

FACT FILE

NAMES Jonathan & Sarah Austen
OCCUPATIONS MD at a consultancy firm & voluntary worker
LOCATION West Sussex
TYPE OF PROJECT Self build
STYLE Traditional
CONSTRUCTION METHOD Timber frame
PROJECT ROUTE Planning drawings by professional design firm; homeowner co-managed the building works alongside the Scandia-Hus turnkey service
PLOT SIZE Four acres
BOUGHT December 2015
HOUSE SIZE 394m²
PROJECT COST £1,003,743
PROJECT COST PER M² £2,548
BUILDING WORK COMMENCED September 2017
BUILDING WORK TOOK 56 weeks
CURRENT VALUE £2,000,000

Jonathan and Sarah Austen

demolished a derelict bungalow to create an efficient home that makes the most of its stunning South Downs setting

WORDS REBECCA FOSTER PHOTOS SCANDIA HUS

Modern build, *traditional appeal*

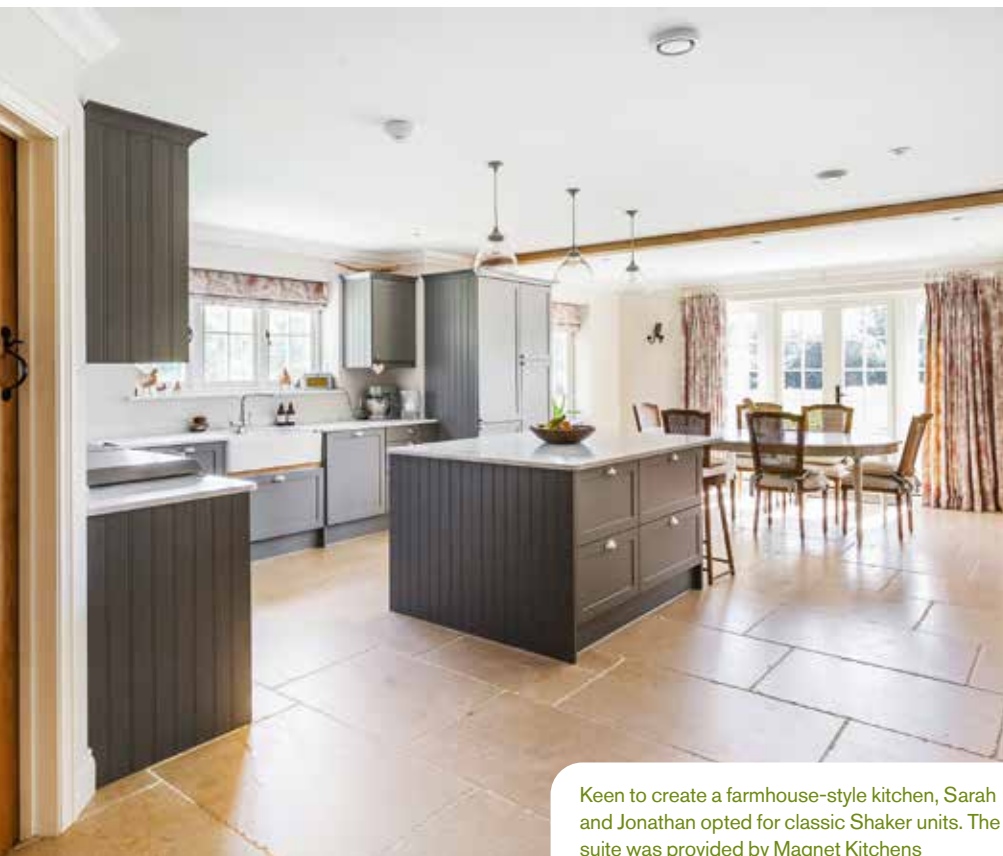


Jonathan and Sarah Austen were poised to begin the renovation of their grade II listed house when their plans took a dramatic change of course. “We’d spent years jumping through hoops to get all the necessary permissions in place – as well as being listed, our home was in a conservation area and a National Park,” says Sarah. However, when a plot at the other end of the village came up for sale, the couple swiftly put their refurb on pause.

“It’s always been one of Jonathan’s dreams to build his own house,” says Sarah. “Even though we were just about to start our renovation, I knew he wouldn’t be happy if he had to watch someone else living

out that dream by creating their own abode just at the other end of the village. As much as we adored our existing home, we knew we had to seize the chance to do our own self build.”

To make the most of the opportunity, Sarah and Jonathan were keen to pack the design with high-quality features that their refurbishment wouldn’t have been able to deliver. “Essentially, that meant creating an energy efficient property that incorporated renewable tech,” says Sarah. “As much as we could have upgraded our existing home, an ex-ale house, it would have been impossible to bring it up to the same level in terms of thermal performance.”



Keen to create a farmhouse-style kitchen, Sarah and Jonathan opted for classic Shaker units. The suite was provided by Magnet Kitchens

“With help from the team at Scandia Hus, we’ve realised our dream”

Developing the design

Both fans of heritage architecture, the Austens wanted to create a characterful home that sat well within the vernacular style of the village. The couple worked with Phil Brown from Sloane & Brown Architectural Services, who had been recommended by a neighbour, to put together drawings for the local planning department. Having recently been through the process for their renovation project, the pair knew exactly what to expect when it came to obtaining permission for the build. “I had already learnt quite a lot from our previous application. It was helpful to have a good understanding of the process for our

second time around,” says Sarah. “We no longer had to deal with getting listed building consent and our new plot was outside of the conservation area, which made things simpler, too.”

Jonathan and Sarah worked closely with Sloane & Brown to create a design that met their aspirations for a traditional home. “For example, I wasn’t keen on having any square rooms inside because I didn’t want the house to look like a new build,” says Sarah.

The drawings had to go through several iterations to meet the approval of the local council. “We got lucky with our planning officer as he was very helpful,” says Sarah. Based on feedback from the council, the Austens needed to tweak the proportions of the ground and first floor of the house to make them smaller. “We had to find space for a plant room for the renewable technology that we wanted to incorporate, but the planners weren’t keen on the size of the property with that zone positioned on the ground floor.” The couple decided to introduce a basement level as a solution to this, and put the plant room down there to minimise the footprint of the house. “At that point we thought, if we’re going to put a basement in,



we might as well blow the budget and put in a media room, gym and wine cellar to make the most of digging down.”

Eco aspirations

Building an energy efficient property was at the top of the Austens’ priority list, so once their design had been approved by the planning department, they set about researching a company who could help them achieve this goal. They soon came across Scandia-Hus – a Sussex-based package home company that specialises in timber frame houses. The couple hadn’t considered this construction method before, but they were impressed by the excellent thermal performance it offered. “Scandia-Hus builds to such a high standard. Plus, I felt that using a local company and trades to keep business nearby was something we should do. It was a no brainer,” says Sarah. Using local firms also helped reduce their build’s carbon footprint.

The team at Scandia-Hus took the drawings that Sarah and Jonathan’s designer had put together and translated them to the right specification for a timber frame build. “From that point on,

Limestone floor tiles are laid throughout the ground floor, creating a seamless flow



WE LEARNED...

YOUR DESIGNER should have an established relationship with the local planning office. That way, you'll be equipped with a strong idea of what the planners in your area do and don't like. There's no point submitting a proposal they wouldn't even consider.

FIND A PROFESSIONAL designer who is on your wavelength. You want an individual who has a good understanding of what it is you're trying to achieve. It's important to look at the projects they've worked on before, too, as this will help you to picture whether or not you'll be able to work together.

IF YOU'RE CREATING A THREE STOREY HOME, don't let Building Regulations catch you out – there are more stipulations for fire safety here than there would be for a typical house with two floors. We'd already chosen lovely interior doors, but our build manager informed us we needed fire-rated products that would give 30 minutes of resistance. In the end, we managed to source another design we liked that fitted well with the decor style we wanted.

we worked with Scandia-Hus using a turnkey package which meant they looked after the day-to-day management of the build," says Sarah. "We wanted to be able to pass it on to someone we could trust, just to take a little bit of the pressure off us."

As well as managing progress on site, Scandia-Hus assisted Jonathan and Sarah in ensuring the build stuck to budget. "They were great at keeping us on track, showing us where we could make savings if we wanted to channel extra money into another part of the project. As a result, our overall spend stayed on course."

The build begins

Jonathan and Sarah moved into a static caravan on site in July 2017, ready for the build to get underway. Reflecting on the project, Sarah remembers the first day of construction as one of the high points. "We didn't start until September because there was a lag in ensuring all the planning conditions were met. But the day we finally got going was so exciting," she says. "Seeing the existing bungalow demolished, I realised it was actually happening." Scandia-Hus coordinated the team on site, led by build manager Dan Stimpson. "He was a great guy," says Sarah. "He worked so hard to achieve the look we wanted in terms of the traditional character of the house. The rest of the trades the company brought in were fantastic, too."

Due to poor weather conditions, digging out the basement was one of the more challenging parts of the build. "It was probably the wettest winter for some time, so not ideal for excavating the clay soil," says Sarah. The Austens endured the elements in their static caravan. At one point, the gusts of wind were so strong they caused their temporary home to rock, leading Sarah and Jonathan to fear that the structure would tip over into the road. "We were fine in the end, but it was certainly a testing time for the poor builders."

Once the timber frame structure was erected, it was clad in stone sourced from a local quarry so the house would blend seamlessly with the local architecture. To complete the traditional aesthetic,

the roof was topped with clay tiles. Double-glazed timber casement windows with decorative glazing bars were fitted throughout.

Green goodies

The couple took a fabric first approach, investing in the structure and packing in plenty of insulation to create an efficient, airtight thermal envelope. "It's so different to the experience of living in our old house. We wouldn't have even been able to fit double glazing there due to the property's listed status," says Sarah.

As the plot came with four acres of land, it was an ideal candidate for a ground source heat pump to power the underfloor heating and hot water. This setup is complemented by an array of solar PV panels, which have been fitted onto the roof of the stables next to the house to provide electricity, meeting the couple's renewable target. "The heating is run from an app on my phone," says Sarah. "It's fully programmable and really simple – if I can operate it, anyone can."

A rainwater harvesting system has been installed to collect water from the roofs of the house, garage and stables. From here, it is channelled to a storage tank hooked up to the garden hose so it can be used to water plants. "We did look at collecting the run-off to provide grey water for flushing loos and washing clothes, but the additional cost was too high," says Sarah. "It was one of those things we had to compromise on to make sure we stayed on budget."

Traditional charm

Vaulted ceilings, oak beams and timber wall panelling are just a few of the features that were incorporated inside the house to establish the characterful aesthetic Jonathan and Sarah were after. "The whole place feels airy and light. It's a lovely change from living in our old ale house with its low ceilings," says Sarah. "We wanted to create a layout that felt spacious enough for when we have family come to stay, but with areas that can be closed off so it feels snug when it's just Jonathan and me." To achieve this goal, pocket doors have been

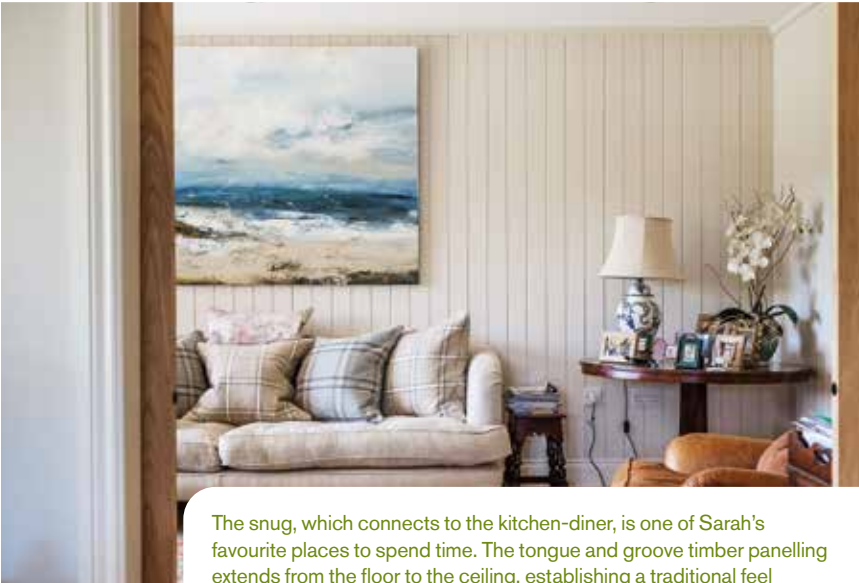


In the main living area, a woodburner forms a cosy focal point

fitted throughout the ground floor, which can be drawn back into the walls to create wide open spaces when needed.

Sarah's favourite place to spend time is in the snug, just off the kitchen-breakfast room. "The pocket doors in there are pretty much always open, but it's still a lovely cosy space," she says. "Jonathan loves sitting out on the terrace, just looking at the view."

Though she found the process tiring at times, Sarah has no regrets about tackling a self build. Plus, she's picked up plenty of knowledge along the way. "I could probably write a small book about it now! Although, looking back, it would have been helpful to have some more experience under my belt before getting started," she says. Sarah also acknowledges that, now she's had some time to live in the house, elements that she'd initially wanted to change don't feel quite so important now. "When you're going



The snug, which connects to the kitchen-diner, is one of Sarah's favourite places to spend time. The tongue and groove timber panelling extends from the floor to the ceiling, establishing a traditional feel



£ TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£74	3%	£28,963
Foundations (incl basement)	£486	19%	£191,300
External walls & windows	£288	11%	£113,539
Roof structure & covering	£92	4%	£36,300
Timber frame	£411	16%	£162,000
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£145	6%	£57,000
Joinery & fittings	£58	2%	£23,000
Plumbing & heating	£84	3%	£33,200
Electrics	£58	2%	£22,800
Decorating	£42	2%	£16,600
Site (incl garage)	£420	17%	£165,544
Fees	£287	11%	£113,000
External works	£103	4%	£40,497

Grand total	£1,003,743
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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.

through every aspect in minute detail, everything seems really big. But when you give it a bit of time, you realise many of these details are insignificant in the grand scheme of things," she says.

Now that they've created their ideal home, Sarah and Jonathan are unlikely to take on another self build any time soon. But the process hasn't put them off. "It's an exhausting experience, but by the end you really feel as though you've accomplished something. With help from the team at Scandia-Hus, we've realised our dream home. We're really proud of what we've created."

closer look

Secret doorway...

One of Sarah's favourite design features is the door to the downstairs cloakroom, which was purchased as a surprise birthday present for

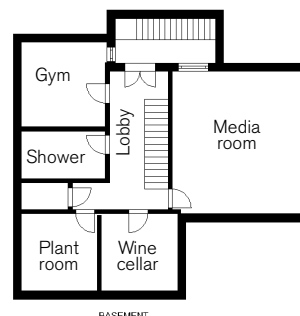
Jonathan. "I realised we would have had loads of doors lined up along the downstairs hallway, so I wanted to do something a little bit different for the entrance to that room," says Sarah.

With the help of the local carpenter and Scandia Hus's Dan Stimpson, Sarah came up with the idea of a doorway disguised as a bookcase – a classic secret entrance. It features a detailed resin finish that has been decorated to look like a bookcase full of classics, which avoids the monotony of too many doors. "As you come down the stairs, you see the 'bookcase' where there should be a door," says Sarah. "It's fitted with a push mechanism, so that when you press the leaf, it swings open."

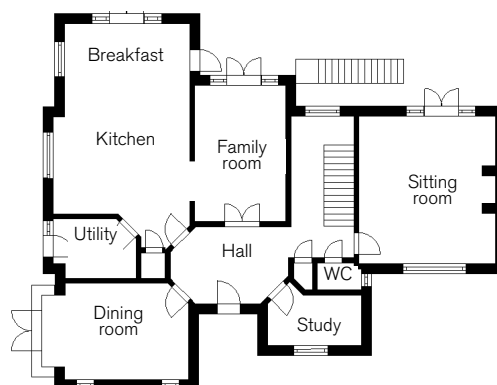


Floor plans

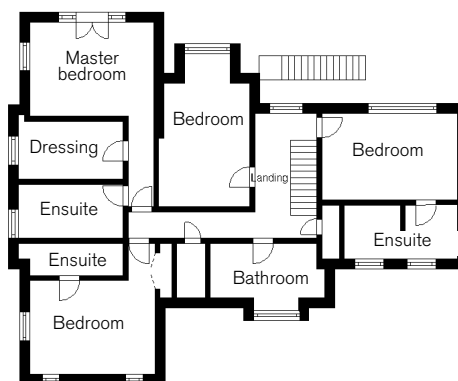
Basement



Ground floor



First floor



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

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT Sloane & Brown Architectural Services (Phil Brown) 01243 774764 www.sloaneandbrown.co.uk **DESIGN & TURNKEY HOUSE BUILD** Scandia-Hus 01342 838060 www.scandia-hus.co.uk **STONE Traditional Stone** 01403 824000 www.traditionalstone.co.uk **TILES Barge Tiles** 01342 833470 www.bargetiles.co.uk **GARAGE J Weston Carpentry** 07458 169963 **GROUND SOURCE HEAT PUMP (GROUNDWORKS)** Andrew G-D Groundworks 07836 638982 www.andrewgd.co.uk **GROUND SOURCE HEAT PUMP (INSTALLATION)** Nicholls Boreholes 01403 820750 www.nicholls-boreholes.co.uk **EXTERNAL GARAGE STAIRCASE** Sycamore Joinery 01243 819029 www.sycamorejoinery.com **INTERNAL DOOR COVERS** Covers 0800 210 0458 www.coversmerchants.co.uk **DOOR & WINDOW IRONMONGERY** From the Anvil 01597 823822 www.fromtheanvil.co.uk **KITCHEN Magnet Kitchens** 01325 744067 www.magnet.co.uk **BATHROOMS Littlejohn Bathrooms** 01730 231050 www.littlejohn.co.uk **ENGINEERED WOOD FLOORING** Ted Todd 0800 046 6045 www.tedtodd.co.uk **INTERNAL LIGHTS** Jim Lawrence 01473 826685 www.jim-lawrence.co.uk **EXTERNAL LIGHTS** Garden Trading 01993 845559 www.gardentrading.co.uk **RANGE COOKER Everhot** 01453 890018 www.everhot.co.uk

