# Elderly woman's ambitious home project faces budget challenges on Grand Designs



In a recent episode of Channel 4's "Grand Designs," viewers were introduced to an ambitious project undertaken by Kathryn, an 83-year-old woman from Barnet, north London, who has resided on the same street for an impressive 60 years. Her goal was to replace an old music room with a modern, accessible three-bedroom semi-detached home adjacent to her Edwardian property, which she planned to mirror in design while incorporating contemporary sustainable features.

The plans for the new build were created by architect James Mak and included such environmentally-friendly amenities as triple glazing, an air source heat pump, ten solar panels, and a battery to optimise energy use. Kathryn had a budget of £600,000, a figure comprised of her lifetime savings and contributions from her son, Gordon, who sold his home to assist with the finances. Kathryn envisioned this new dwelling as a "facsimile" of her cherished home, intending to reside there for the foreseeable future.

As the episode progressed, however, it became clear that the project was facing significant financial challenges. Upon revealing the project's costs, Gordon disclosed an astonishing over-budget estimate ranging between £800,000 to £900,000. This revelation prompted reactions from viewers, with many expressing disbelief over the soaring expenses, particularly since Kathryn already owned the land on which the new house was built.

Comments from viewers included expressions of shock and incredulity at the figures presented. One remarked, "That was one ridiculous, overpriced, unnecessary, rip off build I've seen in the history of this show," while others questioned the practicality of the house for Kathryn's future, stating that given the overspend, the accommodation might not serve her needs well should further care become necessary.

Despite the financial turmoil, the final construction received praise from the show's host Kevin McCloud, who described the new home as "glorious" and a "long-lost sister" to Kathryn's original house. The design was well-suited for her needs, featuring a spacious open-plan living area and ensuring that all essential amenities were located on the ground floor, including a walk-in shower and adjacent bedroom.

The building process was marked by challenges, including inclement weather that hampered initial construction and a particularly costly requirement to connect the new house to the electricity grid. Kathryn informed McCloud that achieving this connection involved running power across the road, with the shocking cost reaching £19,000, which ultimately escalated to a total of approximately £50,000 for the necessary infrastructure.

The new home, designed to mimic the style of her previous residence, boasted modern materials and features that have dramatically reduced Kathryn's monthly energy bills from £343 to £66, marking a significant improvement in efficiency.

Kathryn's decision to move stemmed from the passing of her husband, Jon, just a year prior to the filming in 2023, and her acknowledgment that maintaining her older home was becoming increasingly difficult due to mobility issues. Reflecting on the importance of her location, Kathryn stated, "If I were to leave this street, I would feel desolate."

As the episode concluded, Kevin was visibly taken aback by the costs involved in the project, particularly the unexpected financial hurdles. The narrative highlighted Kathryn's determination to create a comfortable and accessible living space while balancing the implications of a significant budget overrun.

Overall, the episode encapsulated the complexities and unexpected challenges of home-building, especially for those entering their later years, as both Kathryn and her situation captivated viewers with her heartfelt story and ambition to secure a comfortable future in a familiar setting.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.instagram.com/granddesignstv/reel/DILgiptAQkr/> - This Instagram reel from Grand Designs provides visual insights into recent episodes, possibly including Kathryn's story, though it doesn't directly confirm details from the article.
* <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/grand-designs> - This URL links to the official page of Grand Designs on Channel 4, where viewers can find information about recent episodes and projects featured on the show.
* <https://www.channel4.com/news/energy-bills-soar-as-britain-faces-cost-of-living-crisis> - Although not directly related, this link about energy bills on Channel 4 News highlights the broader context of energy costs in Britain, which parallels Kathryn's significant reduction in energy bills.
* <https://www.homebuilding.co.uk/advice/design/planning-permission> - This webpage offers advice on obtaining planning permission for sustainable home designs, which aligns with Kathryn's project, though it doesn't corroborate specific details about her case.
* <https://www.trustedtraders.which.co.uk/building/energy-efficient-buildings> - This webpage discusses energy-efficient building techniques, similar to those used in Kathryn's new home, featuring elements like triple glazing and solar panels.