

Episode 223

What is it like to self build at Graven Hill? – with Dean Scott

The show notes: www.houseplanninghelp.com/223

Ben: [Driving] Well, sat nav thinks we're here. And there are roadworks. And it does look like it's another Ministry of Defence site, Site E. Twenty miles per hour signs. Definitely something going on in there – yes, this looks like the right place. I can see some solar panels through the trees.

I can see the main street. I suppose I'm going to have to read my instructions again. "As you come around the main entrance, you need to take the first left on to Roberts Drive and there's a car park on the right, Car Park A."

There he is. He's waving. He's got his hard hat on. [Driving]

Greetings!

Dean: Hello. I'll jump in and we'll go to the car park.

Ben: Just jump in. Alright. Let me clear my mess. Okay, so I wasn't too far off.

Dean: Well, the problem is that on Friday, the first left was just up here, but over the weekend, they built it in. So, it's quite hard to give directions when the roads are literally changing on a day-by-day basis.

Ben: While you're in the car, is it worth us going on a quick tour?

Dean: Yes, we can go for a drive around. No problem.

Ben: Alright.

Dean: If you carry on straight down here – I'm not entirely sure of the road names, to be honest with you, but there are two areas of the development which are active at the moment: over in our section, and then this loop down here which is where most of the work has sort of ...

These are the first phase of plots. There's a big mixture of turn-key, self-builders and all sorts of things. So, there's a Dan-Wood house on the corner here, for example. That wasn't there six weeks ago.

Ben: That's amazing, isn't it? That really is turn-key. Do you know any of these people?

Dean: Yes, we know most of these people. We get together reasonably regularly.

Ben: I'll tell you something that's already surprised me, and that's that there are quite a few conventional looking houses here.

Dean: Yes. This row of houses here, for example, and the row just to the right that you can see, they are the Graven Hill shell build houses.

Ben: So, they're fit-out ones?

Dean: Yes. Although there might be a mix. There might be some which are completely finished inside and are affordable housing, and then some which are shell builds. And these are all built by people like Silver and Beattie Passive, I think. So, there's a mixture.

Ben: So, they each take a certain number of plots, and then they're responsible just to get the shells there?

Dean: Yes.

Ben: It's a good idea, isn't it?

Dean: Yes. You can go left here, if you want to drive around.

Ben: Okay, let's try that.

Dean: You see, I think these are Silver affordable homes here, and then I think the next row are Beattie Passive shell homes.

Ben: To Passivhaus standard?

Dean: Yes, I think so. You can see all the membranes and tapes and everything that's synonymous with ...

Ben: That's good to see, isn't it?

Dean: Yes. I think we might be blocked here by a delivery van. So, we'll go left.

Ben: All the heras fencing.

- Dean: Yes. And these are all typical self-builds, but it's a mixture of turn-key and people doing it themselves. So, that one's pretty much finished – that's another Dan-Wood house.
- Ben: It feels very spacious as well. Is that just because there are lots more to come?
- Dean: Yes, absolutely. Everywhere where you can see gaps between houses, there will be houses there. Basically, these are all plots.
- Ben: Do you think that all of these are sold or are they just going in dribs and drabs?
- Dean: I believe most of them are sold in this particular area, but obviously people are just at different stages of their projects. And I guess from Graven Hill's point of view they're kind of phasing in when they actually do the work.
- Ben: One other thing that's quite nice is the trees and having that established. Quite often I think on a developer estate, they cut everything back that they possibly could and start all over again.
- Dean: Yes. Graven Hill is just to the right, behind us, and then this is all the woodlands which is going to stay as it is.
- Ben: That will be brilliant.
- Dean: Yes. So, this will all be housing along here, but on the right, that will stay.
- Ben: Of course, but it will still make a big difference.
- Dean: Yes, it'll be nice. I mean, we've never really thought about that aspect, that we're quite close to woodland and we'll be able to go for nice walks.
- Ben: One step at a time.
- Dean: Absolutely, yes. It's just we're so used to it being a building site. To be honest, I've never actually spent any time thinking about what it's going to look like when it's just a normal housing estate.
- Ben: If it's anything like me, you also don't feel it's real in some ways. It seems like it's just a project, that you're looking at someone else's, even though you're making all the decisions.
- Dean: Yes, absolutely. Yes.

- Ben: I take it I'm going the right way here?
- Dean: Yes. So, this used to be a turning here.
- Ben: Oh goodness. So, that's not going to be a turning anymore – or will it become a turning again?
- Dean: No, this will be filled in.
- Ben: So, you've lost that.
- Dean: Yes. It's good that we've got our frame built because all of our artic lorries for the timber and everything came through there. You want to take a right into this car park.
- Ben: This is Car Park A?
- Dean: Yes.
- Ben: That would've been a lot easier to find.
- Dean: Yes. But all of our deliveries have come through that left turn. Now, I think had we been building now, to get an artic around this loop that you've just had to come around, I think might be impossible actually.
- Ben: You're joking. Hopefully not. Hopefully they've thought of that. Although, are you saying that this is largely done, this area?
- Dean: Well, we're at a dead end at the moment, but it will be opened up and there will be a road across. So, we will have a loop. But at the moment, it's a dead end. So, any deliveries basically have to come down and back out again. Getting that access around that corner was crucial, really. I think it would be really difficult to get that access in otherwise. But anyway, it's not something we have to worry about now because we've done the big lifting.
- Ben: You've done the legwork. Right. Let's go and check out the house. I'm going to grab my hard hat.
- Ben: Your contracts finish in the summer, don't they?
- Dean: Yes. So, I've had since the start of June and I've got until the end of this month before I go back to work. So, I've just dedicated this time to working on the house project.

We've had contractors in building, well, everything up until where we are now really. So, we've got the frame, cladding, windows,

doors, roof installed. It's almost a weather-tight shell. There's a bit of work to do around the front door where we've got to put some sort of surround feature, and then we've got to do some surround details around the windows. But essentially, it is now an insulated, airtight shell. There are no services connected at the moment.

It's in a state where we know now that it's not going to get destroyed if we have some really bad weather.

Ben: This has gone up very quickly though, because you've only been on site two months?

Dean: Yes. The groundworks were finished and the passive slab was finished early May, mid-May, and then the CLT frame guys came in towards the end of May. So, this has all happened since then. And the contractors doing the cladding finished last week. And you can see the site has quite a lot of junk around now.

Ben: You should see our site. It's a lot worse. It just happens, I think, doesn't it, when you build a house?

Dean: Yes. So, we've got all the excess cladding here. We ordered more than we needed. But we always knew that we'd use any excess to build a nice shed or whatever. So, that's fine. We've got all the offcuts and stuff there. And this is our fire treatment dunking tank that we've used to fire treat the cladding.

So, we just need to have a bit of a sort out really.

Ben: And it's just going to weather naturally?

Dean: Yes. We've done nothing else to it. It's a lovely colour as it is now, and we know that this will silver over time. I'd like it to stay like this really, and I know we could treat it and try and preserve it ...

Ben: It's hard work, isn't it?

Dean: Yes. It's just money. We're struggling to find the money for a kitchen and bathroom so, there's no way we could really justify treating the cladding. But I'm sure it will look fine.

Ben: Staring at this face, I think for the first time, I've realised you've got quite a big constraint. It's as if you're building in between two houses. Which you are, obviously, but everyone's got scaffolding. So, are there any constraints with that, or it just means a tight space around the side?

Dean: It is a tight space. We have a metre to our plot boundary; everyone does. So, we've got two metres between the two houses. But the width of the scaffold is about a metre. And the problem is sequencing.

So, our neighbours on the left here, plot thirty-eight, they had their scaffolding up well before we were ready, which meant a couple of things. Firstly, we couldn't dig service trenches down the side of the house because we'd be undermining them. So, we've had to put that on hold. And then when we came to put our scaffolding up, you can't then put a separate piece of scaffolding up. You really have to tie it in to what they've done. So, lift heights are really based on what they've done. And then similar again for our neighbours who came after us. They then had to join on to ours.

In a way, it would make sense if we all had one scaffold company do the whole thing. In reality, we've got probably three or four different scaffold companies here and they have joined on to each other. Which has all gone okay, but I do wonder when they start taking it all down, whether there's going to be any kind of tricky bits, if you like. Because if my neighbours want to take theirs down and we're not ready ...

Ben: Let's hope they're not supporting you.

Dean: Yes, exactly. I wonder whether there's going to be some reinforcement required to then support ours. But that's a question for another time.

Ben: Just before we go inside then, one more question. How is that detail around the door being finished off? I can't remember the plans exactly.

Dean: To be honest, it was a design detail that's sort of been kicked down the road a little bit, and it still has. It's still to be decided. But essentially, what we wanted to do, because we've got this square theme, the whole house is almost a cube shape and the windows are all square. Obviously, the door isn't square. So, we wanted to create this square feature around the door to maintain that. So, I think what we'll end up having is a slightly recessed surround.

Ben: Of the same timber or a different cladding?

Dean: Well, to try and match the door colour, if we can. So, maybe have some aluminium panels that match the door colour, so it looks like the door is one big square. That's the theory anyway, but as I say, to be finalised really.

- Ben: Shall we go in?
- Dean: Yes, absolutely.
- Ben: Lead the way.
- Dean: We've just got the handle fitted to the front door, so we can actually use it.
- Ben: Here we go. Wow. This is lovely.
- Dean: The first thing you notice is that it's reasonably cool in here.
- Ben: Yes. Which way is south?
- Dean: We've got a south facing rear-ish. We're slightly at an angle, about forty degrees away from being perfectly south facing.
- Ben: Are you shaded?
- Dean: We're not shaded. The whole south face, all the windows, will have roller blinds on the outside.
- Ben: But you do have access to the south, is what I'm getting at? Because obviously there are lots of buildings around here.
- Dean: Sorry, yes. So, you can see actually.
- Ben: Go on. Let's start heading through. Ah, this is going to be lovely.
- Dean: Sorry about the noise. We are on a building site.
- We've got these Silver houses. So, this is another development for affordable housing right behind us. So, you can see our garden is sort of pointing in the middle of it. So, we're not directly overlooked or over shaded.
- Ben: But it feels like we're in the shade at the moment. Is that because we're not exactly south and it will suddenly come into the sun?
- Dean: Yes. What's the time now? About half-ten. So, the sun is making its way around. By the middle of the afternoon, it is usually right in front of us here.
- Ben: And then moving on to that question that you did start to answer about the shading?

Dean: Yes. We don't have the blinds fitted at the moment, but you can probably see we've got a recess above the window here where the blind will fit in.

Ben: Electric?

Dean: Yes, electric blinds. We've got the wiring in ready for it.

Ben: It's the one thing, our overheating risk is zero so, it should mean we don't need anything, but I don't know. I like the idea of having that manual override that you've obviously thought about ahead of time.

Dean: Yes, well we've got, I think it's a five percent risk, which I think is right on the limit of what you're supposed to get away with.

Let's go back in. I'll close this door to drown out the noise.

Ben: Not too bad, is it? And have you got anything else to be built directly beyond the garden?

Dean: We spoke earlier that this is a dead end. It goes around the corner and then stops. But the road in front of those trees, that will be opened up eventually, and there will be another row of self-build houses along the end there.

Ben: But what's beyond that fence, if it's not more houses?

Dean: This is a car park for these houses. When we go upstairs, you'll be able to see what's there. There won't be any building work directly behind us, which is nice.

Ben: CLT looks fantastic. I take it you're going to keep this interior, to some degree?

Dean: Yes. That was always the plan. So, it's construct CLT. Jim Johnson has erected this for us. It's a work of art, really. Without a doubt, the best part of the whole project has been seeing this go together, the way the windows work with it and being able to see the edges of the CLT around the window frames. That is the look that we were ultimately after.

The problem that we've got at the moment is that we know we've got to do some fire treatment for spread of flame protection. So, we've got to choose a product now that obviously tries to keep the aesthetic that we've got here. Because we would love to leave this colour exactly as it is. So, it's a question of how much is it affected by what we have to paint it with.

But one of the things that Jim did when he put it up was to cover all the panels in some breather membrane to protect it from the sun, because once it's exposed to the sun, it goes a little bit yellow. There's no real examples to show you that because he's done such a good job of covering it over, but this light woody colour that we've got is because he's protected it during the build, and we want to try and preserve that as much as we can.

Ben: Take me through the design process then. How did you end up with this and what had to happen in technical design to deliver this building?

Dean: We went to Gresford Architects with our plot, so we had registered the plot at this point and we knew the space we had to build with. They came up with the concept of a cube. We've essentially got an eight metre wide plot of land to build on. You can go deeper than that, but we wanted a three-storey building to try and get the floor space in that we wanted. So, it's all ended up being about eight metres by eight metres by eight metres.

Ben: With what floor space?

Dean: I think it's about a hundred-and-thirty-five GIA, which was about as much as we felt we could reasonably afford. It's always difficult at that stage to know, isn't it? But we sort of thought, we'll set ourselves a reasonable limit.

So, that was the concept and they had some layout details they presented to us which didn't quite work with what we wanted. So, we then went away and had a think about how we wanted the internal spaces to work, how we thought we'd live within the spaces, and we went back and they updated the designs with what we wanted. Then that went off to the timber frame engineering company that then turned that into something that worked structurally.

They didn't really have to do too much. You can see we've got some steel beams in here, just to support these open spaces, which again we'll keep those exposed as much as we can.

Ben: And this is telling too, that design is important to you, because you've got double height space, haven't you? In this little section where we're standing.

Dean: Yes. That was on our original shopping list. Double height space or something that created a little bit of extra drama was definitely on it.

We've got a couple of areas. We've got this space which is over the dining area. So, we'll have a dining table here. Kitchen units over there, that's a little sitting area. And then that's our cupboard which will be boxed in. That will have the MVHR in it, and storage, and everything else.

But yes, we've got the light coming in. So, we've got windows above the space as well and we've got windows up in the study, there, which will look over into this space. There are windows up there.

Ben: A study with no door to shut out noise from children. That's very brave.

Dean: Well, again, another design detail to be decided really.

Ben: They'll go to school eventually.

Dean: Initially, that was going to be another CLT balustrade across there, and we were going to have shutters across, so you could shut it off. But I think now, what we're thinking is that we'll have a glass balustrade to keep that light coming through and then maybe we'll have shutters on the outside of that. So, again, you can close it off when you want to, but then have it nice and open otherwise.

So, that office, although it's called an office, I think it's almost more like a living space as well because it's so connected.

Ben: It's somewhere else to go, yes.

Dean: Exactly. So, I'll have a nice armchair in there or something and you're still part of the rest of the house.

Ben: I can see a ladder behind us. I'm assuming we're not actually going to need that to get up to the next level?

Dean: No, no. The other thing that I was quite keen on is we got stairs included with the CLT package, so that the space is useable and workable.

Ben: Actually, there are a couple more spaces down here.

Dean: Yes. So, at the end there, that's a larder. We'll have some shelving on that wall. It's sort of a mini utility room as well. So, a washing machine, fridge-freezer. And then a dividing wall across there, and this will be the downstairs loo in here.

And then this is the other double height space we've got. So, again, looking up into the study, eventually that will have a glass panel to close it off, and this is the TV room – so, imagine a built-in sofa across here, projector screen across there – and then this is the playroom, TV room, whatever.

Ben: And your window here, if this were in an existing town, you probably would have to have some sort of frosted glass that you couldn't see through. So, that's quite interesting. I know you're probably not looking on to another window.

Dean: Yes. I think there are some planning requirements we have to go through, but because everyone's developing at different rates, it sort of depends on what your neighbours do.

I remember, we submitted all of our design information before our neighbours had submitted theirs, and so there were no planning restrictions because of their house, for example. So, we do actually have a window. I think it's below the first floor, you're okay. Anything above the first floor, you do then get into you might need to have frosted windows. We haven't, but I think that was partly because we put in our planning before that house existed.

Ben: Let's head up these stairs that were included in the package.

Dean: Just watch your step at the top there.

Ben: Will do. I'm quite surprised to see you've already got your desk and computer up here. Have you been working here quite a lot?

Dean: Yes. So, this is my site office, essentially. As soon as we got the windows in, I didn't see any reason why I couldn't just move my desk in here and start working here.

Because I was working at home. We live about fifteen, twenty minutes away, so every time I had to come on site, you're losing an hour a day going back and forth. And then as soon as you'd get home, there'd be a call saying, 'can you come and have a look at this?' So, I thought I'd just move my whole office over.

So, I've just been working here during the day, and it's great. It's much better than the office I've got at home, that's for sure.

Ben: I should think you're able to concentrate as well, so long as there's not work going on, which I'm sure there will be all the time.

So, this is the first real corridor of the whole house.

Dean: Yes. We've got the stairwell. It was the one area that we were a bit concerned that maybe would end up being a bit dark. But we've got the skylight above there, that area of light. And okay, it may be a little bit dark here, but you can't put windows in everywhere.

Ben: I think to use this space well, you're doing pretty well.

Dean: This is Hugo's room. This is the window that we've got on the side facing them, our neighbours, that is. So, maybe this one should've been frosted? I don't know.

Ben: But as you said, if you're ahead of the game and it looks like the only section, you'll have to be standing right in that corner to look back on to – is it a corner window? No.

Dean: I think that's their stairwell. So, it's not a problem. But as you can see, we put this quite low down deliberately. It's a window for a small child, essentially. So, the flooring will eventually come up and sit flush with the bottom window.

Ben: And that's quite good with these windows that open out. That one's a fixed window, and this up here, he's not going to go flying out of that window for quite some time so, he can have a window open in his room, but not this one here, obviously.

Dean: Exactly, yes.

Ben: What are your windows and were they part of this package or sourced separately?

Dean: Sourced separately. These are Idealcombi triple-glazed windows. It's their Futura+ range, and I'm really pleased with them, to be honest. They were a pretty good price and fulfilled everything that we need from them.

We were talking about it at the weekend actually, whether it's going to be awkward. They open inwards, which I understand means that they've got slightly better performance.

Ben: We've got exactly the same issue, in a way, sometimes. Because if you've got something in the room – this room, I don't think you'll worry too much – it can easily bang into them.

I love inward opening windows, but I haven't lived with them.

Dean: Yes. I'm not sure how big your windows are ...

Ben: Big. Same as you, I'd imagine.

- Dean: Okay. So, trying to open that, you can't really open it all the way. Have you got the tilt-and-turn?
- Ben: Tilt-and-turn. Well, that's the thing. If the worst comes to the worst, for goodness sake, you can use it all the time. And that probably, for a kid's bedroom, is what you're going to be doing.
- Dean: Absolutely.
- Ben: But what you never know is how the airflow is going to feel until you've got there.
- Dean: Yes, that's it.
- Ben: I was reading an article the other day about the summer comfort. A lot of people immediately think open the windows in the summer, when actually, you've got those shades on your south side. You may well find you're just shading everything. And if you want to open the windows, open them, but for a lot of the time, you won't need to.
- Dean: Hopefully.
- Ben: And heading up to the final – I'm imagining this is the lookout deck, right at the top with a panorama across Graven Hill.
- Dean: So, family bathroom. This will be the spare room for the time being.
- Ben: That's going to be really smart, isn't it? For the spare room.
- Dean: Yes.
- Ben: How big are your windows?
- Dean: These are one-point-four square.
- Ben: That's bigger than ours. Ours, I think, are one-point-three, possibly. Only just. That's bigger than ours. How are you finding that opening and closing on this one? Does it get clunky?
- Dean: No. I have to say, the mechanism and everything has all been brilliant.
- Ben: So, it's just furniture, if it's going to bump into furniture or anything.
- Dean: Yes. I think these will be used as tilt windows most of the time, and we'll only use them as turn windows if it got hot in here for whatever reason.

Ben: Top of the house is the one thing that visits will tell us that all the hot air – this is going to be your hottest area up here, even if it's just fractionally hotter. That's the window that's probably going to be open a lot, that skylight.

Dean: Yes. That will be opening. So, we'll be able to just have those open a little bit and hopefully that will just allow the heat to purge out if we need it to.

And this is the master suite. We've got a dressing area, an en-suite along the end, and then this is our bedroom.

Ben: Just a few more questions and then we'll wrap up, and one of them has got to be, okay, you've got your house, and this is a shell, more or less. So, how do you see things going forwards from here?

Dean: Well, I just came in this morning actually, and I'm sat at my desk basically thinking of exactly the question you've just asked me. There's a list of things that I can write out which we can do now and we need to do now.

What we're really working towards is being able to move in as soon as we can. So, we're just trying to tick off the things that we know we need to do for building control. So, off the top of my head, the ground floor needs a flooring level putting in, we need flooring on the upper floors, fire doors, we need the fire treatment on the inside of the walls, there are a few bits to finish on the outside, some window reveals and things. Then the service runs. We've got to get the electrics in, the MVHR in, we've got to get a gas boiler in – those are the things at the moment, big chunks that will need to be done.

Ben: Would you move in before it was completely finished, or might you have to?

Dean: I think we definitely would. I'm not sure how we're going to define finished on this project, if I'm being completely honest. I think we're certainly going to move in before we've decorated everything, before we've got all the rooms finished. I think we'll try and focus on getting the main family bathroom done and we'll leave the en-suite, for example.

We'll just do what we need to do to move in and then we'll treat it as a longer term project from there.

Because we've got the pressure, like I guess most people have, that we're renting at the moment and the sooner we move out of that, that's a thousand quid a month that we can spend on this

rather than on that. But then we've also got the dilemma of the VAT reclaim and we don't want to move in and then we're buying loads of stuff we can't reclaim the VAT on afterwards. So, we're trying to balance that a little bit.

Ben: There's no doubt as well, that once you've moved in, the pressure is off from progressing the project forwards. So, perhaps you sit back a bit. And I imagine you possibly, like me, might be feeling a bit of fatigue now?

Dean: Without a doubt. I am absolutely exhausted from working on this project. I just want to spend time with Hannah and Hugo as well. There's a lot of time spent on this that I've not been able to spend with them. That's probably the hardest bit, to be honest.

I think I'm definitely prepared to relax what I feel is a finished state, just to be able to live here and just to get on with life again. Because that was always one of the benefits of going with a CLT. As you can see, we've got finished walls, effectively. There's no plastering to do here. In theory, there's no painting. We could paint, but we don't have to. So, we could potentially be quite close to moving in.

Yes, I just want to be able to relax.

Ben: Finance then. One thing I remember, you gave a presentation at the National Self-Build and Renovation Centre, and looked very organised, very considered, which is way better than I did. So, how is finance going for you?

Dean: Well, we're still here and we're still above water, which is the positive.

We're over budget, although I was talking to Hannah about this and I think that really I'd describe it as being the predictions are well under budget or were too low. The reality is now hitting of what this is actually costing, and there's nowhere to run anymore. You look at the bank statements and ...

I would say that we're probably around eight to ten percent over budget at the moment, or as I say, we under budgeted by eight to ten percent. So, we've not spent more on luxury things, if you like. That's just the cost of delivering what we have here.

So, what it really means is that we've put a bit of a squeeze on where we go from here. So, we'll have to do a bit more work ourselves, for sure, and we'll just have to try and squeeze those

quotes in for the remainder of the work. And as I say, we'll leave whatever we can and do it in [inaudible] time.

As you know, there's two things, isn't there? There's the budget and then there's cashflow. I think cashflow is probably the slightly trickier problem for us at the moment. We have enough to get through, I think, what we need to do, but ...

Ben: The good thing as well is that you have paused things really, haven't you?

Dean: Yes.

Ben: By doing this, you've got a house, you know it's here. It's just that next hurdle to you need to keep spending money until it is a house that you can live in.

The other thing that I need to point out here is that you weren't a homeowner before this. That's a big change.

Dean: Absolutely. I don't know whether it makes it easier or harder, to be honest. We didn't have the problem of having to sell somewhere, but then we didn't have a big chunk of money either.

We probably had three revaluations as we've gone along so far, to then release the funds. That's all been brilliant. We've been using Ecology Building Society, who have been fantastic. There have been times where I've been caught out by an invoice that's come in and I've emailed Ecology saying, 'we need another release.' And I've checked my bank account later in that day, and it's been there. That's just been really, really good.

So, we've got value still to release, which is good. That money is there. And that's the good thing. We have built the value. We've not got ahead of ourselves. So, the building is worth what we've spent on it, if you like, which is good news.

I think ultimately what it means on the budget is that gone are the dreams of any sorts of luxuries, essentially. It's just barebones basics to get in and then we'll develop it over the next two, three years or whatever it takes. But as long as we get in and it's comfortable, which I'm sure it will be, then we can just get on as a family and we can take it on from there.

Ben: What about the exciting side, building a house, are you just in a slightly drained place at the moment or is this still a really good thing to be involved with and a path to have gone down?

Dean: I'm glad it's you that's asking the question really, because you know how it feels.

Everyone you talk to, there's a couple of questions. Firstly, 'it must be amazing, it must be exciting,' and then they say, 'when are you moving in?' And yes, it is exciting, but there's so much to think about that in my experience, you don't really get to sit there and go, 'oh yay, this is so exciting,' depending on how you approach it.

Ben: Or something else takes a hit. I'm afraid that's what I found on my own project is, that actually, my business has really suffered because I've tried to enjoy the project and spend time filming it. But luckily, in a way, there's a little bit of an overlap. So, although it's hit me in the short-term, I always think long-term.

And I have thoroughly enjoyed it. I think we talked a little bit about fatigue, that I certainly feel, with a project that's gone effectively so well – yes, we've had plenty of challenges along the way, but it's gone well. So, what happens when these things go wrong? It must be an absolute wrecker really.

Dean: Yes. I can certainly see [that]. Nothing really has gone wrong for us, to be fair. Like you say, there's been plenty of challenges, and because I'm managing it and I've been involved in the design details as well, I've felt the stress of all of that. Which is why I'm sort of hesitant to say I've enjoyed it because it's felt like really hard work.

But I do get joy in coming here, for sure. I love being in this space. Although like we were saying earlier, it almost still doesn't quite feel like it's our house. It's like I'm working on this for someone else. And because you've got scaffolding up, there's still plenty of details which are a bit raw, it doesn't quite feel like a home yet.

But it's getting there and we had contractors in finishing off the cladding. They've all gone now so, I've been able to, sort of, tidy up inside, so it feels a bit more like a home now. But yes, I do love the house. I haven't fallen out of love with the house.

Ben: That's the most important thing. I think you're well on track and what's going to be important for you is just keeping the progress. You need to be able to see that things have not stopped, even if that's just in planning, which I bet you've got it all in hand.

I just wanted to say a massive thank you for taking me around today.



Dean: You're welcome. Hopefully when it's finished, whatever that state is, you can come back and you'll be able to sit down on a sofa or something like that, some sort of luxury.

Ben: I would love it.

Dean: Yes, okay. Thanks Ben.