



Right up their

# STREET

Melvin Tucker and Edith Fotheringham have built a new house at the bottom of their garden – and so have their neighbours!

The two-storey front elevation incorporates large areas of curtain walling.

**W**hen it came to obtaining planning permission to build in their large garden Melvin Tucker and his wife, Edith Fotheringham, had some unusual allies in the form of their immediate neighbours. Instead of the customary ‘not in my back yard’ attitude from people living in the surrounding houses they received nothing but support – partly because everyone else was also planning to do exactly the same thing.

“We’d always wanted to build our own home and had been looking for a plot of land for some time,” Melvin explains. “When we bought our previous four-bedroom detached house at the end of 2004 it was described by the estate agent as a ‘1970s executive-style property’, and we were attracted by the village setting and the fact that planning permission had



already been granted to build a small dormer bungalow in the garden – although certain restrictive covenants existed.”

Neighbours were also well aware of the development potential offered by such long gardens, but the existing covenants meant that previous planning applications to build on the land had failed to be implemented. “Our solicitor explained everything to us about the planning history, and we decided it was worth pursuing,” Melvin continues. “If we hadn’t been able to build in the garden we would have been happy to carry on living in the old house, so there was really nothing to lose.”

The avenue of 1970s houses had been built on the outskirts of a Derbyshire village, overlooking open fields to the rear, and all of the neighbours needed to be in agreement about the proposed development before it could go ahead.



An official consortium had been formed some years before, which Melvin and Edith joined. Seven of the neighbours decided that they wanted to build, while the remaining three agreed to sell their land to the others. A newsletter was produced which documented the various stages of the process and everybody worked together to ensure that the project moved forward and legal requirements were met.

In the summer of 2006 the covenants were amended and the development was ultimately given the green light to go ahead. Melvin and Edith spent several months travelling in India and Nepal but kept in touch with the neighbours via email, and were able to answer queries and approve certain decisions for the new development while they were abroad. They even paced out the relevant sizes on a dirt volleyball court high up in the Himalayas.



Planning conditions required the rear of the house to appear lower than the front, with rooflights serving some of the first floor rooms. Brown glass panels serve to obscure the bedroom floors and create a feature. Although the only self build in the avenue, the house was built by the same contractors as the neighbouring houses.

“We were the only ones who decided to tackle a self build – the other people are all retired and chose more traditional designs before employing the same contractor to build in brick and block,” explains Melvin. “We wanted a more contemporary timber-framed house, and decided that I would take a year off work to manage the project.”

The couple compiled a mood board of various ideas they had clipped from magazines, and approached three local architects to come up with a suitable design. Planning conditions stated that the new dwelling could only be one-and-a-half-storeys to the rear, and the brief was to create a contemporary, energy-efficient dwelling which would satisfy planning and take advantage of the location and views while incorporating sustainable building techniques.



A dining area is positioned between the kitchen and garden room, with views into the hallway through glass doors. White high gloss cabinets and CaesarStone worktops have been fitted in the open-plan kitchen.



NEW BUILD

The double-height sunroom opens through sliding doors onto the garden patio.

“Out of all the architects we spoke to Justin Smith gave us the most input and was really positive about the project,” says Melvin. “He was the only one to send a follow-up email after our meeting and we felt that he would be good to work with because nothing seemed to faze him.”

To start with, Justin examined the wording of the planning permission and restrictions to maximise the scope of his design. The resulting house is dormer style to the rear and two-storey to the front. Large expanses of glass curtain walling were incorporated, with vaulted ceilings throughout and environmentally-friendly features such as rainwater harvesting. Predictably, none of the neighbours offered any objections to the proposed plans.

Melvin and Edith were keen that the kitchen should be the hub of their new home, and this large space opens into a dining area with a double-height sunroom beyond. The atrium hallway is stunning, with a feature staircase leading up to a

cosy seating area above the entrance door. Great care has been taken to ensure that the layout is flexible, and the ground floor study could easily become a fifth bedroom if required.

“We could have added even more bedrooms upstairs by building over the sunroom, but we have more than enough space for two people and preferred to keep the drama of the double height vaulted room,” says Melvin.

Work began on site in May 2008 and the couple continued to live in their previous home during the build. Some neighbours had already started their own projects, so the street was buzzing with activity as deliveries were made and houses were built on the newly formed road.

Edith, a human resources consultant, continued to work full-time during the build and took charge of the associated paperwork – paying bills and keeping accounts. Melvin worked on site every day and was keen to become involved in every stage of the process. As a kitchen and bathroom fitter he had

worked in a number of timber-framed houses, and admired their energy efficiency and the potential for a fast build time.

“We always knew we would build with timber frame, and approached various companies at the design stage,” he says. “We chose an open panel system so that I could insulate everything myself, because we were keen to pack as much insulation into this house as possible. It took longer to put on the hand-cut roof than to erect the main frame because it’s quite a complex load-bearing design, with a great big steel beam forming the backbone of the house.”

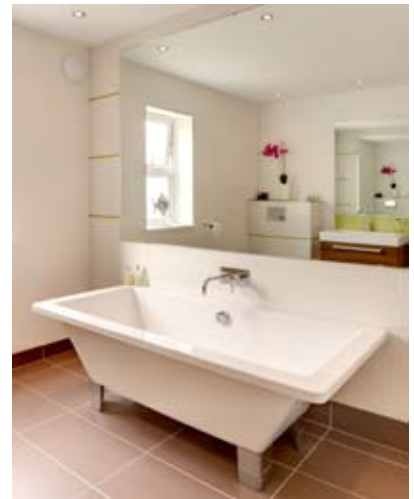
Choosing the bricks to clad the house was a major decision, and Edith and Melvin felt that the samples they had collected were not helping to create a clear picture of how the finished house might look. They decided to drive around South Derbyshire to look at examples of brickwork in situ, and asked in the site office of a large development to find out which bricks had been used. Melvin then saw a bricklayer →

The double-height entrance is lit from above by four rooflights, flooding the space with light. Melvin is particularly proud of the ash staircase, which he designed with frameless glass balustrades.





LEFT: The separate sitting room is ideal for relaxing and listening to music and features geometric wallpaper and oak flooring. BELOW LEFT: A gallery area has been created where Melvin and Edith enjoy morning coffee and reading.



ABOVE RIGHT: Melvin fitted the contemporary bathrooms himself, including toilets flushed using rainwater harvested from the roof.



working in the next village and, after admiring his work, asked if he would quote for laying the bricks.

"I'm quite a perfectionist so I was pleased that everything went so well," says Melvin. "The foundations and slab were incredibly accurate, which made erecting the timber frame very straightforward, and from then on the build ran pretty smoothly. Even the glass curtain walling went in without a hitch. We had a contingency sum included in our original £300,000 budget, but in the end we managed to build the house for £275,000."

Melvin's input certainly helped to keep the final build cost under budget. He was able to fit plasterboard, doors and

ABOVE RIGHT: The vaulted master bedroom overlooks fields through a glazed wall, with a glass safety balustrade outside the double doors. The other bedrooms are also finished to a high standard.

skirtings as well as tackling all of the plumbing and installing the kitchen and bathrooms, despite taking two months off to have an operation on his back while the house was being plastered. He even designed and installed the bespoke ash and feature glass staircase in the entrance hallway.

Zoned underfloor heating with a weather compensator has been laid downstairs, with radiators upstairs, and the couple's fuel bills for the highly insulated new house are dramatically lower than their previous 1970s home. Rainwater is harvested from the roof and stored in an underground tank in the garden, to be used for the garden taps, washing machine and toilets.

## NEW BUILD



The garden room is connected to the dining area and kitchen via glazed sliding doors.

## Melvin and Edith's TOP TIP

“Research, shop around and do your homework to avoid last minute decisions and panic buying.”

“It took us just over a year to complete the house and we moved in during August 2009,” says Melvin, who even built a pizza oven and a smokehouse in the rear garden. “It’s been an incredible experience made even better because we were surrounded by other people who were also building. Now we have a brand new house in a brand new road, but all of our neighbours are familiar faces.”

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Melvin and Edith already owned their garden plot, which was worth around £200,000 once planning permission had been granted. They spent £275,000 building their detached house which has been valued at more than £725,000.

Ground floor



First floor



## THE FLOORPLAN

The new house was designed to offer flexible, spacious accommodation. Three of the four generous first floor bedrooms have en suite bathrooms and the ground floor study could become a fifth bedroom if required. The garden room benefits from a vaulted ceiling and the imposing hallway features a landing seating area.

## CONTACTS

**Contractor** Hayman Construction:  
[www.haymanconstruction.co.uk](http://www.haymanconstruction.co.uk)

**Architect** Justin Smith Architects:  
[www.justinsmitharchitects.co.uk](http://www.justinsmitharchitects.co.uk)

**Kitchen and bathroom fitting**  
Melvin Tucker: 07973 315150

**Groundworks and plant hire**  
J.E.Thompson: 07973 288429

**Curtain walling and windows**  
Window Concepts:  
[www.windowconcepts.co.uk](http://www.windowconcepts.co.uk)

**Concrete roof tiles** Marley:  
[www.marleyeternit.co.uk](http://www.marleyeternit.co.uk)

**Kitchen** Cucina Colore:  
[www.cucinacolore.co.uk](http://www.cucinacolore.co.uk)

**Kitchen supply** Mereway Kitchens Ltd:  
[www.merewaykitchens.co.uk](http://www.merewaykitchens.co.uk)

**Worktops** CaesarStone:  
[www.caesarstone.uk.com](http://www.caesarstone.uk.com)

**Worktop supply**  
Middlepeak Marble & Granite:  
[www.middlepeak-marble.co.uk](http://www.middlepeak-marble.co.uk)

**Bath and fitted bathroom furniture**  
Utopia: [www.utopiagroup.com](http://www.utopiagroup.com)

**Brickwork** Andy Donnellan:  
07931 842139

**Sanitaryware** Laufen: [www.laufen.com](http://www.laufen.com)

**Underfloor heating controls**  
Radiant Control Ltd:  
[www.radiantcontrol.co.uk](http://www.radiantcontrol.co.uk)



## FINAL THOUGHTS

### WHAT WAS THE HIGH POINT OF THE PROJECT?

I enjoyed everything from driving the dumpers to installing the kitchen, and I learnt an enormous amount. I had some very good people work for me – we were all pulling in the same direction, which made the build seem effortless.

**...AND THE LOW POINT?** Some days were snowy or wet and I'd be working on site and wishing I was somewhere warm and dry!

**WHAT WAS YOUR BEST BUY?** While the groundworks were going in I had time to shop around and get at least three prices for everything we needed, which meant that materials such as plasterboard, insulation, sand and cement were all bought as cheaply as possible. We spent around £2,000 on insulation, but that was definitely our best buy.

### ...AND YOUR BIGGEST EXTRAVAGANCE?

The acrylic Enigma light fitting in the hall cost £1,800, but everybody comments on it because it's such an unusual design.