



When Ben and Merry Albright decided to build their own home, they had firm views about exactly what they wanted. “We had already built a small cottage in a village near to our family,” Merry explains. “It was our first home together, and we took immense pride and care in all the decisions and details; but when I became pregnant with our daughter, we knew that we needed more space. Ben and I had only lived in the house for 20 months, and here we were contemplating a second self-build before we had even hit 30!”

The couple had lived in the same area all their lives and were determined not to leave the pretty village if at all possible, so when another plot became available just a short distance from their home, right in the heart of the village, they knew that they couldn’t let such a rare opportunity pass.

An ugly air-raid shelter sat virtually in the middle of the compact plot, which was formerly used as a breakers’ yard, and planning permission had been granted for a large two storey property with the proviso that the air-raid shelter remained.

“We simply couldn’t afford to build the approved house design, but the planners were more than happy with our smaller, lower cottage, and Merry had great plans to convert the air-raid shelter into a potting shed or a garden office,” says Ben. “In the end, though, the position of the shelter meant that we couldn’t comply

PREVIOUS PAGE: The brownfield building plot was a redundant industrial site located in the middle of the village, and Merry and Ben wanted the house to fit in with its surroundings

ABOVE AND RIGHT: The bespoke free-standing kitchen/diner is finished in a combination of soft creams and blues, with oiled maple and granite worktops and a black limestone tiled floor



with the council’s demands to provide three parking spaces and a turning space. Our planning officer suggested demolishing the redundant shelter, which meant that we were able to relocate the house and have enough room to comply with the planning conditions.”

The site had cost £125,000, and the Albrights allocated a further £160,000 for the build — a figure which combined their full mortgage entitlement with

the proceeds from the sale of their cottage. They realised that it was going to be a struggle to build a four bedroom house on such a tight budget, particularly as Merry would have to stop working when the baby arrived, and there was certainly no contingency fund for any unexpected expenses.

“We based the design largely on the cottage we had just sold, as it suited us and we hoped it would suit the

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