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HOMES OAK FRAME SELF-BUILD

Home in the Forest

Louise and Peter Wreford have built a characterful oak-framed property in the New Forest, overcoming strict planning rules to achieve their dream home

Words: Natasha Brinsmead Photography: Jeremy Phillips



PROJECT NOTES

Project: Oak frame self-build

Location: New Forest

Build time: Nov 2011 – Oct 2012

Size: 192m²

Plot cost: £322,000 (2001)

Build cost: £550,000
(£2,864/m²)

Value: £950,000+



THE QUICK READ

⇒ Louise and Peter Wreford demolished their 1950s brick bungalow in order to build a family home on their 3/4 acre plot

⇒ Being located in the New Forest meant the Wrefords had to work with oak frame provider Border Oak in order to find creative solutions to fit in with the very strict planning rules that were imposed

⇒ A combination of oak, brick, timber cladding and clay roof tiles means that the house blends in perfectly with its setting

⇒ Despite the traditional look of the house, it uses some very eco-friendly technology, including a ground-source heat pump — making it economical to run

When Louise and Peter Wreford, along with their two children, Victoria (13) and Alexander (14), first moved to the New Forest in 2001, they had planned to renovate and remodel the 1950s brick bungalow they had purchased there. “It quickly became clear that it needed far more than we realised doing to it,” begins Louise. “It had shallow foundations and needed underpinning — so we decided to demolish it and just start again.”

The couple had been searching for something suitable for some time — which for them meant a house with enough land to accommodate the household as well as their horses, three dogs and five cats. “Originally Peter suggested that we live in a caravan on site while the build took place,” begins Louise. “I couldn’t see us coping with that, not with all the animals and two children — which meant renting would have been difficult, too. In the end we bought a small two bedroom terraced house just five minutes’ walk away from the bungalow, which we now rent out.”

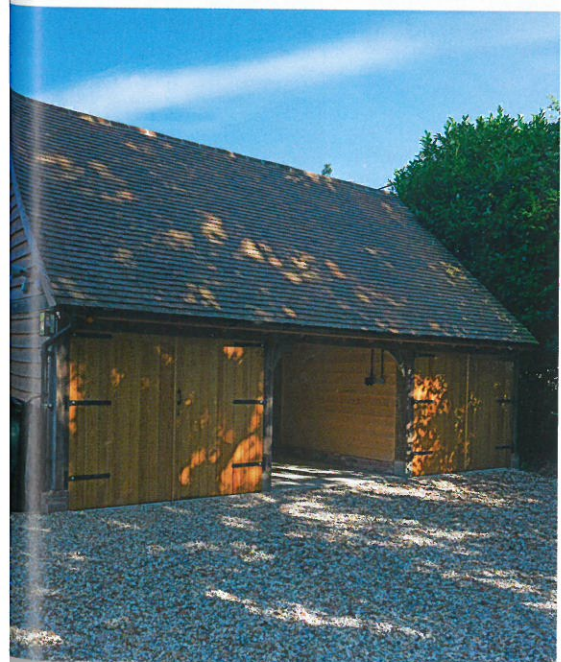


Left: Exterior and Garage

The oak-framed house features clay roof tiles, render panels and a single storey timber-clad section — all in keeping with the local area. The detached garage was built before work on the house began

Below: Double-Height Hallway

The hallway is flooded with light, thanks to an enormous full-height window, with views over fields owned by the Wrefords





Top: Dining Hall

The light-filled dining hall is now used for Victoria's piano practice, as the family tends to congregate in the kitchen/breakfast room at meal times

Above and Right: Living Room

The living room is full of character, thanks to the exposed oak frame and the eye-catching Bath stone fireplace complete with woodburning stove from Clearview Stoves

Strict Planning Regulations

Being located in the New Forest meant the planning stipulations about what they could do with the plot were ferociously strict. "We were told we were only allowed to build a house 30 per cent larger than the original bungalow," says Louise. "By this, the council meant 30 per cent of the total floorspace rather than the footprint, so we did have to look at ways to get the space we needed into this."

After consulting with the New Forest District Council on what kind of house would be acceptable (materials in keeping with the local area and a design that looked as though it had evolved over time), Louise and Peter chose a design from Border Oak's portfolio and adapted it to suit their needs.

"The size restrictions meant that we have gone from a five bedroom bungalow to a four bedroom house, but the layout is so much better and the rooms much bigger," explains Louise. Plan- ➤➤

HOMES OAK FRAME SELF-BUILD





Kitchen-Breakfast Room

An Aga and island unit were top of Louise's wish-list for the new home. The painted units (well suited to the country-style kitchen) are from deVOL. The marble floor works brilliantly with the underfloor heating — the only issue the Wrefords have with the kitchen is stopping their newly acquired rescue dog from chewing it

ning permission was granted in May 2011, but delays followed after a mistake that Louise describes as an 'awful moment'. "The groundworkers had just started digging the foundations and were in the process of excavating the first trench when I arrived on site," explains Louise. "I knew immediately that the trench was not where it was supposed to be and it turns out that the measurements they were using were derived partly from an Ordnance Survey map that was 4m out!

"Building work came to a halt and we weren't allowed to continue — we had to wait for a non-material minor amendment to be granted which took an additional seven weeks and was finally approved in November 2011. I was so upset — we had demolished our home and had nothing to show for it and technically no planning permission," says Louise.

Designing a Family Home

The new home has been constructed using an oak frame with SIPs (structural insulated panels) and finished in render. Shiplap cladding has been used for the single storey element of the house. Clay roof tiles and Flemish Antique bricks from Hoskins Bricks have been used to ensure the home blends in with its setting.

"Our brief was for the complete opposite of the original bungalow," says Louise. "No long corridors and plenty of natural light." And this is just what they have got. The open plan kitchen-breakfast



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Below: The Utility

The handy utility room that leads off the kitchen is essential for a home with so many pets, while the open plan kitchen-breakfast room (bottom) makes the whole space sociable





First Floor Spaces

Upstairs, the original plans were tweaked at the request of Louise and Peter to open up the ceilings to the A-frame for maximum character. Although the stylish bathroom is currently shared by the whole family, plans are afoot to turn a storage space in the master bedroom into an en suite



HOMES OAK FRAME SELF-BUILD

room is filled with light and is the room where family members spend most of their time. An island unit, Aga and marble flooring suit the house perfectly, while a utility and cloakroom lead off.

In the living room, a Bath stone fireplace – chosen before the couple had even obtained planning permission – frames a wood-burning stove, giving the space a homely feel. But it is perhaps the stunning dining hall that steals the show, with full-height picture window and chunky oak staircase, set off by a chandelier that took Louise and Peter 12 months to choose. In fact, the decision-making process was something that Louise admits she found hard to deal with. “There were so many decisions to be made all the time,” she says. “It was quite overwhelming — and constant. It is hard to decide on flooring, door furniture and so on when you are struggling to picture what the finished house will look like.”

On the first floor, the four double bedrooms ooze character, thanks to the vaulted ceilings and exposed beams. “On the original plans the ceilings were not open like this,” says Louise. “So we asked for them to be opened up to the A-frame.” At present there is just one bathroom, although a master bedroom en suite has been planned in for the future. The finished house has some

rather impressive eco-credentials, too. Underfloor heating has been used throughout the house, powered, along with the hot water, by a ground-source heat pump. In order to meet Code 3 for Sustainable Homes (which, while now defunct, was required by the local planners at the time of building), they were also required to install a compost bin, space for bicycles and bat and owl boxes, as well as soakaways for the rainwater.

“The house is so economical compared to the old bungalow,” says Louise. “The bungalow cost us around £3,000 a year just for oil, now we only have electricity and that costs just £2,000–£2,500.

“My advice to other self-builders? Don’t be afraid to give your input. I was hesitant at first to interfere, but the builders are not mind readers! They need your input and if you don’t tell them exactly what you want, you won’t get it.”

Despite going over budget – the build ended up costing around £550,000, including interior fittings – Louise and Peter could not be happier with their new home. “I asked Peter whether he would build again, and he said ‘why would I?’” says Louise. Peter sums up how pleased they both are with their new home: “Every time I pull up at the front gate and look at the house, I smile.” **H**

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HOMES OAK FRAME SELF-BUILD

The Project



Merry Albright
Border Oak

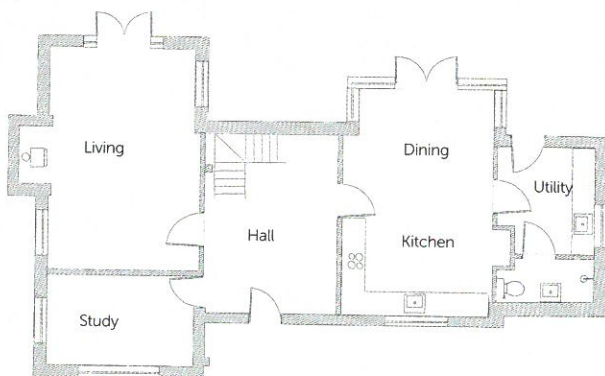
DESIGNER'S VIEW

What I love most about this design is the organic, relaxed ambience. This has been created by using a mixed palette of natural materials such as green oak, brick, glass, weatherboard and lime render — all of which will weather gradually without competing against one another. It is a classic palette that Border Oak has used many times over the past four decades and something we are confident will complement the surrounding landscape.

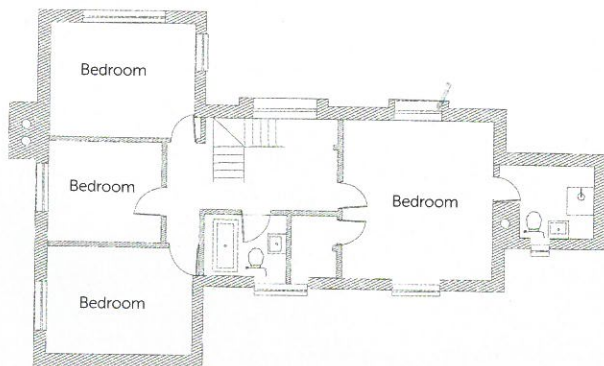
The combination of materials also works well because the design has architectural variation and interest — differing ridge heights, dormer windows, an oak jetty and the open porch, for example. These devices help diminish the volume and size and allow the building to integrate with the plot, but they also provide recession and projection and a distinctive 'informality', which is both easy to live with and pleasing to the eye.

It is always a pleasure to work with clients who prioritise craftsmanship and workmanship in their brief and hopefully this home is an excellent example of our artisan skills, traditional craftsmanship and high specification. Quietly blending modern technologies and construction detailing with incredible craftsmanship and a family-orientated layout that is light and bright was important to our clients and we hope we have achieved this for them. It was a joy to work on this project from the design and planning stage through to the complete build.

Ground Floor



First Floor



SUPPLIERS

Design, structural engineer, quantity surveyor and build Border Oak

.....borderoak.com

Arboricultural tree survey Mark Hinsley
Arboricultural Consultants

.....01202 840819

Building materials Travis Perkins

.....travisperkins.co.uk

Bricks (Flemish Antique) Hoskins Brick
Companyhoskinsbrick.com

Tiles Heritage Clay Tiles

.....heritagetiles.co.uk

Fireplace Finesse Fireplaces

.....01225 783558

Drive and patio Scotiabuild

.....scotiabuild.com

Woodburning stove Clearview Stoves

.....01584 878100

Fencing supplier New Forest Fencing
and Gates023 8073 3442

Kitchen deVOLdevolkitchens.co.uk

Sanitaryware Vitravitraglobal.com

Brassware Crosswater...crosswater.co.uk

Bath Bathroom & Kitchen Academy

...thebathroomandkitchenacademy.co.uk

Shower controls Aqualisa..aqualisa.co.uk

Renewable heating and hot water

system Worcester Renewable Energy

.....01684 892121

Code for Sustainable Homes designs
and post-construction assessments

Ashmount Consulting Engineers

.....0161 337 4353

Chandelier My Home Lighting

.....01202 835002

Curtains, blinds and poles

Material Matters01420 82759

PROJECT TIMELINE

May 10 First enquiry to New Forest
District Council

Dec 10 Planning application submitted,
withdrawn on the advice of the
planning inspector

Feb 11 Planning resubmitted

May 11 Planning permission granted

Nov 11 Non-material minor amend-
ment approved and work began

Oct 12 Build completed