



**PROJECT NOTES**  
**Project:** Self-build  
**Location:** Suffolk  
**Build time:** Sep 2014 – Jun 2015  
**Size:** 275m<sup>2</sup>  
**Plot cost:** Already owned  
**Build cost:** £610,000 (£2,218/m<sup>2</sup>)  
**Value:** £1.2million

HOMES OAK FRAME SELF-BUILD

# Forever Home

After negotiating with planners for seven years, Rupert and Lindsay Osborne have finally realised their dream of building a stunning oak-framed home in Suffolk

Words: Natasha Brinsmead Photography: Oakwrights/Mark Welsh



#### Rear Elevation

The combination of large, south-facing glazed areas and a full-width veranda mean Rupert and Lindsay are able to enjoy their new home all year round



#### THE QUICK READ

⇒ Rupert and Lindsay Osborne undertook a lengthy and stressful planning battle in order to gain permission to build within the garden of their existing 17th-century home

⇒ They chose an oak-framed design from Oakwrights and have combined the traditional design with contemporary features

⇒ Open plan spaces and large areas of glazing – not to mention a breathtaking staircase design – are the main features of this ‘forever home’

**W**hile prepared for some level of compromise and patience when submitting plans for their new home, not even Lindsay and Rupert Osborne could have imagined that this was a process that would take a gruelling seven years to resolve.

The plot they had set out to gain planning permission on formed part of the garden of their existing home, a beautiful – yet expensive to run – country merchants home built in 1650.

“We had decided that we wanted to downsize, we both have a real interest in design and we also wanted the chance to use more modern technology in our home – plus this was our way of leaving a legacy,” explains Rupert.

#### Overcoming a Planning Battle

Their existing home sat on two acres of land and plans were submitted to build a new property some 100 yards from their old house. Despite the plot forming part of their existing garden, it was considered by the planners to be outside the village boundary – and so the battle began.

Having come across Oakwrights at a Homebuilding & Renovating Show in 2007, they visited the company’s showhome in Herefordshire, and were subsequently introduced to architectural designer Pete Tonks. Plans were drawn up for an oak-framed home on the garden plot, but were turned down flat. In 2008 Rupert and Lindsay submitted a planning appeal but were once again turned down. “We decided to leave it,” explains Lindsay. “Then after five years, planning rules changed under the new government and we put forward a sustainable proposal for the new house – which would effectively be a ‘nil-bill’ home.”

“The planners couldn’t really turn it down,” continues Rupert. “Permission was finally granted in January 2014.”



#### HOMES OAK FRAME SELF-BUILD

#### Central Staircase

The striking staircase, designed by Lindsay, is made from steel, glass and granite and dominates the central area of the house. It leads up to a mezzanine-style landing which overlooks the double-height dining space with its stunning garden views





**Above and Opposite: Family Spaces**

The dining space is filled with light, thanks to the impressive double-height glazed gable end. A galleried landing to the bedrooms on the first floor offers far-reaching views over the two-acre plot

**Opposite, Below: Veranda**

A generous veranda allows the couple, both landscape gardeners, to enjoy the outdoors all year round



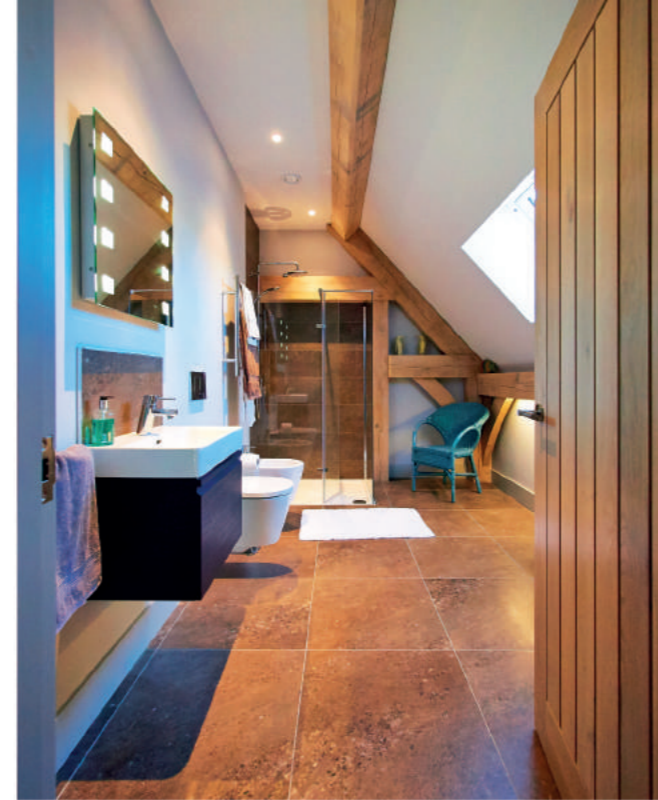
“Although we loved our old house, we were keen that our new house was easier to run and look after,” explains Lindsay. “Oakwrights seemed to be able to offer this, as well as a traditional look.”

Lindsay and Rupert sold their house to release funds and rented a bungalow opposite the plot, meaning they were able to visit the site every day. Work began on site in September 2014, with Oakwrights acting as main contractors and using local trades where possible.

A design was developed, involving Pete Tonks and Oakwrights — although Rupert and Lindsay already had a very clear idea of the house they wanted. “We had so long to plan everything and had researched every single thing really thoroughly,” explains Lindsay. “We knew exactly what we wanted and just had to fit it in with the oak frame.”

**A Link to Outside**

One of the priorities for the couple, who are both landscape gardeners, was that they could enjoy the garden all year round. With this in mind, the veranda, created by large overhanging eaves that run the width of the house at the rear, plays a big role in the design of the house, plus the layout internally was designed to maximise solar gain — huge areas of glazing, all largely south-facing, flood



## HOMES OAK FRAME SELF-BUILD



the interiors with a clear, natural light. “We wanted the house to be really easy to live in and open — for it to feel really light,” explains Lindsay.

### A Traditional Home with Modern-Day Features

Oakwrights began work on the new oak frame, which was constructed off-site in around six weeks, while groundworks were put in place on site. Two boreholes were dug, which now pump water up from the ground at 11°C before passing through a heat exchanger in order to heat the wet underfloor heating system that operates on both the ground and first floor of the new house. The hot water is also heated by an open loop ground-source heat pump.

“In the summer, the heat pump can be turned off,” explains Rupert. “We have 16 solar panels tucked discreetly away in a sunny corner of the garden and these heat the water.” The couple receive financial rewards, in the form of the Renewable Heat Incentive, from the government for running the heat pump.

A separate borehole was dug to provide filtered and softened domestic water, so Rupert and Lindsay have no water rates to worry about. In addition, a Klargestor BioDisc is used to treat waste water and only has to be emptied every four to five years.

### Building in Oak Frame Home

When the frame arrived on site, it took just five days to erect, with only four men and the designer. “More than 1,000 wooden pegs were used to secure the oak frame,” enthuses Rupert. “No steel — all oak. It was so important to get everything just right. We realised just how important 10mm can be with oak frame. The house is 18m wide by 14m and the oak frame had to sit within 10mm of the foundations.”

Living opposite the site while the building work took place was hugely important to the couple. “I have no idea how you couldn’t be on site every day,” says Rupert.

While the oak frame building has been clad in oak weatherboarding and finished with traditional handmade clay tiles, finer details such as copper rainwater goods and grey aluminium windows and doors ensure the whole design has a contemporary edge.

Internally, a similar blending of traditional and modern design elements has been employed. A stunning central staircase made from steel, granite and glass and weighing around 1.6 tonnes takes centre stage, with the glass keeping the whole thing from dominating the space and allowing light to flow through. “It is more like a work of art,” says Lindsay. “It was made by a young guy with his own forge and was his first staircase.”

The kitchen was designed to be a sociable, open space. “We wanted a very linear kitchen that was unfussy,” says Lindsay. “The kitchen is fantastic and sociable — my daughter says it is like cooking on *Masterchef*.”

To meet the couple’s future needs, the master bedroom has been located on the ground floor should the need arise for Rupert and Lindsay to live on one level. “This is our forever home,” says Rupert. “Yes, we went over budget, but for us this is a one-off experience.” ➔

### Above Left to Right: First Floor Spaces

On the first floor are three bedrooms and bathrooms — two en suite. Oak beams and vaulted ceilings add character and interest, while the couple’s antique furniture and contemporary flooring, fuss-free shutters at the windows and expanses of glazing work harmoniously together

### Left: Sociable Kitchen

Pale flush units with stainless steel handles — to echo the steel staircase — sit alongside a Total Control AGA. A minimalist island, complete with boiling water tap and waste disposal, is flanked by a timber breakfast bar section and antique chairs

