

Exmoor Young Voices

SELF-BUILD TOUR

Summer 2019

Self build Hosts and Tourists: Sally Webber, John Davis, Eric Norman at the Rest and be Thankful, Richard and Nic Kemp, Mark and Lucy Taylor, Justin and Linda Tyers, Will Lock (EYV Chair), Sam Harris (EYV Co-ordinator), Josh Smith, Megan Hunt, Sam Camp, Robyn Gummer, Delilah Gummer, Malcolm Harding, Laura Harding, Jessica Pryce, Dan Matravers, Nick Matravers, Steph Rawson, Dean Kinsella (ENPA Head of Planning), Tessa Saunders, (ENPA Senior Planning Officer), Marion Silverlock (Secretary, EYV Trustees), Leslie Silverlock (EYV founder and adviser)

Will Lock welcomed everybody and Dean Kinsella opened this special event with “We would like to see this tour as the start of an on-going process, based on the Park and EYV working together.”

Morning

The group visited 4 properties in Wheddon Cross: two at **Higher Park Lane**, both single storey timber houses, designed by architects and owners; **Maric**, a traditional, detached house. All three fall within size limits and were built 15 and 20 years ago.

The Old Chapel is an on-going conversion project.

Afternoon

Following lunch and Q&A with Dean and Tessa, the group visited **Hoe Farm** and the **Straw Bale House** at Exton.

Learning points

- It is essential to consult with the Park planners at the earliest possible point, before ideas become fixed. Find out what is possible and work out how to comply, whilst achieving what you need
- The 93 sq m size limit is based on living space and includes everything inside the external walls, so that stairs and landings etc are included (see Footnote 1)
- Ceiling height also affects what is considered living space, which might allow an imaginative solution somewhere in the property
- A high roof enables snow to slide off and avoid leaks – and also creates large lofts for indoor storage
- Building regulations have become even more stringent and ‘by-the-book’, so be prepared for changes to your plans
- Consider a wide range of factors, including access, (carrying in shopping etc) and the position of doors and windows for maximum light and heat
- Where you need the most space will dictate room sizes elsewhere; bedrooms may have to be modestly sized in order to create a large living area – or an extra bathroom; with good loft and garage storage this need not be a problem
- Use sustainable/mechanical systems for ventilation, drainage etc which are cheap and easy to run. Most pay for themselves in a few years
- Put the controls for all systems in one convenient place eg airing cupboard
- Make the most of a good view so it can be seen from a main room
- An open plan area can create a sense of space, especially if it also has lots of glass – windows, doors and some conservatory-style roof glass
- Under-floor heating removes the need for space-wasting radiators. It is expensive but cheaper to install during construction rather than later
- Make use of locally available fuel – eg small wood-burner

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Learning points

- Save money on the basics such as interior woodwork – doors, architraves, sills, skirting boards, and leave them as bare wood
- Save on door handles and window fixings - choose the simplest and cheapest to enable buying better systems
- A large loft, provided it has no natural light and is not lived in, can be used for storage, a play space etc
- External garages and green houses (and sheds?) should be included in the initial application to avoid separate applications in the future (see Footnote 2). They do not affect the size limitation on the house
- A large double garage can house freezers, recycling, tools as well as vehicles. It cannot have a shower and loo but the potential for a compost loo that needs no water or drainage is unclear as yet
- A green roof can be planted and solar panels fixed onto suitable garage roofs
- Take advice before investing in a ground heat system – one owner was advised that the outlay in a well-insulated, small house with solar panels might not be worth the expense
- Light weight roof tiles made from re-cycled plastic are indistinguishable from slate, easy to install and quick to replace (See Footnote 3)
- Architects? Ask for references and look on-line. The wrong one may keep you waiting
- A large, open fronted porch does not count as living space; with glass side panels it could be used for plants, laundry, sitting out etc
- An imaginative porch design can be an interesting architectural feature

Self-build costs

- Land – there might be help to find a site through parish councils, as well as future opportunities for self build plots through the recent call for sites held by eight parish councils (Cutcombe and surrounding parishes). Work is underway to assess the suitability of these sites
- Materials – unlikely to be less than £60K
- Ask a buyer for large estate developments if you can piggy back on their account with building materials suppliers, for a huge saving in costs
- Labour – your own, shared with other self-builders, bought in
- Advice - there is now a growing number of self-builders willing to advise and support, help with plans, suggest suppliers and alternative ways of achieving what you want



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Conversions

- Different building regs apply because the exterior might be protected eg windows cannot be moved
- A large barn could still be used for a 93 sq m house, with unused space used for other purposes such as a garage or possibly a work space
- There may be hidden costs due to the unusual nature of the building eg requiring unusual fittings
- Costs can be reduced by using a policy of 'beg, borrow and E-Bay' but the Old Chapel conversion has already costs £60K
- One advantage might be that you can live in your conversion building whilst the work is going on, and do it section by section
- Generally speaking building from scratch looks easier



Design and intention

- Build with the long-term in mind – it can rarely be fast
- Start the process as early as possible and begin by consulting with planners
- Consider the financial implications – it could costs more to build an affordable home of your own than it would be worth should you sell it, so build for life-time occupancy if possible
- Consider how much you are spending on potential high-tech solutions. It may be cheaper to increase the energy efficiency of your home through additional insulation for example to keep heating costs lower

Discounts

- Discounts on bulk-bought building materials for large scale developers are substantial – possibly 50%. In one case a £1,000 drainage system was purchased for £67!
- Can we ask organisations, with an interest in rural and low-end urban housing, to request a national account for young self-builders from the Housing Minister? It could be put out to tender. It would be a positive political move for the next government.
- Can we identify a bulk buyer – or merchant – to sponsor EYV discounts?

Footnote 1: It excludes the floor area of any general store, dustbin store, fuel store, garage or balcony; any area in rooms with sloping ceilings to the extent that the height of the ceiling does not exceed 1.5m; and any lobby/porch open to the air.

Footnote 2: The result of the removal of permitted development rights means that work that would not normally require planning permission will actually require the submission of an application. A planning fee would not be required in these cases.

Footnote 3: Current policy requires the use of traditional and natural, sustainable, building materials.

Exmoor Young Voices

Sustainable homes, communications, childcare, and travel for young workers and residents

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www.exmoortrust.org.uk

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Group

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Devon
County Council

The Rest and be Thankful Inn

The Parishes of

Kentisbury and Trentishoe, Brompton Regis, Selworthy and Minehead Without, Parracombe, Luccombe, Porlock, Luxborough, Dulverton, Timberscombe, North Molton, Cutcombe, Brushford, Upton