

Traditional self-build

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Old Meets New

The evolving character of a new oak-framed home fulfilled Kelly and Ben Homden's desire to live in a characterful home with all the convenience of modern living

PROJECT NOTES

HOMEOWNERS Kelly and Ben Homden
LOCATION Shropshire
PROJECT Oak frame self-build
HOUSE SIZE 245m²
BUILD ROUTE Builder, subcontractors and DIY
BUILD TIME Aug 2015 – Jun 2016
LAND COST £175,000
BUILD COST £555,800
CURRENT VALUE £850,000



The team were so helpful, really lovely and easy to deal with

Kelly and Ben Homden began exploring the idea of a self-build when Kelly's builder dad, Graham Bennett, decided to try his luck with planning to see if he could build houses on a plot he owned. The two and a half acres had been part of the purchase of a house – where Kelly grew up – which he'd bought around 25 years before.

"Dad didn't think he'd get permission to build on the land so when he and Mum sold the house some years ago they kept the fields for pastureland," Kelly explains. "Then in 2015 a local developer on the other side of the village got permission to build some houses and that got Dad thinking about what he might be able to do."

Graham, who owns Netley Joinery and Bennett Homes, offered to sell Kelly and Ben a section of the land so they could apply for planning to build their own home. He portioned off two-thirds of an acre and divided it in half to make two equal-sized building plots. The couple would keep one for themselves and, if they got planning, they'd sell the other as a serviced third-of-an-acre plot, with Graham's firm building both houses.

"The field is a beautiful spot; we look out onto farmland and the hills," says Kelly. "The idea was for Ben and I to get outline planning for both houses and then we'd go back with a detailed design for our own home later on."

The design foundations

The Homdens – who have three children, Olivia, 9, Lola, 2, and Freya, 1 – approached Roger Parry & Partners, friends of Graham, about achieving outline permission for the site, discussing their design ideas with architectural technologist Paul Middleton.

The couple had their sights set on an oak frame house. "We both love oak – I grew up in a 15th-century farmhouse with oak running through it," says Kelly. "Though we didn't talk to an oak

CAPTURING CHARACTER

The house's exterior features a cream-coloured render as a gentle nod to nearby Tudor houses. The bargeboard on the roof gables has decorative edges and were made by Kelly's dad, Graham's company.



FAMILY SPACE

The kitchen – from Crown Kitchens – is designed to be interactive and cosy, with a breakfast bar and a window seat with integrated storage. Painted in cream, the Shaker-style cupboards are set against a grey kitchen island, paired with a black quartz worktop.

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DINING ROOM
The dining room has been designed like a conservatory with a sloping steel roof. Karndean's Van Gogh wood-effect LVT in Auckland Oak runs through the living room and kitchen.

frame company until we were sure we had outline planning permission."

The couple wanted a large, detached, four-bedroom home with a double garage and big driveway to accommodate Ben's vehicles and equipment for his groundworks business.

"I liked the idea of a gable on the front and to be able to walk into a lovely big open hallway," Kelly recalls. "Paul angled the house so we have light throughout the day and unobstructed views. When we're sitting in any of the downstairs rooms, we can't see the other houses around us."

Creating an oak-framed house

Kelly and Ben's outline application for both houses was approved in May 2015 without question. By now, they'd done some investigating into oak frame building companies, and a friend highly recommended Welsh Oak Frame.

"The firm weren't far from us and I liked the idea of keeping the project local," says Kelly. "The team were so helpful, really lovely and easy to deal with. Our designer, Emyr Davies, took our drawings and turned them into a beautiful oak-framed house."

Kelly and Ben's brief centred around creating a home that felt lived-in rather than new. Oak was ideal because it shrinks and cracks over time and has given the house its naturally aged appearance.

"We wanted a new-old house that feels like it's been here for years and years but at the same time fresh and easy to look after," says Kelly. "For

instance, we've got a big brick and oak living room fireplace, but we've also got underfloor heating throughout the house. We've got oak doors with iron latches that are new, but they look old."

The couple submitted their revised design a few months later. The planner wasn't keen on the prominent front gable, calling it 'too grand' for the area, but Kelly wasn't budging.

"The front gable is a beautiful feature and the whole point of the oak frame design, so I couldn't give it up," she says. "They wanted us to reduce the height, but I did my research to prove houses in the area are all different and many have high roofs."

A family build

Permission for the design was granted in August of that year. By this time the couple had sold their house and the family had moved into a caravan (though when the weather became too cold, they moved into Kelly's parents' barn conversion holiday let). Ben brought his team in to start the groundworks and build the foundations, and Kelly project managed the build alongside her dad.

"Dad's been in the business for 45 years and knows all the trades so it was easy for us in that respect," explains Kelly. "He still had his own business to run so he showed me the ropes and I got stuck in."

Welsh Oak Frame arrived in November to erect the frame and threw a team of 10 onto the project, finishing in just two weeks.

SUPPLIERS

ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGIST Roger Parry & Partners: www.rogerparry.net
DESIGNER AND OAK FRAME BUILDER Welsh Oak Frame: www.welshoakframe.com
BUILDING CONTRACTOR Bennett Homes: www.bennett-homes.co.uk
GROUNDWORKS Homden Excavations: www.homdenexcavations.co.uk
ROOFERS Paul Wilkes Roofing: www.pawilkesroofing.co.uk
WINDOW Velfac: www.velfac.co.uk
RENDERER AND PLASTERER Richard Evans & Sons Plastering: 01584 890668
ELECTRICIANS AND PLUMBERS Mark Robson at Shropshire Cooling: www.scsgroup.info
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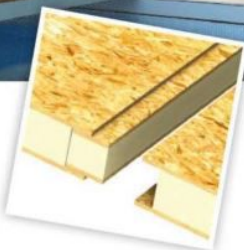
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BUILD COSTS

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| FEES (INCLUDING DESIGN, CIVIL AFFORDABLE HOUSING LEVY) | £47,000 |
| GROUNDWORKS | £30,000 |
| FOUNDATIONS | £20,000 |
| FRAME (INCLUDING GARAGE) | £125,000 |
| EXTERNAL WALLS AND WINDOWS | £83,000 |
| ROOF STRUCTURE AND COVERING | £45,000 |
| INTERNAL WALLS | £10,000 |
| FLOOR, WALLS, CEILING FINISHES, | £22,800 |
| JOINERY AND FITTINGS | £38,000 |
| PLUMBING AND HEATING (INCLUDING BATHROOM AND KITCHEN) | £58,000 |
| ELECTRICS | £21,000 |
| DECORATION | £7,000 |
| MISCELLANEOUS | £13,000 |
| GARAGE | £36,000 |
| TOTAL | £555,800 |



DESIGNING THE INTERIORS
The travertine tiles on the walls and floor of the wetroom are matched with traditional-style sanitaryware; the whole bathroom was specified from Farr and Harris Plumbing Supplies.


“The manpower was amazing — we couldn’t believe how quickly the frame went up,” says Kelly. “This was a real high point in our project.”

Once the house was watertight and the second fix under way, Ben and Graham would finish work and come to the house in the evenings to carry on with the multitude of jobs. Fortunately, Graham is a joiner by trade and was able to help with some of the joinery work, along with his colleague, Adam Tunnicliffe.

“With an oak frame house, you need a joiner who understands oak,” says Kelly. “Dad and Ben’s hard work helped us save money, and all the trades we used were brilliant. I think the secret to our success were the doughnuts and cakes I bought every Friday! Everyone looked forward to that time and stopping for a chat.”

An evolving home

Kelly drew on her mum Lynne’s expertise for the interiors, as Lynne runs the interior design side of the family business, Netley Interiors. Lynne helped Kelly choose the decoration and finishes, such as carpets and curtains.

Although the Homdens are already very happy in their house, Kelly says it is still evolving. The most recent alteration was removing the wall between the family room and dining room to create an open-plan space. And, of course, the oak is continually changing. “As the oak’s dried out, splits and cracks have appeared and given our home even more character than it had when we first moved in,” enthuses Kelly. “We really love living here — we’re never moving as we’ll never be able to create a house like this again.” 



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THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

A financially painful situation sprang up when the couple were unexpectedly slapped with the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Self-builders have been exempt from CIL since new rules were implemented in 2014, but there are strict steps you need to follow to take advantage of this fact. The 'Assumption of Liability form and Self Build Exemption Claim - Part 1' must be completed and sent to your local authority to certify that your new property will be occupied as your principal residence for a period of three years from completion. Before work starts, you must submit a Commencement Notice. Then, within six months of completion, 'Part 2' of the 'Exemption Claim Form' must be completed.

Kelly's error was frustrating — and expensive. "I posted the correct documents two weeks before we started the foundations but the council didn't receive them," she says. "I had no proof of postage and tried to appeal but they wouldn't relent and we had to pay £27,000."



A WELCOMING ENTRANCE
The grand double-height entrance hall is Kelly's favourite part of the house and draws the eye upwards to the galleried landing and pitched roof.

THE FLOORPLAN

