

The beauty of compromise

A tricky site next to a listed property meant that **Graham and Mo Setterfield** had to review their plans, and they're very pleased that they did as they've created a home that adapts to their changing needs

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THE SETTERFIELD FILE

NAMES Graham & Mo Setterfield
OCCUPATIONS Semi-retired & retired
LOCATION Devon
TYPE OF BUILD Self build
STYLE Modern chalet bungalow
CONSTRUCTION METHOD Closed panel timber frame
PLOT SIZE 1,400m² (0.35 acres)
LAND COST £245,000
BOUGHT December 2011
HOUSE SIZE 251m²
BUILD COST £480,000
COST PER M² £1,912
TOTAL COST £725,000
BUILDING WORK COMMENCED March 2013
BUILDING WORK TOOK Nine months
CURRENT VALUE £900,000

Getting the green light to crack on with a self build project is undoubtedly an extremely exciting prospect. But even when you have a plot and finance in place, working out what to build can be a journey in itself – as Graham and Mo Setterfield discovered. “We started talking to oak frame companies at first because we really like the feel and style of these traditional properties,” says Graham. “But the house we actually ended-up building is far more modern, which we like even more!”

Graham and Mo's new direction wasn't so much a change of heart but a realisation that the oak design they liked just wasn't going to be financially viable. After months of discussions and drawings with an oak frame specialist, the build costs were higher than they had at first anticipated, and the local planning authority thought the design was overly large for their site. “I don't think our pre-application sat on the planner's desk for long,” says Graham. “Our plot is next to a Grade II listed building and they wanted our house to be subservient to it.”

A lucky find

The Setterfields first saw the site – the old tennis court of the listed lodge – in 2010. They knew it was in a fabulous part of Braunton, Devon, as they own holiday houses in the area and have been coming here since 2001. “The plot is on a nice road and slopes down 2.5m, levelling out where

The spacious kitchen-diner offers Graham and Mo the opportunity to engage with guests while preparing food



“We look back at our original design and wonder how we came to it! But it was all part of the learning process; this house is just perfect for us”



the tennis court once was,” says Graham. “We knew we would have amazing views over the Taw Estuary and towards Bideford from the upstairs rooms, and it seemed too good an opportunity to pass up.”

The couple put in an offer straight away with the intention of building a house for themselves to live in. They were hankering for a lifestyle change with a permanent move to Devon from their Brighton home – but the purchase wasn't straightforward. “The owner of the plot and lodge only wanted to sell on the basis that we made a contract with him to build the house that he had planning permission for,” says Graham. “Unfortunately the design wasn't to our liking so we decided not to proceed.”

Although they were disappointed, the couple weren't too disheartened as they weren't in a rush to move because they still had their jobs back in Sussex. Then a year or so later the plot came back on the market. “This time the vendor was happy to sell to us, but as he was going to be our new neighbour, we agreed to keep him in the loop with regards to our design ideas,” says Graham.

Taking the package route

By now it was 2012, and although Graham was still working and living in Sussex, the couple sold their house to finance the project. They rented locally and the plan was to move as soon as their new

home was built. “This was the start of the exploratory journey that led to us choosing a Potton-designed home,” says Graham. “We spent nearly nine months on an oak frame plan before we realised the design was simply too complex, which meant it was going to exceed our budget.” So they got in touch with a range of other firms to obtain ballpark figures on the home that they wanted to create. However, nothing seemed quite right, so they decided they either had to find an architect and start from scratch or turn to a package company that could take on a bespoke project.

But while attending a self build show they got chatting with Potton. “By then we realised the structure of the house was as important as the design. We liked the reassurance of the company's building route where the frame is pre-engineered in a factory. We read some good reviews and decided they were a firm that had a decent reputation, and one we could trust,” says Graham.

They also liked the company's design flexibility, as it offered a range of styles from ultra-modern through to traditional. So in August 2012 they started talking to their local Potton designer, Sean Adams. “We met with Sean and described the journey we'd been on to get to this point,” says Graham. “He listened to our requirements and within days he'd given us a completely different design. And with just a few minor alterations, it was exactly what we wanted.”

Designing for the future

The Setterfields had some key points in their brief. They wanted their new home to have a galleried landing to create an airy hallway space and a downstairs room with an ensuite that could be used as a bedroom for when Graham's elderly mother came to stay. It needed to have a side entrance close to a wetroom to wash off the sand from the beach before coming into the house. The property also had to make the most of the beautiful views at the rear towards the Taw Estuary, which have been encapsulated in the bedrooms, together with large ground floor windows to the living rooms.

Graham and Mo chose high levels of insulation and underfloor heating run by a gas boiler. Additional warmth comes in the form of a woodburner for added comfort, although the reality is that they rarely need to use it. They also specified a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery (MVHR)



WE LEARNED...

HIRE LOCAL TRADESPEOPLE as they will be committed to the area and will want to showcase their best work.

A PROJECT MANAGER is vital if you're working full time, but be sure to choose someone who understands your objectives so you can trust them to act on your behalf when you're not available.

BE ON SITE whenever possible to check finished work is of a high enough standard. If you have the time, think about project managing yourself. If we do this again I'll take on this role as you have more control if things go wrong.

This flight by Stairbox features open risers and glass balustrades, which complement the rooflights to maximise the feeling of light and space



system; a sensible addition for modern homes. "There's only two of us living here so we didn't want the air inside to become stuffy and humid in the bedrooms that we don't use," says Graham. "We thought the MVHR system would be useful to keep the house fresh and draw out the dust, and it's definitely been worth it. At first it was a little noisier than we imagined, but we've now programmed it for lower speeds at night which has reduced the operational feedback."

Initially, the couple thought they would have to build a single-storey house because of the precedent set by the lodge next door. But experience helped Sean liaise with the local authority in a pre-planning meeting, where they agreed the house could be one-and-a-half storey, and consent was given in January 2013.

The Setterfields had hoped they could use the package company's full turnkey service but their site was out of the company's area for this level of involvement, so Potton manufactured and erected the frame, and supplied the windows and doors through Kloeber. They also provided a list of recommended project managers in the region who could handle the remainder of the work.

Trades and rising costs

In March the build commenced with a project manager on board – contracted by Mo and Graham – who drew up a cost schedule based on the couple's £360,000 budget. This included his fee (a percentage of the total) but excluded the £30,000 for external landscaping, which the Setterfields organised themselves. The beauty of choosing a package route is that once underway the build is well-organised;

and work progressed smoothly with Potton's timber frame going up without a hitch. However, things changed when they reached second fix stage and the costs started to inch up, with some of the trades coming in higher than forecast. "An extra £50,000 was justifiable to a point as we changed the spec on a few things like the flooring and kitchen," says Graham. "But I was frustrated because the commitment to the quality of the finish was still a challenge, despite us increasing the budget."

With hindsight, Graham feels that part of the problem came down to not using local tradesmen on the project. "Some of the guys were travelling two hours from Plymouth to work on our scheme and it was a constant headache to get them focused on detail," he explains. "We would have been better off if we'd sourced local people with personal recommendations, who would have had more of a reputation to maintain in the area."

By now a turn of events in Graham's job meant he had been able to take early retirement, and the couple left Brighton to stay locally in a holiday home. "This was fortuitous as I could be on site all the time and check the work," says Graham. "For example, I noticed the wrong plasterboard had been used in the bathroom, and if I hadn't been around it would've been plastered over and we'd have been none the wiser until a problem cropped-up."

Despite some tense times during the final stages, by the end of the year Graham and Mo had moved in while the decorators were making the finishing touches to the couple's new home.

The Setterfield's house was almost complete by the time Christmas rolled around and they threw a big family celebration. Although their journey to this point was far from easy, they're both really pleased with the setup of their new home. "We think that our designer Sean did a great job creating something that worked for us and the planners – last weekend we had four couples come to stay and we didn't feel cramped at all, yet the space also works really well when it's just Mo and I," says Graham. "We look back at our original design and wonder how we came to it! But it was all part of the learning process; this house is just perfect for us."



closer look

Vernacular influences

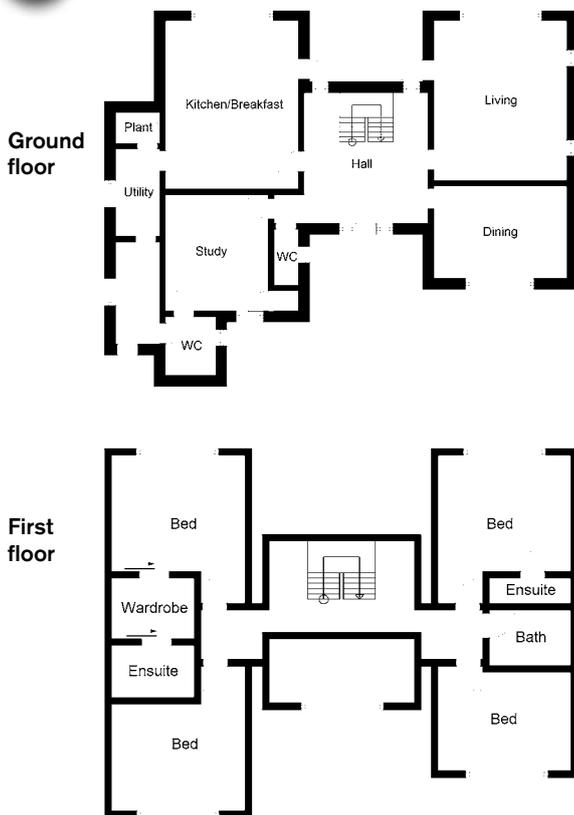
The Setterfields initially wanted an oak frame house. This was rejected at the pre-planning stage for being too overbearing next to the Grade II listed property. The new Potton design took this into account, and in a second pre-planning meeting, also attended by the heritage and conservation officer, demonstrated how the scale and mass could be reduced. The house and garage occupy 15% of the site with the ridge height at 6.6m, in line with the eaves of the neighbouring property. The house has rendered walls and natural slate on the roof ensuring it's in keeping with the area.



Slate roof



Floor plans



Elecosoft House plans re-created using ARCON 3D Architect Home Designer Software. www.3darchitect.co.uk
Tel: 01252 267788 Email: arconsales@eleco.com



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m ²	Cost %	Total cost
Project manager, insurances & professional services	£104	5%	£26,000
Groundworks & landscaping	£518	27%	£130,000
Scaffold	£32	2%	£8,000
Timber frame, windows & doors	£574	30%	£144,000
Roofing	£60	3%	£15,000
Electrical (including labour & Lutron system)	£64	3%	£16,000
Plumbing (including boiler & under floor heating)	£64	3%	£16,000
Trades (carpentry & labouring)	£68	4%	£17,000
Plaster & rendering	£100	5%	£25,000
MVHR	£28	1%	£7,000
Staircase	£32	2%	£8,000
Kitchen	£68	4%	£17,000
Bathrooms	£44	2%	£11,000
Flooring	£44	2%	£11,000
Decorating internal & external	£36	2%	£9,000
Utilities	£20	1%	£5,000
Other materials	£48	3%	£12,000
Woodburning stove	£12	1%	£3,000
Grand total			£480,000

Useful contacts

PACKAGE COMPANY **Potton** 01767 676400 www.potton.co.uk EXTERNAL WINDOWS & DOORS **Kloeber** 01487 740044 www.kloeber.co.uk
BATHROOM DESIGN AND BATHROOM FITMENTS **Mayflower Bathrooms** 01823 665663 www.mayflowerbathrooms.co.uk KITCHEN **DIY Kitchens** 01977 608418 www.diy-kitchens.com KITCHEN DESIGN **I-design** 0844 414 6044 www.i-designkitchens.com MECHANICAL VENTILATION & HEAT RECOVERY **Service Vent** 01293 404342 www.servicevent.co.uk STAIRCASE **Stairbox** 01782 832555 www.stairbox.com ELECTRICS **PT Electrical** LIGHTING SYSTEMS 01422361357 **ELECTRICAL SUPPLIES** **Expert Electrical** 01706 860011 www.expertelectrical.co.uk TILES **Hampshire Tile Warehouse** 0333 355 7485 www.htw.co.uk LIMESTONE FLOORING **My Stone Floor** 01509 416557 www.mystonefloor.com ENGINEERED OAK FLOORING **JF Joinery** 01598 740197 www.jfwoodflooring.co.uk EXTERNAL GLASS BALUSTRADE **Any Weld** 01271 860794 www.anyweld.co.uk

