

The Self-build Magazine

HOMEBUILDING & RENOVATING

www.homebuilding.co.uk

Building a
Traditional
Cottage

Contemporary
Style Extensions

Beautiful Barn
Conversions

Exciting Modern
Home Designs

Choosing
the right
heating
system

Plots for
sale in
your area

Estimating
build costs
the easy way

Renovating for Profit

Your route up the property ladder

February 2002 £2.95



The kitchen is ▶
perhaps the
finest example of
the minimalist
approach — the
only evidence of
its existence is a
small sink, while
everything else is
hidden away.



"Despite the open plan design of the house the warmth and comfort level is remarkable," says Diane. "We have oil-fired underfloor heating downstairs and the infrastructure for a wet central heating system upstairs. However there is every indication that this will not be needed. In the first year our heating costs were just £100. In a conventional four bedroom house we'd be spending at least £600 a year on heating, so we feel we have done our bit for the environment."

"We like space in which to do things. For example, two local photographers used it for an exhibition... really, we'd rather have space than possessions."

"This way we have no unsightly radiators and it helps us in our concept of 'flexible space,'" John explains. "This is very important to us. We like space in which to do things. For example, two local photographers used it for an exhibition for three months last summer. Really we'd rather have space than possessions."

"We would have preferred far more glass and a more hi-tech appearance at the front, but Michael had a pretty good idea of what the local planners would find acceptable and skillfully negotiated us through the minefield."

"To assist with this Michael used a local architect, Terry Foster. Round here the District Council likes things to be 'in keeping'. It's a phrase I hate. You finish up with something that is phoney and chocolate-boxy. The whole thing about villages is that they evolve, with generations of buildings of different types and styles. But round here the planners like to mix and match materials of all ages in the new houses. It is easy on the eye and 'cute', but doesn't ring true to us."

"The planners are afraid of something metallic, full of glass and shiny, using the best of modern materials. Why on earth should we have to apologise for building a house ▶







◀ The open internal spaces, combined with minimal furniture, white walls and large windows help to create a feeling of minimalism. Diane's office is situated on the mezzanine level, accessed by a galvannead steel staircase.



of the 21st century using modern materials that looks fantastic alongside old buildings? Attitudes like this really make me angry. I also think they limit scope for good design."

The only really fixed 'thing' in the interior of the house is the stacked service core that carries all the services to the first floor and incorporates the bathroom and wcs on both levels. It saved on construction costs and is also very important structurally, as it ties together the two halves of the L-shape.

"Why on earth should we have to apologise for building a house of the 21st century using modern materials that looks fantastic alongside old buildings?"

The most extreme example of the couple's approach to design is the kitchen. The only thing that indicates it is a kitchen is a small sink. Everything else pertaining to the function of the room is hidden in cupboards and taken out when needed. Even the dishwasher is concealed behind a cupboard front. When they can afford it John and Diane may buy a small oven and conceal it in a similar fashion, but at present they cook on a portable gas cooker powered by a gas canister. They also have a small electric combination oven and microwave which they ▶

Fact File

NAME: John Stevenson and Diane Fisher

PROFESSIONS: Interior designer and graphic designer

AREA: Rural Suffolk

HOUSE TYPE: Four bedroom timber frame using I-beam construction in walls and roof

HOUSE SIZE: 150m²

BUILD ROUTE: Main contractor

CONSTRUCTION: Timber frame using masonry system

WARRANTY: Architect's certificate

FINANCE: £30,000 mortgage from Woolwich

BUILD TIME: 14 weeks

LAND COST: £26,000

BUILD COST: £136,000

TOTAL COST: £164,000

CURRENT VALUE: £225,000

COST/m²: £930

**18%
COST
SAVING**

Cost Breakdown:

Main building contract ... £108,000

Architect and structural engineer fees

..... £10,000

Windows and fitting £20,000

TOTAL

£138,000

keep in a cupboard. John grins when questioned about the practicality of this. "We are not 'Aga louts'" he says.

There is only one internal door – situated for obvious reasons on the downstairs wc. "If we, or any future owner, should wish to add more doors or divide the space up then it would be quite possible," John says.

"The tables are large sheets of thick plywood on trestles and eating is indeed a 'moveable feast'. We can eat in any part of the space and we can move the furniture round likewise," he continues. "This gives us maximum flexibility to adapt the house for all sorts of purposes and we have added to this by making all the walls plain white and keeping the floors largely bare to add to the effect of 'fluid space.'" ■

Useful Contacts

Architect — Michael Winter:
01892 536709

Site architect — Terry Foster:
01728 724892

Structural engineer — G.C Robertson
Associates: 01394 384887

Main contractor — Featherstone
Builders: 01473 231135

Spiral staircase — Crescent:
01480 494001

Windows — Swedish Window
Company: 01787 223031

Roof and wall insulation — Warmcell:
01495 350655

Underfloor heating — Wimbo:
01293 548512

Timber frame — Masonite/Flocrete:
01482 233466

Ventilation — Building Product Design/
Passivent: 0161 962 7113



▼ Architect Michael Winter says: "If you look at the windows in old buildings they are all over the place. I managed to persuade the planners that there was no harm in having windows of different sizes at the front."

