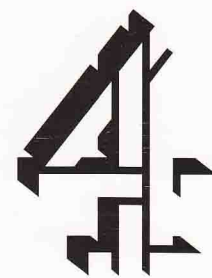


GRAND DESIGNS



DREAM HOMES FOR THE REAL WORLD | AUGUST 2009 | £3.50

SUMMER STYLE

SUNNY HOMES PACKED WITH INSPIRATION

GARDEN ROOMS

THE EASY WAY TO GAIN EXTRA SPACE

COASTAL CHIC

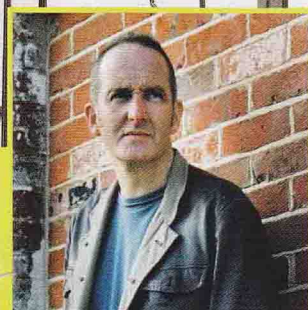
A STUNNING SEASIDE COTTAGE RENOVATION

OUTDOOR LIVING

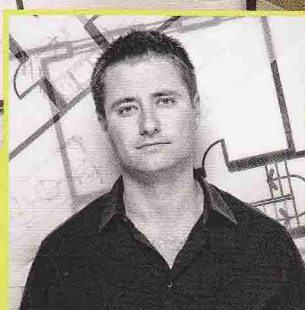
GORGEOUS GARDEN BUYS

BAG A BARGAIN

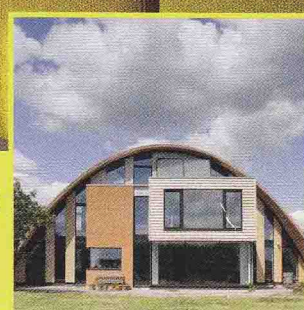
HOW TO FIND THE BEST DEAL AT PROPERTY AUCTIONS



KEVIN McCLOUD
THE LATEST SOLAR PANELS



GEORGE CLARKE
EXPERT ADVICE ON CONVERTING A GARAGE



TV HOUSE
THE ECO HOME WITH ZERO ENERGY BILLS



PLUS STYLISH STORAGE ♦ WOOD FLOORING FOR EVERY BUDGET ♦ PROJECT PLANNER



HOUSE ON THE HILL

VICKY THORNTON'S DECIDEDLY MODERN HOME IN SOUTH-WEST FRANCE IS PERCHED HIGH ABOVE THE NEARBY VILLAGE, BUT THANKS TO CLEVER USE OF REGIONAL MATERIALS IT BLENDS PERFECTLY WITH ITS RURAL SURROUNDINGS

WORDS **OLIVER BENNETT**
PHOTOGRAPHY **CHRIS TUBBS**

How does your home become *of* the landscape, rather than merely *in* the landscape? It's a perennial problem for self-build houses, a conundrum, particularly in the globalised construction industry, where materials have often racked up some serious air miles: roof slates from China; flooring from the Philippines.

At Petit Bayle, architect Vicky Thornton's house in France, there's been a real effort to make it part of its locality. This dramatic building, like an irregular wooden box on top of a bed of stone, is made from local materials as far as possible, was built by local people, and is indivisibly knitted into the *terroir* by responding to its location in a manner that is utterly 'site-specific'. 'The technology comes from regional house building, and the form of the house is generated to maximise the local views,' says Vicky. 'This house couldn't be anywhere else.' Once inside, this becomes clear as you walk towards the light-flooded living room with its amazing view at the end of the house.

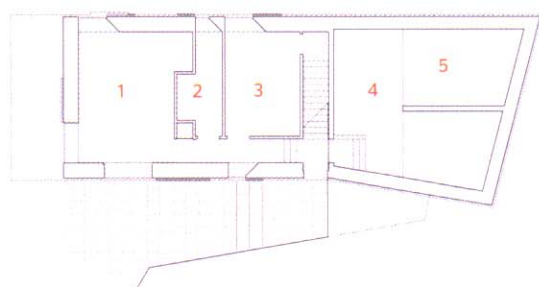
Petit Bayle's exterior is uncompromisingly modern. Indeed, when the lights are on at night, it's almost space age. Its roof is shaped like a valley, with large futuristic flanges on either side of the signature balcony. But the ground floor is made of the local stone, recycled from a nearby house, the chestnut cladding comes from the Dordogne region, and the roof is planted, so that you won't even be able to see it on Google Earth. 'It looks like a big statement, but it's quite tucked away,' says Vicky. 'You can see it from the road only if you look out for it. There's no passing traffic.'__

right Using local stone for the ground floor and locally sourced chestnut cladding for the first floor, this three-bedroom new-build blends perfectly with the landscape. The wing-shaped green roof adds to the camouflage





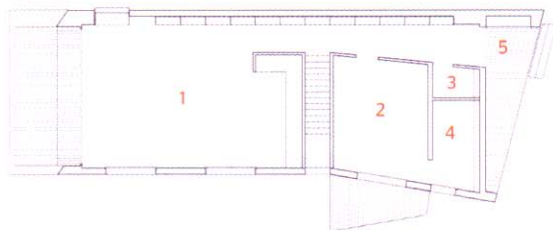
ground floor



ground floor

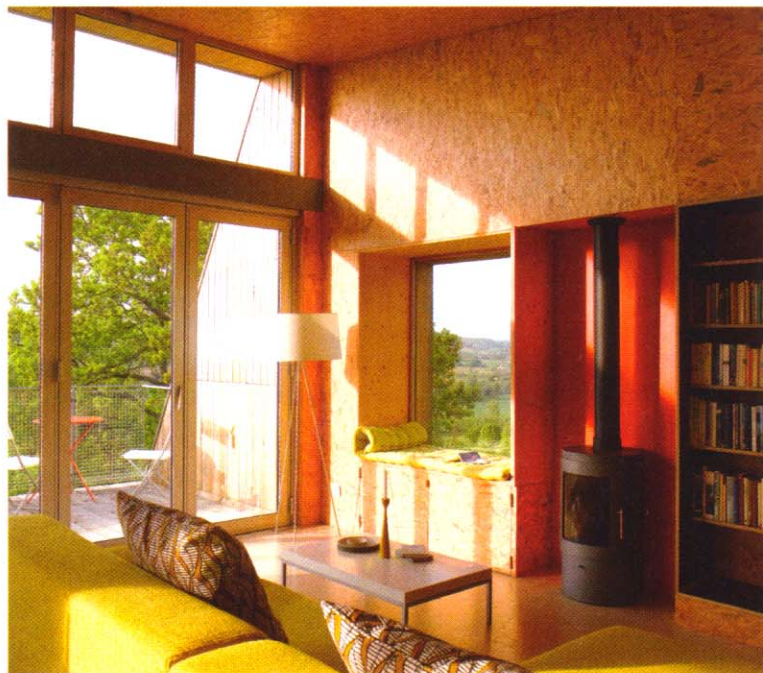
- 1 bedroom/studio
- 2 shower room
- 3 bedroom
- 4 utility
- 5 tank room

first floor



first floor

- 1 living/dining/kitchen area
- 2 master bedroom
- 3 toilet
- 4 en suite
- 5 entrance

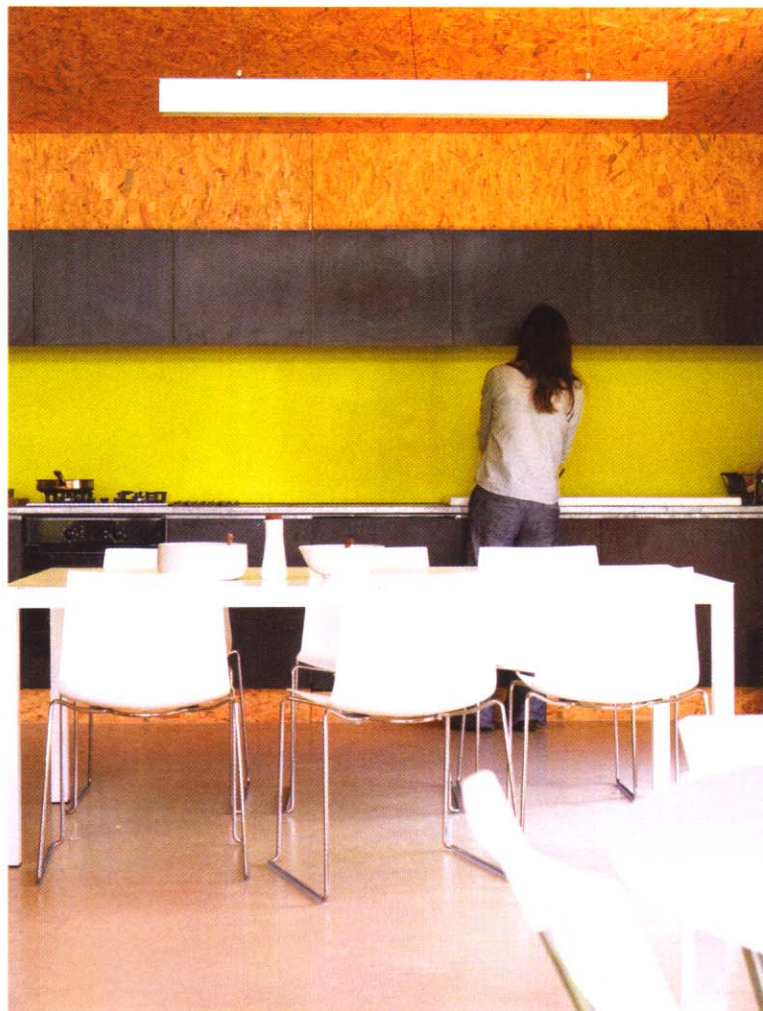


above right The living room is simple and cosy, with its built-in window seat and woodburning stove **below right** Simple furniture in the kitchen area adds to the deliberately unfinished look of the OSB walls **opposite** The decked terraces are the perfect spots for taking in views down the valley

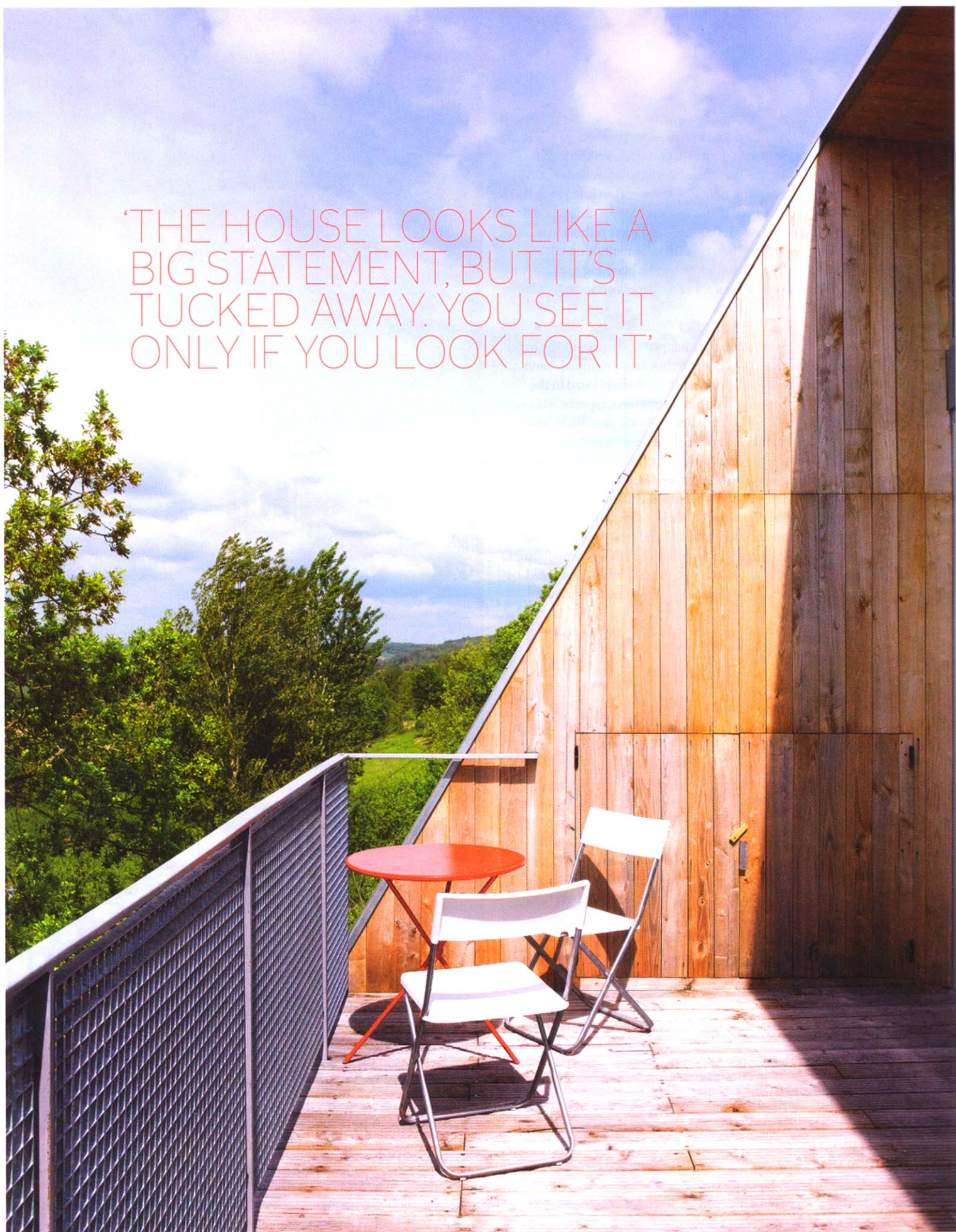
Petit Bayle is in the Tarn-et-Garonne region of south-west France – above Toulouse, below the Lot valley – on a steep ridge. Sunflowers, stone buildings, rolling fields: this is France profonde, the deep, rural interior beloved of the French and often lived in by the British. At the front is a fir plantation; beyond the house a slope, looking towards the beautiful fortified village of Lauzerte, five kilometres away. 'It's a wonderful area,' says Vicky, who spends her French days making ceramics and cycling around its lanes. 'There's always a market on somewhere, whatever day of the week.'

She knew the site from old as her parents had a house next door: a historic property made of local stone with typical shuttered windows, garnished with a delightful pigeoniere – a fancy dovecote. 'I always noticed that their house was very good in terms of thermal control,' she says. 'It's cool in summer which is a big thing here as it gets so hot.' An adjacent spare parcel of land offered the chance to build, so in 2005, Vicky designed the three-bedroom Petit Bayle on two storeys, the bottom one stone, the first floor mainly wood, with plans to harness the strong southern sun by way of solar thermal panels installed on the wing-like roof. She included three terraces, to bring the inside out; to make the wider environment as much a part of the design as the house itself.

Vicky's design rose to the challenge of the site – a steep slice of scrub, long and narrow – the 6m by 18m house uses the hillside as a feature. At first the foundations of the house were designed to be stepped, but an inexplicable local rule forbade building it on two levels. 'It's now mounted on an 18m-long slab,' says Vicky. 'It didn't make any difference to the design.' Plus, it gave her lots of space for a sustainable engine room in the lower ground floor of the house. __



'THE HOUSE LOOKS LIKE A
BIG STATEMENT, BUT IT'S
TUCKED AWAY. YOU SEE IT
ONLY IF YOU LOOK FOR IT'



Of course, Vicky needed planning permission before she could go ahead. 'You have to be registered in France, so I made the application through a French architect friend,' says Vicky. 'They have a regional equivalent of CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) so first I took the plans to their representative.' She liked it, but the local Mayor didn't. 'It didn't fulfil his notions of local building, and he wanted tiled roofs rather than a green roof. Fortunately, the DDE – Direction Départementale de l'Équipement – overruled the Mayor and Vicky gained planning permission in April 2006, nine months after her first application.

Vicky chose a contractor who lived half an hour's drive away. 'He said he could start in July, but started in November and finished last year.' Still, it went well. 'Most French people are amazed it happened so quickly.' The build cost €280,000 – luckily, Vicky snuck in before sterling really dropped – and she is confident that it was much cheaper than it would have been in the UK. The stone storey turned out to be one of the most expensive aspects. 'Although the stone is everywhere, it was a big cost at about €30,000,' says Vicky. She fitted metal shutters to the lower level and the front door; something that refers to the functional doors on the farm buildings of the south of France.

As she wanted the house to be as sustainable as possible, Vicky installed various capturing devices. 'There are two storage tanks for water, to flush the toilets and irrigate the garden and green roof,' she says, and the solar thermal panels on the roof go down to a collector to fire the hot water and potentially also the underfloor heating (which she augments with an efficient woodburning stove). The heating isn't actually needed too much: 'It's very well insulated and the solar control is done via the shutters.' The oak-framed windows, __

right Vicky designed the house to make the most of the views, bringing the living space outside with the use of glazed folding doors and expansive terraces

MONEY MATTERS

A CONTEMPORARY NEW-BUILD USING LOCAL MATERIALS AND SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGIES

GROUNDWORKS	€22,000 (£14,960)
FOUNDATIONS, TERRACES, FLOOR SLAB	€30,000 (£20,400)
STONEMWORK	€30,000 (£20,400)
WATER STORAGE TANK AND PUMP	€2,000 (£1,360)
MAIN TIMBER STRUCTURE	€23,000 (£15,640)
METALWORK	€3,000 (£2,040)
GLAZING AND ROOFLIGHT	€13,000 (£8,840)
SLIDING FOLDING DOOR AND LIGHTS OVER	€10,000 (£6,800)
FIREPLACE INC. FLUE	€3,000 (£2,040)
SHUTTERS AND LOCKS	€6,000 (£4,080)
INTERNAL WALLS	€12,000 (£8,160)
ROOF COVERING	€15,000 (£10,200)
JOINERY (INCLUDING OAK STAIRCASE)	€10,000 (£6,800)
POLISHED SCREED FLOORING	€10,000 (£6,800)
PLUMBING (INCLUDING SANITARYWARE)	€13,000 (£8,840)
ELECTRICS AND UNDERFLOOR HEATING	€10,000 (£6,800)
APPLIANCES	€3,000 (£2,040)
SOLAR PANELS	€6,000 (£4,080)
FINISHES AND IRONMONGERY	€2,000 (£1,360)
KITCHEN INC. ALL JOINERY	€5,000 (£3,400)

TOTAL BUILD COST	€280,000 (£190,400)
CONVERSION RATE AVERAGE FOR 2007	€1=£0.68



TIMELINE

EARLY 2005	JULY 2005	APRIL 2006	NOVEMBER 2006
Site acquired	Planning submitted	Planning received	Contractors start on site



DECEMBER 2006
Groundworks

FEBRUARY 2007
Foundations and
lower level slabs

MAY 2007
Stonework

JULY 2007
Upper level

**AUGUST/
SEPTEMBER 2007**
Cladding

DECEMBER 2007
Internals

APRIL 2008
Finishes

MAY 2008
Completion

made by a local craftsman, are designed specifically to accentuate the views, to the extent that the reveals of the lower level windows have been chamfered to – as Vicky puts it – ‘scoop the view into the frame.’

Inside, the mood is functional but warm, and one notable aspect is that Petit Bayle is what Vicky calls a finish-free zone. ‘Nothing is painted. I’ve minimised the maintenance by using self-finished materials.’ For example, the walls upstairs are made of OSB – oriented strand board – a material usually used for hoardings. Do people think it seems unfinished? ‘No one has complained yet,’ she says. ‘It suits the character of the house.’ The floor throughout is polished screed, and the joinery is in phenolic (resin-covered) ply; again, ‘self-finished’ in a purple-brown colour.

One might assume this was about the Modernist idea of expressing materials, but as Vicky says, it was mainly due to her intention to have a place that would be low-maintenance, low-carbon and without unnecessary visual intrusion. ‘You often see white spaces full of timber furniture,’ she adds. ‘This is an inversion of that idea: the furniture is white and the walls are darker.’ The only exceptions are in the bedroom, where the OSB is painted white for calmness’ sake; and on the doors, painted a strong yellow throughout. Elsewhere, the interior tries not to upstage the views. The lighting is concealed in wall voids or is in standard lamps, and Vicky has tried to keep the furniture to a minimum.

Petit Bayle is not yet complete: one day, Vicky will install a ground source heat pump. There’s already a place for it, just as there’s a site for a natural swimming pool, and an orchard. And Vicky also plans to put a kiln in the house – as well as being an architect, Vicky is also a potter – some of her work can be seen on the shelves. Meanwhile, she’s content just to sit in her living room and enjoy her tremendous gallery of views. ★

Petit Bayle is available for holiday lets at themodernhouse.net

SUPPLIERS

ARCHITECT

**VICKY THORNTON IN ASSOCIATION
WITH JEF SMITH OF MELD
ARCHITECTURE**
(020 7490 5249; meldarchitecture.com)

MAIN CONTRACTOR

ARPOSE LEGRAND (+33 6 83 86 92 19)

WINDOW SUPPLIER

SARL DUFORETS (+33 5 63 04 43 74)

SOLAR HEATING

SARL BEDOURET (+33 5 63 95 86 57)

LIGHTING

ZUMTOBEL (020 8589 1800;
zumtobel.co.uk)
LUCERA (lucera.fr)

DINING ROOM TABLE

NAUGHTONE AT COEXISTENCE
(020 7354 8817; coexistence.co.uk)

DINING CHAIRS

CATIFA AT COEXISTENCE
(020 7354 8817; coexistence.co.uk)

KITCHEN TABLE

HABITAT
(0844 499 1111; habitat.co.uk)

MAIN BEDSIDE TABLE/SHELF

**LEDGE:ABLE SHELF AT
FUNKTIONALLEY**
(01924 466 040; funktionalley.com)

SOFA/BEDS/KITCHEN CHAIRS

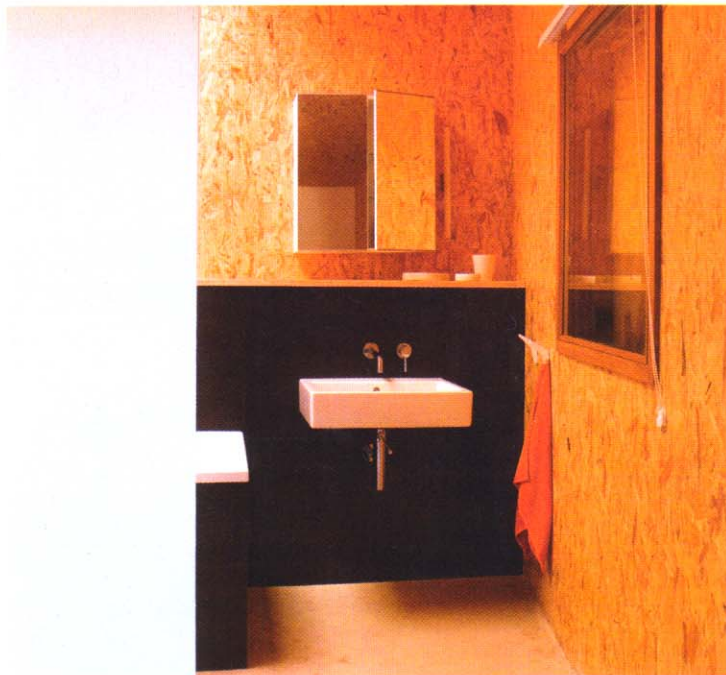
IKEA
(0845 358 3364; ikea.co.uk)

SANITARYWARE

DURAVIT
(0845 500 7787; duravit.co.uk)

WOODBURNING STOVE

WESTFIRE 21 AT STOVESONLINE
(0845 226 5754; stovesonline.co.uk)



above The textured finish of the oriented strand board contrasts with the sleek minimal bathroom **below** Much of the lighting is concealed in wall recesses – a great way to save space and avoid interfering with the uncluttered look

