

# Modern conversion project

Adding a large extension and a new first floor has transformed Pat and Bill Cross's 1950s bungalow into their dream open-plan home

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Left and below The bungalow's original conservatory was demolished and the house extended to create an open-plan layout, with a first floor added to provide more living space



## FACT FILE

### THE OWNERS

Pat Cross, a part-time book-keeper, lives here with her husband Bill, who is a retired engineer

### THE PROPERTY

A three-bedroom 1950s bungalow

### THE LOCATION

Brentwood, Essex

### WHAT THEY SPENT

The couple bought the house in 2004 for £325,000 and have spent around £250,000 on the renovation project. The property was recently valued at around £825,000

A light-filled conservatory is part of Pat (below) and Bill's new extension. The uPVC window and door frames are from Altex and provide a good contrast to the warm oak beams



## 'It was a big project as the bungalow hadn't been updated in decades – but we were inspired by the new plans'

**P**at and Bill Cross used to help Connie, a friend and neighbour, with her garden, never imagining that one day she would offer to sell her bungalow to them.

'Connie was such a lovely person and we'd become very good friends over the 20 years I had known her,' says Pat. 'One day she asked us if we'd consider buying her home, but with the proviso that she would be able to continue living there. It was an unusual arrangement but it worked

because we were so close – Bill and I didn't live far from Connie, and we did all we could to look after her for several years until she passed away.'

With Connie's blessing, the couple took stock of the bungalow they had owned since 2004 but hadn't yet lived in.

'We could see its potential,' says Pat, 'but it needed a lot of work.'

The bungalow hadn't been updated for decades. Connie's late husband had built the kitchen in the 1950s – although the fixtures and fittings would have been

good quality originally, they were now far too old and neglected.

'Everything had to be ripped out, including the lean-to conservatory, as we needed to start all over again,' Pat recalls.

To begin with, the couple's plans for the bungalow were fairly modest and mainly involved creating two extra bedrooms and a bathroom in the roof space, which would become a new first floor. They also wanted to create a focal point by installing a new staircase that would connect the upper space with the ground floor. This essential



The hallway now leads directly through the open-plan kitchen and dining space to the conservatory. A marble coffee table from Dansk has been teamed with Marks & Spencer rattan/fabric sofas in Fudge



**BEFORE**



Above and right The front of the house was rebuilt and the garage moved to the other side of the property. Marley Eternit clay tiles, which are designed to replicate handmade tiles, have been used on the new roof

**DESIGN TIP**

Integrate your hallway with the sitting room or kitchen to make the most of the space. A simple open-tread staircase can be a great choice, as the minimal structure will avoid interrupting sightlines and allow light to permeate through

Billericay Kitchens designed the elegant Shaker-style kitchen. A modern Amana American fridge-freezer from TEJ Domestic Appliances works well with a traditional-style range cooker. For a similar model, try Rangemaster



## 'We created an open floorplan by changing the layout and moving the garage to the other side of the house'

addition actually paved the way for developing the property's true potential.

'We employed a fantastic local architect, Andrew Davison, who said that the original floorplan made it difficult to accommodate the new staircase, because of the low ceiling in the hallway area,' says Pat. 'Andrew suggested that we could create a more open floorplan by changing the layout, which would involve moving the garage to the other side of the house and converting the redundant space into a new sitting room.'

Pat and Bill loved the idea of open-plan living, so they were thrilled with Andrew's new plans for the bungalow. He also suggested leading the hallway straight through to the kitchen and dining space and adding a light-filled conservatory to the rear of the house.

The only self-contained areas on the ground floor were to be the new sitting room, a utility room, a bedroom and a wetroom. On the new first floor, there would be a family bathroom and two

bedrooms (turning it into a three-bedroom property), including the en suite master bedroom and a spare room for guests and Pat and Bill's grandchildren.

Linking the two floors and leading to a galleried landing overlooking the central space below would be the new open-tread crafted oak staircase.

The original lean-to conservatory at the rear of the bungalow had already been demolished, along with the main back wall, to create more space for the couple's new



**Above** A smart oak open-tread staircase by IDG Joinery leads to the first floor and a balustrade with views of the space below

**Below** The solid oak dining table is from Dansk and the stylish dining chairs by Lloyd Loom are from Roomes of Upminster



Underfloor heating has been laid beneath the porcelain floor tiles in Rainforest White from Marlin Bathrooms. The classic-style dresser is from Billericay Kitchens



open-plan layout. Part of the restructure plans now allowed for a new extension at the rear to bring light into the open-plan space and create an extra living area/conservatory room.

'It turned out to be a bigger renovation project than we'd originally considered,' laughs Pat, 'but as we were so inspired by Andrew's new floorplan, we were happy to go ahead with it.'

Altogether, it took several months to draw up the new plans and get planning permission for the renovation project. Only the two side walls of the original bungalow were to remain. The front part of the house would be completely transformed when the garage was moved to the opposite side of

the property, while the back of the house was extended by 3ft in length and 2ft in width to accommodate the new extension. Surprisingly, everything went quite smoothly and as planned.

'We didn't have any problems installing dormer windows in the new roof because they weren't higher than the original roofline and, as the extension was only 3ft, we managed to secure planning permission fairly quickly,' Pat explains.

As the renovation work was scheduled to take six months, the couple stayed in their flat in nearby Rochford, visiting only to see how work was progressing. In the past, they had taken on small DIY projects themselves, but this time they felt it would be too

**DESIGN TIP**

A wood-burning stove is far more energy-efficient than an open fire but still provides the appeal of real flames. Make sure you choose the correct size output in kW for your space – if the stove is too powerful it will be unusable

A specially designed chimney breast in the sitting room was built from Hathaway Brindle bricks, which were also used on the exterior walls. For a similar cubed mirror design, try the Abstract from BDL at Debenhams



## 'Choosing new furnishings has helped to create a more coherent style, which we've continued building on'

ambitious and were happy for Andrew to be the project manager, employing local tradespeople to do the building work.

'Our builders organised tradespeople too, such as the plasterers, roofers and decorators,' says Pat. 'Our builder Les also put us in touch with a great landscape gardener. The kitchen and bathroom suppliers and a furnishings company all came highly recommended.'

The couple's project stayed within budget too. As Pat recalls, 'We've all heard about

the problems some people come up against when they take on something of this scale, but the whole thing just clicked into place. Working closely with Andrew meant we were able to keep track of every penny to ensure that there were no major hitches to take us over our £250,000 budget.

'What really helped was that we were all on the same wavelength – we liked and trusted Andrew instantly,' she adds.

Pat and Bill were on site almost every day so they could follow progress, but it also

gave them the chance to choose the right fixtures and fittings for their new home.

'I love Mediterranean-style tiles,' Pat explains. 'Originally, we were only going to use tiles in the kitchen and conservatory, with oak flooring in the hall. We thought this might look odd though, so we decided to tile all the way through the open-plan space for a seamless look.'

The light, airy feel is emphasised throughout the house with neutral walls and pale carpets in the sitting room and



**Above** The light, airy master bedroom fills half of the upper floor. The wooden bed and side tables are from the Pine Factory Warehouse. Touches of colour have been added with glass bubble lamps from Dansk and John Lewis bedlinen



**Right** The guest bedroom on the ground floor is furnished with white side tables from Hammonds and a throw, bedlinen and cushions from Next

## ‘We had no problems installing dormer windows in the new roof as they were lower than the original roofline’

bedrooms, offset with soft furnishings and accessories in bold accent colours. The couple realised, however, that much of their furniture would be too traditional for the new contemporary scheme.

‘Some of our furniture is still stored

in our daughter’s garage,’ says Pat, ‘but choosing some new pieces has created a more coherent style. On the other hand, some things have been given a makeover. For example, the dressing table in our bedroom is an original 1950s G-Plan piece

that we inherited from Connie and painted white. Classic old furniture was often very well-made and durable compared to many modern-day pieces, and can easily be transformed to suit your room.’

The couple have gradually introduced



**DESIGN TIP**  
 Create a relaxed feel in your en suite by fitting subtle accent lighting switched independently from the ambient lighting (ideally on a dimmer switch). Options include low-voltage LEDs washed up the walls

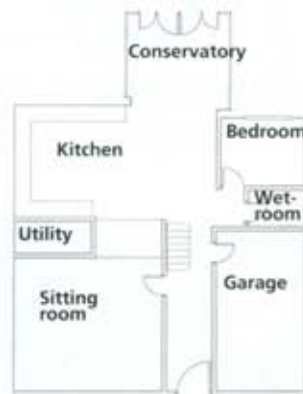
A Victoria + Albert roll-top bath makes a stylish focal point in the main bathroom, which has feature floor lights inset in ceramic tiles from Marlin Bathrooms. The fitted laminate units are from Miller Accessories

PLANS

GROUND FLOOR BEFORE



GROUND FLOOR AFTER



FIRST FLOOR AFTER



An extension has been added to create a conservatory, the garage was moved to another side to free up space and an upper floor has been created by converting the loft. The bungalow is now a three-bedroom property, with two bedrooms upstairs and another on the ground floor

their own personal style, as Pat explains: 'I'm still looking for a few new things, such as fabric for curtains to match the blinds in the bedroom, but I want to wait until I see exactly what I'm looking for. As we don't intend to move again, we're in no rush.'

So, is there anything she and Bill would have done differently?

'We should have put a log-burning fire in the conservatory,' says Pat. 'We'd have had to square up a wall to accommodate it, which seemed like a lot of extra work at the time, but as we now spend so much time in there it would have been worth it.'

'We often think about Connie and what she would make of the bungalow now,' adds Pat. 'We like to think she would be happy with the new look.'

CONTACTS

**Architect:** Andrew Davison  
 01277 221333 Andrewdavison.co.uk  
**Construction:** Les Clarke  
 01277 659951 Lesclarkebuilders.com



Above A simple glass screen partitions the wetroom, with shower fittings by Aqualisa. The WC and basin are from Marlin Bathrooms

COSTS

Architect's fees	£22,000
Building costs	£169,300
Windows	£15,000
Kitchen	£20,000
Bathrooms	£9,300
Floor and wall tiles	£5,800
Furnishings	£9,000

**TOTAL £250,400**