



“ We knew that Huf Haus wasn’t the cheapest way to build, but we loved the monochrome design with floor-to-ceiling glazing that is Huf’s signature look ”

Method Timber frame

Build cost £479,800

Location East Sussex

Haus plans

The Salmons snapped up their perfect plot and built an iconic and ultra modern Huf Haus

WORDS **PAT GADSBY**
PHOTOS **DAVID GADSBY**

When Bob and Pam Salmon discovered a piece of land for sale in the Sussex village in which they had lived for almost 30 years, they snapped it up. "We were very lucky," says Bob, "I heard that a piece of land about 150 metres away from where we lived was coming on the market. I put in a bid and it was accepted." The 100m² plot was in a wonderful position on a steepish slope – with a view right across a valley at the front – just 200m from Ashdown Forest.

Unfortunately, the site came with couple of problems, which spelled out delays for the Salmons. Firstly, and not so seriously, was a telegraph pole connecting the two neighbouring houses on either side of the plot. "There was no legal agreement so it ought to have been easy to have it moved," says Bob. "Getting hold of BT was the difficult part. I talked to a lady in a call centre in Mumbai who had no idea what a telegraph pole was. In the end I managed to



Top tips

- ⊕ Get hold of the utilities companies and order connection before you even get planning permission
- ⊕ If you get wind that planning permission is going to be rejected, withdraw it and start again. Otherwise, a rejection will be marked against your plot
- ⊕ Bob wrote a blog of the build at www.bobshufhaus.blogspot.com – having a good rant helped alleviate stress
- ⊕ Organise as much storage as possible – you'll be amazed at the amount of things you have collected over the years



Favourite feature

“The view down the valley is, without a doubt, one of the best things about our home,” says Bob. “And the floor to ceiling glass walls to the front of the main floor make the most of it”



Although the house is on top of a hill and has glass walls, it is surprisingly private. The copper beech is no longer a problem and fits perfectly into the landscaping

get hold of a local BT Surveyor who organised things for me, but it was such a headache.”

The second problem was the large copper beech tree in the middle of the site – which had a Tree Preservation Order. “We had been in touch with a local timber-frame company and they were going to design the property for us. When they saw the site they were concerned the tree was intrusive and would be too close to the house, but they produced a plan for us which was submitted,” says Bob. “Fortunately I got wind that the application was going to be rejected, so I withdrew it and started again. That cost us nearly a year.”

Outside the box

“I’d been watching a design programme on TV and seen something about Huf Haus,” says Pam. “I loved the look of it, and although I thought it would be too expensive, I persuaded Bob to contact them anyway.”

“Huf houses are expensive,” admits Bob, “but they are good. You get what you pay for. Once we had decided that it’s what we wanted, we just had to keep a tight rein on the price. It was, in effect, a fixed price contract. We would have liked to have the kitchen and storage done by Huf but it was too much for our budget. And in the end we have still managed to get look we were after.”

The Huf architect came to look at the site and, refreshingly for the Salmons, had a completely different take on the beech tree. The couple breathed a sigh of relief when he said: “What a nice tree so close to where we can put the house.” ➤





The monochrome kitchen and simple decor inside mimic the contemporary exterior of the house

The planners liked the Huf design but there were concerns about how dark the house would be due to the proximity of the tree. The architect did a sunlight/daylight calculation, submitted the analysis and the plan was passed with no problems in the summer of 2005. The proposal was for a three storey house with garage, plant room and guest suite at basement level, a large open plan living/dining/kitchen, cloakroom and study on the ground floor and three bedrooms, one en suite, and a bathroom on the first floor.

Shortly after the plan had been accepted, Bob had second thoughts and wanted to move the garage from one side of the basement to the other, so that cars could drive through. "There were no problems," says Bob. "Huf changed things over without a murmur."

Included in the price of the house was a visit to Hartenfels, Huf's factory in Germany. The house panels are delivered with wiring and plumbing already in place, ready to be connected, the visit means it's easier for new owners to make final decisions on exactly where each plug and light will be fitted and what fixtures they want. A minor annoyance for Pam was that she wanted a conventional letterbox, and Huf do not put letterboxes in their doors as it doesn't fit in with their design. "I wanted one in the front door," says Pam, "but they refused and only on sufferance would they put one in the basement door."

Water, water everywhere

"Once we had organised everything with Huf it was down to us to do the excavation in readiness for the concrete slab for the basement," says Bob. As a semi-retired civil

Green issues



The couple love the solar panel on the roof that provides their hot water. Bob would have liked to install a ground source heat system, but it would have cost £25,000 - £30,000 which was way over their budget. Instead, they fitted gas-fired, computer controlled underfloor heating, with an outside sensor that keeps the house at a constant temperature, which is extremely efficient.







engineer, Bob relished the opportunity to get involved with this part of the build. “I thoroughly enjoyed the whole project,” he says, “but getting the diggers in and digging things up is what it’s all about. It was such good fun.”

The Salmons had budgeted £20,000 for the groundwork, but this increased dramatically. The original requirement for 200mm of gravel to be laid ready for the basement slab was doubled to 400mm, and Terram (a cellular membrane that gives strength) had to be laid to secure the sides of the excavation. Hard standing for the container that brought the basement panels, and the crane that lifted them into place, had to be arranged too.

Unfortunately during the excavations in July, there was torrential rain. “Our neighbours either side were flooded,” says Bob. “You don’t expect to be flooded on top of a hill but the water drains down from the forest, and it was a quagmire.”

Sadly, this was a sign of things to come, as the site was flooded all over again in November when the excavator found a piece of water main that was not on the records. “The neighbours lost their water supply which didn’t make

us popular,” says Bob. “But the water company were quick off the mark and sealed it off.”

By November the base was in and the concrete complete. “We still had no gas or electricity, and we needed to dry things out,” says Bob. “We were a little late putting in our application but it took longer for EDF to connect us than it took to complete the house!” A neighbour very kindly allowed them to use the electricity supply from their garage otherwise the build would have come to a halt.

Excitement mounted for the couple when the panels began to arrive on site. They came complete with the windows and internal blinds fitted, so once they were erected the house instantly began to take shape. “Huf brought their own crane for that bit and lifted the pieces up and over the oak tree on the other side of the road,” says Bob. “It was amazing. There was no need for discussion or shouting. They have done this so often they know exactly how to get it right.”

The German work ethic was a real eye opener for Bob. “They’d start at 6.30am and carry on until the job »

The open tread staircase makes a dramatic feature as well as providing a handy space for storage behind it





they were doing was finished, sometimes until 10.00pm at night. They are given their job and, boy, do they work. They are so organised and focused – it was a joy to work with them.”

By Christmas 2006 the building was up and the roof was on. The builders went off for their Christmas break and carefully switched off the electricity in the neighbour's garage since they were away as well. “Unfortunately they switched off the current to the neighbour's freezer,” says



Useful contacts



HOUSE PACKAGE **Huf Haus** www.hauf-haus.com

GROUNDWORK **St Pierre Contractors** 01732

700539 KITCHEN **Magnet** www.magnet.co.uk

LANDSCAPING **Tim Norris Contractors** 07973

510242 BUILT IN WARDROBES **Nikolai Zytynski** 07816 442719

Bob. "The neighbours were very sweet about it - but it was just so embarrassing."

After Christmas there were seven weeks of furious activity as Huf painted, tiled and carpeted the interior. When their part of the job was completed, the Salmons still had much to do. "We saved ourselves a considerable amount of money by arranging to put in the kitchen ourselves," says Bob. "Finding one to fit in with the Huf design meant trawling pretty much every kitchen showroom in the south east."

They finally decided on a Magnet design that fits in well with the Huf black and white aesthetic. Bob hired someone to do the fitting, talked him through it, gave him the plan and left him to get on with the work. "I came back that night and found two of the units assembled and fixed - but in the wrong place," he says. "I told him not to come back and did the job myself. I had done DIY before but not on this scale. Although it was slightly daunting, it was relatively straightforward and did save us some money."

Bob and Pam are extremely happy with their new home and find they have interesting passers by. "We were sitting having dinner one evening and 12 deer led by a large stag trotted by on the verge outside our front window," says Bob, "Some people complain about them raiding their gardens but I feel the loss of a few flowers is worth it. It's a privilege to have them around"

"We've lost the flowers on our camellias but they'll grow again next year," says Pam.

Bob loved it the build, despite the minor hiccups: "You have to be realistic and realise that when you embark on something like this, it is not going to be a straightforward project," he says. "Your patience and relationships is going to be tested. Even I found it stressful at times, but I would do it again tomorrow. I don't think Pam would agree though!"



Location matters

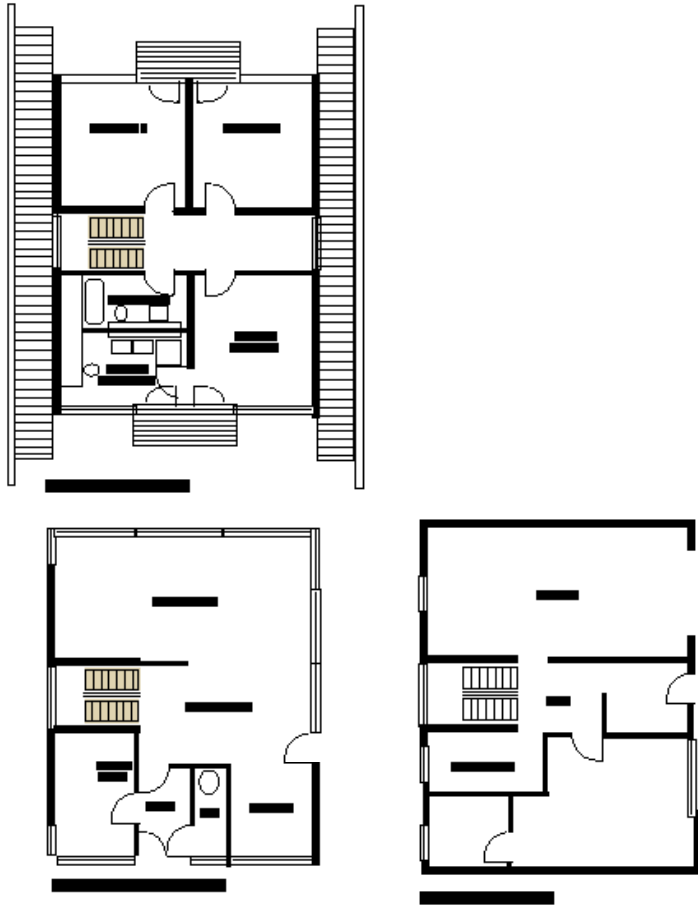
Regional facts and figures	Sussex
Cost of this plot	£250,000
Current market value of similar house	£800,000
Plots currently available in region*	39

*correct at time of press

See our plot listings on [page 131](#)



Floor plans



The Salmon file

Owners Bob and Pam Salmon
Occupations Bob is a semi-retired Civil Engineer and Pam is a housewife
Location Forest Row, East Sussex
Type of build New build
Style Contemporary
Method of construction Timber frame
House size 327m² (3,519 ft²)

Plot size 0.25 acres
Land cost £250,000
Build cost £479,800
Cost per m² £1,467 (£136 per ft²)
Total cost £729,800
Date work commenced Sept 2006
Construction time 6 weeks
Current value Approx £1m

Build timetable

Acquired plot in June 2004, and applied for planning permission that October, which was later retracted. In May 2006 the Salmons reapplied with the designs for Huf and started work in September.

Schedule of the build 2006-2006	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Preliminaries									06			
Foundations										06	06	
External walls & windows											06	
Roof structure & covering											06	
Internal walls & doors											06	06
Floors, walls & ceiling finishes												06
Joinery & fittings	07											
Plumbing & heating												06
Electrics												06
Decorating												06

06 Work in progress by year and month

Build cost breakdown

Elements of the build	Cost %	Cost m ²	Total cost*
Groundwork & drainage	8%	£122	£40,000
Huf Haus package	83%	£1,223	£400,000
Kitchen	<1%	£6	£1,800
External works & landscaping	8%	£116	£38,000
Grand total			£479,800

OUR VERDICT

The Salmons had a very clear idea of what they wanted right from the start of the project. And by choosing a package from Huf they knew exactly what they'd be getting. Bob was able to get involved in the aspects that interested him, and leave the rest to the experts.