



PICTURES: The traditional frontage of Ilex Cottage hides a spacious renovation and rear extension (above), the interior spaces are filled with light from lanterns and skylights (opposite).

A marriage of traditional cottage and contemporary style

Merging a traditional street frontage with an ambitious rear design, ACS Architectural have transformed the space available at Ilex Cottage.

ACS Architectural first became involved with Ilex Cottage, a bungalow positioned in a quiet estate on the edge of Burnham Market, to design a basic loft conversion. And when the home-owner sold up, ACS imagined that to be the end of the story.

But having discovered the drawings, new owners of Ilex Cottage gave Architectural Designer Nick Borrman a call. "They liked the idea of the loft conversion we had designed," Nick explains, "but they also talked about ideas for a much more extensive refurbishment including extension to the rear as well." And so a complete remodel was launched.

The cottage holds a very prominent position and is the first property to be seen as visitors turn into the estate. ACS Architectural knew that the front aspect of the property would always have to fit in with the surrounding street scene. "One of our main objectives had to be finding a design that would be successful through the planning process," Nick says. "We explored lots of different design ideas of what we could achieve at the front, but ultimately it had to appear traditional which is why we went for three small dormers and an understated oak porch."

The owners' main objective was to open up the space inside the property as much as possible. "Working with

existing buildings to utilise what you have already got is a real strength of our design practice," Nick describes. "and so we created a design that used as much of the space already available and avoided the need for an enormous extension."

"In each project we try to create defined areas and establish a clear flow into each space so that users can easily find natural pathways around the building." Nick created new openings to form a kitchen-dining area and added galley stairs that overlook the lower floor and carry you up to the master suite. The existing garage was also transformed to create a workshop for crafting and hobbies. The design included extending too. "We wanted to avoid just adding



Before

“Making something visually appealing but also practical is always tricky when you are extending a bungalow...”

a great big box to the back of the bungalow,” Nick says, “so it was about breaking the extension work up through form and materials to create a more interesting visual experience.”

The design at the rear of the building follows a modern, contemporary style and makes use of lots of flat roofs and lanterns to get light into the internal spaces. “It was an interesting one,” Nick explains, “because we were experimenting with lots of different materials, such as boarding in different configurations, to soften the overall effect.”

The combination of old and new materials is a signature of ACS Architectural’s designs, where planning allows. At Ilex Cottage, rendering, flintwork and treated cedar boarding all subtly complement each other. “Unusually flint hadn’t previously been used on that estate,” Nick says, “despite being a key traditional material in this region.”

Nick and the ACS Architectural team place great importance on creating balance through design. At Ilex Cottage this balance has been achieved by



marrying up the different roofs and designing the rear structures in a way that reduces the mass of how it appears as a whole. “A lot of thought and consideration has been put into practical elements too, like how to get the drainage out in a visually balanced way,” adds Nick.

Transforming Ilex Cottage was not without its challenges. “Making something visually appealing but also practical is always tricky when you are extending a bungalow,” Nick explains. “The greatest design challenge was making the head heights work.”

The only regulation that must be met with regards to head height is to maintain

a continuous 2m up the stairs and on to the landing. The head height at Ilex Cottage was quite limited overall and so that meant that the whole design needed careful consideration. “We added a large dormer on the back of the property which transformed the upstairs into a much more appealing and useable space.” Nick reveals.

It is the technical talent of ACS Architectural that enables them to achieve such great results for their clients. Nick and his team have in mind how their designs will be constructed and the cost implications involved from the earliest proposal stages. “We communicate closely with our clients throughout



ABOVE: A large dormer transformed the upstairs accommodation (top) and internal reconfiguration created spacious open-plan living in the former bungalow (bottom).



the process,” Nick explains, “discussing alternative ideas in depth and advising them on how to reduce cost with smart design details.”

For the owners of Ilex Cottage, attention to detail and a flawless finish were important and it was for this reason that Nick recommended builder Kevin Mortimer of Sureline Construction. “Kevin was an excellent fit for the client,” Nick says, “the client was impressed with the level of his workmanship inside and out. The craftsmanship really is very, very good.”

“We think Ilex Cottage is a great project that really showcases what you can do with what is already there, using just a little bit of imagination,” Nick says. “The site isn’t massive, but it goes to show that if you can reconfigure what you have got, it can be much more beneficial than a



huge extension.” ACS Architectural have now completed four similar projects on the same street making Ilex Cottage a true trailblazer in transforming this small corner of Norfolk for the better.

PICTURES: Natural pathways are designed around defined areas in the living space (above), with the contemporary extension is softened by its variety of forms and materials (below).



ACS Architectural

Poppyfields Retail Park, Poppyfields Drive, Snettisham PE31 7FR

Tel: 01485 532112

Email: info@acs-architectural.co.uk

Web: acs-architectural.co.uk



The flat roof

