



### In brief

**PROJECT** New build  
**LOCATION** Kent  
**COST** £200,000  
**SPENT** £650,000  
**WORTH** £1.275m

Chalk is on the market with The Modern House: [themodernhouse.com](http://themodernhouse.com)



# A whiter shade of pale

Chalk is an elegant new home on the Kent coast, inspired by the pioneering courtyard houses of mid-century California.

STORY: DEBBIE JEFFERY PICTURES: CHRIS SNOOK

"The estate is orientated to look at the lighthouse, which is a real talking point."



**GARDEN**  
As the house is orientated away from neighbouring properties, the Ralphs came up with a courtyard design with outdoor rooms.



**N**amed after the rolling white cliffs that line the Kent coastline, Chalk is a newly completed single-storey house, composed from a striking palette of white-glazed bricks and oak cladding. Standing on Broadstairs' coveted North Foreland Estate, just a few minutes from some of the best beaches on the Kent coast, the house was inspired by Californian modernism and is arranged around a wonderfully private garden.

"There was huge interest in the building plots being sold on the estate, but we noticed a tiny, run-down gardener's cottage for sale, which had been ignored," recalls Teresa Ralph. She and her husband, Anthony, realised that the tucked-away cottage could offer a more private setting, away from the road, and negotiated to buy the old building.

The couple had previously built their own home and were looking for another project when they spotted the cottage. "I originally come from a retail background, and Anthony was in marketing, but we now run a property development business together," Teresa continues. "We started small, with a tiny flat which we sold for a profit, but then moved on to new builds and larger projects. It's been a steep learning curve."

Teresa and Anthony have two children – Zach, now 15, and Scarlet, 14 – and planned to create a family home for themselves on the renowned North Foreland Estate, which stands in a stunning clifftop location in the coastal town of Broadstairs on the Isle of Thanet in Kent.

Built in 1691, on a promontory of the almost perpendicular cliffs, North Foreland Lighthouse replaced the original octagonal





“The house had to be orientated away from neighbouring properties, which gave us the idea of a courtyard design with outdoor rooms.”

## EXTERIOR

The North Foreland Estate is privately owned and gated. Chalk was built using white-glazed bricks and the contemporary new home was designed with privacy in mind. It sits in the former estate gardener's cottage garden, with unique views of North Foreland lighthouse.

lighthouse after it was destroyed by fire, and the white tower makes a striking backdrop to the Ralphs' newly completed home.

The relaxed and unspoiled resort retains a nostalgic seaside charm, with picturesque beaches, and many of the self-build plots being sold on the North Foreland Estate have direct sea views.

“Our plot doesn't have those views, but its peace and privacy were very appealing,” says Teresa. “The estate also has resident-only access to a beach and is wholly orientated to look at the lighthouse, which is a real talking point.”

The couple decided to remodel the old gardener's cottage to sell and then build a home for themselves in the garden, which has been fenced off as a separate plot. No outline planning permission existed, so the Ralphs drew up their design and then worked with multi-award-winning practice

On Architecture to produce final plans for a house which would complement the revamped cottage.

“They're back-to-back, and the cottage is clad in black, so we decided to use contrasting white materials for Chalk,” explains Teresa, who scoured magazines and Instagram for ideas, and was inspired by low-slung contemporary Californian homes.

“The plot size is quite snug, so the new house needed to be orientated away from neighbouring properties, which gave us the idea of creating a courtyard design with outdoor rooms. The only real restriction imposed by the estate was a duty of care while building, and we also had to contribute to the road repair once work was complete.”

The planning application for a modest single-storey house was declined, following a site visit, when the planners asked for the building to be brought forward on the plot and designed as a much taller property over several storeys.



## The floorplan

The house measures 198 sqm and steps connect the open-plan living/dining/kitchen and separate utility to the bedroom wing, where three bedrooms, the hall, bathroom, en suite, and dressing room are contained. There is a private entrance to the home office.





“We’ve absolutely loved designing and building it, and the layout makes it feel like a private refuge.”



**TERESA’S TOP TIPS...**

“You don’t need to buy off the shelf from a kitchen company – use local joiners to make your own design.”



“We were shocked, as our design was far more discreet and better suited to the setting, so we decided to go to appeal and won,” recalls Teresa. “Later, during lockdown, we made a retrospective planning application for an office with a separate entrance, as we realised that we’d be working from home far more.” Building during a pandemic proved tricky, but Teresa took care of the accounting, interior fit-out and paperwork, while Anthony oversaw the build and project-managed various subcontractors. These were brought to the site one at a time to ensure safety, when Covid restrictions allowed, which prolonged the build. “It was actually quite refreshing to take our time, as we usually work very quickly, but for our own home we were able to spend from January to June of

**LIVING AREA** The open-plan living space features a contemporary wood-burning stove, mounted on a plinth with wood storage beneath. Everything is robust and hardwearing to withstand family life, pets and even skateboards on the floors.



2020 concentrating on the project,” says Teresa. “We employed a bricklayer to construct the brick and block shell on standard strip foundations, and as we’re on solid chalk we didn’t need to go too deep or pile.” Selecting the white external bricks was crucial, and the Ralphs realised that a matt finish could end up appearing yellow. They also wanted to avoid having to paint the house in future, but finding a pure white glazed brick, without variations, took time. The result is stunning, with reflections cast onto the walls by the sun. Aluminium-framed doors and

**KITCHEN** Designed by Teresa and Anthony, the kitchen is made from oak ply, along with the space-saving dining table and storage bench. The worktop is Silestone.

**In detail**

**PROJECT**  
**Project management and build** TG Designer Homes: tgdesignerhomes.com  
**Architect** On Architecture: onarchitecture.co.uk  
**Structural engineer** MLM Engineers: mlmgroupp.com  
**Landscaping** New Build Landscapes: newbuildlandscapes.com

**STRUCTURE**  
**Bricks** MKM Building Supplies: mkmb.co.uk  
**Brick and blockwork** BC Brickwork: 07544 730490  
**Sedum roof** Complete Roofing Contractors: completerooftingcontractors.com  
**Doors and windows** Rhino Aluminium: rhinoaluminium.co.uk  
**Electricians** Pro-Wire: pro-wire.co.uk

**Front door** Urban Front: urbanfront.com  
**Carpentry** Turners Carpentry: turners-carpentry.co.uk

**FIXTURES AND FITTINGS**  
**Wood-burner** Stovax: stovax.com; **supply and fit** Heat Design Kent: heatdesignkent.co.uk  
**Sanitaryware** Smallbone Interiors: smallboneinteriors.co.uk  
**Kitchen, bespoke furniture, sliding cupboards** 3 Planks: threeplanks.co.uk  
**Polished concrete floors** Contemporary Concrete Floors: contemporaryconcretefloors.co.uk  
**Underfloor heating** NDC Plumbing and Heating: ndcplumbingheating.com  
**Bookcases, window frames, office** Creative Carpentry: creativecarpentry.co.uk





“It was actually quite refreshing to take our time (on our home), as we usually work very quickly.”

windows were installed, and a sedum-planted roof has been laid by the roofing contractor, which reduced any visual effect to the neighbouring property.

The land falls away, creating two levels within the single-storey building, so that bedrooms are positioned lower down than the living accommodation, producing a cosy feel. The western wing of the house is occupied by an expansive open-plan kitchen/dining/living space, with huge sliding doors at two aspects, allowing light to pour in throughout the day.

The kitchen is situated at the rear of the room, with full-height cupboards in white and oak veneer, and an island which merges seamlessly into a built-in dining table and bench seating with integral storage.

“The kitchen design was an amalgamation of ideas we’d seen in pictures and on Instagram,” says Teresa. “We then had it made by a local joinery company, with oak handles and the space-saving built-in seating.”

The whole house has been thoughtfully designed with ease of use and a coastal lifestyle in mind, using a palette of oak and polished concrete laid over underfloor heating throughout, so that spaces feel coherent. Choosing a single flooring material also means that no thresholds are required, and bathrooms can become wet rooms.

Even the steps between levels have been finished in the same concrete finish.

The northern wing contains three large bedrooms and a family bathroom. The principal bedroom has wonderful views over the garden, framed by huge sliding single-pane windows, and is arranged with a free-standing bath and separate en suite bathroom and dressing room.

“Having a bath in the bedroom is quite contentious – some people hate the idea – but we enjoy using it as our



**BEDROOMS**

Stepped-down bedrooms create a cosy feel, with half-height patio doors overlooking the garden. The en suite, hallway and dressing room were designed with roof lights instead of windows, for privacy.

**OFFICE**

Laminated plywood panelling and green Formica worktops were chosen for the home office, which has its own entry.

“It’s so light and bright, and the white brickwork, big windows and three-metre-high ceilings really do lift your spirits.”



**Final word**

**What was the high point?**

Enjoying the tranquillity of the site and seeing how windows frame views of the lighthouse, which looks especially beautiful at night.

**...and the low points?**

The white glazed bricks needed a final acid wash to remove any mortar streaks or marks, which was quite labour intensive for the bricklayers. The result is worth the effort, though, as they reflect light and shadows.



**Your best buy?**

The Ikea outdoor seating, which is so comfortable.

**Biggest extravagance?**

Our entrance door is enormous and cost over £10,000.