

# Natural beauty



WORDS **GEORGINA CROTHERS**  
PHOTOS **BAUFRITZ**

**Jonathan and Joanna Lunn** left city life behind to build their own contemporary home on a stunning woodland site in the South Downs National Park

## FACT FILE

**NAMES** Jonathan & Joanna Lunn  
**OCCUPATIONS** Strategy director & HR professional  
**LOCATION** West Sussex  
**TYPE OF PROJECT** Self build  
**STYLE** Contemporary  
**PROJECT ROUTE** Turnkey  
**CONSTRUCTION METHOD** Timber frame  
**PLOT SIZE** 4 acres  
**PLOT COST** £515,000  
**BOUGHT PLOT** 2015  
**HOUSE SIZE** 238m<sup>2</sup>  
**PROJECT COST** £1,108,000  
**PROJECT COST PER M<sup>2</sup>** £4,655  
**TOTAL COST** £1,623,000  
**BUILDING WORK COMMENCED** September 2018  
**BUILDING WORK TOOK** Seven months

After realising their charming yet cramped terraced home in the centre of Chichester wasn't offering the space they needed, Jonathan and Joanna Lunn switched on to the idea of self building. With four school-aged children, the couple wanted a home that could accommodate each of them comfortably and offer more privacy. So, when a rare plot in a stunning woodland setting on a private estate became available, it piqued their interest. "Often all the good plots don't make it onto the open market, and neither did ours, in fact" says Jonathan. They discovered the opportunity through Joanna's parents, whose neighbour was looking to downsize. He split his land into two, moving into what was formerly a gardener's cottage and selling the other half with the bungalow on to Jonathan and Joanna as a separate plot. The plot came with planning permission to demolish the existing bungalow and rebuild a traditional-style property in its place. Jonathan and Joanna were keen to keep the build process as stress-free as possible, so they decided to go down the route of enlisting a package home supplier to realise their dream property. The couple reached out to German timber frame manufacturer, Baufritz, after receiving recommendations from friends. Although they found their quotes to be seemingly expensive at first, after further investigation, the couple determined Baufritz was the right supplier for them. "We did our homework and felt we could trust Baufritz and that they knew what they were doing," says Jonathan.

Above: Brises-soleil have been installed externally to reduce excess solar gain and mimic natural shading from the trees

Above right: The plot is set within a stunning wooded site in the South Downs National Park



Jonathan and Joanna opted for the company's turnkey package, which meant that – once the groundworks and foundations had been arranged – Baufritz would take care of the rest of the build and fit-out. "It was all very transparent, and the build pretty much ran to plan and to cost. Any increase was because we had to make design adjustments for planning, such as using bigger windows," says Jonathan.



## A lengthy process

The planning permission the plot originally came with stipulated a traditional design for the replacement dwelling. However, Jonathan and Joanna were keen on something more contemporary, and getting this through planning proved a challenge. The site is located on the edge of the South Downs National Park, where policy understandably supports new development that recognises, respects and enhances the intrinsic landscape, character and visual amenity of the area. The locale is dominated by large, detached houses and mansions that are formal in character, set in substantial plots with sizable outbuildings. Accessible via a private road, the design had to ensure the property would not be visible from public vantage points. So, securing permission for a modern home that fulfils these criteria and doesn't negatively impact the existing architecture would require careful and clever design. "The existing planning permission gave us some confidence we could at least build something new on the plot," says Jonathan.

However, the couple needed to submit their application as soon as possible if they weren't to be caught out by updates to the area's planning rules. "At the time, South Downs National Park was working under the planning rules of Chichester District Council, but they were about to introduce their own regulations, which were more stringent," he says. "So, there was some pressure to get the application through before the new plan was put in place." Time constraints also meant they had to work strategically in case





Left & above: The ground floor of the home was designed with the intention of it being the family hub, keeping the bedrooms simple

*“It’s a nice, comfortable climate that doesn’t cost much to run. All year round you can be fine wandering around in a T-shirt”*



their application wasn’t approved. “There was quite a lot of time in between the point we purchased the plot and when we secured planning consent,” says Jonathan. “In that time, the original permission was due to expire, so we renewed it for the house we didn’t want to build. This meant, if all went wrong and we couldn’t get consent for the design we wanted, then at least it would preserve the value of the plot if we were to sell it on.”

The couple hired a planning consultant to assist throughout this tricky process, which helped them successfully secure permission for the home they wanted. “We found the process was subjective. The response to our pre-application was negative from one planning officer, but then when we went in with the full plans,



Above & bottom right: Sleek sliding pocket doors divide spaces to give the option for both open- and broken-plan layouts

#### WE LEARNED...

**THINK ABOUT ACOUSTICS.** We had provision for study space, but when we designed our home pre-pandemic, we didn’t realise how much we would be using it now to work from home. Our home office has nice sliding pocket doors, which look great, but don’t stop noise from travelling. So, if we could change anything, we’d make sure to have better acoustic barriers to allow for quieter work-from-home spaces.

**BUDGET FOR LANDSCAPING.** We didn’t appreciate the scale and cost it incurred and didn’t end up putting enough aside for it, so it’s something we’re still finishing off now.

**PLAN FOR THE FUTURE.** We incorporated futureproofing measures in our home so that we can add details where we might eventually need them. For example, extra support has been built into the ceiling for curtain rods, and our smart home system can be extended should we want to continue adding features.

the person assigned to our application was very much on board,” says Jonathan. The couple also had to pay for ecology surveys as part of the process. “There was evidence of bats in the roof of the existing dwelling and, although there weren’t any in the end, our planning conditions required us to build bat boxes into the fascia of the house to accommodate them in future,” adds Jonathan.

#### Getting the design right

To come up with a contemporary scheme that would get the greenlight from planners, the couple enlisted the help of Baufriz design partner Magnus Nilsson, co-founder of architectural practice Nilsson Pflugfelder. The aim was to minimise the visual impact of the house, while still working to a similar size allowed in the previously approved plans. So, Magnus devised a concept of twin cottages. The volumes are connected at the centre of the build but appear as though they are sliding past one another, each acting as a separate wing to serve a specific purpose, echoing themes in rural architecture. The modern barn-style aesthetic allows the



Right & below right: Although Jonathan and Joanna stretched to the top end of their budget, the high-quality fixtures and fittings throughout the home made it worthwhile

Bottom: Internal glazing in the master bedroom offers up views of the verdant surroundings and amplifies the amount of natural light in the space



design to sit nicely against the verdant woodland backdrop, while still taking on the contemporary feel Jonathan and Joanna were keen to achieve for their countryside build.

A natural materials palette has been chosen for the exterior of the build. Pre-weathered larch cladding and zinc roofing in anthracite grey help the home blend into its context, with the irregular sizing of the timber panels designed to imitate the shapes of the surrounding trees. In order to make the most of the fantastic location, the house is oriented along a northwest-southeast axis. The habitable rooms have been located towards the woodland, where ample glazing captures the stunning views.

Inside the two-storey home, the ground floor consists of a kitchen, dining, utility area and guest toilet in the east wing, where the entrance is located. The west wing faces the woods, containing



a living room and multi-functional TV/office/snug space. On the upper storey, one section consists of the children's equally sized, compact bedrooms, while the other contains the parents' master bedroom, ensuite and family bathroom. "Part of the simplification of the upstairs layout was to control costs," says Jonathan. "For example, we placed the bathrooms above the plant room where all the services are to make plumbing easier. We also had a lot of people to fit in and wanted to ensure it was equal among our four children in terms of the size of each of their bedrooms."

### Turnkey solution

For Jonathan and Joanna, the turnkey option was the right choice for them as first-time self builders. "Once Baufritz took over and we were assigned a project manager, I felt like we were in good hands. It didn't require too much involvement from us other than making decisions, which is a nice problem to have!" says Jonathan. However, the Lunn's needed to arrange for foundations to be laid before the build could start, so they took on more of a project management role on this front. "Thankfully it was a smaller part of the cost, and it was fairly short-lived, but I had to keep a closer eye

Above: High ceilings add a sense of grandeur to this contemporary home, which is otherwise subtle and minimalist in its sleek, pared back interiors

on that stage of the build to ensure it went smoothly and effectively manage the budget for it," says Jonathan.

The couple were also fortunate enough to attend the Baufritz showrooms in Germany, where they spent a couple of days sampling the different finish options for their home, including everything from

flooring to taps. "Cost-wise, the build was a stretch for us, but it was the right thing to do because we have really good-quality products that we can easily add to in the future as and when we need to adapt our home," says Jonathan.

One of their favourite aspects of the build is how it feels to live in, thanks to an efficient combination of an air source heat pump and underfloor heating system. "It's a nice, comfortable climate that doesn't cost much to run," says Jonathan. "All year round you can be fine wandering around in a T-shirt. There aren't hot or cold spots." A mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system completes the setup, extracting moisture from the kitchen and bathrooms, and using the heat to warm the incoming fresh air.

Jonathan was keen to set aside enough of the budget to install smart home technology. “We decided on a KNX system where everything is controlled from one place,” he says. “Every room has a thermostat to control its temperature, and we’re able to extend the setup if we need, so it’s evolving all the time.” The retractable external Venetian blinds are also controlled by the smart home system – another favourite feature of the couple. “The blinds mean we don’t need curtains, since we’re already in a very private location that isn’t overlooked,” says Jonathan. “In gale force winds, there’s a weather sensor that will also automatically pull them up

so that they don’t get damaged.” Nonetheless, the couple had battens installed in the ceiling at appropriate points so that they can fit curtain poles should they ever change their mind. “The best day was when Baufritz told us our house was on its way from Germany on the trucks,” says Jonathan. “Later that same day, we were already able to walk through one of the doors.” With the build complete, Jonathan and Joanna now have the spacious family home they wanted. “The luxury of planning a forever home is not having to think about who is going to own it next. We wanted to take this opportunity to design it for how we would live in it.”

closer look

Double-height ceilings...

Jonathan and Joanna decided to sacrifice some of their bedroom space in order to create an impressive double-height volume over the kitchen-diner area on the ground floor, making it feel much more open and illuminating the space with light from every angle. A vast swathe of internal glazing in the bedroom enables daylight to flow through and allows the couple to see the woodland views through to the picture window on the other side of the house. The same double-height ceiling is also a feature at the entrance zone above the staircase. The half-wall that forms the balustrade curves around to create a subtle but impressive point of interest in the home’s design. Tall, slim windows keep light flooding in from above and through every level of the house.

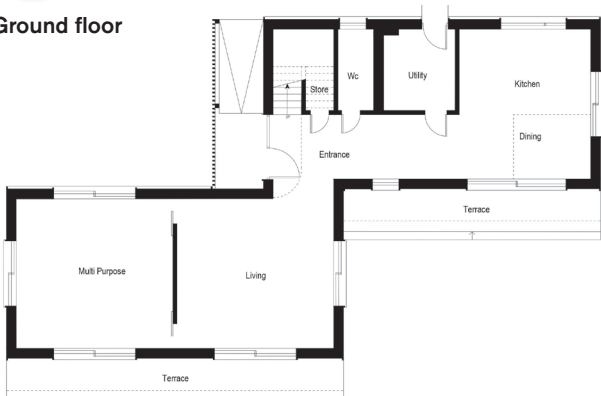


Bright and airy space

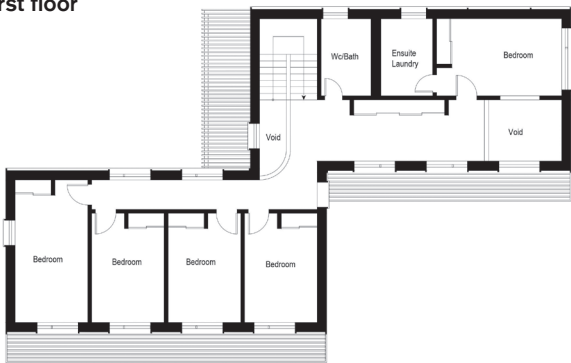


Floor plans

Ground floor



First floor



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

| Elements                              | Cost m² | Cost % | Total cost |
|---------------------------------------|---------|--------|------------|
| Demolition, groundworks & foundations | £651    | 14%    | £155,000   |
| Planning fees & ecology surveys       | £71     | 2%     | £17,000    |
| Baufritz turnkey package              | £3,828  | 82%    | £911,000   |
| Kitchen                               | £105    | 2%     | £25,000    |

|             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| Grand total | £1,108,000 |
|-------------|------------|

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

TURNKEY HOME Baufritz 01 223 235632 [www.baufritz.co.uk](http://www.baufritz.co.uk)  
ARCHITECT Nilsson Pflugfelder [www.nilssonpflugfelder.com](http://www.nilssonpflugfelder.com) SMART HOME SYSTEM Gira 01483 713400 [www.gira.com](http://www.gira.com) KITCHEN Hubble 01243 533727 [www.hubblekitchens.co.uk](http://www.hubblekitchens.co.uk) LIGHTING David Village Lighting 01142 634266 [www.davidvillageighting.co.uk](http://www.davidvillageighting.co.uk) AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP Viessmann 01952 675000 [www.viessman.co.uk](http://www.viessman.co.uk) MVHR Dimplex [www.dimplex.co.uk](http://www.dimplex.co.uk) FURNISHINGS SCP 020 7739 1869 [www.scp.co.uk](http://www.scp.co.uk) Case 020 8870 4488 [www.casefurniture.com](http://www.casefurniture.com)

