



Pastures new

Maureen and Clive Keevil left their converted barn to build a new smaller timber-frame home on their farm in Somerset.

STORY: LOUISE PARKIN PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN BAILEY

Maureen and Clive Keevil have lived together on their family farm in Somerset since they were married in 1975, and when the couple's children left home and Maureen wanted to retire, they decided to build something smaller. They were no strangers to self build, having previously converted a large barn from where Maureen ran a successful bed and breakfast business.

"We are tied to the farm because we rear store cattle, and so we applied for outline planning with an agricultural tie," Maureen explains. "An agent dealt with the application for us, and they prepared a statement endorsing the fact that we were genuinely farming the land in order to qualify as an agricultural dwelling."

The Keevils' new barn-style house sits on a quarter-of-an-acre plot opening onto fields. Larch cladding was chosen because of the silver-grey patina that imbues a sense of timelessness, the house appearing far more established in its surroundings than its two years suggest.

Inspiration for the project came during the construction of a neighbouring house. The Keevils were impressed by the speed of the build and the efficiency of the erection team, and so when some subcontractors working on the project stayed in the B&B, Maureen took the opportunity to glean



In brief

Project: Barn-style timber frame new home
Paid: Already owned
Build cost: £327,000
Worth: £500,000

EXTERIOR

Larch cladding and a slate roof on this new timber-frame home create a barn-like look perfect for its farmyard setting.





In detail

PROJECT

Timber frame Potton: potton.co.uk
Self build consultant Sean Adams:
adamspss.co.uk

Builder Acorn House Ltd:
acornhousetd.co.uk

Stone dwarf walls Douling stone:
doulingstonequarry.co.uk

Windows and doors Bereco: bereco.co.uk

Insulation Kingspan: kingspan.com

Solar thermal and underfloor heating
 Nu-Heat: nu-heat.co.uk

Pewter door handles Ironmongery Direct:
ironmongerydirect.co.uk

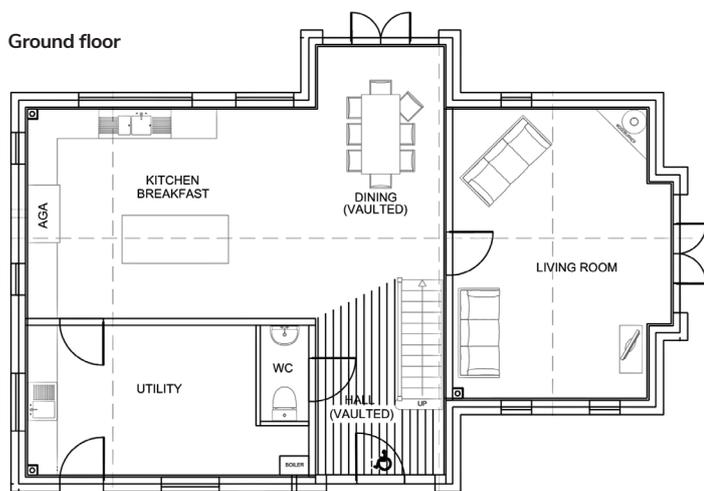
Carpets The Carpet Shop,
 Shepton Mallet: thecarpetshop.co.uk

**Dovre wood-burning stove and Esse
 range cooker**

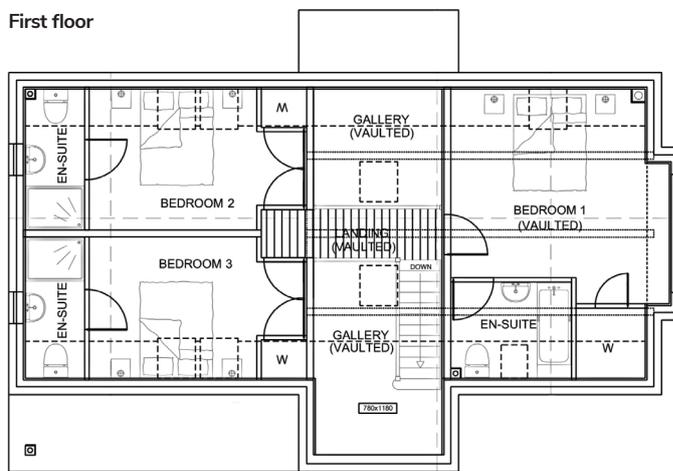
Mendip Stoves: mendipstoves.co.uk



Ground floor



First floor



FLOORPLAN

The barn has a double-height atrium and dining room through the centre of the ground floor, with a large utility room and separate lounge. Suspended above the open-plan hall and diner is a walkway connecting the master suite with the other two bedrooms, each of which has a shower room.

“We really liked the fact that Potton would handle the design side of things and also make the planning and Building Regs applications on our behalf.”



advice and information from them, soon deciding to approach the same company for their own project.

Potton is a timber-frame house builder based in Bedfordshire. It recommended self-build consultant Sean Adams to work with the couple, come up with a design, and obtain detailed planning and Building Regs approval. Potton has a portfolio of stock house styles, but can also design bespoke homes. “We really liked the fact that Potton would handle the design side of things and also make the planning and Building Regulations applications on our behalf, so we wouldn’t need to employ an architect and would have a single point of contact,” says Clive. “It just made the process so simple. Sean was very perceptive and a great help in achieving exactly what we wanted.”



**KITCHEN/
LIVING**

Slate floors run throughout the ground floor, with grey kitchen units, pale walls and lots of glass.

Clive and Maureen met with Sean to provide details of their requirements for living space. Using the Keevil's budget as a guide, Sean produced a bespoke design which included double-height spaces reminiscent of their old barn, with an open-plan layout. "Our last home was huge because of the guest rooms, and it was silly having so much room just for two of us, but we didn't want to compromise on the sense of space we enjoyed before. This was a key part of the design for us," explains Maureen.

The internal space is made up of three bedrooms on the first floor, each with an en suite bathroom or shower room, and a galleried landing suspended above the open-plan ground floor, overlooking the hallway to one side and the dining/kitchen to the other. There is a large utility room for coats, muddy boots and dogs, and a separate lounge with a log-burner and full-height glazing opening onto a patio, the garden wrapping around the house on three sides.

All living accommodation was positioned to the rear of the house to take advantage of the countryside views, while the more utilitarian areas are located at the front of the house.



“I love the kitchen. I chose an Esse range as an Aga would have been too hot because the house is so well insulated.”

Phil Albrow at building firm Acorn House had built Potton homes in the area before and was chosen as the main contractor on Sean's recommendation.

The Keevils sold their barn and moved into rented accommodation while the builders prepared the foundations and the timber frame was built off-site in the Potton factory. The timber frame went up quickly and was infilled with 120mm of Kingspan rigid insulation. The base of the walls is built using Douling stone



LOUNGE
A contemporary log burner contrasts with the traditional style of the furniture.

“Clive insisted on a log-burner but we only use it on the coldest of days.”

sourced from a local quarry, while the exterior is clad with timber weatherboarding. The cut roof is covered with natural slate, and the double-glazed windows have wooden frames that have been painted grey.

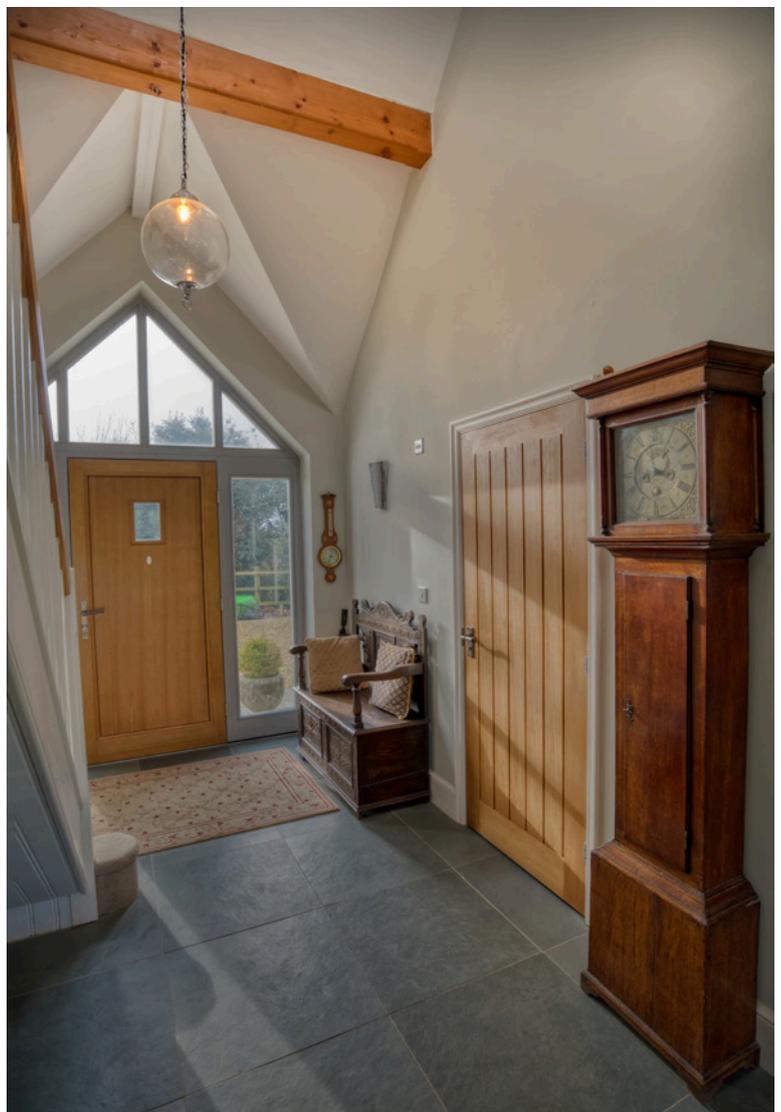
As the build progressed it became clear that the deadline for completion would not be met.

“It took a bit longer than we anticipated, and our rental agreement was running out. We have dogs, and it would have been impossible to find somewhere to rent for a couple of months. We ended up with a caravan on site between October and December and used the new double garage for storage. I was not happy about living in a caravan, but it made moving in even more exciting,” admits Maureen.

A water treatment system has been installed instead of a septic tank, which needed sign-off by the Environment Agency. Electricity was brought over from the farm, and solar thermal panels were installed to provide hot water while electricity is generated by photovoltaic panels. Both arrays are sited on the roof of the double garage.

Inside, old meets new with sharp angles and contemporary finishes combined with more traditional furniture and pewter door handles, achieving a modern farmhouse style. In the kitchen, pale grey tones on one side are contrasted with a bank of deep purple cabinets on the other, topped with white granite, and twinned with a striking blue Esse range cooker and matching splashback.

The Keevils were keen to support local businesses where they could, selecting Ashgrove Kitchens in





UPSTAIRS

Vaulted ceilings and roof lights have created bright bedrooms.



Devon to supply and fit the cabinets. "I love the kitchen. I chose an Esse range because an Aga would have been too hot because the house is so well insulated. We also have a log-burner in the living room because Clive insisted on it – he's always had one – but we only use it on the very coldest of days," says Maureen.

Natural slate floors run throughout the ground floor, and carpets cover the stairs and bedrooms. Painted balustrades and a natural wood handrail line the stairs and the suspended landing above, the wood tying in with the oak internal doors.

The final word

What was the high point?

Moving out of the caravan into the finished house.

And the low point?

Living in the caravan in the cold weather.

Your greatest extravagance?

The pewter door handles were expensive but they were worth the money.

Best buy?

The kitchen. Ashgrove was phenomenal. You can spend a fortune on kitchens



but we got exactly what we wanted at an affordable price.

What do you like most?

The location, and the light, airy interior.