



opstead

Enhancing the space you live in

We provide homeowners with a complete, end-to-end architectural service — guiding you from the very first design ideas through planning permission, building regulations approval, and detailed design.

This includes developing initial design concepts, refining them into fully considered plans, preparing and submitting planning applications, and producing the technical drawings and specifications builders need to cost and construct extensions or new build homes. Our aim is to make the whole process straightforward and stress-free, turning your vision into a design that is both ready to build and can make a meaningful positive impact on your life.

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Our approach

At Opstead, our step-by-step approach means we guide you through every stage of your home project — making the process clear, manageable, and stress-free.

Consultation → Measured Survey → Existing Drawings → Layouts/
Feasibility → Planning → Technical design → The Build Stage



STEP 1 (CONSULTATION)

During the consultation, we sit down with you (in person or online) to really understand what you're hoping to achieve — whether it's an extension to create more family space, reconfiguring your home for better flow, or designing a new build home from scratch.

We'll talk through:

- How you currently use your home and what's not working
- Your ideas, wishlist and priorities
- Your budget and timescales
- The character and constraints of your site (like access, orientation, neighbouring properties, and planning considerations)
- Your style preferences and any inspiration you've gathered

We'll also explain the design and planning process step by step, outline likely costs for each stage, and answer any questions you may have. By the end, you'll have a clear sense of what's possible, what the next steps are, and how we can help turn your ideas into a well-considered design ready to take forward.

We offer complete flexibility at this stage, whereby we can either visit you at your property, or we can do this fully remotely and ask for a little more information including photographs of the existing property ahead of an online consultation call.

STEP 2 (MEASURED SURVEY)

After the initial consultation, the next step is the measured survey.

This is when we visit your home (or site) to carefully measure and record all the details we need to create accurate existing plans and elevations.

During the survey, we'll:

- Measure each room's length, width and height
- Note positions of doors, windows, stairs and any structural walls
- Record floor levels, ceiling heights, and roofs
- Capture external features, garden

levels, boundaries, trees, drains and anything that may affect the design

- Take photographs for reference back at the office

Using these measurements, we produce precise digital drawings of your current home or site. These become the foundation for all the design work that follows, ensuring our proposals are accurate, practical, and suitable for planning and building control.

STEP 3 (EXISTING DRAWINGS)

Once we've completed the measured survey, we move on to drawing up the existing drawings. This step is about turning all the measurements, notes and photos we gathered on site into accurate digital plans and elevations of your current home (or site).

Specifically, we:

- Create scaled floor plans showing the layout of each level
- Draw elevations that show what your home looks like from each side
- Include key details like windows, doors, roof shapes and boundary lines
- Produce sections through the building to show floor levels and roof heights

These drawings don't yet include any new design ideas — they simply capture what's there now in a clear, professional format. They're essential because:

- Planning applications always require a set of "existing" drawings for comparison
- They form the baseline for testing and developing new design options accurately
- Builders, structural engineers and building control need them to understand the current structure and the basis of what may be changing by new works.

STEP 4 (LAYOUTS/FEASIBILITY)

After we've drawn up your existing home or site, we move on to the layout / feasibility options stage. This is where design ideas really start to

take shape.

During the survey, we'll:

- If extending – explore different ways to arrange and extend your space — for example, open-plan living, new kitchen locations, bigger bedrooms, or better connections to the garden
- If new build – explore different layouts and spaces to best deliver against your brief
- Test what's realistically possible within planning guidelines, your budget, and the physical site constraints. This sometimes will include things you've not asked for to really drill down to determine what you really want/need to mitigate the future '*what if we had done it like this instead*'.
- Prepare a few alternative sketch layouts and 2D plans to show different design directions
- Sometimes illustrate key ideas with simple 3D views or diagrams to help you visualise how the space could feel

During this stage, we discuss each option with you, explaining the pros, cons and likely costs or planning implications. Together, we refine your brief and identify which option (or combination) best meets your needs and provides you with information to obtain some build estimates (we work with many local builders that can help support this stage).

STEP 5 (PLANNING)

Once you've chosen the preferred layout option, we move into the planning application stage.

At this step, we:

- Prepare detailed drawings that clearly show your proposed extension or new home, including floor plans, elevations, sections and site plans that meet the local authority's requirements
- Where necessary, prepare supporting documents such as design and access statements or planning statements, which explain the design approach and how it complies with planning policies
- Coordinate with any necessary specialists (such as environmental

consultants) to provide additional reports if needed. Sometimes we will wait for the local planning authority to request these post submission as part of a planning strategy that we will discuss with you.

- Compile the full application package, ensuring it is complete and professionally presented for submission.
- Submit the planning application to the local planning authority and manage any follow-up communication or queries during the review process, including any drawings revisions that may be required to address any concerns by the local planning authority.

Our goal here is to create a compelling, compliant planning application that maximises the chance of approval while reflecting your vision. We'll keep you informed every step of the way, answering questions and guiding you through the sometimes complex planning process.

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STEP 6 (TECHNICAL DESIGN)

After planning approval, we move on to the technical drawings stage — sometimes called building regulations or construction drawings..

At this step, we:

- Develop detailed plans, sections and elevations that go beyond the planning stage to show exactly how your extension or new home will be built
- Include technical information like wall, floor and roof build-ups, insulation details, and structural notes
- Show positions of doors, windows, drainage, and other building elements in precise detail
- Prepare construction specifications that explain materials and workmanship standards
- Ensure everything meets current building regulations and any other relevant standards

These technical drawings and specifications are essential for two reasons:

- They're submitted to your local building control body (or an approved inspector) to get building regulations approval — confirming your project complies with safety, energy efficiency and structural standards and enables your chosen builder to commence building works.
- Builders use them to accurately

price and build your project, reducing the risk of unexpected costs or misunderstandings on site

Furthermore, we will manage the process of dealing with the building control body and other consultants that may be required at this design stage, which may include, but are not limited to a Structural Engineer, Civil Engineer and SAP Assessor.

STEP 7 (THE BUILD STAGE)

Once construction starts, we don't just hand over the drawings and disappear — we stay involved to support you and your builder during the build, from afar.

At this stage, we can:

- Answer questions from your builder about the design or technical drawings
- Clarify details or provide additional sketches if something unexpected comes up on site (which it usually does when dealing with existing buildings!)
- Help check that the work being built matches the approved plans and design intent
- Advise you on any small design tweaks or decisions that often arise once construction is underway
- Liaise with building control inspectors if extra information or adjustments are needed for compliance and manage other consultants if further information/change is required.

This ongoing support helps keep the project running smoothly, avoids costly mistakes or misunderstandings, and gives you peace of mind that you're not left on your own during the critical build phase.

Oaklands

Client Private
Location Babergh
Size 1.2 hectare site
Status Complete

SERVICES

TECHNICAL DESIGN

PLANNING

Opstead were appointed to undertake concept, planning and detailed design for the major renovation of an existing bungalow in the rural village of Little Cornard, Suffolk. The site was located in a flood zone which prohibited the building footprint from being enlarged.

With the benefit of an existing high roof line, conversion of the attic space was the obvious choice to create additional habitable rooms. With an acre of land and lakes to the rear of the property, opening up the dwelling to make the most of these views were top of the agenda, therefore large openings occupy the striking contemporary rear of the dwelling. Panoramic sliding doors and glazing to the ground floor open plan layout offer direct connection to the outside, whilst a balcony for the master suite, set within a floating box' at first floor provide views across the lakes at sunrise.

The front of the dwelling embodies the traditional nature of the previous bungalow complimented by a contemporary twist, with a more defined entrance gable feature and metal clad box dormers to bring visual interest and articulation to the road frontage. Time has been spent in introducing articulate details of metal cladding features, shrouds to window apertures, timber fins and vertical timber cladding which will gradually silver.

We followed up with a further planning permission for a separate cart lodge, complimentary to the architectural design of the main house. A home office is accommodated within the roof pitch above the parking area, whilst the structure has been constructed to allow any flood waters to pass through.



Before



Boyd Close, CM23

Client Private
 Location East Hertfordshire
 Status Planning approved

SERVICES

PLANNING APPLICATION

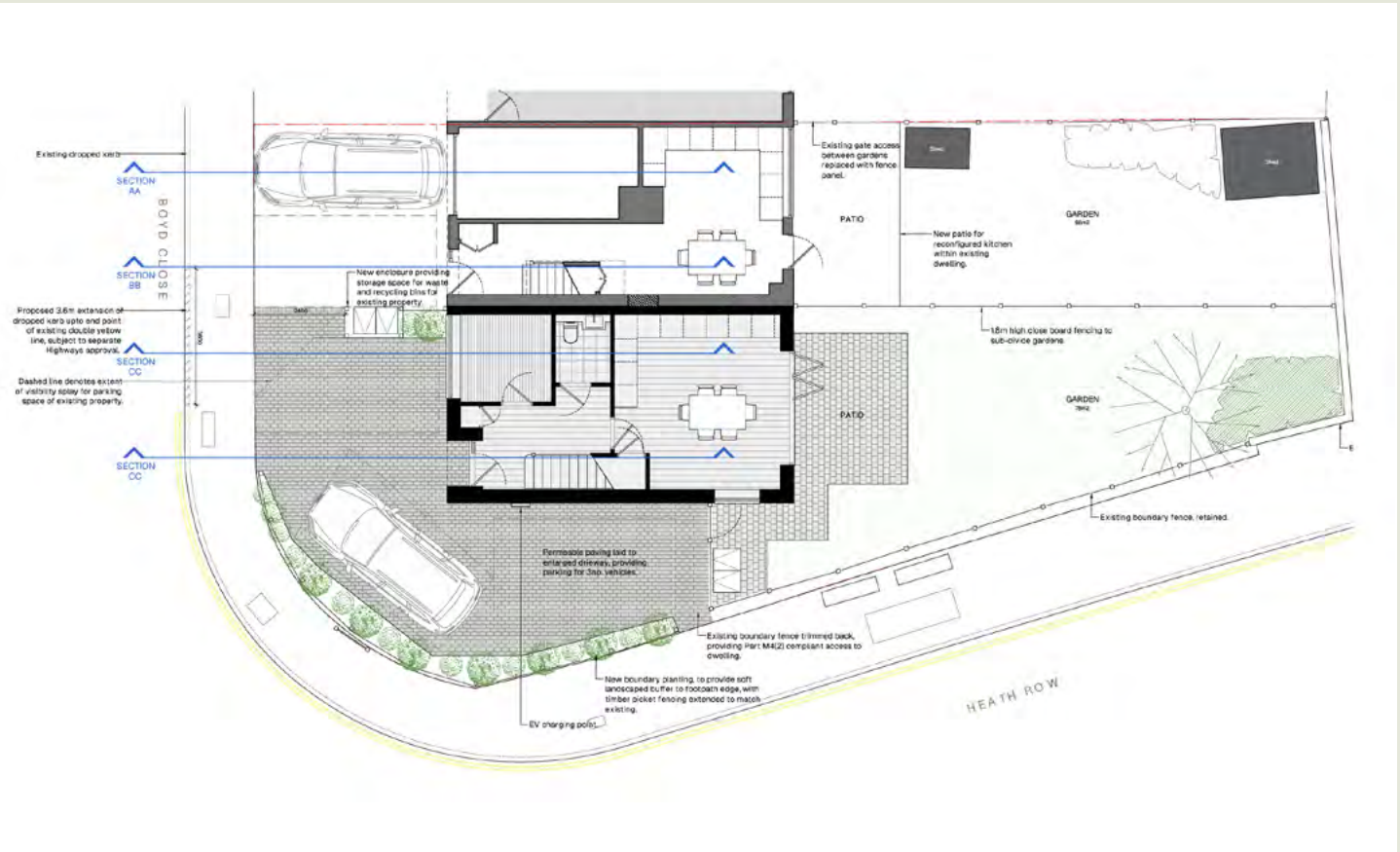
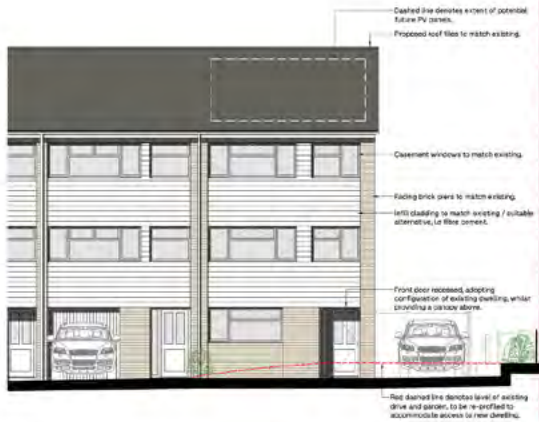
TECHNICAL DESIGN

Planning permission secured for a new dwelling.

Opstead secured approval for the conversion of an existing three-storey townhouse into a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO).

Working closely with the client and their contractor, we developed a viable proposal within the constraints of the existing building, transforming it into a long-term portfolio asset. The project required strict adherence to spatial standards for living areas and bedrooms, compliance with fire safety regulations, and all Building Regulations requirements. We optimised the existing footprint to maximise bedroom sizes and occupancy, delivering the highest possible yields for the client.

Additionally, we provided support on party wall matters, ensuring the project progressed smoothly from design to completion.



White Dale, CM22

Client Private
Location White Dale
Status Under construction

SERVICES

SCHEME DESIGN

PLANNING APPLICATION

TECHNICAL DESIGN

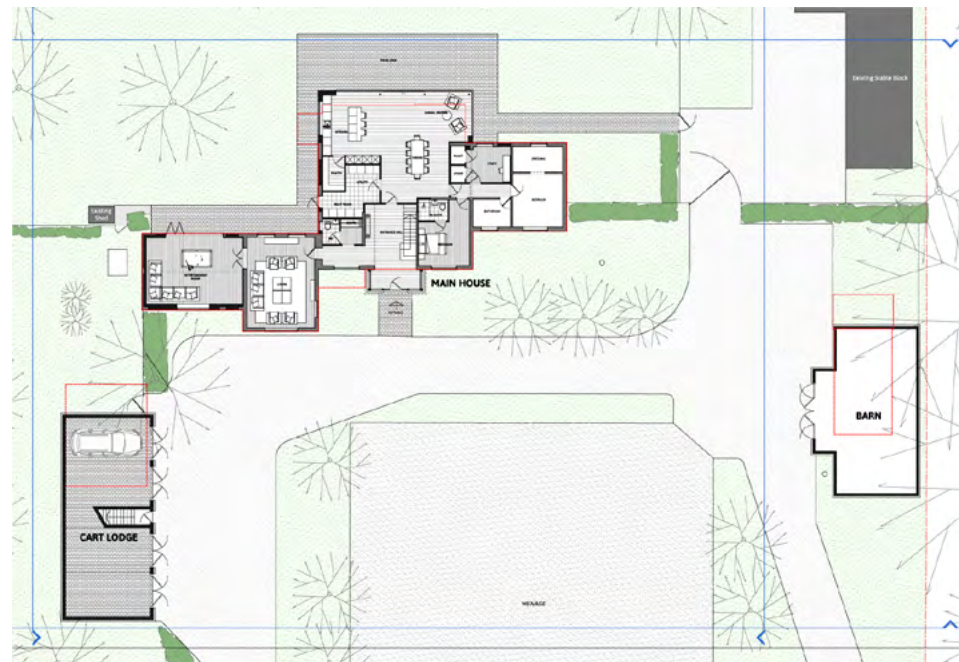
Comprehensive property remodel with outbuildings

Opstead secured planning permission and Building Control approval for a comprehensive remodel of an existing bungalow, complemented by replacement cart lodge and barn outbuildings.

Set in a rural context, the design maximises countryside views through a modern architectural approach at the rear, with large glazed openings connecting the primary living spaces and master bedrooms to the surrounding landscape. The front elevation maintains a traditional character, enhanced by an oak-framed glazed entrance and new dormer windows for first-floor bedrooms.

We carefully selected a traditional material palette to respect the Essex countryside: red brick plinths, off-white render, black cladding, and clay peg-tiled roofs.

The project required complex construction detailing, with close coordination with the structural engineer to integrate new first-floor steelwork through the existing ground floor structure. The result is a sensitive blend of contemporary living and rural character, maximising both functionality and aesthetic appeal.



Crowsheath Lane, CM11

Client Private
 Location Green belt
 Status Planning approved

SERVICES

SCHEME DESIGN

PLANNING APPLICATION

TECHNICAL DESIGN



Green belt replacement dwelling

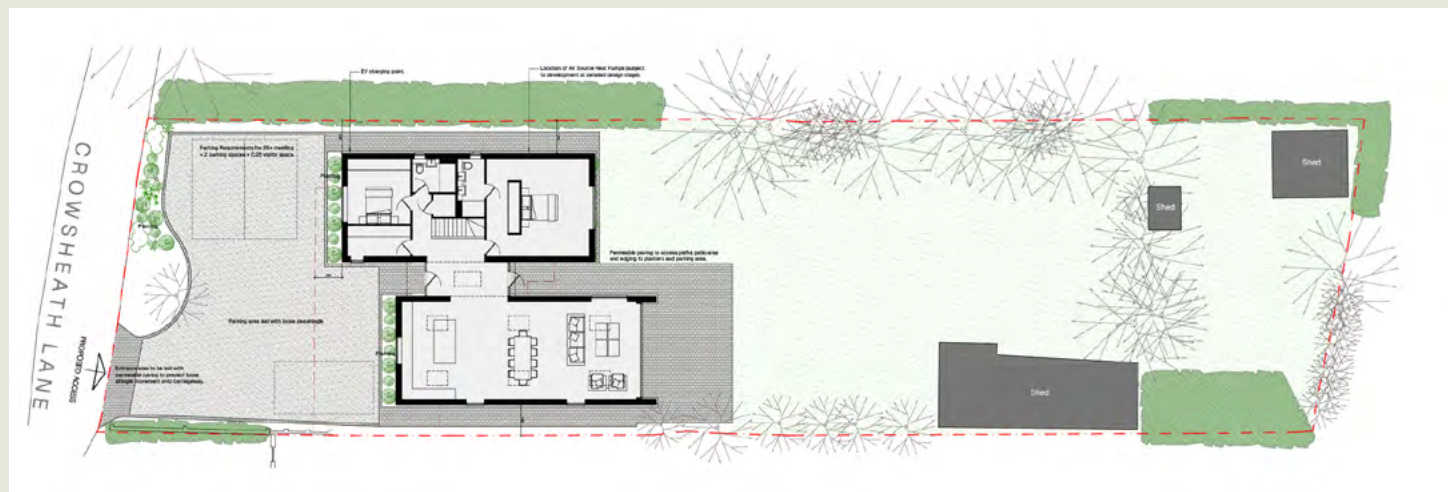
We secured planning permission for a replacement dwelling within the Green Belt, sensitively designed to respond to its rural context and proximity to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The proposal replaces an existing chalet bungalow with a contemporary home organised around the concept of two interlinked barns — one dedicated to daytime living spaces, the other to bedrooms and bathrooms. These two simple volumes are connected by a lightweight glazed link, creating a visual break between the forms and allowing light to permeate deep into the plan.

Each barn is clad in contrasting materials that complement the local vernacular and reflect the surrounding landscape. The design approach focused on maximising the site's potential while respecting the planning sensitivities of its location, ensuring a scale and massing appropriate for the setting.

Through this strategy, we achieved a 50% increase in internal floor area with only a 25% increase in footprint, providing the client with additional living space and an extra bedroom without overintensifying the site.

Following the successful planning outcome, we are now working closely with the client on the project's detailed design and delivery stages.



Thornfield Road, CM23

Client Private
Location Bishop's Stortford
Status Under construction

SERVICES

PLANNING APPLICATION

TECHNICAL DESIGN

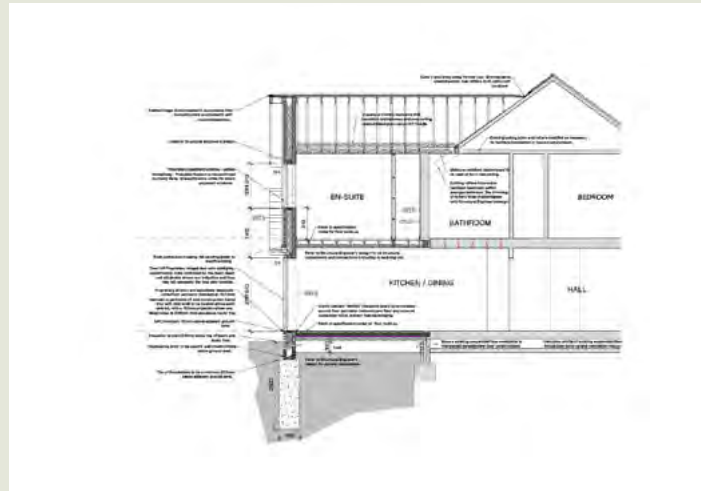


Extensions to a town centre dwelling

We secured planning permission and Building Control approval for a single-storey side and rear extension, twostorey rear extension, and front porch to an existing town centre dwelling.

After two rounds of planning, we achieved consent by working closely with planning officers to refine the proposals. The design carefully responds to the existing character and material palette, referencing key detailing features so that the extensions integrate seamlessly with the original property.

Internally, the extensions were designed to improve the flow of the floor layouts, maximising usability and practicality for everyday living. The result is a sensitive, well-considered enlargement that enhances both space and functionality while maintaining the aesthetic cohesion of the street frontage.



Twin Pines, CM22

Client Private
Location Bishop's Stortford
Status Completed

SERVICES

SCHEME DESIGN

PLANNING APPLICATION

TECHNICAL DESIGN



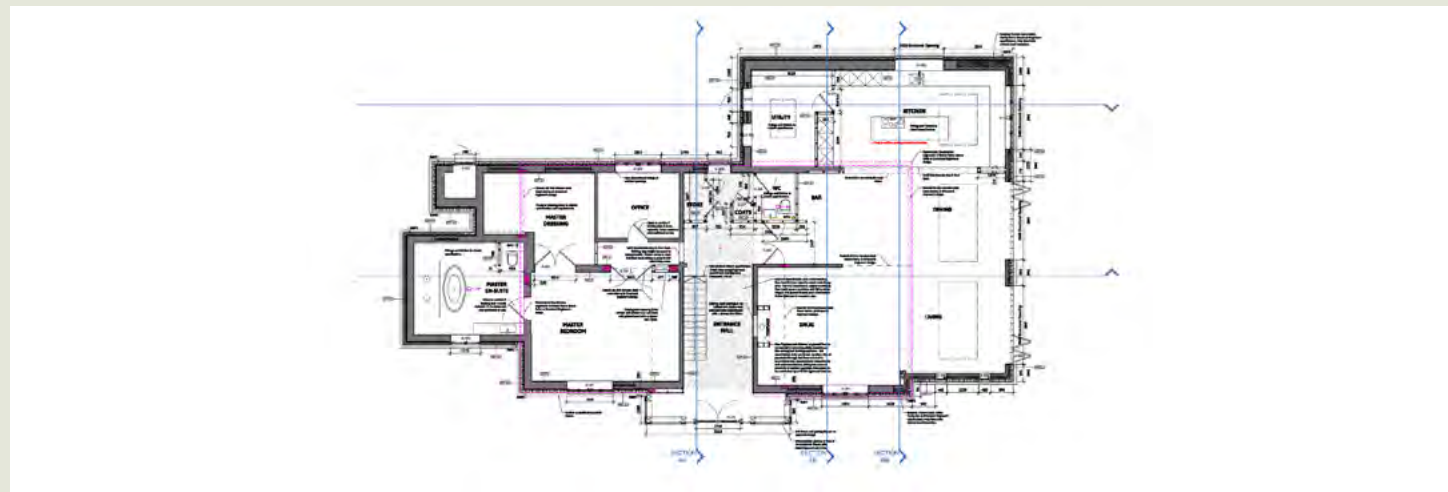
Comprehensive remodel of a woodland bungalow

Set within a stunning woodland environment with farreaching countryside views, this 1960s bungalow was comprehensively remodelled to create a contemporary rural home that truly connects with its surroundings.

Our design process explored a variety of options to meet the client's brief for additional bedrooms and enhanced living and kitchen spaces. The final proposal delivered an impressive 81% increase in internal floor area with only an 18% increase in footprint, optimising the site's potential while remaining sensitive to its natural setting.

A traditional material palette was carefully selected to harmonise with the rural character — combining natural textures and tones that blend seamlessly into the woodland backdrop.

At the heart of the home stands a striking double-height oak-framed entrance gable, framing views through to the woodland beyond and establishing a strong visual and spatial connection between inside and out. This defining feature captures the spirit of the project: contemporary living deeply rooted in its natural context.



Oaklands, CO10

Client Private
Location Bishop's Stortford
Status Completed

SERVICES

SCHEME DESIGN

PLANNING APPLICATION

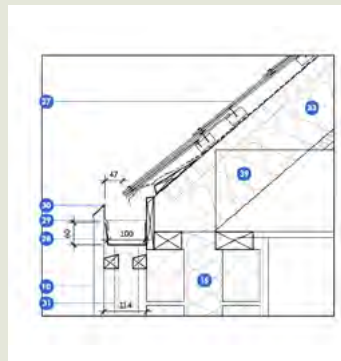
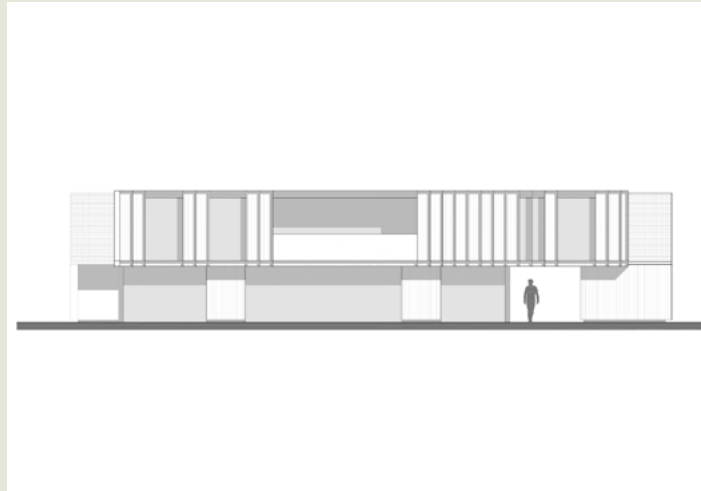
TECHNICAL DESIGN

Opstead secured planning permission within a designated flood zone for a comprehensive remodel of a 1960s bungalow, transforming it into a contemporary home with a traditional twist.

Restricted by regulations that prohibited any increase to the building footprint, our design strategy focused on optimising the existing plan by extending vertically within the height parameters of the original roof. This approach effectively doubled the internal area, delivering a 146% increase in usable space without expanding the footprint. The remodel introduced additional bedrooms and living spaces, as well as an annexe and a new cart lodge.

Externally, Sioo-treated larch cladding wraps the principal façades, complemented by grey aluminium detailing and contemporary dormers that reinterpret the bungalow's traditional form. In contrast, the rear elevation adopts a bold, modern language — a projecting roof box with full-height glazing opens up views across the garden and adjacent lakes.

Attention to detail was paramount: concealed downpipes, hidden gutters, and vertical timber fins create clean lines and a distinctive architectural identity. The result is a refined, efficient, and characterful home that reimagines what's possible within stringent planning and environmental constraints.





Questions & Answers

01 I'VE NEVER DONE A HOME EXTENSION OR RENOVATION BEFORE. WHERE DO I START?

That's what we're here for. We'll guide you from your first ideas, through design, planning, approvals, right up until your project is ready to build, and here to guide and support if anything arises during the build stage.

02 DO I NEED PLANNING PERMISSION?

Not always. Some projects fall under "permitted development". Others need a formal planning application. We'll check this for you and manage the process for you if its needed.

03 WHAT IS BUILDING CONTROL?

Building control makes sure your project is safe and meets regulations (for structure, fire safety, insulation, drainage, etc.). We prepare all the technical drawings and get approval before work starts.

04 HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

Most projects take: **TIM TO FIRM UP TIMESCALES**

Design: 2–4 weeks
Planning approval (if required): 8–12 weeks
Building control approval: 4–6 weeks

We'll give you a clear timeline for your project.

05 HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Our design and planning fees depend on the size and complexity of your home. We'll give you a clear proposal upfront, with no hidden extras.

06 CAN YOU HELP ME FIND A BUILDER?

Yes. We can recommend trusted builders or provide detailed drawings so you can get accurate quotes.

“We would take this opportunity to commend you on the excellent standard of presentation of the drawings and specification. It certainly makes our job easier in assessing and approving you Building Regulations applications”

— Hertfordshire Building Control

Glossary

A

ARBORICULTURALIST

A tree specialist. Required if your site has protected trees (Tree Preservation Orders) or trees close to proposed works.

B

BUILDING CONTROL

Inspectors (council or private) who check your drawings and make site visits during construction.

BUILDING REGULATIONS

National rules to ensure your home is safe, efficient, and accessible.

BUILD OVER AGREEMENT

Permission from the water authority if you build over or near a public sewer.

C

CDM REGULATIONS

Health and safety rules that apply to all building projects (big or small).

CIVIL ENGINEER

Designs new drainage routes, connections or soakaways. Needed where complex build-overs or diversions are required on projects.

COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

The final sign-off from Building Control when everything is completed and compliant.

CONSERVATION AREA

A protected neighbourhood with stricter design rules.

CONTRACTOR / BUILDER

The company or person carrying out construction work.

E

ECOLOGIST

Surveys and advises on wildlife, e.g. bats, birds, or habitats. Required where protected species might be affected.

ELEVATIONS

Flat drawings of the outside of your home (front, back, side).

ENERGY ASSESSOR (SAP / EPC)

Prepares calculations for energy efficiency compliance and Energy Performance Certificates.

F

FULL PLANS APPLICATION

A detailed submission to Building Control for approval before building.

L

LISTED BUILDING

A building of historical or architectural importance needing special consent.

M

MEASURED SURVEY

A precise set of measurements of your existing home, used as the base for design drawings.

N

NEIGHBOUR CONSULTATION

When the council invites your neighbours to comment on your planning application.

P

PARTY WALL

A wall or structure you share with a neighbour, or build close to.

PARTY WALL AWARD

An agreement drawn up by surveyors, setting out how the works will be carried out.

PARTY WALL NOTICE

A legal letter you serve to neighbours before certain works near the boundary.

PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT (PD)

Certain small changes allowed without a full planning application.

PLANS (FLOOR PLANS)

A “bird’s eye view” drawing showing how rooms and spaces fit together.

PLANNING CONDITIONS

Extra requirements attached to planning approval, e.g. “use brick to match the existing house.”. Sometimes these require additional information to be submitted to the Council prior to progressing with the build stage.

PLANNING CONSULTANT

Helps with more complex or sensitive planning applications, appeals, or negotiations with the council. Rarely used for homeowners.

PLANNING PERMISSION

Approval from your council to extend, remodel, or build.

PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR

The main builder responsible for managing health and safety on site.

PRINCIPAL DESIGNER

A designer (often your lead consultant) appointed under CDM Regulations to plan health and safety during design.

R

RIGHT TO LIGHT

A neighbour’s legal right to maintain access to natural daylight through established windows. We will consider aspects such as this at design stage.

S

SAP ASSESSMENT

An energy calculation for new builds or extensions with high amounts of glazing.

SECTION

A cut-through drawing of your home, showing heights and how spaces stack.

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

Designs beams, foundations, and other structural elements so your home stands safely.

SURVEYOR (PARTY WALL SURVEYOR)

Manages the Party Wall process and agreements with neighbours.

T

TENDER

Getting quotes from builders using your design drawings.

U

U-VALUE

A number that shows how well walls, windows, or roofs keep heat in (lower = better).

Contact

Ready to transform your home into the space you've always imagined?

Whether you're planning a stunning remodel, a seamless extension, or building your dream home from the ground up, we'll guide you through every stage—from design to development—with creativity, clarity, and care.

Let's bring your vision to life.
Contact us today to schedule your free consultation.

info@opstead.co.uk
07725 127 205





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