

ROOM TO GROW

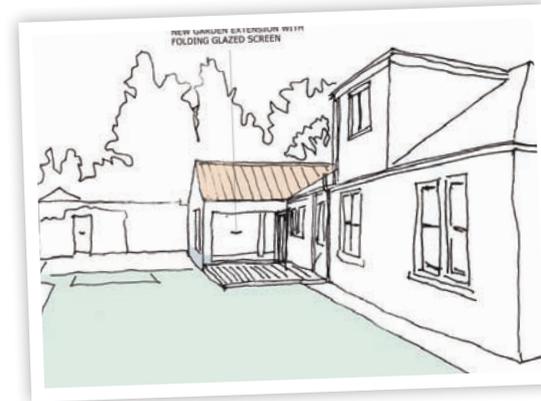
For their latest project, Low Carbon Studio and Alba Green Oak Frames take on a stunning garden room extension in Peebles

WORDS: LYNN STEWART

For their latest project, Low Carbon Studio and Alba Green Oak Frames were charged with creating extra space for a couple and their teenage children. Their home is situated in the pretty Scottish Borders town of Peebles. It was built in the mid-twentieth century using a traditional design and construction method. Apart from an attic conversion into bedrooms and a shower room, the property is more or less in its original condition. The exterior of the

house includes an enclosed garden with a stone boundary wall.

The brief was to provide more room for the family to grow, whilst at the same time improving rear access to their property. This was to be achieved by building an extension into the rear garden, as well as creating a new link from the kitchen to a new rear entrance, utility room and a garden/family room, which in turn was linked to the



garden with a patio/deck. All the materials for the new garden room were selected to complement the existing house and garden.

This ambitious refurbishment meant that the existing kitchen would need to be reconfigured, with a new link door being created. The brief specifically demanded a space where the family could enter and remove their coats/boots, etc, before entering the house after work/school. A high-level roof window brings light into this internal space.

The clients were particularly keen on the idea of using an exposed Douglas fir timber frame, to give the space with a contemporary feel whilst retaining some traditional features. This provided Colin Campbell of Low Carbon Studio a great opportunity to design an interesting new extension, with a folding door screen out onto a patio area linking the internal and external spaces and to the garden beyond. Of course, because the space was being designed from scratch, it allowed the design to incorporate existing furniture – an option you don't get when you buy a new property from a house builder.

When designing oak or Douglas fir timber frames, it's important to ensure that the design is very carefully thought through. The reason for this is



that the frame is cut and pre-fabricated off-site, so once the joints and angles are finished the frame can't be adjusted on-site. As such, Alba Green Oak Frames and Low Carbon Studio always check the dimensions several times – and it was no different with this project, although the junction between the new and existing roofs caused some added head-scratching and some extra time to double check that the angles paid off.

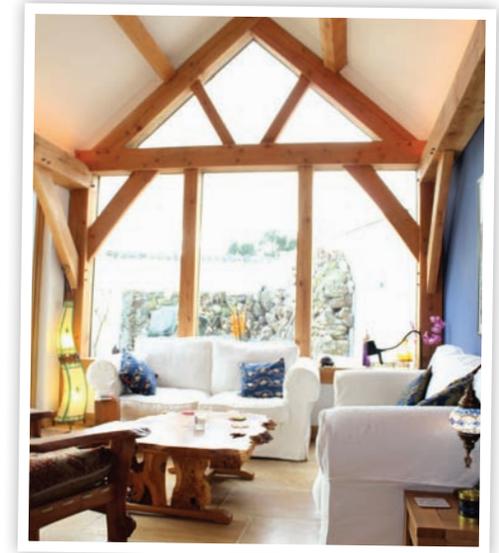
The Douglas fir frame in the extension uses local timber and was also fabricated locally. The external walls use a mixture of render and local stone, and the whole extension was designed to be very energy efficient, with triple glazed windows and doors and a state of the art underfloor heating system. The highly insulated walls, roof and floors also significantly reduce heat loss.



Before



After



light. The materials for the patio deck and walls are designed to match the internal finishes, so that when the folding glazed doors are open the inside space links seamlessly with the garden. The low wall around the patio has a timber seat that matches the exposed Douglas fir frame.

The whole project was, essentially, a self-build, with the clients employing the tradespeople separately, and project managing the build themselves. And whilst this requires an immense amount of organisation, doing it this way does keep costs down. However, the Douglas fir frame did add to the cost compared to a traditional bricks and mortar build and, at around £4k, the folding doors did not come cheap either.

One of the other benefits of the new, west-facing extension is that it, like the rear garden, is enclosed within the existing boundary wall and is not overlooked by any neighbouring houses. The folding glazed screen and the patio are south-facing, ideally positioned to maximise natural

But the finished project underlines how much better the space will look if you're willing and able to invest a bit more in the build. After all, your home is a space where you want to spend time with family and friends, and this particular property is now one that contains beautiful spaces bathed in natural light, from which the clients can enjoy spectacular views. TC