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DID YOU KNOW?

The second-largest home-builder last year was not a big-name contractor, but the army of self-builders working away to build high-quality affordable homes

Build It

READERS' HOMES TO INSPIRE YOU

Meet our success stories

There's nothing we love more at *Build It* than the story of first time self-builders, and this issue the Friedmans won our hearts with their smart home in the heart of the green belt – turn to page 32 for their story. But we've also got a few self-



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builders with connections to the trade – the Hawkins family, on page 40, and the Voigts, on page 60 – so take a look and see what great ideas they've included in their own homes. On page 50 we've got an enterprising young chap who saw the potential in

a tired bungalow, completely reinventing it to create a funky, modern space – proof that it's not all about starting from scratch.

32 Lessons in life

A can-do attitude ensured that novice builders the Friedmans got exactly what they wanted in their new home

40 Hidden gem

Building a home and building equity ensured the Hawkins loved every minute of their self build

50 Above par

£90,000 and a whole lot of vision transform an out-of-date bungalow; dramatically adding value

60 Inspired by design

Tailoring his build to his family, Heinz Voigt filled his home with clever design details that make it a joy to live in

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readers' homes | **new build**

Method Timber frame Build cost £180,000 Location Surrey



"I look at the house and am so happy with what we've achieved. It goes to show that you can do anything you want to."

Lessons in life

Aron Friedman and his wife Jeanne had never thought of building before, but when they found the perfect plot their lives changed, throwing them into a totally hands-on project

WORDS ANNA-MARIE DESOUZA PHOTOS MATT JOHNSTON

Content and relaxed in his new Surrey home, with wife Jeanne by his side, Aron Friedman's current life state is a far cry from his exciting career as a music producer and even further from his old life in South Africa.

The couple had never been involved in a self-build project before, although it was something that Jeanne had always had a certain interest in – spurred on by glamorous property shows and glossy magazines. Living in Surrey, they became familiar with a picturesque part of Effingham and one lane in particular. “We walked and drove down the lane all the time, and walked past a rather overgrown plot without really knowing what lay on the land – and without really paying much attention to it either,” says Jeanne. When the couple noticed a ‘For Sale’ sign their curiosity was ignited, and they immediately arranged a viewing. Jeanne continues: “We discovered that behind the tall trees and hedges was a dilapidated bungalow and a long plot. We were drawn to it instantly.”

Testing times

The initial visit ended with the Friedmans desperate to buy the site, and led to them becoming embroiled in a sealed bidding war with one other candidate. “We just had to keep upping on what we thought he’d put in over the asking the price. We suspected he may have put in £10,000 more, so we put in £11,000,” says Aron. Whatever the case, the Friedmans came out on top and were delighted with their new purchase.

“We put in for planning before everything exchanged hands,” says Aron. “By this point we knew the lane really well, it was situated in green belt, out of the settlement zone and in an area called Home Farm Estate – so we knew planning would not be easy. All the houses in the road were veterans’ homes built after the war. They’re all relatively small, so all planning applications for replacement dwellings would have to be for something of a similar size. Our first application was turned down for this reason, as it was too big. Then we came up with a plan for the current house and they loved it. Because we wanted to change the position of the dwelling, from the top of the plot to the back, we had been all ready for a battle – but it was fine.” ☺





For the time, the plane sailing ended there. Before works could begin the couple were forced to have a geotechnical dig and survey because there's an old landfill site next to the plot. This wasn't easy to arrange or carry out, as Aron explains: "Whilst searching for toxic waste, one of the devices actually broke because the chalk was so hard."

"The only thing they found was minute traces of diesel. But Guildford Council didn't let that pass, so it was considered contaminated land," says Aron. "We got hold of a specialist company and sent them the report. They were surprised when we told them the land was labelled contaminated as the levels were minute." Undeterred the couple tracked down an expert in the field, Dr David Grant, who came to visit them and make some suggestions. In the end he drew up a remedial report that suggested they needed to simply scrape out 5m² of topsoil.

Once this was resolved, other preliminary works could continue – the plot just needed clearing. "It was so overgrown that you just couldn't see what lay beneath! We were shocked to discover a rather sizeable air raid shelter. But once it was all cleared the site looked huge, and it made us realise just what a massive plot we'd bought," says Jeanne.

Hands on

"When we first decided to build, it was really my baby. I had come up with loads of ideas," says Jeanne. "Then we sold Aron's recording studio in London and he started to get more and more involved. Eventually he downed tools in the studio and picked up very different tools on the site and got totally engrossed in it!"

The couple already knew they wanted a timber frame home, and read through magazines and catalogues and visited a show to finalise the details. "We went and saw around six companies," says Jeanne. "But after seeing the

Top tips

- ⊕ A build will inevitably take longer and cost more than you think. There are always unforeseen hurdles to overcome that ultimately cost, so make sure there is a generous contingency fund
- ⊕ Always get a fixed price from sub-contractors and avoid day rates where possible. Contractors work better on a fixed price
- ⊕ Look after the workers! Beers on Friday afternoon, plenty of tea and coffee – it will all be appreciated
- ⊕ Try and get all trades by word of mouth and recommendation
- ⊕ Work with the planners closely in design as communication is key, and ultimately you will reach the desired planning approval quicker with less fees spent
- ⊕ Update your costs daily – expenditure mounts up really quickly and you need to be on top of it
- ⊕ Shop around. The internet is a great tool for researching and sourcing and can be used to haggle with suppliers on prices

drawings produced by one company, Solo, they were instantly our favourite. They were fantastic to work with and let us decide on how much of the build we wanted to get involved in – they reassured us that they'd hold our hands along the way! Along with our architect Martin Farrer, of MF Designs, we came up with a design that we loved and plans that we could follow."

By this stage, Aron was really keen to do as much of the house as possible himself, and was confident in his aptitude for learning various aspects of the building trade. "I learnt a lot from growing up in South Africa. Music was my life there. Going to university was a way to stay out of the army and a war I didn't agree with," says Aron. "I came to the UK for safety as a political refugee, and made myself a successful career in music production. So when it came to building a house, I knew I had the capability to learn and develop new skills."

Aron hired a JCB and dug the foundations in April, and seven weeks later the timber frame arrived – taking just eight days to erect. ☺

Location matters

Effingham is a small village in the Borough of Guildford in Surrey. The unusual name originates from a Saxon noble called Aeffing. In around 500 AD he built a house – then known as a 'ham' in the area and over the years the name has changed.




Regional facts and figures	Surrey
Cost of this plot	£361,000
Current market value of similar house	£600,000
Plots currently available in region*	32

*correct at time of press

See our plot listings on **page 133**





Favourite feature

"I love the use of Velux windows as a design statement," says Jeanne. "The light they bring in makes the living room appear much larger." Also, the light also helps to tie together the modern open living, dining and reception areas

Right: The kitchen has been left semi-open plan so that it can benefit from the roof lights. A bespoke piece of sandblasted glass creates an innovative splash-back

A builder was hired to construct the brick outerskin, which Aron then helped to render. "I project managed myself and enjoyed dealing with the tradesmen. It was a bit of a culture shock to deal with all the various sectors – builders and plumbers, etc," says Aron. "But in the end I realised it was just the same as working in the music industry – they're still all divas!"

"I soon learnt that every job we did generated two or three more jobs, and I tried to get involved at every stage of the way," says Aron. "I got the roofer to teach me how to lay the tiles – and then I went on to do the roof. I enjoyed the physicality of it because I'm normally at my computer or at the studio. The build made me really fit!"

On top of the heavy lifting, Aron trained as an electrician during the build, too, and is now fully qualified. "It made things much easier – I enjoyed learning and saved so lots of money by doing the electrics myself. The build process is so long that I figured I should learn along the way."

The Friedmans features

The couple were keen for the house to mimic the environmentally sound nature of the frame and be as sustainable as possible, so maximised the use of insulation and natural light. In the walls, between the cladding and timber frame is a thick slab of Rockwool insulation with a breather membrane over the top. "We applied two layers of 80mm Celotex to the ceiling so we didn't have to insulate the rafters themselves. The rafters are nine inches so are very deep, and we've left a gap for ventilation."

Although not open-plan, the kitchen and living room area are not completely shut off from each other and focus on





Good idea



Planning policies in green belt meant that the Friedmans were severely restricted on the size of house they could build. So, they were creative with the design to ensure that space was used cleverly and nothing went to waste. The timber frame package was an excellent choice and ticked every box



Above: Apart from the render, the exterior of the house is complete, although the landscaping has far too go. Left: Aron laid the complicated network of underfloor heating cables himself



light and space. The far corner of the living room is double height and houses a series of Velux roof windows, which flood the whole area in natural light. "The windows look great, they are an amazing design statement, both inside and out," says Jeanne. "The internal wall that semi-divides the living room and kitchen has a long sandblasted sheet of glass built in end to end, so the natural light can travel between the two rooms and it really joins them together." Aron continues: "But it was a good job that we shopped around for it as when we went to a specialist company to see how much it would be for them to sandblast the glass for us, the estimate for the finished product came to around £1,000. So I got two pieces of glass myself, sandblasted one and stuck it to the other – and the effect is exactly what we wanted."

The couple have really caught the building bug and are currently renovating another house in the same area. "I look at the house and am so happy with what we've achieved. It shows that you can do anything you want to – and Jeanne and I certainly push each other to do so," says Aron. "Jeanne's aunt, Barbara Harmer, taught us that – she is the world's first and only ever female Concorde pilot."

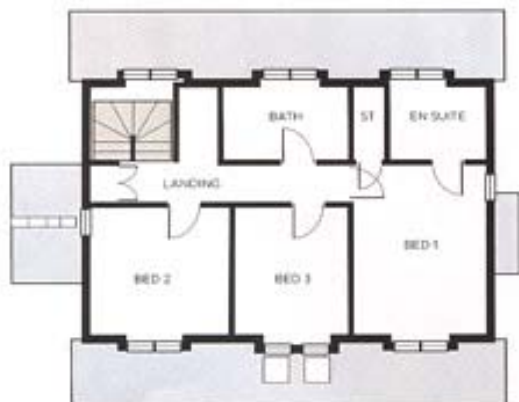
"We have loved working on this house, and living in it, too," says Jeanne. "We just don't let things phase us" – and looking at what they've accomplished, coupled with their calm and relaxed attitude, it is easy to believe. ☺



Useful contacts

TIMBER FRAME Solo Timber Frame 01892 771354
www.solotimberframe.co.uk **ARCHITECT**
MF Designs 01243 377766 **ELECTRICIAN AND**
LIGHTING DESIGN Alchemy Electrical 0845 806
4461 www.alchemyelectrical.co.uk **MATERIALS** Jewson 024
7643 8400 www.jewson.co.uk **BATHROOM FLOORS** Milners of
Ashstead 01372 271 871 www.milners.co.uk **SUITES AND**
FITTINGS Raffles of Redhill 01737 780158 www.affles-redhill.
co.uk **ELECTRICAL SUPPLIES** CEF www.cef.co.uk

Floor plans



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Build timetable

The family acquired the plot in October 2006 and applied for planning permission soon after. Although initially declined, their second set of plans were approved in January 2007 and works began later that month.

Schedule of the build 2007-2008	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Preliminaries	07	07	07	07								
Foundations				07								
External walls & windows					07	07						
Roof structure & covering						07	07					
Internal walls & doors							07	07				
Floors, walls & ceiling finishes							07	07				
Joinery & fittings							07	07	07	07		
Plumbing & heating						07	07		07	07		
Electrics						07	07		07	07		
Decorating											07	07

07 Work in progress by year and month



The Friedman file

Owners Jeanne and Aron Friedman

Occupations Record producer and singer/songwriter

Location Effingham, Surrey

Type of build New build

Style Country

Method of construction contemporary

Timber frame

House size 171m² (1,840 ft²)

Plot size 0.5 acres

Land cost £361,000

Build cost £180,000

Cost per m² £1,052

(£98 per ft²)

Total cost £541,000

Work commenced

April 2007

Construction time

9 months

Current value

£699,000

Total build cost breakdown

Elements of the build	Cost %	Cost m	Total cost*
Preliminaries	0.5%	£6	£1,000
Foundations	4.5%	£48	£8,300
External walls & windows	4%	£40	£6,900
Roof structure & covering	5.5%	£59	£10,100
Internal walls & doors	4.5%	£47	£8,000
Floors	1%	£12	£2,000
Joinery & fittings	4.5%	£48	£8,200
Plumbing & heating	4%	£46	£7,800
Electrics	2%	£24	£4,100
Timber frame package	23%	£240	£41,100
Decorating and carpet	1.5%	£17	£3,000
Kitchen and bathrooms	9%	£98	£16,100
Misc. labour and wood	2%	£18	£3,000
Fees	3.5%	£39	£6,600
Drains and services	7%	£74	£12,600
Site misc	11%	£115	£19,900
External Works	3%	n/a	£5,900
Garage	8%	n/a	£14,700
Grand total			£180,000

OUR VERDICT

The Friedmans 'can-do' attitude has really paid off. They are now the happy owners of a great modern house, and the skills Aron has picked up on the way will be invaluable in the future.