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# HOME INTERIORS

Marion Welham looks at an eco-friendly house

## Behind the green doors

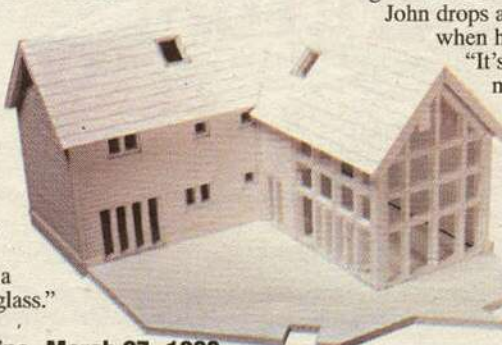


ON SITE: John and Diane Stevenson with children Lydia and Joe, plus family pet Alfie

**P**ROBLEMS, problems. "There are two horrible little words that keep cropping up", says John Stevenson as he tells me about the eco-friendly, sheer edge and atriumed home he has just commissioned from award-winning architect Michael Winter for a small Suffolk village.

"Everything must be *in keeping*. They want local materials and everything the same but villages were never like that. They evolved over hundreds of years."

In Brandeston, where the extraordinary L-shaped house will shortly begin to "evolve", there are Victorian houses, old cottages and a Baptist chapel "so what's wrong", says John, "with building a house for the next Millennium?" Generally the planners were helpful and John and his partner Diane Fisher settled on a traditional Suffolk barn-style frontage with black stained weather boarding on a brick plinth. The really exciting bit is at the back where floor to ceiling glass south and east gives expansive views over the open countryside. "We would love to have gone much more radical," says John. "We had to fight quite a bit for that amount of glass."



John, a sculptor, graphic designer and London interiors specialist and Diane Fisher, a successful illustrator, have two children, five-year-old Lydia and seven-year-old Joe. They lived in Tunbridge Wells for 15 years and it was there they got the inspiration for the house. John was out running one day when he saw Michael Winter's house taking shape on the edge of the cricket ground. At first he thought it might be a pavilion then, says Diane, he realised "Blimey it's a house". Michael Winter is at the cutting edge of eco-architecture. His famous Boundary House is a radical design which has gone as far down the ecology route as possible.

John and Diane were smitten but the hardest bit came when they moved to Suffolk during Christmas 1997 and tried to find a plot of land where they could get permission to build something similar and take on the ecological issues they cared about.

Parham-based architect Terry Foster, who is responsible for taking Michael Winter's design on to the site with the contractor, is a good source of local knowledge.

John drops all conventional terms when he describes the house. "It's like Dr Who's time machine Tardis - bigger on the inside than on the outside. The outside belies what's happening inside where it's industrial, stark and minimal. "One end of the house is double height, like an atri-



THE LOOK: A model of the Stevenson's Brandeston house, left, and the home they are hoping it will be like, Michael Winter's Boundary House (main picture)