

# THE DIY ROUTE

When Jackie and David Oliver found their current house just wasn't delivering what they needed, they rolled up their sleeves, enlisted the help of their family and built a contemporary new home that meets their needs perfectly

Words: Natasha Brinsmead Photography: Jeremy Phillips



## Exterior Details

Blaxter stone, local to Northumberland, oak cladding and through-coloured render combine with details such as the painted timber windows and doors and the striking wraparound veranda to produce a contemporary design that still manages to look at home in its surroundings.

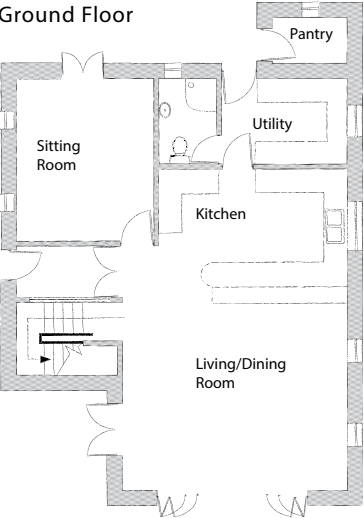
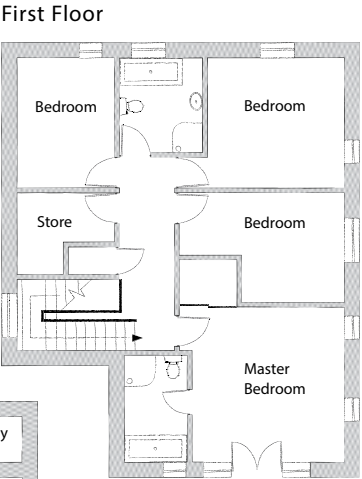






**The Veranda**  
A glass insert has been fitted into the slate roof of the veranda to form a sheltered outside seating area (OPPOSITE). David built the table using leftover oak cladding. Further glazed panels within the veranda roof bring light into the entrance hall (BELOW LEFT) through the glazed sidelights either side of the front door.

**The Carport**  
The carport (LEFT) reflects the timber frame house, with its slate roof and cladding.



## Project Notes

Homeowners  
Jackie and David Oliver  
Project Contemporary eco build  
Build time One year, two months

Size 195m<sup>2</sup> + pantry and garage  
Plot cost £170,000 (in 2011)  
Build cost £205,000  
Value Unknown

### SUPPLIERS

Architect Giles Arthur,  
AT Architecture: 07813 621146  
Structural engineers Simply  
Structural: 01434 344486  
Timber frame Turner Timber  
Frames: 01482 218945  
General materials  
(including stone and external  
oak cladding)  
JT Dove, Hexham: 01434 600062

Render  
Weber: weberfinalfinish.co.uk  
Windows & doors  
Allan Brothers: 01289 334600  
Kitchen IKEA: ikea.com  
Sanitaryware/tiles Porcelanosa:  
porcelanosa.com/uk  
Hardwood floors  
and Elka staircase  
Tynedale timber: 01434 605922





#### Style on a Budget

The sleek grey kitchen, including the extra deep oak island, are from IKEA's bespoke service — the kitchen was also fitted by IKEA. A utility and pantry are positioned behind the internal door shown here.





Downsizing sounds like such a good idea once your children have flown the nest, yet the dream does not always live up to the reality, as Jackie and David Oliver discovered. “When our children left home, we downsized,” says David. “What we hadn’t realised was that although they don’t live with us anymore, they still regularly visit. The new house was just bursting at the seams at gatherings such as Christmas – we wanted something where the whole family could still get together.”

When Jackie and David’s son-in-law came across a plot not far from the Edwardian terrace in which they were living in, one of two plots that had been formed from the garden of a large Victorian house, they decided to go for it. “Building our own home was something that had always been at the back of our minds,” explains David. “We realised that to have the house that we really wanted and to be able to afford it, we would have to self-build.”

The plot came with planning permission for a five-bedroom house, but Jackie and David decided to hire an architect that their son, a plasterer, knew in order to come up with a design better suited to their needs.

“Jackie and I were getting close to retiring,” says David. “We wanted a house that we could comfortably live in as just the two of us, but that had the space to deal with all the family too. It had to be energy efficient in such a way that it didn’t cost us a fortune and could offer us the space we needed too.”

Although Jackie and David didn’t “go through the hoops” to get the house officially certified as a Passivhaus, they worked with their architect to achieve Passivhaus standards in terms of insulation and airtightness. “We were more concerned with building a house that was comfortable for us to live in, was low maintenance and didn’t cost too much to run,” says David.

Selling their home in order to fund the build, Jackie and David moved into rented accommodation. Although planning went through easily, it ended up taking 11 months to get approval. “We only thought it would take around 12 weeks,” says David. “But it wasn’t dead time as we used it to plan exactly what we wanted.”

The exterior of the house has a decidedly modern look, using a combination of cladding materials, including Blaxter stone, quarried in Northumberland, oak cladding and render. The form of the house is defined by a veranda that

wraps around two sides. It provides a sheltered seating area that benefits from several strategically positioned glass inserts that not only deliver light into the veranda but also ensures that light can flow into the interior spaces within.

In keeping with the pair’s wish for a low energy home, the house has been positioned to make the most of passive solar gain, with large window openings and a long run of bi-fold doors on the south-facing elevation combining with rooflights to bring light streaming into the interiors.

Internally, the timber frame house has an open plan layout, with a large kitchen, dining and living area at the heart of the layout proving the sociable family spaces the couple were after. A smaller living room, utility and downstairs shower room have also been included, while a pantry, sited outside of the thermal envelope of the house, provides handy food storage space. On the first floor, four bedrooms and two bathrooms provide plenty of space for visitors.

### A Hands-on Build

Jackie and David’s remarkably low build costs of just £205k, including all legal and professional fees, were achieved through their hands-on approach throughout the build.

“Tom, our son, did most of the on-site project management, coordinating trades and subcontractors, as well as plastering the entire house,” says David. “He also carried out all the first fix joinery and installed our mechanical heat ventilation system.”

“This was a house that we genuinely built ourselves,” continues David. “Jackie and I sourced all the materials as well as labouring on site, while Jackie took care of all the paperwork and admin that is involved in a build – all while still working! You don’t have to pay through the nose to have a quality build, but you do have to put in the effort to do it on a budget.”

Features such as the mechanical heat ventilation system, high levels of insulation and a design that makes the most of solar gain mean that the house lives up to Jackie and David’s wishes for a home that was easy and cost-effective to run – with their total annual heating bills, including hot water, coming in at less than £300.

“The house is delivering everything we hoped it would,” says David. “Although we have no plans to build again, this project has inspired other members of our family to build – and we will be on hand to help.”



### Gathering Spaces

In keeping with Jackie and David’s wish for a home that could accommodate their whole family when they visit, the ground floor layout is largely open plan (ABOVE) and is flooded with light from the timber bi-fold doors, French doors and strategically placed sidelights and rooflights.

### Open Plan Hallway

The hallway was originally designed to be separate from the main living space — however Jackie and David decided it would work better as an open space (timber engineered flooring is laid throughout). The column (LEFT) is actually a vertical steel bracing element within the timber frame.





## Architect's View: Giles Arthur

"The house nestles into the site while still enjoying distant views from the upper storey. A courtyard feel has been created by a stepped terrace which links the house to an oak framed garage/studio, and an oak colonnade veranda lends a sense of arrival to the entrance.

"This characterful, light-filled family home has the 'fabric first' credentials of super-insulation and an exceptional air-tightness rating, yet none of the downsides that can often compromise such eco-houses.

"The complementary materials palette of green oak, natural stone and slate, render, zinc and oak weatherboarding will all weather gracefully on this timeless home."

### Luxury Features

By carrying out most of the building work themselves, Jackie and David have been able to include luxuries such as the large-format tiles from Porcelanosa, within their impressively low build costs.

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