

THE GREEN HOUSE

Alexandra and Rik Hall had two priorities when building their home – it had to be sustainable and connect to the outside

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EXTERIOR
The energy-efficient contemporary house has two air-source heat pumps and is hidden in a walled plot inspired by Australian living, with generous glazing and sweeping views across the countryside. Design, Rik Hall at Arc8 Projects. Timber frame house Kit, Kingspan

HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY
A contemporary self-build

ROOMS Sitting room, snug, kitchen-diner, pantry, cloakroom, boot room, utility room, five bedrooms, five bathrooms

LOCATION Surrey

When Alexandra Hall and her husband Rik designed and built a contemporary energy-efficient home, they wanted it to reflect the seven years they spent living in Australia. 'Our project wasn't only about minimising waste in construction; we wanted to use local trades and suppliers and avoid buying new as much as possible,' explains architect Rik, founder of Arc8 Projects.

The couple were living in London with their three children, Gracie, 15, Saskia, 13, and Monica, 10, when they jumped at an opportunity to swap London life to tackle a self-build in Surrey.

'When I saw the picturesque scenery, I had a crystal-clear image of a modern, low-lying house connected to the landscape,' recalls Rik. 'The Australian ethos for living is all about making the most of light and views, so an indoor-outdoor lifestyle became the focus of my design.'

The couple were aware that permission to replace a dated bungalow and derelict cottages on the one-acre green belt plot would be a challenge. By the time the family had moved into the bungalow, Rik was ready to submit his carbon-neutral design to the local planning department. 'We have two air source heat

pumps, a storage battery and 26 solar panels,' says Rik. 'On a sunny summer's day, we can generate enough to power our house, heat the pool and charge our cars, and still make around £8 a day.'

Rik's first design combined the footprint of all the existing buildings, but it was rejected for being too big. 'My revised design responded to all the queries, but it still wasn't approved,' he says. 'We spent a stressful two years battling the system and seeking letters of support. Eventually, it was deemed "outstanding architectural design" because of its sensitivity to the setting, and we got planning approval.'

The highly insulated timber frame kit, supplied by Kingspan, was built to a shell finish in just 18 days. The house was completed eight months later, but there was still a huge amount of work to do such as demolishing the old buildings, as well as landscaping.

With Rik's focus on the architecture, Alexandra was charged with doing the interiors. The decor is mostly grey-white to allow the colours in the countryside outside to become part of the home and the artwork inside to pop. Having said that, a strong green and gold stone in the kitchen anchors the main living space.




KITCHEN - DINER
'The green stone is really striking and unusual and it felt perfect for Rik's design of our home, which centres on the views and greenery beyond,' says Alexandra. Windows, TP Improvements. Blue Roma Brazilian quartzite, The Marble & Granite Centre. Bend bar stools, Dome Deco at Sweetpea & Willow Outlet

'Rik spotted an amazing quartzite at a stone yard,' says Alexandra. 'I absolutely adored the colours and although he prefers a neutral decor, he reluctantly agreed it was exactly right.'

River Woodwork – Alexandra's sister and brother-in-law's company – made all the joinery, while Alexandra resolutely sourced products that were ex-display, damaged goods, cancelled orders or end of lines. 'When we had to buy new, we went to nearby family-run companies where the supply chain could be tracked to avoid buying mass-produced products,' she explains. Furniture came from local outlet shops

and includes ex-display Eichholtz pieces from Sweetpea & Willow; a scratched but repairable sideboard from Andrew Martin; plus a Kohler sink from West One Bathrooms.

'Some metal-framed doors were rescued from a renovation project by Green Doors,' adds Alexandra. 'We're proud we've been able to show our daughters that it's possible to build a sustainable house with sustainable furnishings.' The project was a tough journey, but we love Rik's incredible design. We feel a calm sense of wellbeing here – it's a magical place to live.' 
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SITTING ROOM
Ethical aboriginal artwork is a reminder of the time the couple spent living in Australia. Sociable armchairs swivel to face the kitchen or garden. Eichholtz Brice ex-display swivel chair; sofa, both Sweetpea & Willow Outlet. Australian artwork, Neroli Weaver. Find similar pieces at Aboriginal Art UK



MAIN BEDROOM
A backdrop of muted neutrals and abundance of light from the window give the space a tranquil feel.
 Walls in Silver Thistle Down, Valspar. Upholstered bed, Sweetpea & Willow Outlet. Chair, footstool and cushions in Maldives Marine fabric, iLiv at Peter Lees



HALLWAY
'Planning the house around a courtyard was key to my design,' says Rik. 'The biophilic concept connects us with nature and light and the large windows definitely do that.'
 Walls in Shetland Sweater, Valspar



DAUGHTER'S EN SUITE
'Our daughter was very definite about wanting the large-format leafy tiles in her bathroom, which I put with a pop of mint green in the vanity,' says Alexandra.
 Resina Forest tiles, Ceramica Tiles & Bathrooms. Bespoke vanity unit, River Woodwork; painted in Teresa's Green, Farrow & Ball