



## Rooms with a view

What was a dated bungalow is now an eco-friendly lifetime home with some of the best views in Britain. **Sharon Dale** reports. Pictures by **Dug Wilders**.

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After 27 years in the same London flat, John and Jean Bloxam, inset, were ready for a radical change. They longed for a garden and rural views but, most of all, they wanted a project.

"We had a maisonette in a tower block in Whitechapel but there's only so much you can do to a leasehold flat. We used to visit the homebuilding and renovating exhibitions in London and watch episodes of *Grand Designs* and they inspired us to think about self-building," says John.

A plot proved difficult to find but after a long search they found a property with potential in a village on the outskirts of Sheffield.

The three-bedroom 1970s bungalow was built into the hillside with breathtaking panoramic views over the Peak District. Even better, it was dated, which gave them the opportunity for a major revamp.

"We knew within five minutes that we wanted it," says John. "The views sold it. They are spectacular and we could see the potential to remodel the house into something that would suit us well into our old age."

Another benefit was its proximity to the city where Jean's sister lives. Sheffield's



rail links to London were also a big draw as the Bloxams' two daughters still live in the capital.

"We could've lived anywhere but we like this area. We got to know it initially from coming up to support the miners' strikes in the 1980s and from visiting family.

"We like Sheffield and the countryside around it and, of course, the property prices here are low compared to the South," says John.

Savings and cash from the sale of their flat provided funds for their new life in the North and serendipity played a part in finding an architect. John and Jean met Paul Testa at a self-building event and immediately struck up a rapport.

They gave him a detailed design brief and top of the wish-list was to have a "retirement home", which they could enjoy and use for the last decades of their lives.

Along with future-proofing the property, they also wanted to bring in more of the



**GREAT OUTDOORS:** The sitting area with its spectacular picture window; the dressing room, off the main bedroom; a bespoke wardrobe by Sheffield Sustainable Kitchens and a vintage Ladderax.

views, make the interior easy to navigate and reduce heating costs to a minimum.

Paul Testa says: "The bungalow was dark, quite damp and the use of space was odd. It also had a lower ground floor that you could hardly stand up in but the views are amazing and making the most of them was a big part of the design."

Paul suggested insulating the walls from the inside. It meant losing a small amount of floor space but that, triple-glazed windows and a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system have cut energy bills by at least a third. They are now £780 a year but a feed-in tariff of £1,600 from solar panels gives them a profit of £310.



**GRANDER DESIGNS:** The bungalow of John and Jean Bloxam before (inset) and as it is after being remodelled, above. It takes full advantage of the far-ranging views of the Peak District.

➤ What was an old lean-to porch is now a smart new entrance hall, utility room and cloakroom. A leaky bay window was enlarged to make the bedroom bigger and provide a view down the valley.

The separate kitchen and sitting room have been combined to provide one large open-plan space with the old kitchen entrance re-purposed as a pantry. Patio doors replaced one window while another was enlarged to make a contemporary bay with a dropped sill to create a window seat.

An adjoining bathroom and en-suite were combined to make one large bathroom and extra space for a dressing area leading to the main bedroom.

The second bedroom is now an office and new stairs lit by a skylight lead to the lower ground floor. The cramped space was made bigger by raising the ceiling to make a comfortable guest room/library with a separate storage room.

All the doors in the property are wide enough for wheelchair access and there is a new access ramp from the garage to

the front door. Paul used renowned South Yorkshire builder Terry Huggett, who also has a keen interest in design. Terry has built a number of spectacular one-off homes, including one for himself, and is a seasoned renovator used to solving problems and dealing with unexpected issues.

The first was stabilising a retaining wall between the property and the road, and dealing with water from a stream, which he diverted.



Terry also suggested replacing the existing roof so that it tied in with the extensions and re-pointing and cleaning the old stonework so it matched the new-build sections.

"Terry has great attention to detail and the quality of workmanship is excellent," says Paul Testa, who project managed the build, while John and Jean planned the interior design.

The kitchen and the island unit were made by Sheffield Sustainable Kitchens, which uses reclaimed materials, and the Bloxams splashed out on a £2,500 ➤



**BRIGHTER OUTLOOK:** The open plan living space with vintage table, chairs by Made.com and lights from David Village; the kitchen by Sheffield Sustainable Kitchens.

## USEFUL CONTACTS

■ Paul Testa, architect,  
paultestaarchitecture.co.uk  
■ Terry Huggett, Builder,  
terryhuggettdevelopments.co.uk  
■ Sheffield Sustainable Kitchens, ss.uk.com

■ David Village Lighting, Sheffield,  
davidvillagelighting.co.uk  
■ Mac and May vintage  
homeware, Sheffield,  
macandmay.co.uk

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Sheffield Sustainable Kitchens also crafted a fold-up seat in the hall, a TV stand, wardrobes and a workbench in the study. John and Jean sourced retro furniture from Mac and May in Sheffield and the Danish Home Store in Nottingham. Lighting was from David Village in Sheffield.

The original budget was £156,000 but the final spend was £210,000 thanks, in part, to the unexpected cost of the ground work and the extra roofing and stonework.

"We have no regrets. We love it and we intend to stay here for the rest of our lives," says John, who adds: "We still visit London a lot to see our daughters but we don't miss it. We can't wait to get back here to the views."



**PICTURE WINDOW:** The new triple glazed contemporary bay windows, with window seating, at a kitchen island by Sheffield Sustainable Kitchens.

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**STYLISH:** The interior of The Stove & Fireplace Studio Ltd in Ilkley.

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