

House in the garden

FACT FILE

NAMES Rosemary French & Norman Simmonds

OCCUPATIONS Executive director & retired architect. Both run a bed & breakfast

LOCATION Surrey

TYPE OF PROJECT Self build

STYLE Contemporary

CONSTRUCTION METHOD
Timber frame

PROJECT ROUTE

Design was a collaboration between homeowner & Scandia-Hus, who supplied & erected timber frame. Main contractor completed the build. Homeowner project managed

PLOT SIZE 0.3 acres (not incl. original dwelling)

LAND COST Already owned. Land valued at £450,000

BOUGHT 2005

HOUSE SIZE 200m²

PROJECT COST £591,474

PROJECT COST PER M² £2,957

VAT RECLAIM £15,000

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED
May 2017

BUILDING WORK TOOK
36 weeks

CURRENT VALUE
£1,100,000



A change in planning policy inspired **Rosemary French and Norman Simmonds** to build their forever home in the garden

WORDS **CHARLOTTE SEAGER** PHOTOS **ALISTAIR NICHOLLS**

On a sunny spot just outside a large village in Surrey, a stunning contemporary house stands amidst the surrounding fields and trees. The recently completed building belongs to Norman Simmonds, a former architect, and wife Rosemary French OBE, executive director and president of the local Chamber of Commerce. It is hidden from the road by the couple's previous mid-century home and is approached via a long, gravelled drive. As the building comes into view, the white render enables the frontage to shine brightly in the sunlight; a stark contrast to the vivid greens of the countryside around it.

Unexpected opportunity

Norman and Rosemary's previous home was set within an acre of land, so their garden offered the perfect building plot. "We didn't think of doing much with the large garden until there was a change in planning policy," says Norman, who had heard of a

new government target coming into effect to combat the housing shortage, which required 300,000 homes a year to be built in England. "Our local council became keener to grant planning permission to meet the quota, so we thought it'd be a good time to take advantage of the plot we had," he says.

The timing worked out well for the couple, since health issues meant their existing abode no longer suited their needs. "Before we considered building, we looked for new bungalows – but they're almost non-existent due to the high price of land," says Rosemary. "We were adamant that we wanted to stay in the area. We adore our village. It's such a lovely place; there's lots of clubs and events, a vibrant arts centre, a high street full of independent shops and a strong sense of community. So, when self building in the back garden became a viable possibility for us, we were thrilled!"

After the new policy became a reality, the couple's next-door neighbour was the first to seize the opportunity. When they were



A light-filled galleried landing on the first floor overlooks the expansive open-plan living space

granted planning permission for their scheme, Norman and Rosemary felt very encouraged to take a similar course of action.

They had a clear vision for their bespoke forever home. The idea was to create a contemporary, low-maintenance, future-proof bungalow, so Norman began to sketch out a design. Thanks to his former career, his skills and in-depth understanding of the process were extremely helpful. The couple were happy to project manage but weren't keen to get involved in the construction side of things, so needed to source a company to do the physical work for them.

"We visited local exhibitions, including Build It Live in Kent. Listening to the seminars and seeing the companies face to face was so useful, we'd definitely encourage others to do the same," says Rosemary. It was at one of these events that the couple discovered timber frame provider Scandia-Hus. "We liked the Scandinavian vibe as it suited the feel we were trying to achieve with our project – a modern, bright and airy space with clean lines," says Rosemary. "The company offered a comprehensive package, which is exactly what we were looking for."

Design strategy

Scandia-Hus, whose head office is a short distance away in West Sussex, was able to handle the project from planning to construction, taking the hassle out of the process. Their show home represented the chalet aesthetic the couple were after. The timber frame method also worked well with the Scandi style of the property, so Norman and Rosemary decided to proceed with the

"It was fundamental that the house would be easy to maintain and have low running costs"



firm. The initial plans Norman had drafted were given to Scandia's project manager Aron Turney, and the scheme soon developed.

The company's in-house architectural designers suggested that another storey could be incorporated without greatly increasing costs. The significant expenses of groundworks and roofing would not have to change, but there would be a greater amount of living space for Rosemary and Norman to enjoy. After looking at the budget and agreeing to add the extra floor, the couple decided to continue their bed and breakfast business in the new home. Three bedrooms were introduced to the drawings on the first floor, all with ensuite bathrooms so they could be used as guest accommodation.

Due to the unique asymmetric two-pitch roofline, which Norman was keen to incorporate, only one side of the building would have a first floor. This led to the idea of a feature galleried landing, beautifully lit by multiple rooflights and an abundance of glazing on the rear elevation. "It's our favourite space," says Rosemary. "The sunshine comes through the glass at different angles throughout the day. It's gorgeous and we feel as though we are outside rather than inside!"

Full steam ahead

Scandia-Hus helped to get the scheme through planning, which was surprisingly straightforward. "The planners were delighted to see something different, and admired the contemporary design," says Rosemary. On 1 May 2017, the build began. The couple wanted to project manage the works themselves, so living next door to the site was beneficial. They were able to oversee the main contractors,



An open-riser staircase and glass balustrade help to enable the flow of light throughout the property

windows, boiler and underfloor heating (UFH). Instead, we chose to save money on sanitaryware, kitchenware and lighting, for example. We can always change these aspects at a later date if we want to, although we're absolutely delighted with them as they are."

Light-filled home

Norman describes the layout of their 200m² home as being split into two zones. On one side of the house is a sleeping block, with the guest bedrooms and master ensuite. On the single storey side is the living zone with a light-filled gallery running through the middle, linking the two areas. The arrangement is a logical and efficient use of space – exactly as you'd expect in the home of a retired architect.

Upon entering through the front door, you are able to see straight through to the rear garden, which provides an immediate connection to the rural outlook. The living block incorporates an open-plan kitchen-living-dining area, with aluminium framed sliding doors on two sides. These give Norman and Rosemary dual aspect views of the south-west facing garden. The pair went to much trouble to ensure these doors had the slimmest of surrounds.

Rosemary is from Scotland and, having both lived there for many years, they understood the importance of maximising daylight. This made incorporating large spans of glass a priority in this area of the house. The grey Sunflex doors that were specified met the brief perfectly and the pair are pleased with their purchase. "There's no interruption of view. It was definitely worth the time we invested looking for the right product," says Rosemary.

Downstairs there's also a study, utility room and WC, along with a built-in garage that will mainly be used for storage. The layout works well as a B&B but would function equally well as a family abode.

The outcome of Rosemary and Norman's hard work is a practical, attractive and energy-efficient home. The airtight timber frame

local firm Compass Construction, and answer any queries rapidly so there would be no disruption to works.

"The builders were superb; the project remained on schedule and was finished in an incredible nine months," says Rosemary. Due to her diligent financial planning and use of spreadsheets, the project came in on budget. Keeping track of every receipt was her main role, a task that was indispensable when it came to starting the VAT reclaim process. "It's essential to keep all paperwork and never lose sight of where the money has been spent," she says. "We ensured we didn't skimp on the important items like roofing,

WE LEARNED...

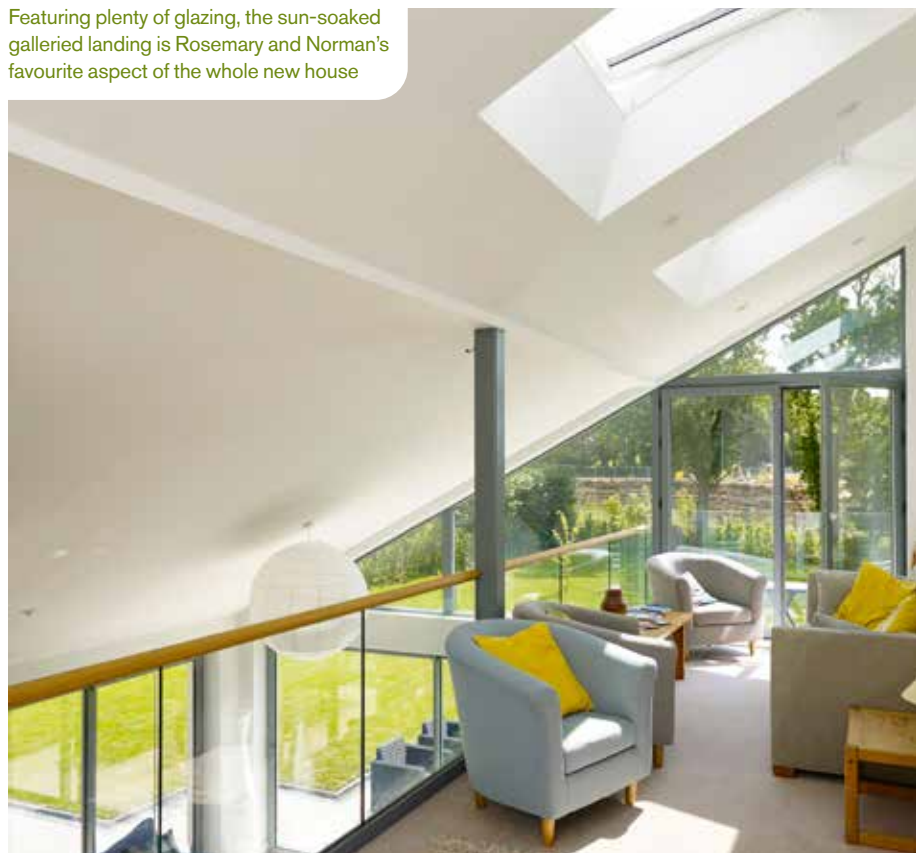
THINK THROUGH EVERY ASPECT OF THE BUILD You can never plan enough. There's always going to be issues that crop up, but if you invest time in preparation then hopefully you'll have a backup solution in place.

WORK TO YOUR STRENGTHS We used the skills we had from our careers. We are not builders but we could design and project manage the scheme, leaving the physical construction to the professionals.

VISIT SELF BUILD EXHIBITIONS It's immeasurably helpful to meet companies face to face, rather than spending hours trawling the internet looking for suppliers. You can instantly get a feel for the product or service you would be receiving, and whether you could actually work with the firm.

FINANCE IS KEY Create a budget and stick to it. It's so easy to get carried away with spending, but it's important to put your money in the right places and keep track of where every penny goes.

Featuring plenty of glazing, the sun-soaked galleried landing is Rosemary and Norman's favourite aspect of the whole new house



closer look

Sun-drenched abode...

The landing isn't a place homeowners are normally drawn to, but in Rosemary and Norman's house, it's hard not to be. A glass balustrade forms the divide between the upstairs hall and the downstairs open-plan living area, creating a stunning galleried space that is gloriously lit through Velux windows above. It creates a magnificent feature, along with the angled glazing that stretches across the rear of the property, making the space feel bright and airy. "It connects all the rooms so seamlessly and it is the perfect area to soak up views of the back garden. We're both so proud of it," says Rosemary.



Overhead windows



structure has been packed with plenty of insulation to keep the heat in during winter. Triple glazed windows with composite timber and aluminium frames support the excellent energy performance of the house. Individual room temperature controls have been installed throughout, too, ensuring the spaces are comfortable and controllable, whatever the weather is doing outside. Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels have also been installed.

This guest bedroom on the first floor features a Juliet balcony that looks out over the garden

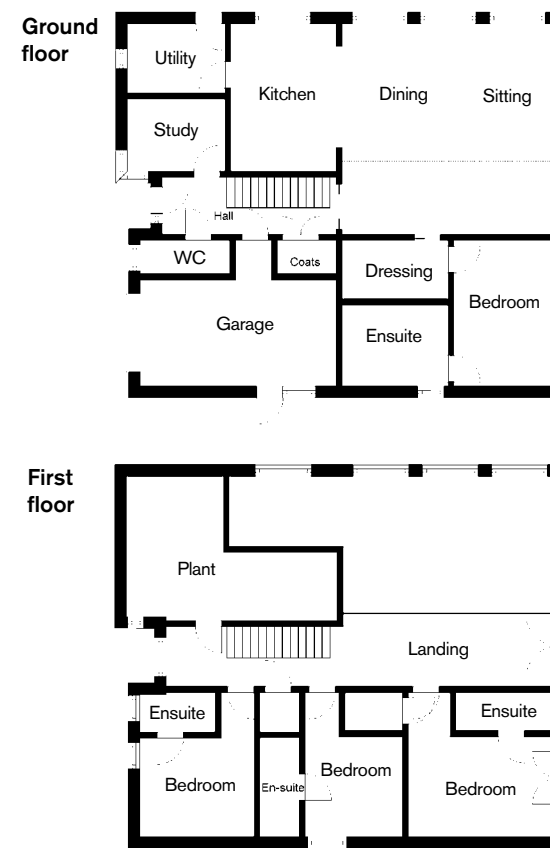


Finishing stretch

The only step left for the couple when they eventually let the old house out was to move their furniture 100m or so to their new abode next door. The couple decided to name the dwelling The Hus, both as a nod to Scandia-Hus and also because it links to the Scottish term, 'hoose'. The striking contemporary home ticks every box for the pair; it's easy to maintain and inexpensive to run, with the principal living and sleeping arrangements occupying one storey and sunshine streaming in from all directions. Rosemary and Norman are very much looking forward to enjoying their design and growing old together in their spectacular new home.

"It was fundamental that the house would be easy to maintain and had low running costs, since we will be living here during our retirement," says Rosemary. The virtually maintenance-free exterior render helps provide protection from the elements and requires little upkeep. The overhanging eaves, often seen on the continent, help ensure the house will endure any inclement weather conditions.

Floor plans



House plans re-created using Build It 3D Home Designer software. www.buildit.co.uk/3dsoftware

£ TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m ²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£148	5%	£29,528
Foundations	£200	7%	£40,095
Substructure	£37	1%	£7,365
Superstructure	£57	2%	£11,384
Timber frame, roof structure & windows	£1,026	35%	£205,205
Staircase & balconies	£118	4%	£23,600
Plastering, drylining & render	£152	5%	£30,483
Insulation	£43	2%	£8,680
First & second fix carpentry	£99	3%	£19,819
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£172	6%	£34,441
Sanitaryware	£33	1%	£6,598
Kitchen & appliances	£101	3%	£20,089
Plumbing & heating	£112	4%	£22,472
Electrics	£69	2%	£13,843
Fees	£16	<1%	£3,261
External works	£379	13%	£75,790
Services	£61	2%	£12,099
Miscellaneous & variations	£134	5%	£26,722
Grand total			£591,474

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

TIMBER FRAME Scandia-Hus 01342 838060 www.scandia-hus.co.uk BUILDER Compass Construction (Richard Taylor & Steve Cadman) 01306 889971 www.compass-construction.co.uk FRONT DOOR RKS Door Systems 01872 222300 www.rkdoorsystems.co.uk SLIDING PATIO DOORS P&P Glass 01483 467250 www.pandpglass.co.uk Sunflex 01603 258649 www.sunflexuk.co.uk ROOFLIGHTS Velux 01592 778225 www.velux.co.uk PLUMBER Daryl Pesquero 07787 522271 ELECTRICIAN Dale Electrical (Banstead) 07900 808001 STAIRCASE & BALUSTRADE Demax (Swaffham) 01760 721222 www.demax.co.uk KITCHEN Wren Kitchens 01483 339468 www.wrenkitchens.com