

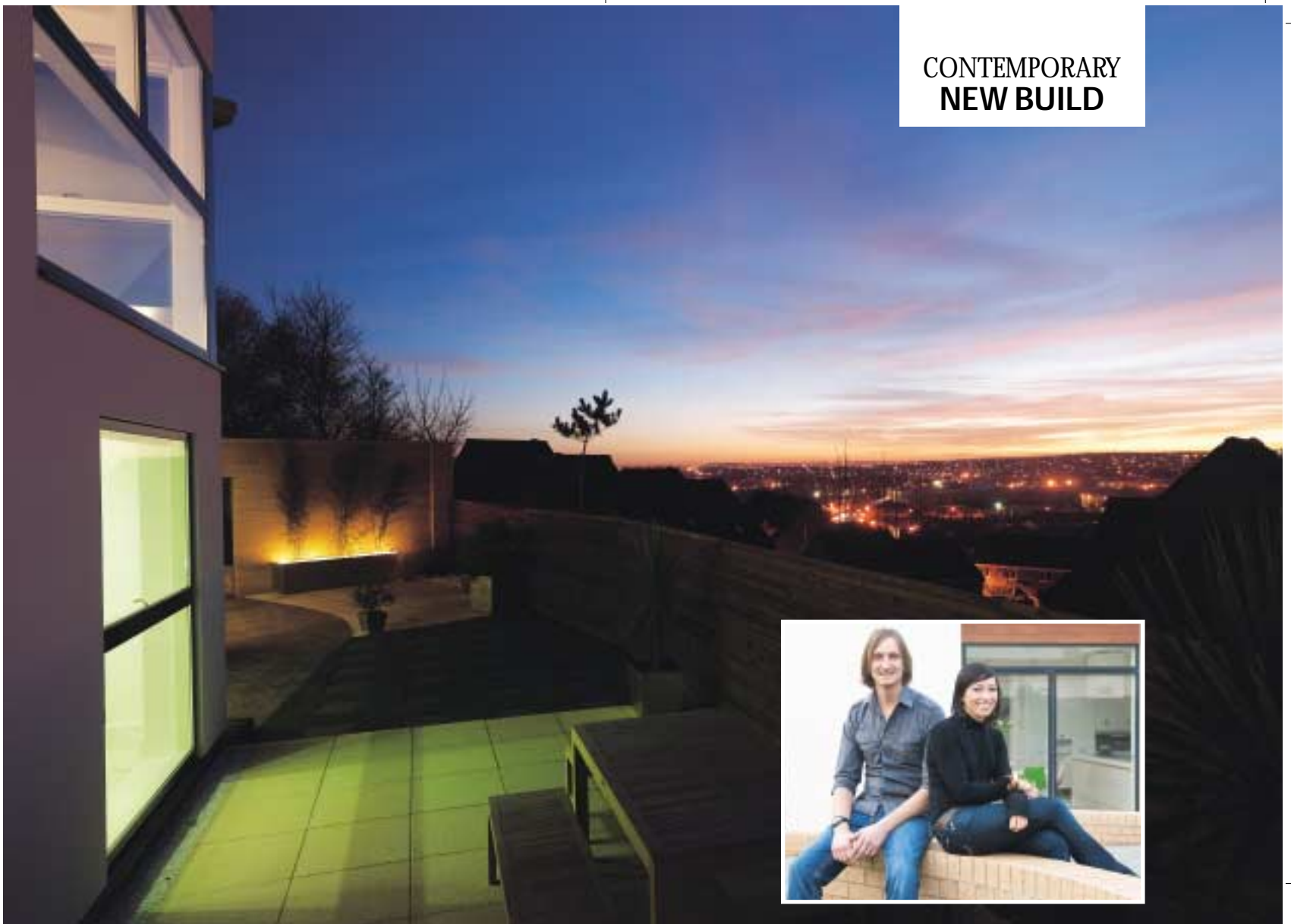


CALIFORNIA DREAMING

Terry and Emma Huggett have created a little bit of California
in a corner of a South Yorkshire regeneration area.

STORY: **Tony Greenway** PICTURES: **Jeremy Phillips**

CONTEMPORARY NEW BUILD



Terry and Emma Huggett like space and light. Their previous home, although traditional-looking from outside, had an all-white, ultra-modern interior. So when they started planning a new self build project three years ago, it was perhaps inevitable that they would design a contemporary, open-plan property to enjoy with their four-year-old son, Bailey. The finished results, however, have surpassed even their expectations.

“For the last nine years we’ve been to California for our holidays,” says Terry. “I suppose we’ve borrowed design ideas from some of the architecture we’ve seen there because we love the Californian lifestyle and look.”

Terry has a head start on most selfbuilders: he’s a builder by trade with his own Yorkshire-based property developing firm, Terry Huggett Developments, founded 40 years ago by his father. In the past, apart from the houses Terry has built for his many clients, he’s also built his own. “Plus my dad was a selfbuilder,” he says. “So it’s in the genes, I think.”

The house Terry and Emma have created is a strikingly beautiful angular building with white walls, large windows, standing seam zinc roof and cedar wood eaves, situated on a hillside overlooking the South Yorkshire town of Mexborough, an affordable housing and regeneration area. The masonry-built property has a double garage, utility →

PICTURES Even though the angular exterior is very modern the planner liked the white-rendered style of the property, which echoes some of the area’s oldest buildings.



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PICTURES: The simple oak-veneered doors contrast beautifully with the bright white interior. Light from the large windows make the kitchen a bright and inviting space. The bank of Leicht units have flush handles, so as not to spoil the clean lines. The counter space has a double function: it makes a practical preparation area, and a space to sit and eat. Vividly coloured chairs in the dining area create visual interest, and functional motorised blinds can be lowered with a remote control to provide shade.



room, cinema room, home office, three en suites and one house bathroom, a gallery landing and a large open-plan downstairs used as a lounge, diner and kitchen.

"When Bailey was born we decided we needed more room and a nicer house," says Terry. "A plot of land became available just down the road for £95,000 with outline planning permission for a single dwelling and a garage, and it was difficult to turn the opportunity down. When I first saw it, I thought it was idyllic with a few apple trees and ponies grazing on it. Plus, the view from the top was really special. It was perfect."

Terry's...top tip

"It's so important to get a good team from the word go. That means hiring a good architect so you can get everything in place design-wise, just as you want it... and then finding a good team of reliable and recommended sub-contractors."

When Terry designed and built his previous house, located just 100 yards away, he had to submit plans three times before the local council passed them. The new property, however, is set back from the road down a path behind a main row of traditional houses; and because it isn't overlooked, there was more leeway to design something radical and bold.

"I had architects draw up plans," says Terry, "but all we got back were bungalows and traditional houses. We weren't happy with those. Then we found Martin at Transform Architects who just 'got' what we wanted



immediately. We didn't say to him: 'We want this kind of house.' But from our conversations he must have picked up on the sort of style we had in the back of our minds because, ultimately, he presented us with a design that we both really loved."

The house was designed to be south-west facing with big windows reaping benefits from solar gains, natural light and fantastic views over Mexborough. Smaller windows on the north east side of the house, meanwhile, ensured minimum heat loss.

Downstairs is a plush cinema room with two large leather chairs and a high definition projector ("We built a home cinema for one of our clients a couple of years ago," says Terry, "and I remember thinking then: 'I fancy one of those.'") Yet it's the drama of the main living area that really gives the house its 'wow' factor. The kitchen-lounge-diner is large and open-plan – just right for entertaining, and perfect for an energetic four-year-old and his friends. The hallway features a statement staircase in glass, to maximise the sense of space.



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PICTURES: The glass staircase would have been beyond Terry and Emma's budget but Munro Designs was looking for a way in to the residential market and supplied it for cost. The Verner Pantone chandelier fills the dead height space between the hall and the gallery.

To fund the project, Terry and Emma sold their previous four-bedroom detached house, which they owned outright. They then bought a three-bedroom terraced house on a nearby estate to move into while the work was being carried out by Terry and his regular team of subcontractors (the Huggetts have kept this property and now rent it out). When Terry submitted the finished plans, he was surprised – and delighted – to find that they were passed first time. The relatively private location of the plot seemed to make all the difference.

Planning might have been easy, but the construction of the building certainly wasn't. Not long after Terry and his four-man team started work in March 2007, Yorkshire was hit by the worst floods in living memory. Because of its hillside location, Terry's property wasn't affected by flood water – but constant heavy rain on site soon became a massive problem.

"It was relentless," says Terry. "We had a good start for three or four weeks and even had the first floor built... but then the weather turned. We didn't have the roof on and the rain was just cascading off the landing like a waterfall. All the waterproof flooring was laid and holding two inches of standing water. It was torrential, but we had to carry on because there were times when I thought: 'It's not going to stop raining this year.'"

"There were days when we'd all go home wet to the skin. On the upside, because I was living nearby, I could go home and study the plans in the dry and come back with a tray of teas. Then I'd stand on the corner looking at this waterlogged building site and comparing it with my 3-D visual, thinking: 'One day, I'll have built that house..!'"

The weather was a frustrating experience and it slowed Terry and his team down. But then the roof went on, the



modular system windows went in (prior to the building being rendered) and the underfloor heating was installed and switched on... and things instantly became easier.

"We could do all the plasterboarding, skimming and the electrics with the heating on," remembers Terry, "so working there during the winter was actually quite pleasant. Because we'd had so much rain, the timbers were in real danger of swelling and cracking, but having the heating on dried out the core of the building."

Terry also fitted the property with state-of-the-art hardware including interior sound systems, Cat5 cabling and integrated lighting controls. Finally, the exterior was finished in insulated white render. The construction period took 14 months in total, and Terry, Emma and Bailey were able to move in during October 2008.

Terry says he is still enchanted by those views from the big floor-to-ceiling windows in the bedrooms. From here you can see right across to Sheffield – and, at night, over to an illuminated Oakwell Stadium, the home of Barnsley Football Club. "Before I go to bed I wander in to look at the view as I clean my teeth," he says, "and, sometimes, in the morning before I set off to work, with the sun gleaming off the roofs, I've stopped and thought: 'Wow.'"

Admittedly it's not a view of rolling hills in Derbyshire – or a view across Lake Tahoe in California – but Terry loves the spectacular urban landscape. "And living in an open-plan space with large windows certainly affects the way you use a house and, ultimately, your lifestyle," he says. "I really benefit from all the natural light. In fact, I feel positively charged living here." →



Terry on... **living here**
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ABOVE: The open-plan layout allows natural light from a variety of sources to illuminate the living space – and its interesting architectural shapes.

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Bailey's bedroom isn't second best – it is as evenly proportioned as the other rooms in the house. The laminate flooring is ideal – and hard-wearing.



ABOVE: The master bedroom has an en suite – and a bedhead which also acts as a screen when dressing by the matt black wardrobes. Internal coloured lights pick up on the gloss of the wardrobes. The modern master bathroom utilises a dark wall tile. The freestanding rectangular bath and long and low sink unit is from Platinum Bathrooms.



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SPOTLIGHT

WHAT WAS THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE BUILD?

"Moving in! Saying that, the initial part of the project was very exciting because back then we had a sense that anything was possible.

Martin was so clever with his designs. Every time he came to see us with his drawings

and to tell us his thoughts, he brought a little bit of magic with him. We couldn't wait to see what he'd come up with."

WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST EXTRAVAGANCE?

"The Verner Pantone chandelier in the hallway which cost £2000. We needed something to fit in that big roof height between the front wall and the gallery landing – but all the big commercial chandeliers were very ugly. This one was the only fitting we liked and we discovered Pantone had designed it in the 1960s. It transcended style."

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD CHANGE?

"Not really. That's the value of having a good architect, fully finished plans and 3-D visualisations. I knew exactly what I was getting before the construction, and there were no surprises. The build followed the designs to the letter – and the drawings were right on the money."

WHAT'S THE MOST COMMON MISTAKE SELFBUILDERS MAKE?

"It's not a mistake, as such, but I'd offer this advice 'Don't look for the cheapest alternative.' Cheap might be attractive to your pocket, but it won't always work for you in practice. When you go down the quality route, the materials have a longevity to them, and they're easier to fit. Also, I'd say: 'Try to plan for every eventuality!' Easier said than done, of course... but when you're going to self build, there's no point in finishing everything off, sitting back and thinking: 'Hmmm. I'd really like WiFi in this room...'"



Ground floor



First floor

THE FLOORPLAN

Because the Huggets had bought a big piece of land, their architect didn't have to compromise on space. In fact, he planned all the rooms first and then slotted them together to make a whole flowing design, with the result that every room is evenly proportioned.

The main bedrooms are accessed from a gallery landing running through the centre of the house – there are no box rooms and Bailey gets to have his own en suite. Downstairs the living, dining and kitchen area is open plan with a cinema room off the main area. On the south-west side of the house, window spaces have been maximised to make the most of natural light.