

# THE MODERN COUNTRY COTTAGE

Despite a year-long battle with the planners to get the design right, Andrew and Toni Leese have built a stunning Cotswold stone home in Wiltshire, using a package build route from Potton >

Words: **Daisy Jeffery** Photography: **Jeremy Phillips**





## Project Notes

**Owners** Andrew and Toni Leese  
**Project** Package self-build  
**Location** Wiltshire  
**Build time** Feb 2013 - Nov 2013  
**Size** 230m<sup>2</sup>  
**Plot cost** £262,000  
**Build cost** £316,000  
**Value** £725,000

### PROJECT TIMELINE

**Plot purchased** Jun 2012  
**Planning permission approved** Oct 2012  
**Start on site** Feb 2013  
**Foundations complete** Mar 2013  
**Watertight stage** May 2013  
**Date occupied** Nov 2013

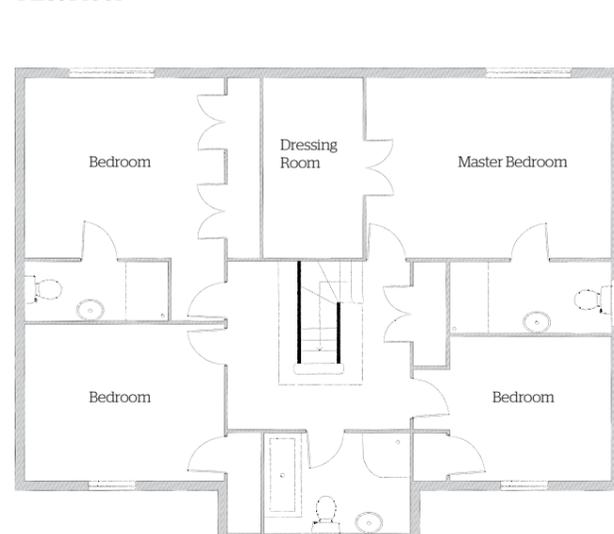
### SUPPLIERS

**Timber frame package supplier**  
 Potton: potton.co.uk  
**Main contractor** Mirus Construction: mirus-construction.co.uk  
**General materials**  
 Buildbase: buildbase.co.uk  
**Stone cladding** Farmington Stone: farmington.co.uk  
**Windows** Allan Brothers: allanbrothers.co.uk  
**Bathrooms** Jacks Bathrooms: jacksbathrooms.uk  
**Woodburning stove**  
 Happy Smiling Chimney Services: happysmilingchimneyservices.co.uk  
**Limestone flooring** Beswick Stone: beswickstone.co.uk  
**Bathroom tiles** The Tile Gallery: thetilegallerysfk.co.uk  
**Kitchen** Loxley Kitchens: edwinloxley.co.uk

Ground Floor



First Floor



### Traditional Façade

Nestled within a conservation area in the Wiltshire countryside, Andrew and Toni's new home had to adhere to certain planning requirements – including Cotswold stone cladding, a gabled roof angled at a 45° pitch and traditional four-bar sash windows. French doors were specified rather than bifolds on the rear elevation, to suit the home's traditional style.

Behind the stone cladding lies a timber frame, provided by Potton, packed with 400mm-thick Celotex insulation.



**SEE MORE OF ANDREW AND TONI'S HOME:**  
[homebuilding.co.uk/cotswold-stone-timber-frame-self-build](http://homebuilding.co.uk/cotswold-stone-timber-frame-self-build)

**Open Plan Kitchen**

The open plan kitchen/dining/family space located at the rear of the house offers views of the garden and opens out onto a BBQ terrace, perfect for summer evenings. The kitchen is from Loxley Kitchens and was manufactured in the UK. "We wanted an open plan space and we now spend most of our time in here," says Andrew.



Having always dreamt of building their own home, Andrew and Toni Leese decided the time was right to search for a plot following 16 years of living in a detached estate house. “We’d found an old police station on Rightmove which was being sold as a development plot for two houses,” begins Toni. “It came with outline planning; however, none of the neighbours wanted houses on the plot.

“Originally we had wanted to build a Georgian-style farmhouse, but given the site’s conservation area status, the planners dictated that we had to opt for a Cotswold stone property, so we spent the best part of 12 months trying to create a design which was right for us but also fitted within the street scene.”

After researching different build routes with a view to achieving as efficient a home as possible, the couple came across package company Potton at the National Homebuilding & Renovating Show at the NEC in Birmingham. “Although we spoke to other timber frame companies to get prices, we felt Potton was more established and we went to their show home in Cambridgeshire to see a fully finished Potton house. We also liked that the build route meant we would be watertight within two weeks,” says Andrew.

#### Long Planning Process

“From the start, we made a scrapbook of the things we wanted, which included an open plan kitchen, a dressing room, space for when family visit, and a separate living room,” says Andrew. The couple worked with Potton to create a design and despite the sensitive location, the couple decided against seeking pre-application advice. “We felt that planning is too subjective and based on individual opinion,” he adds. “Instead, we submitted an application for our original plan for a Georgian farmhouse and had the planners visit the site so we could explain our

*“Taking on some of the work ourselves helped us to be more engaged with the project”*

ideas. They said ‘no’ to this design, favouring a Cotswold cottage with gables to the front. They also rejected the 12-bar sash windows – even though they featured on a Georgian farmhouse down the road – and told us we’d have to have four-bar windows.

“The planners had an issue with the ridge height, too, and insisted on a 45° roof angle, adding an additional £5,000 to the timber frame cost. The more changes we had to make meant the more money we had to pay to make amendments to the design,” says Andrew.

Once permission was in place, Andrew and Toni sold their previous home and moved into a caravan on a friend’s farm nearby when building work got underway.

#### The Build

While Potton provided the structural shell, the couple employed a local contractor to complete the groundworks and finish the build. “We found our main contractor, Adam from Mirus Construction, through the chap who supplied the Cotswold stone from Farmington Quarry. We went along to see some of the houses he’d built, and we liked that he was moving more towards timber frame construction,” says Andrew.

“We’d never built a house before and we both worked full time, so we were lucky to have a great team who we could rely on; we were never held up by anyone we employed,” he adds. “We were on site every day after work to inspect progress. As we were taking on some of the work ourselves, this helped us be more engaged with the project, too.”

Having worked as an electrical engineer, Andrew was keen to get involved, and along with Toni, took on the plumbing, dry walling, tiling and decorating themselves. With Potton ➤



#### Circulation Space

In order to create a sense of grandeur, the floorplan incorporates a generous hallway that provides access to all principal spaces at ground level, including the study, formal dining room (BELOW), living room and the open plan kitchen/dining/family space. A central staircase with galleried landing above adds to the home’s traditional feel.





### Bedroom Accommodation

Andrew and Toni specified four bedrooms for their home in order to accommodate visiting children and parents. The couple also took on the tiling for the bathrooms and en suites, with the tiles (from The Tile Gallery) and vanity units sourced locally.

building the frame to watertight stage, Adam then handled the stone work and windows, and laid the screed.

Building an energy-efficient home – and minimising energy bills – was a key priority for the couple. “When we came to the village we realised there was no mains gas, and our friend’s energy bills here were horrendous,” says Andrew.

“Because of the large plot, we wanted to install a ground source heat pump, with underfloor heating laid throughout the house. Our energy bills are now £75 a month and we get £100 back a month from Renewable Heat Incentive payments. We had to pay £15,000 upfront for the heating system, but in the end, it’s worth the investment.”

Despite the year spent reworking the design, the end result is a Cotswold stone home which is fitting for its location, with the internal fixtures and fittings all sourced from local suppliers. “That was important to us,” says Toni.

“It was a really good experience,” says Andrew of the couple’s first self-build venture. “There’s nothing that would put me off doing it again, and equally there’s nothing we’d change.” **H**

