



## IN BRIEF

**PROJECT** New build  
**LOCATION** Somerset  
**COST** Garden plot, value £180,000  
**SPENT** £200,000  
**WORTH** Not applicable as annexe status

# Baarn on a budget

**Chris and Nicola Moulden's new barn-style annexe boasts a soaring oak frame and enjoys far-reaching views towards the Bristol Channel and across to Wales.**

STORY: **DEBBIE JEFFERY** PICTURES: **SIMON PLANT/EHOUSE/TRAVEL CHAPTER**

“**S**even years ago, we employed a builder to renovate our home, which dates back to around 1800, and later to build a new oak-framed annexe in the garden,” says Chris Moulden. “This replaced a little timber chalet, which had once been let out to a local farmworker by the previous owners. It had fallen into disrepair and wasn’t habitable, so we’d been using it for storage.”

Chris and his wife Nicola, together with their sons – William, now 17, Freddie, 14, and Tom, 11 – had never previously tackled a new-build project but felt that the chalet was wasted. Benefiting from its own private access, the building enjoyed far-reaching views on an elevated site in the family’s three-acre garden.

“Our main house was once two Quantock stone cottages which had already been combined to create four bedrooms, but with three sons living at home we didn’t have any extra space for guests,” continues Chris, a chartered surveyor. “The chalet was poorly insulated, with mould and damp kicking in, and we were fed up looking at it slowly rotting away.”

## EXTERIOR

Based on Roderick James Architects’ BAARN Lofthouse design, the new holiday home/annexe is set within the Quantock Hills AONB.

Granted an established-use consent as opposed to full planning permission, the chalet stands within the Quantock AONB, and the Mouldens were concerned that they might not gain permission to rebuild once it had been demolished.

This drove the family to seek planning permission for a replacement structure, which they could use as an overflow annexe and also rent out to holidaymakers to generate an income. “We’re in a lovely rural location, tucked down a country lane and right on the Quantocks, so it seemed like the perfect setting for a holiday cottage,” says Chris.

“We were fortunate, because the chalet was already served by mains water and electricity, and we were able to connect drains into existing systems. We did have to get a low-voltage electricity line buried underground in our field, but that was surprisingly easy.”

The Mouldens were keen to design an oak-framed building and found Roderick James Architects online. The award-winning practice has decades of experience working with specialist suppliers of timber frames, SIPS, natural building materials





and renewable energy systems – recently devising a BAARN timber-frame house concept.

The main shell of the BAARN house is constructed off-site to achieve a high-quality, sustainable building, and the prefabricated shell provides airtightness and thermal gains, reducing ongoing running costs for the life of the building.

This makes the process of building an oak-framed home simpler, more affordable and efficient by using fabric-first principles, and Chris and Nicola were the first to build a BAARN loft house: a simple, green-oak, barn-like form, with an impressive open-plan living space boasting soaring exposed timbers.

“Their main office is only an hour’s drive from us, and we loved the practice’s portfolio of properties,” says Chris. “Once we’d found Roderick James Architects,

**SETTING**

The barn is set in the Quantock Hills with panoramic views over the Bristol Channel towards the south coast of Wales.







**The build**

The barn-style home was designed by Roderick James Architects with the oak frame erected in just four days by Post and Beam, a company based in St Ives. The structure was completed with the addition of a standing seam coated-steel roof and structural insulated panels. The oak frame was later sandblasted to remove any marks before being clad in larch.



**DECKING**

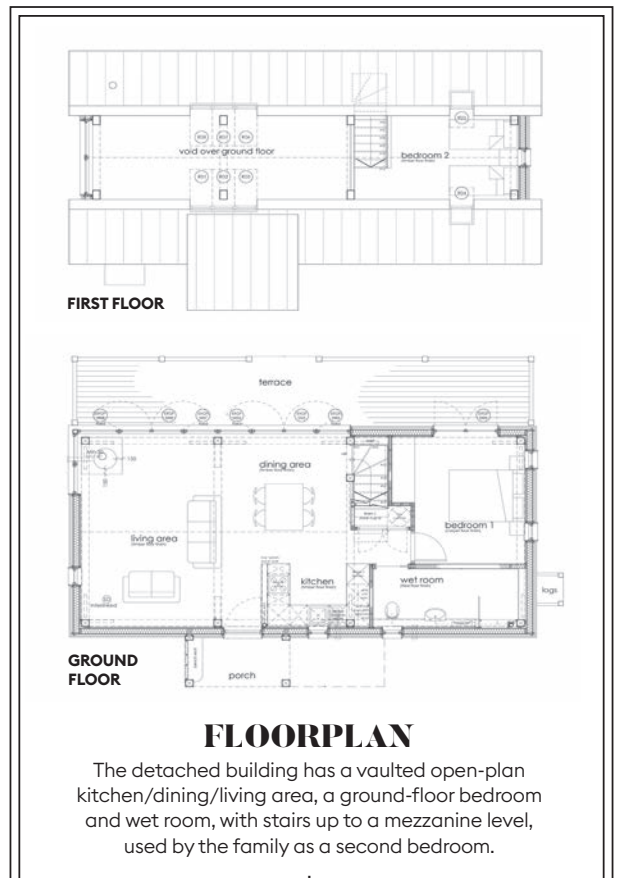
A raised oak deck provides direct level access outside. From the decking, steps lead down to a patio and lawned garden.



nobody else matched up, and we had a great deal of trust in James Lock, our main architect."

The resulting 75-sqm larch-clad design is almost twice the size of the chalet it replaces and sailed through planning with no issues, despite the application coinciding with the start of the pandemic.

The planners and AONB officer were extremely supportive of the detached timber-clad barn, which is tucked away from view and considerably more attractive than the building it replaces. Wrap-around glazed walls were designed to bring in the view, while green-oak detailing conceals the staircase to the mezzanine and a glazed triangular gable window.







#### LIVING AREA

A covered lean-to and partially enclosed porch allow muddy boots and coats to be removed and stored before entering into the stunning open-plan oak framed living space, with a fully glazed wall and contemporary wood-burner.



## “It was a stress-free build, and we feel so lucky to have found such an excellent team.”

“We contacted David Clapp, the builder who had worked on our house and is based in the same village,” says Chris. “He’s well known for doing barn conversions in the Quantocks and embraced the idea of building one from scratch. Our architects also tendered to other builders, but it was clear that David was the man for the job.”

James Lock, the main architect, recommended Post and Beam – a specialist timber-frame carpentry company in St Ives, which designs and handcrafts bespoke frames and timber buildings in its workshop using sustainably sourced timber. For every tree used, two oak trees are planted in a managed woodland scheme by Plant One Cornwall.

“Our builder demolished the old chalet and laid the beam-and-block base for the oak framers,” says Chris. “Despite working in high winds on our exposed site, the frame only took four days to put up, and then the SIPs company took over and dressed the skeleton of the barn over four weeks. Roderick James Architects knew the best people to go to for the standing seam coated-steel roof and structural insulated panels, so we were able to tap into their little black book of contacts.”

The main builder then organised plumbers, electricians, plasterers and other trades to complete the building, fit-out and external landscaping





to an exceptional standard. The oak frame was sandblasted to remove marks once the timber/aluminium composite windows had been installed.

“Ideally, we would have completed the sandblasting first, but with the windows boarded up and well protected, everything worked out okay,” says Chris. “We specified a dual-colour finish for the windows, with white internally, as we didn’t want an explosion of wood inside!”

To save money, the couple chose coated steel rather than zinc for their roof, and had the wood-burner flue colour-matched to the grey roof finish. Externally, the annexe is clad with homegrown larch, and an oak





veranda made by Post and Beam provides an elevated terrace from which to enjoy the spectacular view.

“All of the external larch cladding arrived early on site, to avoid the price rise which happened because of the pandemic,” Chris recalls. “The cost of things like scaffolding boards trebled, and were in short supply, but our builder had the foresight to order materials early.

“He’s become a friend and has a great team, so apart from making them cups of tea, the work didn’t disrupt our life next door. It was the ideal project, because we could be on site and just enjoy watching it going up.”

Despite knowing that they would be renting out the annexe as a holiday let, Chris and Nicola designed the building for themselves, and did not scrimp on finishes. Their builder constructed the feature staircase from the open-plan dining space up to the mezzanine above, which the family uses as an overflow bedroom.

“The interior layout almost designed itself, and we laid engineered oak floorboards over underfloor heating, which is encased in a self-levelling screed,” continues Chris. “The floor is designed to look like traditional old timber boards, complete with the illusion of gaps, and was finished with a UV treatment. We successfully tested the surface by pouring some wine and coffee on a spare plank before laying it.”

## IN DETAIL

### PROJECT

**Architect** Roderick James Architects  
LLP: roderickjamesarchitects.com

**Barn-style homes** BAARN: baarn.co.uk

**Builder** D R Clapp: 01823 451729

**Lighting design** Amos  
Lighting: amoslighting.co.uk

### STRUCTURE

**Oak frame** Post and Beam:  
post-beam.co.uk

**Sandblasting** Albery  
Restorations Ltd: albery.co.uk

**SIPs** Kingspan:  
kingspantimbersolutions.co.uk

**SIPs supply and installation**  
Ovolo Design: ovolodesign.co.uk

**Windows** Rationel: rationel.co.uk  
**Window supplier** Devonshire  
Windows: devonshirewindows.co.uk

**Standing seam roof** Tata  
Steel: tatasteelurope.com

### FIXTURES & FITTINGS

**Stove** Morso: morsoe.com

**Sanitaryware** Villeroy &  
Boch: villeroy-boch.co.uk

**Sanitaryware supply**

Bathrooms Direct Yorkshire:  
bathroomsdirectyorkshire.co.uk

**Kitchen** Howdens: howdens.com

**Light fittings** Orluna: orluna.com

**Wood floor** Wood Flooring Engineered  
Ltd: woodflooringengineered.co.uk

**Air source heat pump**

Samsung Joule: jouleuk.co.uk

**Bolts Barn is available for  
holiday rental with Travel  
Chapter: travelchapter.com**





An air source heat pump runs the heating and hot water, although the couple found that getting someone to service their Samsung pump was far more difficult than it had been to source an installer. They also chose a contemporary wood-burning stove for one corner of the living space as a focal point.

Work started in January 2021 and the building was completed in August of the same year. With stunning oak beams, a light and airy open-plan layout and extensive glazing, the property benefits from a real sense of space.

“It was a stress-free build, and we feel so lucky to have found such an excellent team,” says Chris. “We didn’t set an early date for holiday bookings, as we wanted to enjoy the annexe ourselves first, which was a sensible decision in hindsight. Our sons love having a space away from the main house, where they can bring friends to stay and feel independent, so it’s a well-used building that we thoroughly enjoy.”

**“We wanted to enjoy the annexe ourselves first which was sensible.”**



**BEDROOMS**

The main bedroom is located on the ground floor, with its own wheelchair-accessible wet room. A mezzanine level is available for the family to use as a further twin bedroom.



**FINAL WORD**

**What were the high points of the project?**

Demolishing the old chalet was fun, and when the frame went up in a matter of days we could see how special it was going to be. Having such a good relationship with our design and build team was also fantastic.

**...and the low point?**

There were no major drawbacks, although the standing seam steel roof did have to come off again when there were issues with the installation.

**Your best buy?**

Definitely the oak frame, which surprised us. The frame cost around £25,000, plus £5,000 for the balcony and porch, and defines the building.

**Biggest extravagance?**

Our lighting was expensive, as we wanted to make sure the interiors and oak were beautifully illuminated for the best effect.

**Any top tips?**

Do your research and find an architect and builder with proven experience who you can get along with.