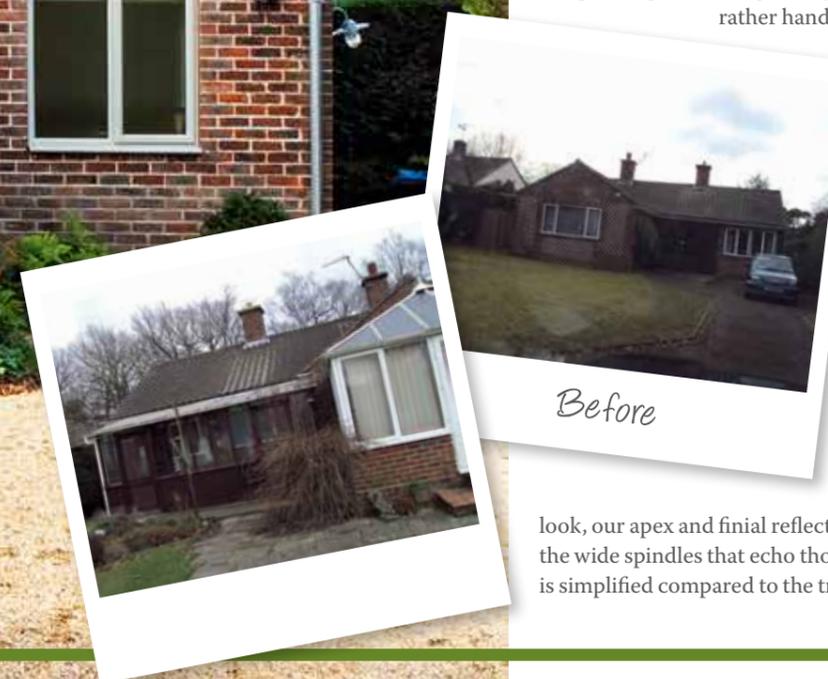
Adam and Karla Bradstock bought their detached bungalow in May 2010 after a long search. They were after more space and a bigger garden, so it's no wonder that the third of an acre this property offered was too hard to resist. "Adam disappeared into the back garden before the estate agent had even arrived," says Karla recalls. "He returned with a grin on his face, so I knew we'd be putting an offer in."

The dwelling was more expensive than their initial £300,000 budget, plus it needed a lot of work doing to it. However, this didn't put the couple off as Adam already had big plans up his sleeve. "Although it looked pretty ugly, it was built from a good masonry shell; I simply thought it made sense to turn it into a house," says Adam. "We had no idea if we'd get planning as, although there's no street scene to maintain, the property is flanked by bungalows."

Complete reworking

Adam (who runs a construction and landscaping company) has a degree in garden design and prepares drawings for clients, which rather handily meant the couple didn't need to

employ an architect for the project. The Bradstocks drew on their fondness for the solid craftsmanship and architecture of the Arts & Crafts period to come up with a plan. They also turned to local National Trust property, Standen (a place they often visit) for inspiration. "We took elements we liked from this celebrated 1890s house and brought these ideas loosely into our own home," says Adam. "Although not the classic steep roof pitch associated with the look, our apex and finial reflect the period. The oak staircase has the wide spindles that echo those within Standen but our design is simplified compared to the true Arts & Crafts style."



Before

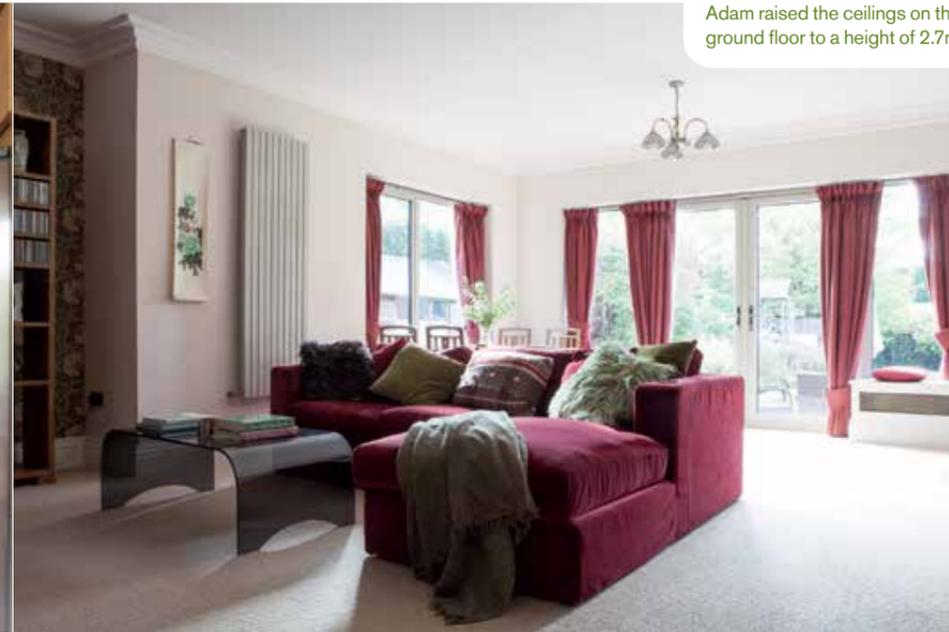
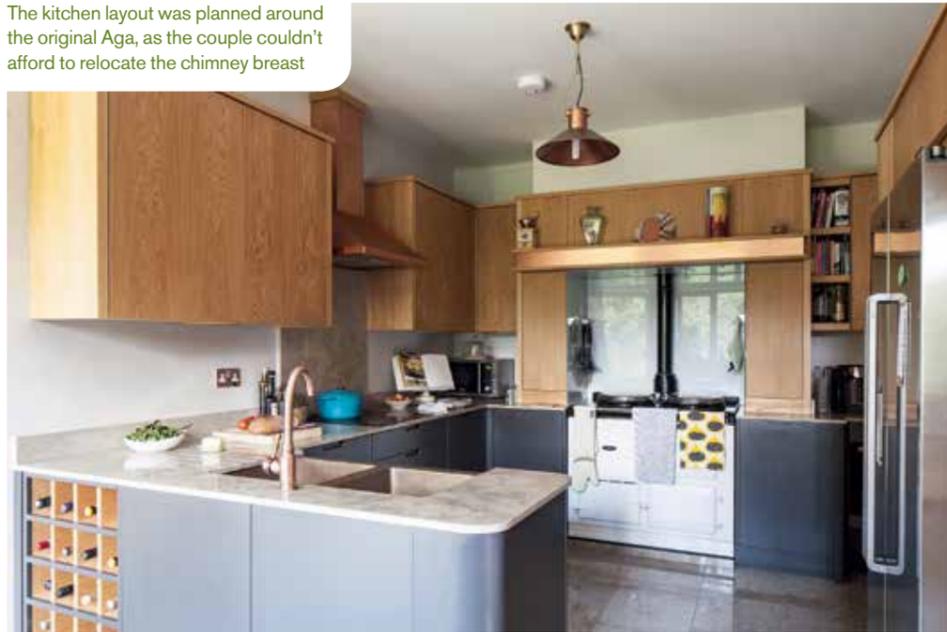
WE LEARNED...

CONFIRM ANY IMPORTANT DECISIONS IN WRITING. We only had a phone conversation about the warm roof insulation calculations for our project, which meant we had no comeback when things went wrong later on.

COSTS CAN EASILY MOUNT UP, especially those for sundries. We ended up spending over £1,000 on screws, nails and bolts without really realising.

TAKING OUR TIME to slowly piece together the rest of the works once the structure was airtight meant that we could save money to pay for it as we went along.

The kitchen layout was planned around the original Aga, as the couple couldn't afford to relocate the chimney breast



Adam raised the ceilings on the ground floor to a height of 2.7m



“We had a love-hate relationship with the project for a long time, but we're really pleased with the outcome”



Open beams in the extension's vaulted ceiling add character and could be adapted later on if the Bradstocks decide to build a bedroom above

As well as adding another storey, the couple decided to remodel the downstairs, removing all the internal walls (except for the loadbearing ones) to make way for a porch, cloakroom, office, playroom and fourth bedroom to join the original kitchen and living area. Small extensions to both these zones replace a lean-to and conservatory, increasing the original footprint by 10m².

The focal point of the revamp was to be the new double-height entrance hall and galleried landing, which would bring added wow factor to the house. “The hallway was always going to be the centrepiece,” says Karla. “I wanted a space big enough to put a huge Christmas tree in – which we did for the first time last year. Having the luxury of that area meant we could only have three bedrooms upstairs but the layout is just right for our family.”

Adam presented his detailed drawings to pre-planning, along with pictures of Standen. The council mostly liked the design, except for the proposed balcony in the bedroom, which they wanted removed to protect the neighbours' privacy. By Christmas 2010 the couple had full planning approval to proceed with the works.

Hands-on approach

Adam and Karla Bradstock got stuck into their ambitious bungalow-to-house project with a budget that was more fitting to an extension. They also had a limited timeframe to complete the structural work and two children (Freya, then three, and Florrie, just a baby) to consider throughout the process. “I took three months off work to make the property liveable for the girls on an initial budget of £50,000,” says Adam. “The timings were tight, but our neighbours' had kindly agreed that we could live in their home while they were away for a few months in exchange for landscaping their garden. It saved us a lot of money but it was still quite stressful.”

Adam spent evenings and weekends getting the bungalow ready before he officially took time off from work. He demolished the lean-to and conservatory, built the foundations for the two small extensions and porch, and prepared the building to first floor height

ready for the second storey timber frame. May soon rolled around and the family moved out across the road. “We stored some things in Adam's workshop and shifted the rest over in a wheelbarrow.”

The first stage of the project began with Adam's vast construction experience allowing him to do nearly all of the work himself. Family and friends also helped – Adam's father is a builder, his brother is a carpenter and his brother-in-law is an electrician. His goal was to complete all structural work to a watertight state for a liveable home in three months – including finishing a bathroom, some kind of kitchen and both girls' bedrooms. The timescale was gruelling, but necessary if they were going to stay on track financially.

Phase one

Things got off to a shaky start after Adam drilled holes around one of the loadbearing walls to check the condition of the foundations. Unfortunately, he discovered that they were insufficient, so the walls would need underpinning (more about this task on page 55).

Then another problem arose to further threaten the tight build schedule. The Bradstocks had ordered aluminium window frames with a green finish on the outside and ivory inside. But a week or so before they were due, the firm advised that having ivory would delay delivery by several weeks – precious time the couple didn't have. “It still niggles that we didn't get the windows we wanted,” says Karla. “The quality on some of the ones we fitted isn't great, so we've had to replace those that had condensation problems.”

As the weeks crept closer to the three-month end date, Adam soldiered on. He worked 14 hours a day, seven days a week, taking on the final push to tile the roof in just two weeks. “This part of the project was relentless,” says Adam. “I lost a lot of weight because of the sheer physicality of the work, but I finished everything I planned to in time – even getting the lights on the day we moved in.”

Typically, this would signal the end of a project for most self-builders, but for the Bradstocks it was simply the end of phase one. In August the family trundled their belongings back home, moving into a house with bare brick walls and ceilings open to the rafters – as well as no more money. The couple had spent more than they expected, taking out a £25,000 loan to finish these works; so they had no choice but to sit tight and save up before they carried on. They rolled out some of the old carpets and laid them in the new rooms, with the upbeat attitude to simply make the best of it.



The oak staircase was stained a dark brown for an Arts & Crafts feel, while the flooring in the hallway is industrial parquet finger blocks. The stair runner is from Ocean Flooring



The master bedroom's Juliet balcony was crafted by blacksmith, Eric Lamprell

Slow progress

For the next few years Adam gradually worked his way around the house, tackling the kitchen in 2012, the living room in 2013 and the master bedroom in 2014. During this time, a problem with the multi-layer foil roof insulation caused a disheartening setback.

Adam found the product after looking for an alternative to the time-consuming process of cutting rigid insulation board. The membrane was BBA-approved and easy to roll out and staple to the rafters. "The firm carried out a moisture risk analysis for a warm roof system, so I was confident this alternative would be fine," says Adam.

"But condensation collected behind the membrane and this had to be resolved before damage set into the rafters." The company gave Adam no direction, so after seeking advice from building control he fitted ventilation into the roof. Access was through Florrie and Freya's bedroom ceilings, meaning Adam went through the painful process of plastering and decorating them for a second time – and had to take another precious three weeks off work to complete the job.

Karla increased her weekly work hours by a day in 2015 so they could take on an additional £60,000 mortgage to pay for the office, cloakroom and hallway, pushing them through to the end of the works. "The new entrance hall has brought the whole house together; when visitors say they love the space, I think, yes, I love it too," says Karla. "The aim was to be finished by our 40th birthdays and have a party, which we did – although our ensuite still needs to be done."

Nearly there

The entire project has been a remarkable achievement for Adam and Karla, whose girls are now 10 and seven. Adam's

architectural planning and design detail prevails throughout, with newly crafted panelled door openings, skirting and plaster cornices giving the property a genuine period feel despite its 1950s roots.

There's still work to be done in the garden that will come in time, but for now the family are simply enjoying living in their house. "We had a love-hate relationship with the project for a long time, but we're really pleased with the outcome," says Karla. "Adam has been amazing throughout and although his time is hard to quantify, we think our scheme might have cost double what we've ended up paying if he hadn't done the work himself."



The new roof is much steeper than the original, allowing enough head height for an upper storey

closer look

Underpinning walls...

The Bradstocks didn't account for the cost of underpinning the loadbearing walls in their budget because they didn't discover the need to do this before work got underway. "I hadn't been prepared to make big holes in the floors of the bungalow until Karla and the children were safely out of the way," says Adam. "We had to decide whether to lose time or money." He estimated that the traditional method (digging out the earth beneath the wall one section at a time) would take him three weeks – time he simply didn't have. So he looked for a speedier solution and found Uretek (www.uretek.co.uk). "The company's team pumped in a resin material, a bit like expanding foam, around the base of the walls," he says. "The resin permeates the soil structure and hardens into a solid raft, so you need granular soil conditions rather than clay for the product to work." The decision came at a cost of £5,000, but the job was completed in just two days.



Floor plans

Ground floor

- Garden room
- Dining area
- Lounge
- Kitchen
- Utility
- Study
- Play room
- Hallway
- Cloak
- Bedroom

First floor

- Bedroom
- Ensuite
- Storage
- Storage
- Hallway
- Bedroom
- Bathroom
- Bedroom

Build It HOME DESIGNER

House plans re-created using Build It 3D Home Designer software. www.buildit.co.uk/3dsoftware

£ TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m ²	Cost %	Total cost
Fees	£19	2%	£3,900
Extension	£98	10%	£20,600
Timber frame	£102	11%	£21,600
Walls & windows	£84	9%	£17,800
Roof structure & covering	£102	11%	£21,500
Internal walls	£40	4%	£8,400
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£51	5%	£10,800
Joinery & fittings	£175	19%	£36,900
Plumbing & heating	£38	4%	£8,000
Kitchen & bathrooms	£180	19%	£38,000
Electrics	£20	2%	£4,100
Decorating	£28	3%	£6,000
External works	£11	1%	£2,400

Grand total £200,000

Useful contacts

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 BALCONY BLACKSMITH Eric Lamprell 01342 822143 www.chordalgreen.com
 KITCHEN Chordal Green 01279 626403 www.chordalgreen.com
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