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1960s HOMES TRANSFORMED

How to Turn an Unfashionable
Postwar House into Your Dream Home

HUF HAUS

A German Kit
Home Built in
Just 4 Months

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SOLUTIONS
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FOR YOU**

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Barn Conversions
- Period Restoration
- Brick Buyer's Guide
- Cladding Repairs
- Passive Ventilation
- and much more!

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Design Masterclass:

Remodelling Postwar Homes

Unfashionable and undervalued – but very much abundant – bland mid-20th century homes could be the perfect canvas for your dream home. By Michael Holmes — whose own 1960s remodel is on the opposite page

The Background

With desirable building plots in ever shorter supply, a growing number of forward-thinking homebuilders and renovators are turning their attention to redeveloping existing houses and, in particular, those from the mid-20th century. Although currently out of fashion, and consequently undervalued relative to more characterful period properties, houses from this era can offer excellent redevelopment potential for a buyer with vision. They are generally solidly built, well located and, by the standards of today's new homes, sit on large plots.

With more decrepit properties the obvious redevelopment choice is demolition,

but many of the homes built from 1945–1975 are a little too good – and expensive – to pull down. With an innovative design scheme, however, a bland house can be utterly transformed.

Almost anything is possible in terms of redesign, from contemporary to traditional style, limited only by cost and the planning constraints of the site. The key is to come up with a design concept that makes the most of what is already there, taking advantage of the building's current virtues and altering or disguising its weaknesses, whilst at the same time making sure that the cost does not exceed the added value.



ALMOST UNRECOGNISABLE

A contemporary scheme, complete with new windows, render and a two-part extension, has transformed the rear of this 1960s detached home into a luxury sanctuary

DESIGN SOLUTIONS



— Key Elements —

Building Form

The most significant factor in deciding the style of any external makeover scheme is the building's current form. This can be significantly altered through extension, demolition and altering the roof shape. Even the orientation can effectively be altered by, for instance, designing a side extension to form a new principal elevation, or remodelling the back to become the front.

To keep down costs, the starting point is to explore options that utilise the building's current form as far as is practical, and this will typically steer the project.

For instance, properties with a very low-pitched roof tend to lend themselves well to contemporary design schemes rather than traditional, although it may be worth exploring the classical Georgian villa with a low-pitched slate roof, largely hidden behind a parapet wall. Buildings with steeply sloping roofs tend to lend themselves better to period-style schemes, especially if there are forward-facing gables, which may lend themselves well to a Victorian or Arts & Crafts-style makeover. This is where the experience of a designer with an understanding of different architectural styles will prove invaluable.

Siting

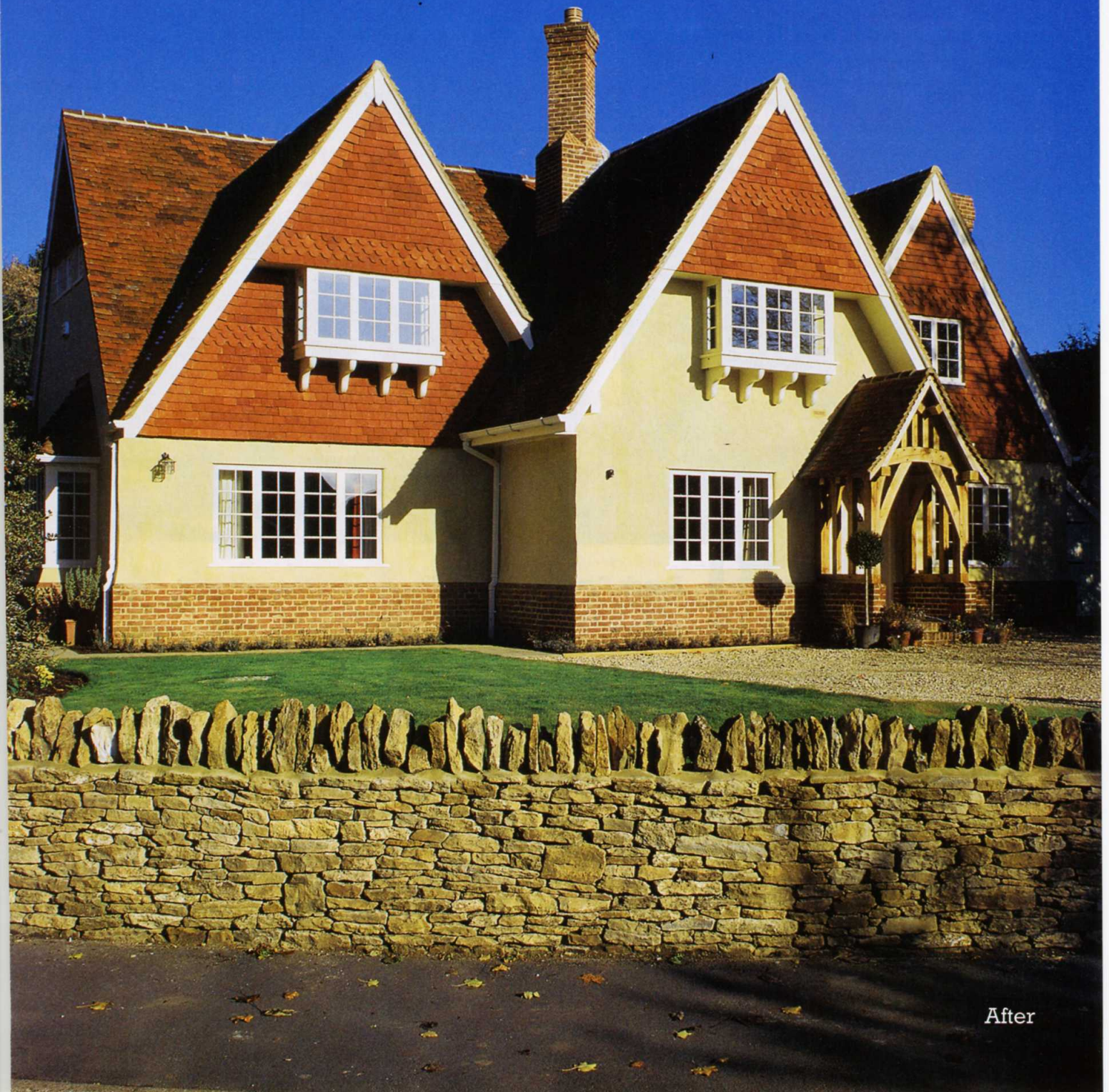
The way the building sits on its plot is another major consideration. It will inform where any new space can and should be added to make the most of the site's characteristics, its orientation, the best views, screening from the elements and privacy from neighbours, vehicular access, and topography.

Architectural Details

Once the essential form of the building has been defined, making the best use of the site, details like wall and roof cladding, chimneys, windows and doors, window and door surrounds, porches and other architectural details can be honed to complete the design scheme (SEE MORE ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES). The key here is to come up with a coherent theme, and then to apply it to the whole building. Some designers like to mix different period styles to create the impression that a building has evolved over time, and this can be very successful, providing it is done well to avoid bad pastiche.

ADDITION MAKES DESIGN SENSE

Michael Holmes and wife Emma saw the potential in this 1960s chalet bungalow in Oxfordshire — by adding a gabled extension, converting the car port and changing the '60s windows, horizontal cedar boarding and concrete roof tiles, they have given the property a traditional Arts & Crafts period feel





After



Before

COMPLETELY TRANSFORMED

This 1960s house in Hampshire has been totally transformed inside and out, thanks to a remodelling scheme from Perring Architecture & Design (01590 670780). The original house has been extended to the front and given a complete makeover with new roofing, window shapes and styles and, most prominently, a new cedar shake cladding motif. Many 1960s homes in particular have much in common with contemporary designs, making them obvious candidates for improvement. We're featuring this house in full in the October 2010 issue

Knock Down or Remodel?

One of the key decisions in deciding how to proceed with the redesign of any house is whether to demolish and rebuild, and thereby benefit from zero-rated VAT, or to work with what is there and to pay VAT on all materials and any labour undertaken by a VAT-registered contractor.

As a rule of thumb, to assess if a building is worth keeping, the rebuild value of that part of the original dwelling left intact needs to be greater than the potential VAT saving through new build. At the current standard rate of VAT, this is 17.5% of the total redevelopment cost.

This decision is skewed if the house has been empty for two years or more, as VAT on labour and materials supplied by registered contractors will be at the reduced rate of 5%.

If the property has been empty for ten years or more, VAT is less of a factor, as the work is reduce-rated at 5%, but ultimately recoverable in full, as the property is treated as a new dwelling.

There are other factors to consider besides cost. Although not often an issue with houses from this era, there may be architectural features with value of character worth preserving. A more significant factor is the local authority's planning policy towards replacement dwellings, which can significantly restrict the viability of redevelopment, especially within the green belt. Policy varies across each planning authority, with some placing no restriction on size and others allowing no increase in volume whatsoever. Typically, policy allows an enlargement of around 30% of the

DESIGN DETAILS

— Roof Coverings —



Planning permission is not normally required to strip and recover the roof, including changing the roofing material, providing the roof depth is not raised by more than 10cm — which allows for over-the-rafter insulation.

Contemporary Styles

For a contemporary-style makeover, blue/black slate is the most favoured roof covering. A budget solution is to go for black, or dark grey, large-format concrete tiles.

Other roofing options include timber shingles, and metal roofing, such as powder-coated steel, zinc, lead or copper.

For flat roofs the most cost-effective option is fibre glass or traditional bitumen felt, but increasingly favoured are single-ply membranes, which are heat-welded and have a long lifespan.

Period Styles

For a period-style makeover, large-format concrete tiles will need to be changed for something more sympathetic, typically slate, plain clay tiles, profiled clay tiles, stone slates or possibly even thatch. Natural materials such as clay and natural slate or stone tend to look best but where budget is limited, the better-quality reconstituted stone/slate or concrete alternatives will still be a big improvement.

Selection should be based on the overall design scheme, and for a period-style project it is best to draw from the palette of materials used on original local houses of the same style. The roof pitch also needs to be taken into account, particularly on low-pitched roofs, as not all roofing options are suitable. Interlocking slates work at 20°; overlapping slate cannot be laid below 25°; plain clay tiles not below 35° — although some regular machine-made tiles can go down to 30°; double Romans can go down to 17.5°; thatch cannot be laid at below 45°.

A Costly Exercise

Changing the roof covering is not cheap — costing anywhere from £60-180/m² — so is best avoided on a budget scheme. However, where the roof is being stripped for other building works, this will go some way to mitigating the cost. If the existing covering is worth salvaging, it should be saved and either reused on a single plane of the roof, or sold. An alternative way to conceal an unattractive low-pitched roof is to form a parapet at the eaves and verge that screens off the slope from eye level.



— Windows & Doors —

Before considering the style of the frames, rethink the size and shape of the window and door openings and how this relates to the style of the overall design scheme. In most cases, door and window openings can be altered under Permitted Development rights.

Period Styles

For a period-style property, select a window style that is sympathetic to the overall design scheme and invest in timber windows, or the highest quality PVCu, with authentic detailing. For a low-maintenance option, go for timber windows clad externally in powder-coated aluminium or PVCu. Doors will almost certainly need to be timber to achieve the correct proportions and detailing, especially if they contain glazing.

Contemporary Styles

For more modern designs, larger windows with minimal or concealed frames are an important design feature. Frames may be powder-coated metal, or timber clad externally in powder-coated aluminium or PVCu. Doors are frequently timber and real interest can be added by using unconventional proportions, such as a wide or tall front door.

— Chimneys —

Many modern houses have no chimney, especially energy-efficient houses which have only a balanced flue stove or no flue at all. In contrast, period houses often have heavy chimneys as a defining characteristic and so getting the chimneys right on a traditional design makeover is critical. These structures will almost certainly require planning permission because they project above the ridge line. Although false chimneys in fibre glass or metal are available and can be clad in brick slips, it is always best to create the real thing if possible, even if there is no flue.

original volume, increased to 50% in the case of very small dwellings. Some authorities use area calculations rather than volume.

Even where replacement seems to make sense financially, it is important to weigh up whether more volume could be achieved by extending and remodelling. Often planners are more open-minded about extension schemes, especially if they are seen to enhance the building or setting.

One significant opportunity currently open in England and Wales is to get planning permission for the maximum extension, and to then use Permitted Development (PD) rights to extend the existing property first, before invoking the planning permission. Even if PD rights are removed by the new permission, this does not come into effect until it is commenced. ▶

Designer's View: "The Key is Proportion"



STEVEN TYLER OF ERINCASLE EXTERIOR DESIGN SHARES HIS ADVICE ON EXTERNAL MAKEOVERS

- When transforming a postwar property into a period one, the most important principle to remember is proportion — get it wrong and the building can look odd and pastiche.
- Find a photo of an authentic period house, similar in size to your property and use it as a model for what you'd like to achieve.
- Use a good hardwood window company. PVCu tends to look inauthentic although there are better-designed PVCu windows around.
- Be bold with traditional colours — white window frames are a late-20th century development. The Georgians and Victorians loved colour and their window frames reflected this in earthy reds, dark blues and olive greens, etc.
- Stick to one era, as mixing different period windows on one house will look confused.
- Cover ugly 20th century brickwork with render and tiling but avoid 'stone cladding' your house, as it rarely looks authentic and can resemble 'crazy paving'.

Erincastle Exterior Design: 020 7237 7646

DESIGN DETAILS

— Wall Cladding —

Altering the outer cladding of the external walls is a relatively straightforward way of transforming a building's appearance. The added advantage is the opportunity to cover up different mismatching materials where a property has been extended, altered or repaired, plus the chance to add external insulation.

Render

Render is a cost-effective option that is relatively thin and, therefore, requires little if any alteration to door and window openings or roof eaves/verges. It is suitable for a traditional-style design scheme, or for a contemporary look.

Render can also be applied on mesh over a layer of external insulation, either mechanically fixed or laid within a new insulated timber frame outer layer — helping to improve energy efficiency without sacrificing internal volume.

Sand and cement render is the lowest cost option, and if white cement is used together with local sand, it can be self-coloured. However, sand and cement render is prone to cracking and, once painted, will require ongoing maintenance.

Sand and cement render can be mixed with aggregate to form various textured finishes with greater weather resistance, ranging from roughcast to pebbledash, but these finishes are not particularly in favour at present.

Traditional lime render is a good option for solid-walled buildings, as it is breathable and can tolerate some movement without cracking; however, it is relatively expensive. It can be self-coloured by mixing with local sand, or finished with limewash. Lime render can also be mixed with aggregates to form roughcast.

Tile Hanging

Vertical tile hanging, using either plain clay tiles or slate fixed over timber battens, is a common traditional cladding option suitable primarily for upper storeys, including gable ends. Hung tiles or slates can be laid over a new externally insulated timber frame structure.

Stone

If it is to look convincing, stone is a difficult material to add as a thin external cladding layer, and has a bad reputation due to overuse in the 1970s. Cladding using smooth ashlar-type stone can be more successful and is used on some contemporary projects. Random walling is impossible to create on less than a 125-150mm bed, so is unlikely to be used for re-cladding.

Brick

Facing brick is too deep — on a 100mm bed — to easily apply to an existing building unless the existing outer wall is replaced with a new brick wall and cavity. However, thin-sawn brick slips are a cladding option and there are several systems available, including systems to fix over external insulation. This is a low-maintenance option, but labour intensive and therefore relatively expensive.

Timber

Vertical and horizontal boarding are both popular replacement cladding materials, either for the entire building, or for upper floors only, combined with render for the ground floor. They can be applied directly onto battens, or over a new insulated timber frame outer structure.

For traditional buildings, painted horizontal boarding is common in many regions, typically overlapping shiplap or weatherboarding. Painted softwood is the lowest cost option, but requires regular maintenance. For those who do not want to paint the exterior, or for harsh weather areas such as near the coast, there are self-coloured manmade cladding boards available made from cement fibreboard or plastics. These can look convincing and come in a wide choice of colours.

For contemporary design schemes, horizontal boarding is currently very popular, typically timbers such as oak, sweet chestnut, cedar, or European larch. Left to weather naturally, this is a low-maintenance option. Boards are usually butt-joined rather than overlapping.



Extensions

Adding extensions to the front, side and rear of a property, and altering the roof shape can totally transform a building's appearance. Most significant remodelling schemes will require planning permission, especially if they involve large extensions or two storey extensions to the side or front of a property. However, there is much that can be achieved using what are known as Permitted Development rights (these currently apply to England and Wales only, but Scotland and Northern Ireland are expected to follow with similar Householder Rights later in 2010). For full details see planningportal.gov.uk.

Before applying for planning permission, it makes sense to explore what can be achieved under Permitted Development (PD), as in some instances it can be possible to utilise both planning and PD to achieve maximum volume. If there is any doubt about whether a scheme will constitute PD, it is possible to apply for a Certificate of Lawful Development from the local authority. ►

To see a full description of the current Permitted Development rights, visit homebuilding.co.uk/extra





COUNTRY CHIC

This characterful country home is in fact the reincarnation of a 1950s mock-Tudor-style house. Back to Front Exterior Design's scheme included conversion of the garage, a new render installation to make the exterior more uniform and new windows, which actually make use of the existing window positions



NEW ENGLAND STYLE

Back to Front Exterior Design's scheme for this tired 1960s detached home included a new slate roof, completely new window positions, new render finish and a front porch. The result is a stylish New England-influenced home



Before

After

Designer's View: "Change Everything"

YOLANDE HESS, CO-FOUNDER OF SPECIALIST **BACK TO FRONT EXTERIOR DESIGN**, SHARES HER EXPERIENCE OF 370+ PROJECTS



- The ideal budget is 60-70% of the equivalent rebuild cost: after all, you are recreating a brand new home for less even after paying VAT.

- Use a designer

with experience of exterior makeovers and ask to see their track record. We see too many people clutching drawings that they ask us to tweak but we have to redraw the whole scheme, which costs more time and money.

- Ask to see a detailed perspective or a 3D visual of the scheme before you 'sign off' your designer's drawings.

- Listen to your designer and take their advice — they have experience and will save you money.

- Windows are the most important aspect in the transformation. Focus budget here and make sure you get the detailing of your windows right down to specifying handles, spacer bar colours, fenestration detailing and paint colours.

- Make sure you budget for renewing all the services such as electrics, heating and plumbing. What was suitable postwar will not be suitable for 2010.

- Materials chosen should be of the best quality.

- Change everything if you want to really pull it off. That means roof covering, windows and walls — and don't forget the landscaping at the end.

- High contemporary needs a good spacious site; if you don't have the space, save the modern for the rear.

Back to Front Exterior Design:
01252 820984



Before

COTTAGE INFLUENCES

Makeovers of postwar homes don't have to be contemporary in style. This bland home on a large plot was turned into a cottage-influenced family home thanks to a redesign scheme by Back to Front



After

DESIGN DETAILS



— Porches —

Adding a porch can be a cost-effective way to transform the front of a building that has a very flat, characterless façade. Period houses often feature closed or open porches, or at least a canopy, whilst grander classical-style houses often have a portico. Once again, this needs to be planned as part of an overall design scheme and the style of any porch or door surrounds selected as appropriate for the architectural style and standing of the building — be it a rustic cottage or farmhouse, or a finer country house or villa.

Contemporary-style porches and canopies tend to be more minimal in style, frequently with a simple rectangular format with a flat roof and lots of glazing in the walls and roof, perhaps combined with timber cladding or render.

— Details —

Window and door surrounds, cills, rainwater goods, external joinery such as barge boards and finials, and other architectural details all need to be considered as part of the overall design scheme. For a traditional-style design, these elements can be fundamental in creating an authentic feel and so should be researched thoroughly by studying original buildings of the same period style, and particularly those in the local vicinity which reflect regional vernacular building traditions.

— Landscaping —

The driveway, boundaries, gates, landscaping and planting should all be considered as part of the overall design scheme, and can go a long way to transforming the appearance of a house. Where budget is limited, climbing plants can be used to help disguise unattractive walls or features, and to screen out less attractive aspects, or to create privacy.

— Garages —

For a period-style property, try and avoid having any attached garages, or at best having the front elevation of the garage at a different angle — for instance, perpendicular — to the main house. An existing integral garage can be converted into living accommodation and in most instances this will not require planning permission as it constitutes Permitted Development.

Traditional garage doors should be side-hung cart-shed-style doors, or emulate this style, or perhaps have raised and fielded panels or simple boarded doors. Detached garages can be designed to appear as traditional outbuildings, such as barns, cart sheds, stores etc.

For a contemporary style, an attached garage is more acceptable, and the garage doors can be more modern in style, too, either sectional garage doors, or simple boarded doors. Raised and fielded panelled doors will not be appropriate.



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