

Auckland couple's pioneering build project turned down for Grand Designs

COLLEEN HAWKES

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JASON DORDAY/HOMED

Rochelle and Joel Payne, who are building a rammed earth house with a 10 Homestar Design rating, are disappointed their build won't be featuring on Grand Designs NZ. They are aiming for a 10 Homestar Built rating and Living Building Challenge certification, which is likely to be the first in New Zealand.

A pioneering rammed earth building project that will see no waste leave the site has been rejected for the *Grand Designs NZ* TV series.

Rochelle and Joel Payne of Beachlands say they're "a bit floored" the show no longer wants to feature their project after a year-and-a-half of talks, especially after they were encouraged to apply.

"They were really excited about it at the start, but then the staff (at Imagination TV) kept changing," says Rochelle Payne.

ABDALLAH ALAYAN

The house, designed by architect Phil Smith, will feature solar panels attached to the balustrading that surrounds a roof terrace. Changing oxide colours in the rammed earth will create strata effects inside and out.

"We were told there were two main reasons they didn't want us. One reason was the fact that we were blogging about our build on social media, which apparently spoils the surprise. We have 500 followers but most of the TV audience wouldn't even know about what we are doing."

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ABDALLAH ALAYAN

Sustainable design features will include triple-glazed, thermally broken windows. The living area will be on the upper floor, with stairs leading up to roof terrace.

The second reason given was the fact that the couple had already started work on the site. "They won't film until you have a building consent, which we got before Christmas. And we have been talking to them for all this time, so they have had plenty of time to plan the start of filming. Once you have a building consent, you naturally start building."

"We don't think either of those reasons were insurmountable. Maybe they were worried we might use it as a political platform, as we have been advocating for incentives for green building from Auckland Council."

"We're still a bit baffled. There are so many hooks and angles with this build that make it a great story. They did tell us that Season Five (to screen next year), when our build would have featured, would be the last."

Joel Payne with Isabella and Nicholas at ASB signing mortgage documents last month. Rochelle posted this image on social media saying 'a big shout out to the specialist lending team at ASB Bank who could see the vision of The Living House and who are willing to loan us the money to make it happen when no other bank would'.

Candida Beveridge, series producer at Imagination TV says, "We'd love to be able to feature many of the applicants who come forward to be on *Grand Designs*, but due to limited resources we cannot cover all the wonderful homes that want to be on the show."

Beveridge denied that there were plans to stop the show after Series Five.

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The Paynes have a 10 Homestar Design rating for their rammed earth house and are working towards a 10 Homestar Built rating and Living House Building Challenge certification, which will be a first for New Zealand.

Not only will the house be highly insulated to passive house standards, it will also generate its own power. No waste water or sewerage will be exported from the site, which means it all needs to be disposed off right there, on a suburban section.

JASON DORDAY/HOMED

Rochelle and Joel Payne have 'practised' the construction system, building a playhouse first.

The couple are building the house themselves, with help as required. They have just finished the prototype playhouse. "Joel's made some very interesting discoveries about how to get good rammed earth," says Rochelle Payne. "The walls of the playhouse are pretty much how the house will look, with the different coloured oxides and the wave pattern. Joel's now about to start ramming the walls of the house."

"Anyone can do rammed earth," Joel Payne says. "If you can bake a cake you can manufacture and make rammed earth walls. There's no rocket science to it. It's just following formulae and mixtures, experimenting and playing around."

The couple have their first workshop planned with two architects from Northland who are interested in the build. And another enthusiast from Christchurch is coming up to work with them and learn about the system.

The couple perfected the rammed earth technique with the playhouse before embarking on the house.

And they are already considering a Grand Designs "replacement" and would be happy to talk to interested parties.

"We still want to tell our story and are now considering making a documentary about the build. It's a great opportunity to tell the story of a family that has decided to do something truly regenerative."

In the meantime *Grand Designs NZ* is gearing up for its fourth season this year. Beveridge says this series will feature a number of "exciting, architecturally innovative builds, ranging from high-spec houses to affordable homes in stunning geographical locations throughout New Zealand".

JASON DORDAY/HOMED

Coloured oxides highlight the rammed earth construction. The oxides are made from recycled car bodies.

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