

# Making the most of the space you have

*In Old Hunstanton ACS Architectural have proved that your dream home doesn't necessarily need extensions or additional buildings – simply a clever re-working of the existing space*

When people look to revitalise their home most of them opt for an extension of some form or another, adding more rooms and increasing the overall footprint of the property. However, with some clever thinking and some subtle adjustments it's quite incredible just how much can be achieved within an existing space.

"We often work on properties where every separate owner has added something new to the original layout," says Chris Borrmann of ACS Architectural in Snettisham. "The problem with that is you tend to eventually end up with a home that's more like a rabbit warren

with various rooms in all directions. In many cases the solution isn't to create yet another extension – you simply have to thoughtfully re-model the space you already have."

Chris founded ACS Architectural almost 10 years ago from a small back room in a shared office, and the practice swiftly grew to a genuine family-run business (Chris now working alongside his brother Nick and father David) offering a professional architectural service to its increasing client base.

Although the company works on everything from front porches and small-scale housing developments to listed buildings and restaurants, Chris is particularly proud of

the recently-completed Spindrift in Old Hunstanton.

"I think it's amazing what we've managed to achieve within the existing four walls with virtually no extension work," he says. "Many people overlook the fact, but you don't necessarily need to build more – you just need to work more effectively with the space you've got."

Although it's hard to imagine, Spindrift was a fairly typical estate house from the 1970s back in May 2019. It may sit in a very desirable area and enjoy sea views (the property is less than 300 metres from Hunstanton's famous beach) but it wasn't the friendliest of family homes.

The kitchen was remarkably small, the 'lobby' area was basically only the



meeting place for several doors, a bedroom over the garage could only be accessed by walking through another bedroom, and there was an odd-shaped room leading off the kitchen that seemed to serve no purpose - apart from leading to a small shower room.

"There were rooms that didn't know what they wanted to be, and the interior layout didn't make an awful lot of sense," says Chris. "It's probably fair to say that it wasn't really designed for a modern lifestyle in the 21st century."

It certainly wasn't built with the needs of Phil and Wendy Ringwood in mind, who purchased the property on the basis that it wouldn't only provide a comfortable home that the various generations of their large family could enjoy - in the short term it could also double as a holiday let, and looking further ahead it would be a fabulous place for them to retire to.

"The property was never designed with the idea it might host large family get-togethers, so we had to completely re-model the space and open it up," says Chris. "Although Phil and Wendy gave us a very detailed brief as to what they wanted to achieve, they trusted our expertise to make the most of the living space they had."

Starting work at the end of May 2019, Chris and his team at ACS Architectural have totally transformed Spindrift, bringing more light into the building, making it more functional, designing a



**“With careful planning it’s incredible what you can do with an existing space and this is a perfect example...”**

free-flowing and more logical layout and adding two new bedrooms - despite doing very little in the way of extensions and not increasing the property's footprint.

They completely re-built the staircase to the first floor, removing a wall in the process to open up the hallway, and they converted the garage to an en-suite master bedroom. The original space that had formerly been a small (and rather impractical) dining area was cleverly converted to a utility room with a walk-in shower to prevent return trips from the beach filling the house with sand. The bathrooms were enlarged, the upstairs bedrooms benefitted from a new en-suite and a dressing room, and a new snooker room and outdoor barbecue area was created to complement a family-friendly lifestyle.

"The property has two more bedrooms than it started with, and in addition to

**BELOW:** Spindrift in Old Huntanton is a far cry from the rather generic estate house it was a few years ago (left) - before ACS Architectural gave it a new lease of life



Existing ground floorplan



Proposed ground floorplan



*Interior before*

being larger rooms four of them now have en-suites," says Chris. "Considering the fact that the overall floorspace is virtually the same as it was before, it's quite an achievement and it highlights how poor the original layout was."

Chris is keen to praise the high-quality work of DSM Construction Services who carried out most of the actual build, and the creative input of owner Wendy Ringwood and her daughter Kasia, who did most of the interior design themselves - from the extraordinary kitchen (the drawers run on small electronic motors) to the specially-made bespoke skirting

boards.

"Once you walk through the front door there's very little left of the original property, but it's now a genuine pleasure to walk through," says Chris. "There's a real danger that in creating open-plan layouts you make them too big and end up with rooms that are little more than glorified corridors. But with some careful planning and some clever ideas, it's incredible what you can do with an existing space and I think this is the perfect example of that."

This isn't just a simple refurbishment. It's a total re-imagining and re-working

of an existing property that meets the current (and future) needs of its owners and their family and enhances their lives. Spindrift finally knows what it is, and it has every right to be proud of itself.



*Exterior before*



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