



Gary Waller had an urge to leave the hustle and bustle of city life firmly behind him, and jumped at the chance to move out of East London to Stock in Chelmsford, Essex. "I decided to take on a big project like this because I wanted land and a bit of space," he says. However, Gary admits that redeveloping a big plot of land, totaling an impressive 11 acres, was a big challenge. However, his motivation started when he was young, having grown up in a small, post World War II asbestos building. "One of the things that keeps me going is the fear of going back to that sort of lifestyle," he adds.

Gary developed the 3-hold farm on the plot, which is approximately one acre in size. Problems with obtaining planning permission meant that the planning stage was, "quite cumbersome, it took about three months to work through." Having resolved everything on paper, it was time to begin digging. "Once we started the house I got to the more cavalier side of things and built what I knew I'd be allowed to

keep. I was worried that something would go wrong with the planning permission, but I kept on going." The property, called Bishops Farm, was ready over an 18-month timeframe, as Gary explains. "Between the inception of buying the place, the house was ready for habitation within two years. It took about 18 months to build Bishops Farm in the end." Since then, he has been living there happily ever since.

Recalling its grandeur and functionality, Gary explains how the house, which is currently up for sale, is great on so many levels, with a three-bedroom cottage and a granny annex joined to the indoor swimming pool, which then flows through into the adjacent main house. This grandeur also comes with a versatility to suit a number of potential buyers. "It's good for business entertainment, or for a couple that perhaps have older parents who want to live in the cottage. It's good for people who want a babysitter or nanny to stay in the annex and look after their children, and it's great for socialising with friends too," Gary affirms.

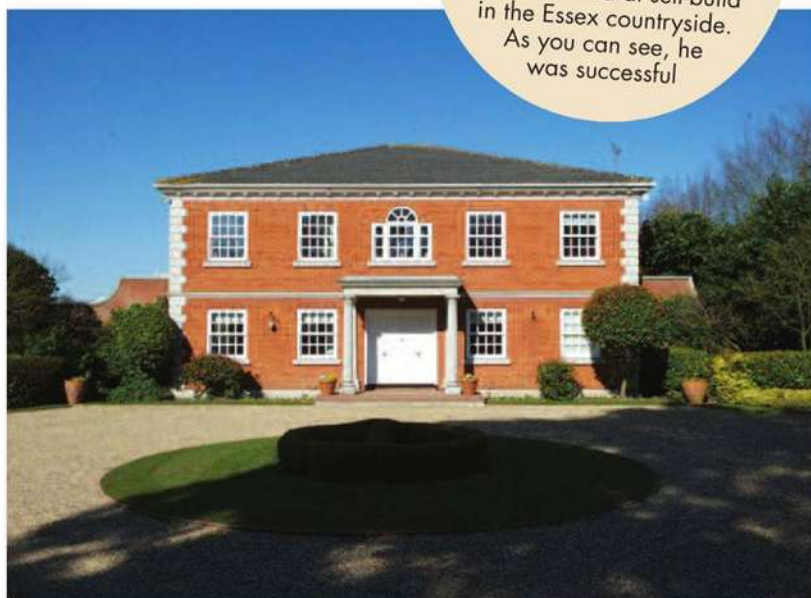
There were setbacks during the redevelopment however, especially when trying to gain the necessary planning permission from the local council. Admitting that he fought the council "tooth and nail" to redevelop the plot of land into his dream home, Gary asserts that a big build project is not for the faint-hearted. "I did have a couple of wobbly moments along the way, and times thinking 'what have I done?'"

The advantages of working for himself were immediately noticeable, Gary admits, and not being bound to the office made the building stage go smoothly, despite setbacks. "It was very time-consuming, I couldn't really have done what I did if I'd worked a 9-5 job. The fact that I own a company meant that I was able to pop out at lunchtime to oversee the builders. I have built more houses since then, but this one certainly was a challenge." Gary advises people against biting off more than you can chew, as there are many things that can go wrong when redeveloping a plot of land, and always more time and cost restraints than expected.



ESSEX COUNTRYSIDE DREAM

Spawning from an urge to leave the hustle and bustle of city life behind, Gary Waller tried his hand at self-build in the Essex countryside. As you can see, he was successful



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– Gary Waller

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The garden was also a **challenge** to have landscaped, and **inspiration** came from buying copies of garden magazines

– Gary Waller

ABOVE: THE EXTERIORS OF THE PROPERTY INCLUDING THE BACK GARDEN

The village of Stock is 500 years old, and the green belt area surrounding it means that it is especially hard to placate everyone involved in building projects, as Gary discovered. "Each place up for development in the green belt zone is very subjective and taken on its own merit," Gary explains. "In some neighbours' cases, they had been denied permission to build, and their attitude was, 'If I can't get permission, why should anyone else be able to?' But you can't think like that in a place as protected as this, sometimes you're not so lucky and other times you are." Having the planning permission to build was one hurdle out of many. For instance, Gary spent £15,000 consulting a town and country planning expert to understand what was

feasible, having had no prior experience of big build projects. This helped him to understand the price and time constraints, as well as to appreciate the considerable challenges ahead.

Deciding to go for a Georgian design, the Wallers gradually began the plot transformation. The interior design was inspired by a mixture of personal taste and happening upon show rooms throughout the planning and building stage. The second master en-suite, however, was bought in Miami after the house had already been built. "We fell in love with the black and white tiling design and decided that, for a change, we'd go for something a bit more different and eclectic." When asked which room is his favourite, Gary immediately replies that

the pool is home to many a fond memory. "We like to watch the rugby in the swimming pool on the flat screen there. We've had a lot of good times in the pool, lots of parties. Then there are the great additions to the house – for example the bars. There is one in the indoor pool, and another in the main house."

The garden was also a challenge to have landscaped, and inspiration came from buying copies of garden magazines and asking garden-fanatic friends for tips. The family now has four gardeners to maintain what was previously wilderness and fields. Gary also made the most of his money by buying products in bulk and at wholesale price. "We bought some box plants that look like small trees at the wholesale price.

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BELOW: THE KITCHEN



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BELOW: THE MASTER BEDROOM
BELOW THAT: THE SPA AREA



**HIGH POINT
OF THE PROJECT**

"The highest point was getting written confirmation that all the planning regulations had been adhered to and had gone through."



Continued overleaf...

Focus on the **end result**, not on the day-to-day trivialities on the building site. Just imagine the place as a finished item

– Gary Waller

BELOW: WASHROOM AREA



THE LOW POINT WAS

"The low point was being worried about whether we'd be able to succeed, having committed the money to the site. Employing the consultant really helped me through that though."

tioned, as there are a few people who, anyone going to do this, would be well-advised to speak to."

Gary also recommends importing products from abroad to get the best possible prices. Working for an international logistics company was advantageous, allowing Gary to, "cut deals and move products in from overseas —things like carpets, ceiling fans and windows."

Originally they were around £400 each, but we had them for £220 each because we bought so many. I think our suppliers should be men-

His expertise, coupled with invaluable advice from his main builder, meant that they were able to keep prices as low as possible. "The builder I was working with became a good friend, I trusted him and he was very good at sourcing materials," Gary explains. "The furniture was imported from the US, as well as certain electrical products, carpets, tiling and the swimming pool pumps. Swimming pool companies in the UK are about four times the price of building a pool in the US, so I shipped them in using my company's containers," he adds.

With 21 years of building experience, Gary emphasises that people who are considering



ENTERTAINMENT ROOM WITH POOL AND A WELL STOCKED BAR WHERE GARY HAS HOSTED MANY PARTIES. THIS IS THEIR FAVOURITE ROOM.



Gary's TOP TIP

Look into importing products and materials from abroad to get the best possible prices. Importing costs are not as high as you might imagine, considering the savings.

land development or home renovation should be prepared to spend a good deal more than their estimated budgets. "Get ready to pay as much as 10 or 20 per cent more than expected. There are always changes, product prices may rise, others are imported, so that's driven by the rate of exchange. Certainly budget for everything, but expect an uplift on it." Aside from the monetary, more practical side, Gary urges people in the process of developing to picture the finished product – their dream home. "Focus on the end result, not on the day-to-day trivialities on the building site. Just imagine the place as a finished item, as opposed to

despairing at the hole in the ground in front of you. It's all worth it in the end."

Though there were tough moments, Gary asserts that his happiness in Bishops Farm outweighed everything else. "It's very hard to be fighting a battle with the council, in a recession, while trying to sell your last house, while also trying to run a business and having one or two neighbours constantly complaining." Despite this, Gary would jump at the chance to do it again, and is looking forward to letting others experience Bishops Farm. "It's been a real pleasure to live there for all these years, I've loved it."

Project costs

Overall cost of land: £200,000

Overall cost of project: £1.2 million

Value of property now: £4 million

What was the high point of the project?

"The highest point was getting written confirmation that all the planning regulations had been adhered to and had gone through."

The low point was: "The low point was being worried about whether we'd be able to succeed, having committed the money to the site. Employing the consultant really helped me through that though."

Contacts

- Builder: CL Plant Ltd
01702 551722
- Floors & Carpets: Epsom Flooring Ltd
0208 949 0453
- Blinds & shutters: Marc Holland & co
Budget Blinds Florida:
001 239 770 3422
- Staircase & fitted bedroom furniture:
Gavin@vertdesign.co.uk
- Furniture: Baers (Naples SW Florida)
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