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Cover Story:

Letting in the Light

**A BLAND 1930S BUNGALOW TRANSFORMED
INTO A LIGHT-FILLED CONTEMPORARY HOME**



August 2012 | £4.25



A New Look

David (pictured) and Jacqui Allen have transformed a small, two bedroom bungalow into a spacious, light-filled four-bed home, with a new wraparound extension. A length of sliding doors, from Rationel, provide access to decking, sheltered from the elements by the overhanging flat roof above

FACE value

David and Jacqui Allen have reinvented a 1930s bungalow, extending and remodelling it to create a contemporary-style family home — for just £110,000

BUNGALOW EXTENSION AND REMODEL | GATESHEAD
2005 (SEVEN MONTHS) & 2008 (NINE MONTHS)
SIZE: 204M² | HOUSE COST: £111,000
PROJECT COST: £110,000 (£539/M²) | VALUE: £600,000



WORDS: HEATHER DIXON | PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID BURTON

David Allen literally got on his bike and started searching the streets for inspiration when he and wife Jacqui realised they wanted to live in a home which was more than just 'alright'.

"We were living in a standard house on a modern housing development but the more I worked with architects through my job in architectural hardware, the more I realised how mediocre our house was," explains David. "Exposure to contemporary architecture — which promotes lots of light and space — made me realise we could do a lot better." So when Jacqui finally spotted a dated 1930s bungalow with a west-facing garden for sale on a suburban road in Gateshead, the couple knew it could allow them to create something more befitting modern family life.

David negotiated the sale in two phone calls made during his regular Monday morning train journey to London. He then approached friend and colleague, Yorkshire-based architect Nick Midgley, to begin proceedings. "I had seen Nick's work and loved it," says David. "I knew a good architect was worth their weight in gold and we certainly couldn't have done it without him."

The two bedroom bungalow was modest in size and square in layout, with rooms leading off a single corridor. The interiors also lacked natural light. But the high cost of removing spoil from this narrow site with limited access ruled out knocking down the bungalow and building a new home. So, an imaginative design scheme and radical overhaul would be the order of the day.

But before thoughts could turn to the redesign, a site investigation was undertaken. The discovery of a nearby network of old underground mines meant the couple could not extend upwards — the cost of strengthening



The Lowdown

DAVID & JACQUI'S COSTS

Fees:	£20,000
Architect:	£8,500
Kitchen:	£5,000
Bathrooms:	£4,500
Roof:	£8,000
Landscaping:	£10,000
Render and timber cladding:	£2,000
Electricity:	£6,000
Plumbing:	£6,000
Flooring:	£8,500
Labour and materials:	approx £31,500

SUPPLIERS

Architect	Nick Migley Design	01422 255818
Architectural hardware	D Line	dline.com
John Planck		020 7608 0074
Windows	Rational	rational.dk
Kitchen appliances	Currys	currys.co.uk
Bathrooms	Armitage Shanks	01543 490253
Furniture	Vitra	020 7608 6200
Timber and ply	R&J Ince	0191 265 1217

Open Plan Living Space

Vaulted ceilings and an open plan layout add to the illusion of space within this single storey home. Pairing neutral walls and ceilings with light European oak flooring (laid over underfloor heating) means the unusually shaped ceilings and garden views remain the focus of the interior

the foundations to support a second storey was again beyond budget. Instead, the couple and Nick decided to extend the bungalow outwards in two directions, creating a flat-roof wraparound extension which would unite the house and garden, and almost double the living space. Timber cladding and decking would be introduced to site the house within its garden, with plentiful doors and windows making the most of the views and natural light.

The existing roof would also be removed and rebuilt to create high, open ceilings in the living room and a small multipurpose room in the remaining attic space. The majority of the bungalow's original layout would, however, be incorporated into the transformation to keep costs to a minimum.

To fund the project, David and Jacqui worked flat out to pay off their last mortgage. They then took out a



new mortgage to pay for the bungalow, in turn allowing themselves a working budget of £110,000. In addition to retaining as much of the original building fabric as possible, Nick's scheme would draw on basic, inexpensive materials in a contemporary way, helping the couple to remain within budget. "The overriding principle of his design was simplicity, using humble timber, block, render and ply to keep costs down," explains David. Birch-faced plywood used throughout the interiors now makes a particularly big aesthetic impact.

Limited access also affected material specification. "We could not get a crane on site so everything had to

A good architect is worth their weight in gold

be in modular form and easy to manhandle," explains David. "With this in mind, Nick's drawings were very detailed and fundamental to the project because all his preparation meant the build could run smoothly."

The design was approved by Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council within six weeks of submission, allowing the couple's builder to begin work on site, first dismantling the roof and demolishing the rear wall.

One particular challenge faced during the work was ensuring the junction between the new pitched roof and the flat roof of the extension was waterproof. "We opted for bitumen laid on 25mm-thick ply, with insulation batons and a vapour permeable membrane, then pebbles on top to keep everything in place," says David.

Four main structural beams were introduced inside the bungalow to provide support for the new additions, ▶

Kitchen Diner

Birch-faced plywood has been used to clad the breakfast bar and a partial wall divide, lending definition to the kitchen and dining area in this open plan living space. Note how the structural beams have been left exposed, hinting at the transformation the bungalow has undergone



with a single column in the middle of the open plan living area holding up an entire corner of the building. The beams have been left exposed in this living space, adding an edge of industrial chic. Opportunity was also taken during the construction to upgrade insulation levels in the existing bungalow.

Most of the work was carried out while David was working away during the week, so it was down to Jacqui to oversee the site day to day. But the couple agree that it was Nick who pulled the whole project together and ultimately kept in on time and within budget.

"People think an architect is expensive," reflects Nick. "But Nick actually saved us money by avoiding mistakes we would have made as novices, and understanding how to save money on materials and labour."

"When I watch these build programmes on television I am always amazed by the fact that the architects rarely ▶

Most people wouldn't consider plywood as a finishing material... but it gives an extraordinary look

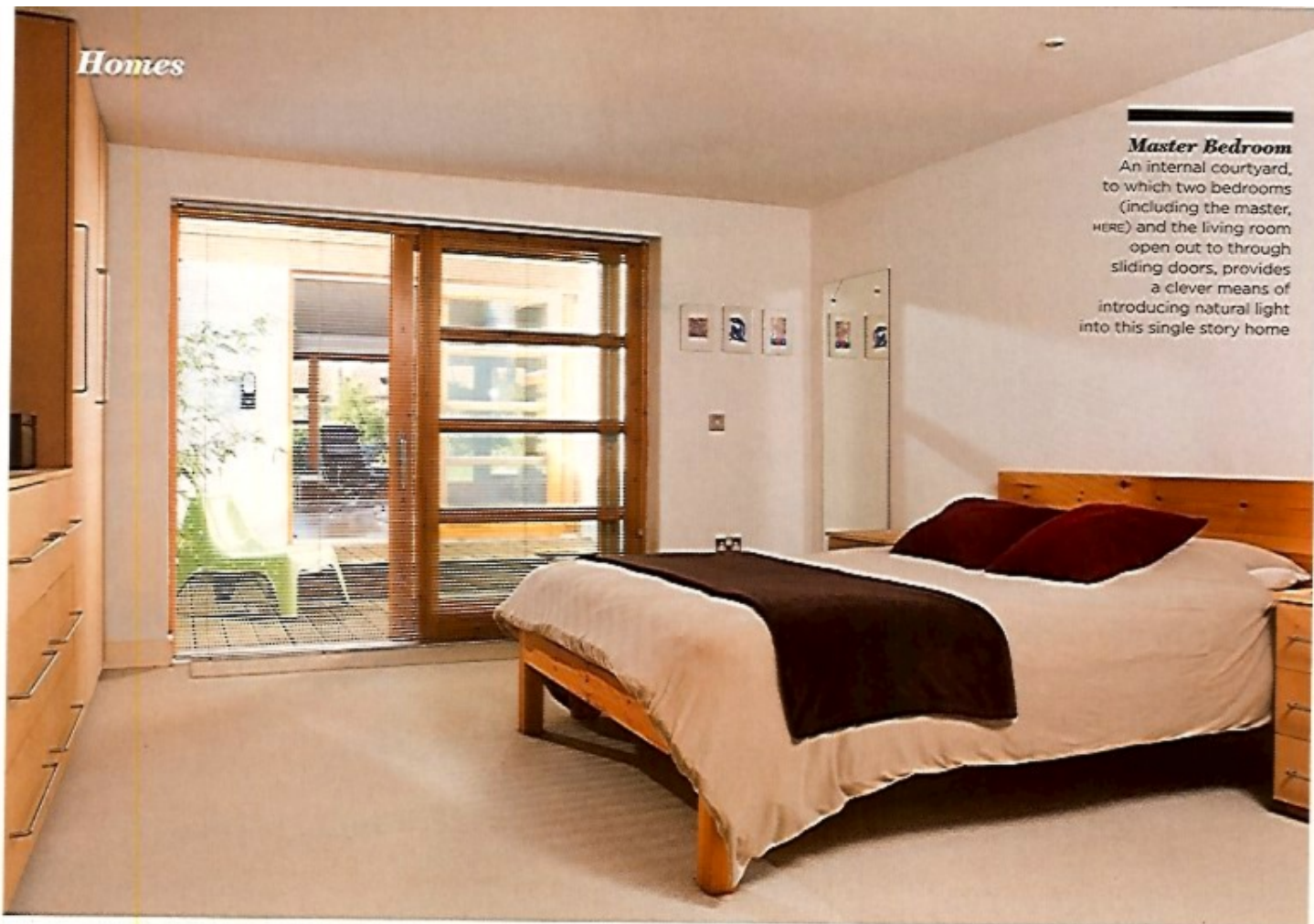
USING PLYWOOD

Birch-faced plywood has been used to great effect, cladding walls and the staircase. The Allens have varnished it with three separate coats of clear, matt polyurethane varnish, bringing out the detail of the grain and giving the ply a rich, lustrous finish.

"Most people wouldn't consider plywood as a finishing material because it's generally used behind the scenes, so to speak, but it gives an extraordinary look to the interior – almost fabric-like to touch," explains David.

The Allens' stairs were hand-built by a family friend, a former shop fitter, who cut the ply and fitted it together on site using templates, and then capped it with a birch-faced ply handrail.

Costing as little as £30 for a sheet of 18mm-thick exterior ply, it's a cheap and versatile material. Plywood is made by gluing together a number of thin veneers or plies of softwood or hardwood. Each ply is at a right angle to the one below, giving the material its strength. Finish quality can vary considerably and is graded for exterior or interior use, depending upon the water resistance of the glue used.



Master Bedroom

An internal courtyard, to which two bedrooms (including the master, here) and the living room open out to through sliding doors, provides a clever means of introducing natural light into this single story home

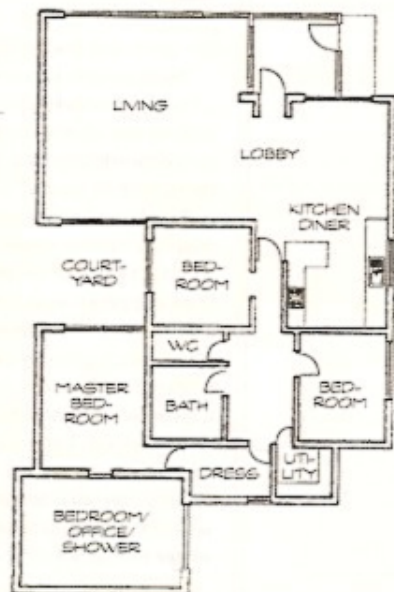
get a mention, yet they are the people who have the most profound influence on the build. Nick had the vision and the knowledge to make it happen and employing him was so pivotal to its success that his cost was the best investment we could have made.” ■

More From the Archive Online:

REMODELLING A BUNGALOW FOR JUST £38,000 (OCT 2011): homebuilding.co.uk/10201146

Floorplan

The entrance lobby leads straight to the heart of this home – the spacious open plan living, kitchen, and dining space. Beyond this a hallway provides access to four bedrooms – two of which overlook and have access to a private courtyard garden. The fourth bedroom/office room was previously the garage, and is now linked to the main house by the new dressing room, utility and master bedroom.



What We've Learned

What's your favourite part of the new home?

"The main living space, because it's central to family life and entertaining. It's made this a very sociable house because we can open up the bi-fold doors in summer and step straight out onto the decking and into the garden. We also like the small courtyard (above), which links the living area to our bedroom. It's a sun trap and also very private."

Was there anything you found surprisingly difficult during the project?

"The most difficult part, from Jacqui's point of view, was co-ordinating a lot of things simultaneously, especially towards the end when the pressure was really building up and a lot of decisions had to be made at once."

What advice would you pass onto other homeowners undertaking projects?

"Employ a good architect who will see you through the project from start to finish. It's the best investment you can make and will save you money in the long run."

If you could undertake the project again, would you change anything?

"We've often thought about this but, to be honest, we wouldn't change a thing."