

PROJECT NOTES

Project:

Contemporary-style
self-build

Location:

Buckinghamshire

Dates:

April 13

- May 14

Size:

170m²

Plot cost:

£302,000

Build cost:

£270,000

(£1,588/m²)

Value:

£675,000

Exterior

The house design draws inspiration from traditional longhouses, and uses low-maintenance materials throughout. New clay tiles (from Marley Eternit) were used for the roof and are mellowing with age, while the Scottish larch cladding is gradually weathering to a silvery grey. The windows and doors are aluminium externally and timber internally, painted the same colour as the exterior frames for a more industrial look.



The Simple Life

Ed and Anna Chipperfield have succeeded in building a new home that marries simple contemporary design with a family-friendly layout

Words: Natasha Brinsmead Photography: Simon Maxwell

Main Living Spaces

The long open layout of the house was something Ed and Anna were really keen on. The partially polished concrete floor retains so much heat that people think they have underfloor heating. The raw, industrial feel is continued through the birch-faced ply walls, staircase and finishing touches, whilst the huge Velfac windows and double-height hallway bring in plenty of natural light



HOMES SELF-BUILD



THE QUICK READ

⇒ Ed and Anna Chipperfield have built a contemporary cabin-style family home in a Conservation Area after successfully negotiating a restrictive covenant on the plot

⇒ The Chipperfields worked closely with their architect, Kieran Hawkins of Mailen Design, to create a layout which reflected their love of longhouses and also their ethos of 'keeping things simple'

⇒ The finishes of the house have an industrial feel reminiscent of a warehouse conversion, and technology has been kept to a minimum to avoid complicating the build

Viking longhouse meets New York loft apartment." This is how Ed Chipperfield describes the new home he and wife Anna have built in rural Buckinghamshire. It's not often you hear a new home described in such a way, but then again this is a house that is surprising on many levels.

After renovating and living in several Victorian houses in Oxford, Ed and Anna came to the conclusion that period houses weren't their 'thing', put their house on the market and sold it almost immediately. The Chipperfields found a building plot which had been split into three; Ed and Anna's parcel of land originally being an orchard on the site. Despite being up against a number of developers, the fact that they had already sold their own house, as well as the owners of the plot planning to still live on part of the original plot themselves, worked in the couple's favour.

While the plot came with outline permission for a more traditional timber frame house, Ed and Anna knew that they were after a more contemporary design, and although a covenant restricting the house's height had been placed on the plot – which sits within a Conservation Area – the new design was passed by the planners. ⇒



HOMES SELF-BUILD



A Considered Design

“I like history and I have a bit of a thing about Viking longhouses,” explains Ed of the concept behind the new house design. “We have friends with a house on the Isle of Skye and really like the style — they offer an open plan, long but useful space, with the bedrooms located in the eaves (a happy coincidence given that there were planning restrictions on the ridge height of the new building). So that was our influence.”

“Anna and I both grew up in the 1980s and were influenced by all those warehouse conversions that were everywhere at the time,” continues Ed. “We basically kept pecking away at the original design until we had something we were both happy with — a raw, cabin-like freestanding structure.”

The couple chose architect Kieran Hawkins, a friend of the family, from Mailen Design to come up with the design for their new home. “We wanted a young architect with similar ideas to us,” explains Ed. “We found that a lot of the local architects we approached only wanted to do conventional things, but Kieran brought a fresh approach to the design.”

Kieran takes up the story: “We tried hard to avoid transplanting a slick city house into historic Buckinghamshire. Our aim was to construct a home that had the clarity and strength of an agricultural building while providing an uplifting backdrop to daily life for this particular family.”

The result is a house that is both modern and understated, yet incorporates rustic and traditional materials that allow it to blend into its surroundings. It has been clad in Scottish larch which fitted Ed and Anna’s ideal of a low-maintenance home; it requires no treatment and has been left to weather to a silver grey.

The Build Process

Structural insulated panels (SIPs) were chosen as the method of construction for the new house, with Ed and Anna keen on the idea of the fast build times they offered as well as the superior thermal performance. “SIPs construction provides excellent environmental performance and allowed the structure to be erected to watertight stage in only one week,” explains architect Kieran.

“I’d definitely recommend SIPs,” says Ed. “The construction was really fast and there were no joists and beams to contend with either, meaning it is a good option for open plan spaces. It was quite messy though.”

The couple employed Lez McKeran from Link Development & Groundworks as the main contractor, who worked alongside Ed and Kieran throughout the build. “Lez really is one in a million,” says Ed. “From day one, if Lez said it would happen, it did.”

During the relatively short build — the whole project, from conception to moving in took around 10 months — Ed and Anna avoided renting, staying at their friend’s cottage on the Isle of Skye for two months and with family for the remaining eight months. “If we did it again, we might rent,” reflects Ed. “It would have been ➔

Above and Left: Ground Floor Spaces

The open plan ground floor allows for light to flood through the spaces while also allowing the couple to keep an eye on their son Jasper, who is five. In the living area a Morsø stove offers a heat source, while Ed’s office is divided off this space — he got the idea from industrial spaces where the foreman has an office sectioned off from the main areas



nice to have been a bit closer to the project at times when decisions were needed fast.”

It was during their time staying with family and friends that Ed and Anna began paring everything down. “Most of our belongings went into storage during the build. When we were ready to move in, we realised that we really hadn’t missed a single thing — so we gave away loads of stuff.”

The Simple Life

Throughout the build, specifications were all based on Ed and Anna’s ethos that: “Each decision you make should move you towards a simpler life.” This ‘simplification’ of their everyday lives is very much reflected in the entire design of the house. Agricultural and industrial finishes have been used throughout, from the partially polished concrete floors and unfinished birch-faced ply details, to the choice of glazing and heating system.

“We considered underfloor heating but decided that it wasn’t worth it,” explains Kieran. “The concrete floor has been poured extra thick (around four feet) and provides a huge thermal mass. The windows bathe the concrete floor all day with heat and in the evening they are so warm underfoot that everyone assumes we have underfloor heating anyway.” The house is actually heated via a tiny condensing gas boiler and radiators, and due to the construction, with an additional layer of insulation in the walls, the couple find themselves with heating bills of around just £300 per year.

“We are always open to sustainable ways of doing things,” says Ed, “but we also wanted to get the best value. We looked at solar panels and it didn’t add up. We thought about heat exchangers but they weren’t for us. We craved simplicity and felt that building a house should be as simple as possible — I can’t think of anything ➔

Top and Middle: Kitchen Diner

The IKEA kitchen, like the rest of the house, is minimally fitted out, with a crisp white island unit housing the hob, oven and storage, central to the space. Elsewhere, open ply shelving and a distinct lack of clutter define the room

Left: Double-Height Stairwell

Light floods into the stairwell thanks to the expanse of glazing — overlooking the double-height space are two ‘hatches’ which open out from the master bedroom and Jasper’s room

HOMES SELF-BUILD



worse than having a plant room!” Double as opposed to triple glazing from Velfac has been used throughout as the couple simply didn’t feel the need to overspecify.

Internally, the layout is dominated by one long open plan space which is double-height in places. To break up the open plan arrangement the floor levels have been varied between the kitchen diner and the living area — the living area sits 30cm below ground level, with the step up to the kitchen providing a handy extra place to sit when required.

In fact, this house features many clever design ideas for such an unfussy project. On the ground floor, partitions featuring glass and ply form a separate yet connected home office for Ed, a commercial copywriter, to work from home. Meanwhile on the first floor, two of the three bedrooms feature internal windows that open out over the double-height stairwell providing a nice link between the master bedroom and Jasper’s room. “They are cheeky little things,” says Ed. “We can open them up and let music from our room stream through the whole house — they are also a good way of letting natural light flow through the spaces.”

For much of the raw, clean style that has been achieved throughout the internal spaces, Ed praises their carpenter who crafted all the exposed ply features of the house — including the ingenious birch ply cover for the extractor hood in the kitchen, and the built-in elements that make up the bathroom. “He came up with loads of ideas and we trusted him as he has really good taste.”

Furnished simply with predominantly original mid-century modern furniture (“the house was basically designed to suit our love of this style of furniture,” laughs Ed) the house manages to exude comfort and charm through its individual touches and tailored design features. The finished project is certainly a lesson in pared-down living done well. 🏠

Above: First Floor

With the three bedrooms located in the eaves to maximise space on the ground floor, the upper level offers a cosy space to retreat to without feeling cramped. A bridge over the entrance hall connects the master suite with the other bedrooms and family bathroom, and similar raw materials have been used in this area of the home too. The sanitaryware in the master en suite is from Duravit



HOMES SELF-BUILD

The Project



Kieran Hawkins,
Architectural
Director,
Mailen Design
Architect

ARCHITECTS' VIEW

Anna and Ed were great clients. They gave us guidelines of what they wanted and what they didn't want, but were very open to our ideas as their architects. The final design was the result of a thorough conversation between architect and client to achieve a building that neither of us would have been able to design without the other.

The final design is a contemporary building that was built within the constraints of a conservative outline planning permission. Planning is a political process and is always unpredictable. To satisfy both the local council, who wanted a traditional barn-style cottage, and the clients, who wanted a free-flowing work of modern architecture, was a real achievement and led to a building that is not compromised, but is richer for accommodating these competing demands.

The interiors have a high degree of variety while minimising the number of interior walls to ensure that areas flow into each other, with changes in floor level, double-height spaces and views from one room to another all carefully managed. The split-level design was important to provide a generosity of space and a sense of connection.

When you enter the house, you are presented with views across the whole ground floor, and upwards to the bedrooms and through the rooflights to the trees and clouds beyond.

The hatches felt right from the first time we sketched them. They allow the clients to enjoy the double-height hallway from their bedrooms and to connect the first floor and ground floor in a way that gives them options of varying privacy levels. They also enable parents and child to talk, play games or read stories without leaving their own rooms.

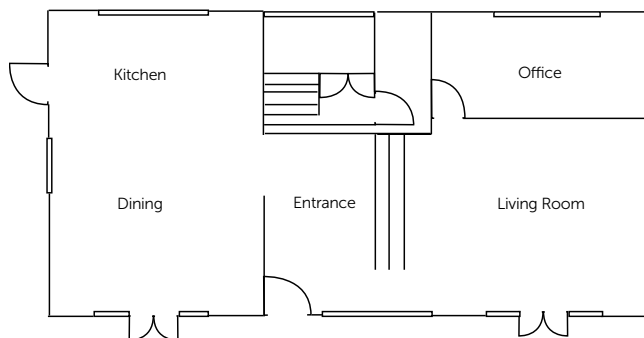


Ben Mailen,
Managing
Director,
Mailen Design
Architect

SUPPLIERS

- Architect** Kieran Hawkins of Mailen Designmailendesign.com; 020 3735 5880
- Main contractor, builder, carpenter and concrete flooring** Link Development & Groundworks Ltd01869 323140
- Birch-faced ply** Travis Perkinstravisperkins.co.uk
- SIPs and insulation** Kingspankingspan.co.uk
- Glazing and patio doors** Velfac01223 897100
- Rooflights** The Rooflight Company01993 833155
- Kitchen** IKEAikea.com
- Worktops** James Lathamlathamtimber.co.uk
- Bathrooms** Duravitduravit.co.uk
- Woodburning stove** Morsø.....morso.co.uk
- Roof tiles** Markey Eternitmarleyeternit.co.uk
- Larch cladding** Russwood01540 673648

Ground Floor



First Floor

