



# GARDEN PARTY

Dreaming of doing your very own grand design, but not looking to buy a pricey plot of land? The answer could be right in your own back yard...

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If you have the space, the vision and the budget, you can make the most of a very large garden by building a second property within it. It's a popular project, with many people choosing to sell one, or even both properties, and others doing it to be close to family.

It was the second option which was particularly attractive to one Pencaitland family, who approached East Lothian architecture practice Low Carbon Studio (LCS) three years ago and set them a challenge; to help their son and his wife to build a house within their large garden. It's an

attractive site with plenty of space, agricultural land on one side and houses on the other. LCS were delighted to help them with this ambitious self-build project.

The first step was to prepare initial ideas. "I would always suggest that self builders do a fair bit of research before they begin," says Colin Campbell of LCS. "Start by looking at other house designs and preparing a sketch book with design ideas you like and don't like."

In this case, the main design idea was to remove the existing garage and workshop which ran



along the north boundary with the new house adjacent to the existing studio and buildings. This would create a garden area between the existing and new houses, allowing each house to have some privacy. It was also important that the new build would fit in with the scale of the adjacent properties, and that it could be accessed from the existing driveway, which would be shared.

"The existing garden has a brick boundary wall along the north of the site," explains Colin. "The proposal was to link the home into its surroundings by incorporating the boundary wall into the new building and punching holes into it to allow light to flood in."



The materials were carefully chosen to reflect and compliment the existing structures. White render walls and clay roof tiles match the studio, while larch weather boarding on a section of the house helps it to blend into the natural colours and textures of the garden.

In terms of layout the house has a fairly conventional arrangement with the living room, a dining/kitchen, WC and family room on the ground floor and bedrooms and bathroom on the upper floor. The kitchen has large patio doors linking to the garden space which has views to the fields beyond. With a total internal floor area of around 100m<sup>2</sup>, it's a little roomier than the average three-bedroom house by a typical house builder, which start at around 90m<sup>2</sup>.



Once the design was settled, appropriate approvals were obtained. In this case, the planning approval required that the new house be retained within the ownership of the existing property and must not be a development to be sold. The proposal also required the removal of two trees from a wooded area of the plot and planting of new trees. Furthermore, the plot sits within the Pencaitland conservation area, which meant that careful design and detailing was in order.

“As with all my projects, along with creating a well-designed building, the other aim is to minimise carbon emissions and heat loss,” says Colin. “We do this by installing lots of insulation, providing good natural lighting and making sure that air leakage is low. Other low-energy features in this particular project are the installation of solar panels linked to the hot water cylinder, while we’ve utilised the roof space so that all of the building space is used for living.”

The close proximity of the house to the boundary presented various issues in obtaining a building warrant, the spread of fire being the main concern. Special fire-rated windows and coated cladding were used on the boundary wall to ensure that these issues were addressed.

The finished property is a lovely family home, which balances style, practicality and privacy. The house has amazing views from the first floor bedrooms, particularly the master bedroom balcony which looks out across the fields to lovely woodland beyond. The sloping ceilings and exposed ridge beam feature make the upper floor rooms great spaces with loads of character. A timber porch at the entrance to the home gives protection from the weather and acts as a focal point on arrival, making this brand new house a home.

