

CRANAGE

Self-Build Stories



HOMES

1981 40 YEARS 2021

Self-building a traditional cottage with a contemporary touch

Introduction:

Our client Amy and her husband undertook a replacement dwelling project to self-build a new family home in Cheshire.

The couple had previously built a house themselves and were keen to do it again, having learned so much the first time round.



Why self-build?

The chief reason for wanting to build their own house again was to have some land with it so they could keep their two ponies at home, rather than having to go to the time and expense of travelling to look after them every day. They looked at plots without much land, plots with too much land, renovation projects and replacement dwellings. They wanted to limit the size of the land to take on, as their children are adult now and so they wanted to have a property that will suit a couple, as well as still having enough space for visitors when required.





Finding a plot of land for the self-build project

While searching online for a plot, Amy came across a replacement dwelling plot in Cranage, near Knutsford. A big attraction was that there was another small building on the site which looked like it might be suitable for further development, as an ancillary property. There was also plenty of room for the ponies and their stable.

Getting planning permission

The owner of the land had got outline planning permission already, but the couple wanted a much more interesting build for their own house. They knew it needed to complement the site and the area and they wanted it to look like it had been there for a really long time, rather than being an obvious new build.

The restrictions placed on a new house by the regulations surrounding replacement dwellings can put people off, but as long as you are realistic about the size of the house you want, it can be a great way to get planning permission for a new house.

When the existing house was demolished, it turned out that there were barely any foundations beneath the house, and a couple of telegraph poles had been acting as RSJs holding the whole thing up!



Finding a builder

Amy says,

“The builders we chose first, who worked with our architect, seemed in quite a rush to start work and I felt we were being pushed into paying over the odds for building regulations drawings and also to re-jig the design inside to make the most of the space as we wanted. This was annoying but it should have rung loud alarm bells too.

“The costs started spiralling to ridiculous levels and then compromises on the design were suggested that clearly were just intended to make the house easier to build, rather than making it better or closer to what we wanted. The company was also very restrictive in the specifications for things like sanitaryware and flooring, so I felt like we weren't getting our own choices at all. At this point, our previous experience of building a house was really helpful because I knew that the prices they suggested were too high. The solution suggested to save costs was to cut down on features that we loved so we decided to call a halt and find a different builder.”

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Choosing CB Homes to build the house

Once Amy got in touch with the CB Homes team, she realized we were prepared to be really flexible in order to accommodate her choices. Amy signed up to our turnkey option, where she just had to deal with our team, and we dealt with everyone else on her behalf.



The design

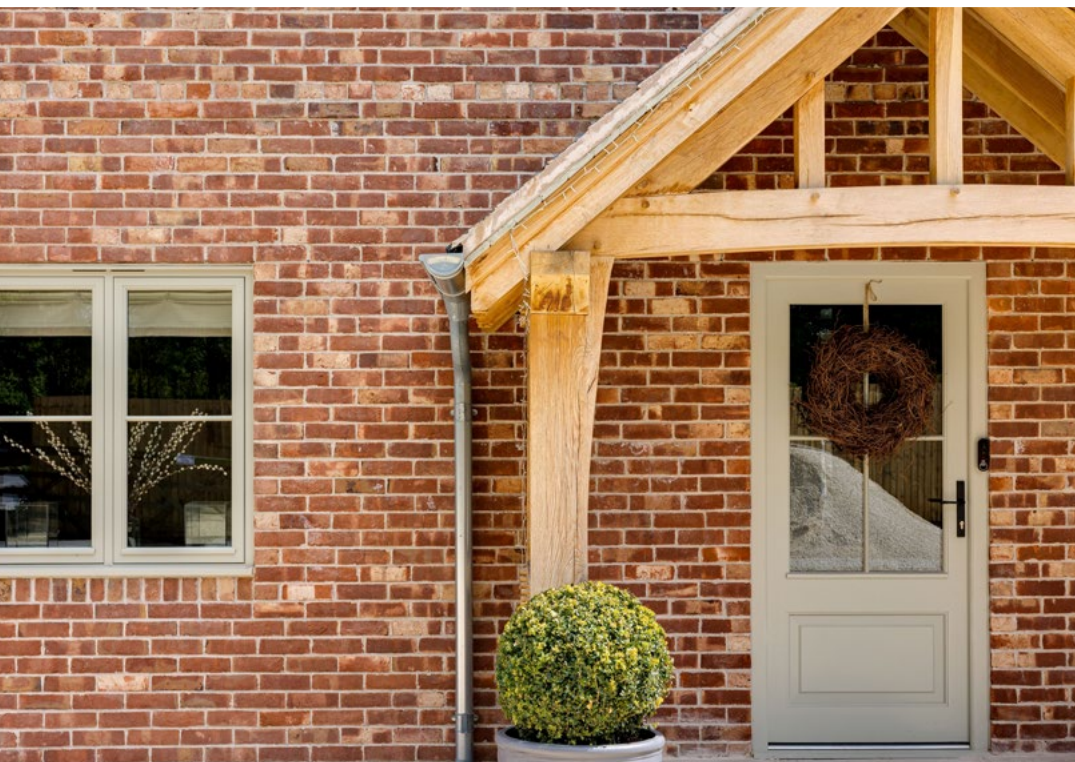
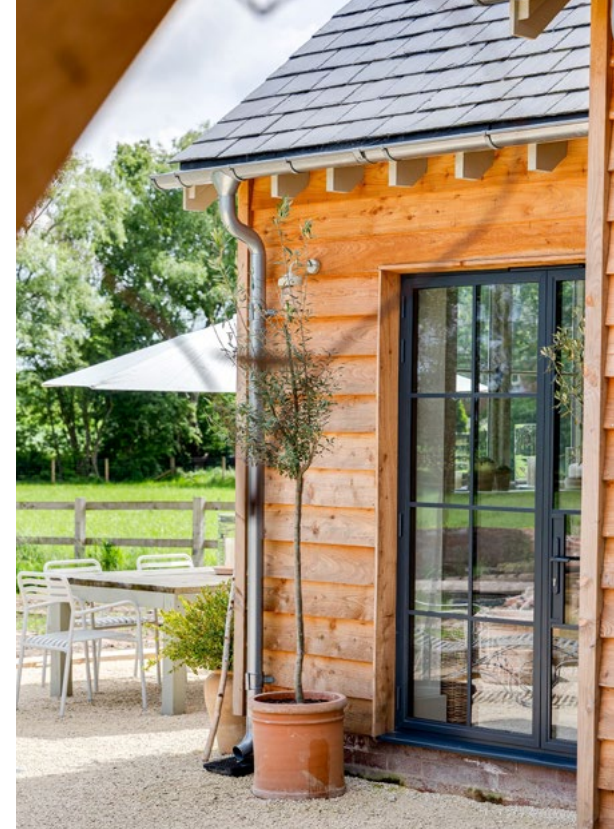
Our clients wanted all the modern benefits of a brand new house but to make it look as if it had been there for years. Another, older building has been retained onsite, so they wanted the new house to look as similar as possible to this other building too. Our site team suggested ways of achieving that through the finishing, such as using roof slates that, although new, are designed to look older and advising on which bricks to use which look much older than they are really.

Reclaimed bricks can be tricky, as they do not always meet building regulations standards and quite a lot may be broken, so it is hard to find a batch of bricks big enough and it is really important to get them all from the same batch for consistency.

We put Amy in touch with a brick merchant and she chose one called a 'reclamation style' which sets the tone of the whole house. The next thing for her to choose was the mortar – not just the colour of it but the style of the pointing too. Our bricklayer even built our client some mini sample walls to show three different ways

of finishing the pointing to give it different looks! She was happy with her final choice as the house walls tone really well with the older building that has been retained on the site.

Originally the client had thought of having traditional Crittall external doors but swapped them for Aluco Crittall style instead. They are the closest to traditional Crittall but comply with building regs. They have lots of benefits, including not steaming up with condensation – a big plus when it comes to ongoing maintenance.



No clutter, fuss-free interior décor

The handmade kitchen is beautifully made, with some natural wood and some painted units, with white stone worktops. The design is very simple, with a big island and a huge pantry cupboard, where all the usual kitchen paraphernalia will be stored out of the way, leaving the surfaces clear and uncluttered.

The fuss-free theme extends to the bathrooms. Microcement, a very durable decorative coating of several layers composed of cement, aggregate, resin and pigments, has been used in the shower enclosures, which means there are no lines of grouting or sealant. Microcement creates a wonderful feeling of spaciousness and is waterproof and moisture resistant, making it ideal for bathrooms.

One of our client's favourite features in the house is a beautiful slipper style bath in the master bedroom's ensuite, made of copper and finished in tin.

“I'm so happy with the proportions and it's exactly what I wanted of a balance between looking a lot like a cottage but with a very modern twist. When you stand in the hallway it feels like a cottage but then opens up into this really unexpected open space.”

“It's all about textures for me. There is a beautiful sandstone floor in the kitchen/ dining/ snug space and hall and some gorgeous wooden beams in the master bedroom and the second bedroom. There is much more height there than we expected to have and the beams really show it off.”

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A word from CB Homes

In common with many of our customers, these clients wanted a very traditional looking build but to enjoy contemporary design too.

Notable for its very simple, pared back aesthetic, this turnkey home has a number of beautiful design features that really set it apart. Some of these elements provided particular installation challenges for our site team. For example, the vaulted ceiling in the master bedroom has a 10 x 10 oak beam set underneath the ridgeline. This weighs nearly 300kg so fixing it safely and securely was clearly very important!.



Timber features tie the whole self-build design together

The effective use of timber throughout the design of the interior echoes the oak framework to the exterior of the cottage.

Tongue and groove boarding is scattered throughout the home, including on feature walls in the bedroom, while the bio ethanol fireplace has an oak beam mantelpiece, creating a gorgeous focal point for the downstairs. Further softwood beams were used on the ground floor but the client wanted these to seem more

subdued rather than stand out features. The team made sure that these had a suitably 'worn' look, before painting them to soften their appearance still further.

The vaulted ceiling in the dining-lounge area has the appearance of traditional cottage with rafters, and a ridge beam. These are actually very convincing looking 'fakes', echoing the timber details elsewhere in the house, and tying the whole design of the home together.

This self-build home is very neutral toned throughout and as part of this, the clients particularly did not want the same plaster finish to be used everywhere. To make it more interesting, they chose to have it lime plastered. This natural, breathable finish is beautiful when it is done properly, providing a striking grained finish, and there is a real art to it, requiring a specialist plasterer. This is highly skilled work, so it is essential to get a recommendation of a plasterer who has the necessary skills and to see examples of their work too. The natural soft finish throughout the house is really unique and the finishing touches, such as fine beading around the windows, are absolutely stunning.

The very clean looking neutral finish is even carried through to the bathrooms, which are finished with microcement, a waterproof and moisture-resistant decorative coating, which gives these areas almost a plastered appearance. Like the lime plaster, this needs highly skilled trades to make sure it looks perfect.

Underfloor heating has been installed throughout the property, apart from the traditional pantry off the kitchen, which needs to be kept cool for food storage.

If you have always dreamed of building your own home, talk to us. Find out how we can help you design it and secure planning approval. We can carry out the whole build with our complete turn key self-build package. Whether you are starting with a blank sheet of paper, seen something that inspires you, or you have a clear vision of what your dream home looks like, we can deliver your bespoke house. [Contact us](#) to find out more.

