



# CRAFTING A HOME

We all have an idea of our Dream Home. ARCH angels Architects make dreams into reality. Here they profile a project and explain the process

Most people dream of designing their own home. They usually have a concept in their minds already, and the client for this project was no different. The process for building your own dream home begins with an idea. With the help of an architect's experience, this idea can be put to paper as a sufficient way to explain it to a home builder, who can then transform the refined idea into something physical. Architectural drawings make up the graphic language of building design and construction. This stage is used to visualise possibilities, study alternatives and present design ideas about the form and spaces of a building.

The concept stage is where you must take the time to really decide on what it is you want from your home and what kind of lifestyle you want to create for yourself. When these questions are answered, it is through a relationship between yourselves and your architect that the design can be completed.

The owners of this property in the Surrey countryside wanted to improve their family life with a larger, more energy-efficient home. They originally looked at renovating the existing dwelling, an old 1950s bungalow. However, after a lot of research, it was decided that a new dwelling would be more sensible and economical. The old property was very poorly designed, with unsympathetic extensions.

It was an eyesore and did not fit well in its surroundings, which are predominantly woodland.

Starting from scratch enabled the client to correct the mistakes of the old property as well as creating their dream home. One part of this dream was a large, open-plan living area, later to be known as the 'Great Hall', containing a high, vaulted ceiling and panelled glass walls, which created the building's centre-piece.

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The planning stage for this house was a tricky one. After much negotiation, compromise and some alterations, the house was eventually designed to be built in a two-stage process. Breaking the process into two satisfied all of the planning requirements and enabled the client to get his dream home. The time period for this stage with this project was roughly a year and a half, including the

passing of the planning stage. It was now that the physical building of the home could begin!

The first ground works on site began in December 2009. Unfortunately, nobody could have predicted that the winter of 2009/10 was to be later known as 'The Big Freeze,' and was the coldest on record for 30 years! However, despite the months of rain and snow, the site preparations were completed and the specially designed foundations were laid. The ground consisted of a clay soil, which required the house to have up to 3m deep foundations, designed not only for the ground type but also the proximity of the trees. Along with digging trenches for the foundations, the drainage was laid and an existing drainage ditch was relocated.

The existing property remained during construction. The client was able to live in this house, and it was set to be demolished once the new house had been occupied.

Once the foundations were in place, construction of the timber frame of the building began, in February 2010.

The 'Great Hall' vaulted central area of the house was constructed of green oak. Green oak is a great material that was carefully chosen for the character it would bring to the large centre-piece of the house. This 'character' is inherent in the wood's properties. High in moisture content, the wood, with good



## Features include:

- Use of locally sourced, natural, low-maintenance, durable materials
- Under-floor heating and high levels of natural insulation
- Natural ventilation
- Rainwater harvesting
- Wood burning stove
- Solar thermal panels
- Low flush toilets



selection, good detailing and the skill of the craftsmen, will dry and shrink over time, 'cracking' and forming a very unique feel for the room.

The beautiful hand-made clay roof tiles were fitted to the roof structure at the beginning of May 2010. Along with the timber windows and doors, the building had a hand-made brick plinth added (bottom left photograph). Above this plinth, British sweet chestnut was carefully chosen and added to the façade. British sweet chestnut has a similar golden colour to oak, but will weather to a natural silver colouring if left untreated. Chosen not just for its aesthetics, sweet chestnut is hard-wearing, strong and durable, and relatively light when compared to other hardwoods, making it ideal for cladding.

The plumbing, heating, and electrical systems were 'first fixed' in July 2010. The client wanted an interactive intelligent lighting system installed into the house, enabling him to remotely control the lighting throughout their home. The internal walls were also insulated during this time.

The internal walls were also insulated and sealed. Rolls of insulation were inserted between the studs in all exterior wall cavities. Any gaps between framing members and around windows were tightly sealed to eliminate potential air leaks.

The finishes to the floors and walls as well as the painting were completed by December 2010. Also by this date, the second fix of services had been completed. The oak staircase, together with glass balustrading, was completed by January 2011.

The clients were delighted to finally move into their new home in February 2011, and their original house was demolished shortly afterwards.

For help in creating your own dream home contact:

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