

A high, vaulted ceiling soars over the main living area



**W**hen Amy and Adam Greenman inherited a piece of land on the edge of Dartmoor National Park from Adam's grandfather, building their own home seemed like the perfect opportunity to get on the housing ladder.

'As first-time buyers we were priced out of the local market,' recalls Amy, 'but then unexpectedly we had this great plot, to which we felt a huge emotional connection. A self-build project seemed like the perfect solution.'

This was the beginning of a seven-year process for the couple, one that would see their first design refused by the local planning authority. The location of their site, so close to the national park, meant that developing a new structure was always going to be tricky. 'We went for something quite radical initially,' admits Amy. 'When that was refused we decided to go back to the drawing board with a fresh design and new architects. That's when we met Kirsty and Stuart from Living Space Architects.'

The brief was to create a split-level family home that was sympathetic to its environment. 'They did a brilliant job of marrying what we wanted with what the planning authority would allow,' explains Amy. 'They knew that a positive

planning outcome was far more likely if the proposed building complemented the landscape.'

With a road running down one side of the naturally sloping plot and woodland enclosing the other, visibility and the choice of building materials had to be carefully considered. 'The finished design minimised the ridgeline and embedded the house in its environment by building into the bank,' explains architect Stuart Bayley.

A semi-subterranean and thermally efficient home was an exciting prospect, but Amy and Adam were faced with another hurdle when the planning office asked for proof that the site was garden and not protected farmland. 'We went digging through 40 years of old family photos to prove a manicured garden had been there,' says Amy. 'It was a huge relief when we found the shot that clinched the planning and allowed us to start building our first home.'

Today, the upside-down, lodge-style house has an open-plan living and kitchen space upstairs to take full advantage of the valley views, while four bedrooms and a bathroom downstairs are partially dug into the hillside.

The external walls are clad in beautiful Siberian larch that will fade to silver over time, but the crowning glory is the →

Rustic furniture sits well with the pared-back interior



Homeowner highlights

» 'Plan as much as you can in advance. It is never too early to start looking at sanitaryware or kitchens, for example, because you can get to the stage where you need to be creative but your enthusiasm for the build is waning.'

» 'Being 100 per cent sure of our design before we got the build priced was really helpful. Then we stuck to it, which avoided any amendments that would have affected the budget. It's also vital to factor in some money for landscaping because it is an important extension of your living space.'

» 'Had we known how well insulated the house was going to be we would not have fitted underfloor heating upstairs. We have never needed to use it.'

White kitchen units are topped with a quartz cement worksurface

