

# Keeping up appearances

When the Billingtons bought a run-down, aging park home they saw through its battered exterior and in under two weeks their home had undergone a total transformation

**U**p until the tail end of 2009, Roy and Margaret Billington were living in a three bedroom semi-detached property in South Yardley, Birmingham. With retirement looming large they found themselves rattling around their big house, and made the decision to release some equity and downsize.

Like many in their situation,

## QUICK CHAT OVER A CUPPA



Roy and Margaret Billington told PH&HC, 'Now that we are OAPs we have no need for a large house. We decided to "downsize" and after considering many other options, chose to take on a total refurb project.'

'We have been converting this 25 year old park home into a 21st century version - fully insulated and with minimum maintenance. We have since refurbished internally and made this home our haven.'



**Right: This tired and dated property was given a new lease of life by Rapide**

they started their search looking at bungalows and flats. However, nothing appealed to them and after many futile searches they decided to have a look at some local park home sites. They soon stumbled across Hillcrest Park, in Wythall, West Midlands.

As Roy is the only driver in the couple, they needed a park that had easy access to shops or a bus route to the town centre and this site ticked the right boxes.

Happy they had discovered their ideal park, they had yet to discover their ideal home. They had seen many different makes and models on their quest but nothing that got the pulse racing. That was until they came across a 25-year-old Omar 36ft x 20 twin. First impressions were not, if the Billingtons were honest, great. The home's age and lack of proper maintenance had meant it's exterior was in a poor state and the home required a lot of work and money to get it up to their high standards.

But there was something about it that appealed to the Billingtons. Something about the home had resonated. 'We realised that this was a home we could make our own,' explained Roy.

'Yes it needed a lot of work, but here was a home we could stamp our authority on and truly make our own.'

### Transformation time

After several visits to the home, they decided to take the plunge and buy it. Unsure as to how much work would be needed to bring it up to scratch, or even



**TO THIS, IN 2 WEEKS!**

what work would need to be undertaken, they enlisted the help of Rapide.

They discovered the company through an advert in PH&HC and the firm initially carried out a full structural survey before the sale went through.

Once a list had been drawn up of the alterations required, the Billingtons then discovered

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Rapide carried out home refurbishments and enlisted their services to carry out the exterior refurbishment.

Even though the couple appreciated that the sheer amount of work required would not come cheap, they were wise enough to understand that they would still have a large amount of their retirement nest egg remaining, plus a home that was built with them in mind.

Looking forward to their future the couple moved into their new

home on October 19, 2009.

Working with Rapide, the Billingtons outlined their intentions on how they thought the home should look.

Halfway through, the Billingtons realised they needed a bedroom window moved so that it would not be blocked off by their wardrobe. This was no problem and the workmen were receptive to any changes.

All in all, the work took around two weeks to carry out. This was despite the terrible weather, which meant the workmen had to battle harsh winds and torrential rain.

Throughout the work the couple were pleased they could remain in the property and they even discovered that having the workmen there had its definite advantages. 'We were taking delivery of two large sofas,' explained Roy. 'Park home doors can be quite narrow making it very difficult to get bulky furniture in. Thankfully the day the sofas turned up coincided with the day the windows were replaced. This meant that the delivery guys could simply load the furniture in through the hole in the window!'

**Turn over to see how Rapide transformed the Billingtons home in just two weeks...**

## 1 Windows/doors

The couple had seven windows replaced in total. The old ones were water damaged and in dire need of repair so the couple opted to start again. They decided to fit leaded windows in a similar style to their previous property.

**EXTREME MAKEOVER: HOW IT WAS DONE**



▲ **Before:** All the original single glazed wooden windows were showing signs of decay or rot. The doors had been replaced with uPVC but these had been poorly fitted and were made for a bricks and mortar home. They needed to be replaced with uPVC double glazed units which would be fabricated with an odd leg outer frame, specifically for park home use.



▲ **During:** The windows were replaced with uPVC double glazed units to enhance the home and give more windowsill space in the lounge. The Billingtons replaced old fashioned splay bays with box bays, installed with GRP gallow brackets to the underside and a feature tiled roof canopy which would continue across the home and match the new tiled roof.



▲ **After:** The front hall door had a continual decorative uPVC panel with stained cut glass. The kitchen door however was a more functional mid-rail door with obscure glass in the top and a Georgian panel below. The Billingtons decided to enhance the glass in the windows using border lead, similar to their previous bricks and mortar property.

## 2 Cladding

There are different types of cladding at different costs in the park home market. The Billingtons could have gone for a cheaper option, which would have looked just as effective, but ultimately opted for Vinytherm cladding with double insulation.



▲ **Before:** The original plywood texture coated outer walls were showing serious signs of decay, some of the boards had rotted and the drip bar had perished. The outer wall boards needed to be removed and the original wall structure would need to be checked over. After explaining and discussing the various wall renovation options available, the Billingtons decided to opt for the total non-maintenance, energy-efficient, thermally-enhanced wall renovation.



▲ **During:** The existing outer wall boards had to be removed and rotten timbers replaced from the existing wall structure. The wall thickness was doubled by screwing tanalised timbers onto the structure. Thermax PIR insulation board was fitted inside the new wall structure on top of the existing quilt insulation. Vinytherm uPVC cladding board was installed.



▲ **After:** Vinytherm has a unique integral cavity which creates a continuous air circulation between the additional insulation/structure and the outer wall surface. This results in a maintenance-free outer wall finish and an enhanced thermally efficient wall structure keeping the home free from condensation and rot while being warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer.



## 3 Roof

The roof was leaking and with winter fast approaching, needed to be fixed as soon as possible. This meant Rapide prioritised work on the roof first, especially as the home had some problems with damp, due to the previous owner blocking the air vents.



▲ **Before:** The roof covering was still the original Hyplon blanket and had perished over the years. Water ingress was evident so Rapide suggested to replace it with a new granulated lightweight pitched tiled roofing system. There was also evidence of rotting fascia/barge boards and the guttering was on its way out and leaking.



▲ **After:** New, maintenance free, uPVC fascia/barge boards with guttering were installed. This allowed Rapide to increase the pitch of the roof pre-formed gable ends with white uPVC open 'V' board cladding and trusses with lateral/diagonal bracing where screw fixed into the original roof. Klobber reinforced underlay and tanalised battens were then secured to the new roof carcass. Finally the granular lightweight tiles and trims were fitted.

## UNDERSTANDING THE JARGON

### 1 TANALISED TIMBER BATTENS

A batten is a piece of timber which is secured over the underlay and on top of a roof carcass (structure). Its main function is for the roof tiles to be secured to it using nails. Tanalised timber is a piece of wood/batten that has been chemically pressurised in airtight tank - in other words treated to stop it rotting.

### 2 ODD LEG OUTER FRAME UPVC WINDOW/DOOR

This is the standard type of window/door installed into park homes by manufacturers and reputable park home refurbishers. Unlike domestic house windows they are produced with a lip on the outer frame. This gives the windows a clean appearance when installed onto the flat wall surface of a park home. This type of window eliminates any gaps around the outer edge of the window when installed as the lip covers them. It also helps when sealing the window to the wall. These type of windows do not require an unsightly sill on the bottom of the window, on a domestic window the sill allows water that gets into the frame to be drained out, however odd leg windows have face drain caps which does the same job without the sill.

### 3 GRP GALLOWES BRACKETS

When a box bay is installed most of the bay overhangs

past the outer wall, the gallowes brackets are installed underneath the bay to give it support and help with its stability. GRP gallowes brackets are architecturally moulded brackets with an upmarket traditional shiny white appearance, the process uses fibreglass resin to create these and various architectural building items i.e white bay tops, etc.

### 4 KLOBER SPANTECH UNDERLAY

A new breed of roofing underlays. Underlays are laid below tiles as a secondary precaution against wind, rain and melting snow as these severe conditions could cause the roof tiles to leak. This type of underlay does not rot or tear easily (unlike old fashioned felt underlays), this rotting process can cause problems where the felt penetrates underneath the tiles into the gutter.

### 5 VINYTHERM CLADDING

Vinytherm cladding is a type of cladding which has double insulation. Thanks to its stone surface the cladding is maintenance free.

This is a more expensive option but it also offers a 50 per cent increase in heat retention. This will mean heating bills will be drastically reduced and could prove to be a wise money saving measure in the long run, especially with the ever-escalating cost of fuel bills. It also reduces exterior noise from the home.

## The Billingtons' verdict

'If you have the necessary capital to spend and you have the help and desire to take on this type of project, the rewards are outstanding,' enthused Roy Billington adding, 'the "before" and "after" are literally chalk and cheese.'

## Rapide's assessment

Denis Stanton from Rapide told PH&HC, 'We were contacted by Roy and Margaret in September 2009 as they had decided to retire and sell their bricks and mortar and downsize to an ageing 25 to 30 year old home. We were engaged to carry out a full structural survey and it was evident that the home was in need of a major refurbishment. Although the chassis and structure of the home were in a good condition,

**"The work was carried out in no time at all. We are delighted with its new look and have had several of our neighbours commenting on the transformation."**

the roof, walls and windows were badly in need of replacement.

'Once the Billingtons had received the report from our survey, a site meeting was arranged to discuss how to bring the home back up to current specifications. The Billingtons awarded us the contract to carry out the refurbishment, which commenced in October 2009 and took approximately two weeks.'

For a free information pack on the full range of Rapide's services call: 01889 882275 or e-mail [denisstanton@btinternet.com](mailto:denisstanton@btinternet.com)

## Cost

It is difficult for Rapide to provide a typical cost as it depends on the quality of materials, type of home, length of job, etc. However if you were to undertake the same type of complete overhaul as the Billingtons' you could expect to pay around £16,000. ●