



IN BRIEF

Plot cost: £407,000
(already owned)

Spent: £310,000

Worth: In excess £575,000

Made to MEASURE

Sheena and Simon Loveday decided to downsize for retirement by building a new house in their garden designed specifically for their needs.

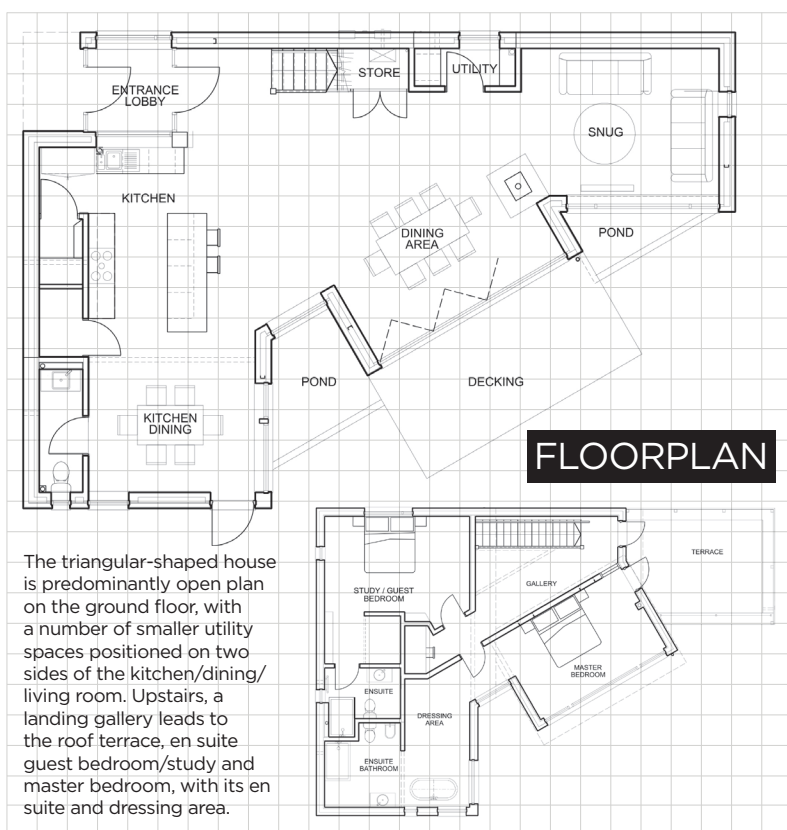
STORY: DEBBIE JEFFERY PHOTOGRAPHY: PAOLA FERLA





Exterior

Cedar weatherboarding, zinc roofing and white render clad the new house, with five-metre-wide bifold doors connecting the ground floor to the landscaped garden.



When Sheena and Simon Loveday purchased a house in Wells nine years ago they were aware that planning permission had already been granted to build a terrace of three new townhouses in the garden. The listed property stands within a Conservation Area, and had originally been a public house, with the ground to the rear used as a car park for customers.

“When we bought the rambling old house it was rather rundown, and the garden was overgrown with brambles,” says Sheena. “We’d completed several renovation and extension projects in the past, including restoring a 12th-century French farmhouse, but had never actually built anything from scratch. From the start we knew that, at some stage, we would like to build a smaller home for our retirement in the garden.”

The city centre plot is surrounded on four sides, and overlooked by neighbouring houses, but enjoys views of Wells Cathedral, Glastonbury Tor and the local church. Sheena and Simon borrowed a scaffolding tower and spent a week moving it around the garden in order to see the views from a different perspective, and to orientate the new house accordingly.

“The site sloped more than a metre from one side to the other, and we wanted everything completely level, with no steps on the ground floor,” Sheena continues. “We and our friends are getting older, so the plan was to create a house and garden which would

be easy to access in a wheelchair if necessary, with wide doorways. Levelling the site not only achieved this, but it also completely changed the outlook.”

Sheena and Simon already knew George Batterham of Batterham Matthews Architects, as he had worked for their daughter, and approached him with their brief for a new home. George, along with fellow architect Ben Smith, designed a contemporary energy-efficient house, integrating the garden into the overall design and making the most of the long views to the south-west towards Glastonbury Tor and Wells Cathedral.

The dining and main bedroom section of the house has deliberately been orientated to face due south looking towards Glastonbury Tor, to maximise natural passive solar gain to these rooms in winter, with an overhanging roof to protect the space from overheating in the summer.

“George and Ben planned the layout around the way we live, and worked closely with us as the design evolved,” says Simon. “The ground floor living area is mainly open plan, but in order to keep this uncluttered we needed plenty of utility space. This was achieved by designing one-metre-deep ‘inhabited walls’ around two sides of the kitchen/living room, which contain a cloakroom, larder, laundry, coat cupboard and boiler room – all precisely kitted out for their individual purposes.”

Coming from a larger house meant that the Lovedays were used to spacious rooms and high ceilings. For this reason they chose to create two generous en suite bedrooms upstairs, instead of the three they had originally considered. They also have a first-floor study area on the landing and a desk in the guest bedroom, which allows them to each have a workspace.

“Externally we had no real idea about how we



Dining

Painted timber boarding and matching doors create a feature in the open-plan living/dining/kitchen, where engineered oak flooring is laid over underfloor heating. High ceilings and wide doorways enhance the overall feeling of space.



SHEENA'S TOP TIP

“Think about every detail from the start. We decided to retrofit Japanese paper blinds to prevent sunlight fading our furniture, but these could have been built-in and concealed if we’d included them earlier.”



Stairs

Bespoke oak and glass stairs are lit from above by a triangular roof light.



Kitchen

The kitchen has been positioned at the heart of the open-plan ground floor, with dark grey cabinets and a combination of beech and unpolished granite counters. Reclaimed pendant lights came from an old munitions factory.

Snug

To one end of the ground floor a cosy snug area is furnished with a dark blue modular sofa.



wanted the house to look, and left this mainly up to George,” says Sheena. The shell of the triangular house was designed with a blockwork ground floor and a highly insulated timber-framed upper storey, clad externally in render and cedar boarding.

“We specified English cedar cladding, which has been left untreated and weathers to a soft silver grey colour,” explains Simon. Samples of the materials, including blue-grey aluminium windows and zinc roofing, were made available to the local council for approval prior to construction.

A sheltered, south and west facing roof terrace, accessed from both the landing and the master bedroom, was designed to avoid blocking the neighbours’ view, but the planners chose to replace some of the glass balustrades with timber, to prevent overlooking. Apart from this, the design sailed through the planning process – despite the fact that the previous planning approval for three houses had already lapsed – and work started on site in February 2013.

Chivers and Co were selected as main contractors ➡



IN DETAIL

PROJECT

Architect Batterham Matthews Architects: 01225 851122
batterhammatthewsarchitects.co.uk

Builder Chivers and Co Ltd: 01934 740118

Structural design Rexon Day: 01225 339552

Garden design Helen Johnson: 07879 423894

STRUCTURE

Aluminium windows and doors Techniglaze: 01761 417654

English cedar cladding Northwood: 01275 794735

Triangular roof light Roofglaze: 01480 474797

Insulation Rockwool: 01656 862621

Roof Colourcoat Urban: 01244 892434

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Sanitaryware Bathstore: bathstore.com

Kitchen Timbercraft: 01749 678 140

Woodstove installation Robert Neave Ltd: 07976 747821

Oak engineered timber floor

Atkinson and Kirby: 01695 573234

following a tender process, with Batterham Matthews Architects overseeing the build, liaising closely with the Lovedays who remained living in their previous home during the eight-month project.

"It helped that we were only next door, and could make decisions and answer questions immediately," says Simon. "Our architects and builders all got on really well, which made for a very happy site, and everyone worked hard to make sure that the project came in both on time and on budget."

A mains sewer which ran diagonally across the plot was diverted to the edge of the site before excavating new foundations, and material deliveries were carefully timed to avoid lorries blocking the shared driveway.

The landscaping is a large part of the living space, with a five-metre span of glass doors opening onto decking, which is flanked by two ponds. Rainwater is collected and harvested to use in the garden, and for grey water supplying WC flushing.

"We'd spent a great deal of time and money on creating a Mediterranean-style garden, and wanted to preserve it as much as possible," says Sheena. "A holding pen was made from sleepers for trees and yew hedging, and all but one survived and could be planted back once the builders had finished."

Sheena cut out pictures from magazines of products and finishes she liked, which helped to narrow down choices when it came to buying fixtures and fittings. The blue/grey colour of the window and door frames is echoed throughout the house, in furnishings and the simple, contemporary kitchen.

"We almost positioned the kitchen to one end of the house, but changed our minds at the eleventh hour and decided to make it more central," Sheena explains. "One day later and the drainage would have gone in, so it really was a last-minute decision which should definitely have been made far earlier. Even so, we're now very happy with the layout, and feel that the snug is much cosier in one corner of the room."

The house is 175 sqm, but feels far larger due to the open-plan ground floor layout and absence of hallways. A bespoke staircase, with oak bannisters and glass balustrades, rises up from the dining area to a landing which has been purposefully designed as a gallery space, complete with a hanging system so that artwork may be displayed without damaging the walls.

Since its completion the house has received



Rear

The main living area extends out onto a raised deck in the garden, providing the perfect venue for alfresco dining in summer.

Upstairs

The landing doubles as a gallery, with a hanging system which allows artwork to be moved. The centre of the house is naturally lit via a large triangular roof light from Roofglaze.



positive reactions from local people, as well as winning several awards. Designing the building to face out onto a courtyard, and incorporating large panels of glass looking onto the garden, creates a sense of privacy, despite the built-up setting, and the internal spaces have been cleverly devised to offer flexibility in the future.

"We needed to get rid of quite a lot of furniture, because we were downsizing from a larger house, but it's actually been a very positive experience," says Sheena. "Now we have a low-maintenance, energy-efficient home, designed exactly for our lifestyle. It's wonderfully light and warm to live in and has completely exceeded our expectations."



My self build EXPERIENCE

What was the high point of the project?

The atmosphere on site was happy and the whole project was a real pleasure.

Would you change anything?

The snug area could perhaps be a little wider, because this was supposed to be the kitchen and we changed our minds at the last minute.

Your best buy?

We love the triangular roof light above the stairs, where you can look up and see the roof structure, because it echoes the shape of the house.

...and the biggest extravagance?

Having two bedrooms instead of three was probably an extravagance, because most homes squeeze in as many rooms as possible.

