

Starting over

It took two years for the **Kings** to turn on to the idea of self building – but just six months to knock down the existing house and replace it with a characterful New England-style bungalow

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When Jeffrey and Lorraine King looked into moving house back in 2009, self building wasn't the first thing that came to mind. "We were living in a lovely duplex apartment in west Kent, which had plenty of big rooms," says Jeffrey. "But Lorraine is very green-fingered and we were craving some outside space of our own."

Set in a one-acre garden surrounded by mature trees and shrubs, the place the couple now call home has certainly given them the lifestyle they wanted – but the journey wasn't quite what they were

expecting. What began as a straightforward plan to renovate and extend the existing house evolved into a demolish-and-rebuild project, leaving the Kings with a brand new 204m² bungalow that nestles beautifully into its surroundings.

Grounds for a change

The couple bought the original bungalow, which lies on the Sussex-Kent border, in February 2010. Lorraine fell in love with the garden straight away but at first Jeffrey wasn't convinced. "Understandably,

THE KING FILE

NAMES Jeffrey & Lorraine King

OCCUPATIONS Company director & retiree

LOCATION East Sussex

TYPE OF BUILD Self build

STYLE New England bungalow

CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Closed panel timber frame

PLOT SIZE One acre

LAND COST £345,000 (including existing bungalow)

BOUGHT 2010

HOUSE SIZE 204m² (2,196ft²)

BUILD COST £316,000

COST PER M² £1,549 (£144 per ft²)

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED

June 2012

BUILDING WORK TOOK

Six months

CURRENT VALUE

£650,000



The bespoke Shaker kitchen is from Edmondson Interiors and is painted in grey, with Pelt by Farrow & Ball on the island unit



Lorraine was really drawn towards the garden – but it wasn't until our second viewing that I came around to the idea of living here as well," says Jeffrey. "It was only 10 miles from our apartment and it seemed ideal for extending."

At just over 100m², the bungalow was much smaller than they were used to. Having been let as a holiday home, it wasn't in tip-top condition either – but the couple weren't in a hurry to renovate and spent more than a year in the property, absorbing the surroundings and planning the project to suit their lifestyle. By summer 2011 they had consent to extend the bungalow and build a detached garage with a bedroom and ensuite above. Keen to ensure the updated house would be cost-effective to run, Jeffrey went to see a sustainability specialist to discuss the scheme.



The new house nestles neatly into the plot – a design feature that sat well with the planners

WE LEARNED...

DESIGN AND BUILD companies can offer a lot of support throughout your project, so they're great for first timers. Potton provided the impetus for our plans as well as pointing us in the right direction for our main contractor.

HIRE A BUILDER with good references who has a track record of creating houses in the style and build method you like – that way you can be confident they'll achieve the results you're after.

GOING FABRIC FIRST will give you a home with low running costs. Good insulation levels combined with an air source heat pump have reduced our bills to a third less than they were in the old bungalow; yet this property is double the size.



“It never occurred to us to knock the old property down,” he says. “I wanted to discuss how we could make the existing bungalow warmer and more energy efficient. The expert said it would be easy to make the new extension eco-friendly but that, if we were serious about a low-energy home, we’d be better off starting from scratch. When I got back from the visit, I told Lorraine she’d better sit down. As I explained what he’d suggested, her eyes lit up – she thought it was a brilliant idea and I knew then the decision was made.”

A new path

Although the couple were literally throwing their extension plans into the bin, they weren’t disheartened at the thought of losing a year’s worth of ideas. “We’d not considered building a new house, but once we realised it was an option and that we could design something tailored to us, we were both very excited,” says Jeffrey.

Starting with a completely blank canvas can be daunting, but the Kings already had an idea of how to proceed. Back in the 1980s, they



ran a hotel in the Cotswolds. At one point, they purchased a neighbouring plot thinking they might extend the accommodation with a new unit. In the course of researching the project – which didn't come to fruition in the end – they'd been intrigued by what specialist self build company, Potton, had to offer.

"We saw their houses in a magazine and loved the designs even then," says Jeffrey. "We also really liked how quick the firm's timber frame building method was, because time is of the essence in the hotel industry. So when we found ourselves creating our own home, Potton was our first port of call."

Before they approached the company, the couple were careful to do some research and estimated they'd need to budget at least £1,100 per m² for a new build. They'd gathered inspiration online, too, and were captivated by the idea of constructing a New England-style bungalow complete with white weatherboarding. Having flicked through Potton's brochure in early 2012, they spoke to one of the team's self build consultants, Richard Hall. He encouraged the couple to visit the company's show home site in Cambridgeshire so they could see exactly how the houses were built and get a feel for the finishing touches. The centre includes four properties to explore, in a range of styles from a Georgian-style rectory through to a barn-style project, and is set to be bolstered later this year with the addition of the UK's first dedicated Passivhaus show home.

"Richard walked us around the centre, which was a brilliant experience," says Jeffrey. "For every concern we had in our minds, he had an answer – and we came away really enthused about the project." Buoyed by the experience, the couple took another look over Potton's brochure and began to scrutinise one of the designs in particular. "With its New England references, the Hazelhurst was the ideal starting point for us," says Jeffrey. "We borrowed elements from some of the other styles, too, and were able to adjust the plan to pretty much exactly what we wanted."

Fixed on timber

With good energy performance high on his agenda, Jeffrey selected Potton's closed panel construction system. This method involves a high degree of prefabrication, so all the shell components are precisely manufactured. The factory-made timber panels are pre-filled with insulation and very easy to slot together on site. This means the structure of the house can go up quickly and efficiently, while the potential for human error in air tightness detailing (sealing draughts and suchlike) is significantly reduced.

The couple considered a few options for the main heating system. The old bungalow used an oil-fired boiler, which cost more than £1,500 per year to run. The property's secluded location meant no mains gas was available, so Jeffrey spoke to friends who had installed air and ground source heat pumps (ASHPs and GSHPs). "Both systems came highly recommended, but I wasn't keen on the idea of digging up the garden for a ground source version. Realistically, an ASHP was our only option – and it's performed well for us."

The Kings worked closely with Potton to draw up a house design they were happy with, and the company submitted the planning

application on the couple's behalf in February 2012. Despite the fact that it's double the size of the former bungalow, approval was granted without a hitch in May that year.

Jeffrey and Lorraine had secured a fixed price from Potton for the design, manufacture and erection of the house shell. However, the couple instead decided to employ a main contractor and asked Richard Hall to provide a list of recommended local builders. "My reasoning was that if I used a contractor who had worked on a Potton home before, I would be halfway there," says Jeffrey. "Richard put us in touch with Alan Manwaring, who has completed around 30 of the company's houses. Our timing was spot on – the family business, AW Manwaring & Son, had just finished a Potton project for one of Alan's children."

It was the perfect opportunity to go and get a sense of the firm's quality of workmanship and the couple felt very comfortable with the team immediately. "They are all lovely people and we got on extremely well with them, which was important to us," says Jeffrey.

Alan gave the Kings a fixed price for the demolition works, groundworks and foundations, plus the tasks involved in finishing the house once the timber frame was up. The project got underway in June 2012, and the structural shell was in place within seven

The master bedroom looks out onto the elegantly-landscaped garden via traditional-style bi-fold doors



working days – mainly thanks to a great team of labourers who put in long hours to get the job finished quickly.

An efficient build

Jeffrey and Lorraine rented a house nearby during the project and visited the site every day to see the bungalow evolve. "There was only one small bump in the road on what was otherwise a smooth build, and that was the £8,000 cost we incurred to replace the cesspit. We had a very effective working version for the old bungalow but the building control inspector said we'd need a new one," says Jeffrey.

"Alan argued that we didn't because there were only two of us living here. But the inspector wouldn't budge, just in case we sold the house sometime in the future and there were more occupants."

The project was finished in mid-December and was so warm and cosy on Christmas Day they were able to have the dining room's bi-fold doors open to soak up the winter setting. The Kings are

astonished at how easy the whole process has been. "It's all thanks to Alan and his team, and Potton, who were extremely efficient and fast," says Jeffrey. "It took four days less than six months to complete the house from the day they knocked the old bungalow down to the day we moved in. We love our home: we've got everything we could ever need; and Lorraine's got her garden, too."

closer look

Making the planners' decision easy...



A low-lying home

The Kings' new bungalow is twice the size of their old one, but there was never any real doubt as to whether the council would grant

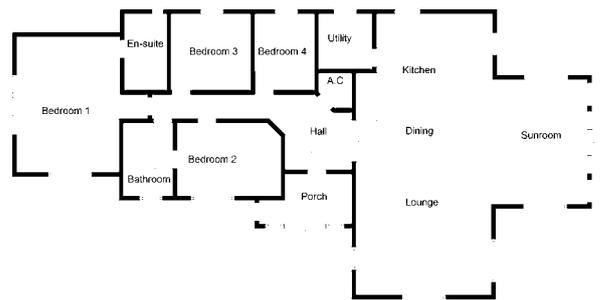
permission for the project. The couple already had consent to double the original bungalow's floorspace with an extension and garage, and this replacement scheme has a similar footprint.

Some clever touches at the design stage helped to make the project even more palatable. The ridge and eaves heights reflect those of the previous structure, for instance, and there are no overlooking issues with the adjoining property. In fact, the new bungalow is set into the middle of the slightly sloping plot – a lower position than the old building – with the garden wrapping around to create a beautiful, secluded spot.

The Kings' choice of white shiplap timber cladding for their New England-inspired design was popular with the planners, as the finish is in keeping with other homes in the area. Handmade clay roof tiles and a red brick plinth complete the effect.



Floor plans



Elecosoft House plans re-created using ARCON 3D Architect Home Designer Software. www.3darchitect.co.uk
Tel: 01252 267788 Email: arconsales@eleco.com



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m ²	Cost %	Total cost
House design & structural shell (including insulation, windows and external doors)	£446	29%	£91,000
Main contractor package (demolition, groundworks, foundations, first and second fix, bathrooms)	£990	64%	£202,000
Kitchen	£113	7%	£23,000
Grand total			£316,000

Useful contacts

HOUSE DESIGN & SHELL KIT **Potton** 01767 676400 www.potton.co.uk
MAIN CONTRACTOR **AW Manwaring** 01892 825061 **KITCHEN Edmondson Interiors** 01580 212934 www.edmondsoninteriors.co.uk

