

Unique country house shortlisted for award

DESIGN HONOUR: Success emerges from planning struggle

By Craig Robinson

A UNIQUE house within the heart of the Suffolk countryside which was at the centre of a David versus Goliath struggle has been nominated for a leading honour.

The Wilderness in Westleton, near Leiston, has been shortlisted for this year's *Daily Telegraph* British Homes Awards.

The contemporary looking property, which is set within 50 acres of woodland, was the vision of Sara Low.

The 70-year-old, who died on a cycling holiday in France with friends in 2007, faced a fierce fight with planning bosses to get the development approved.

She sold her previous home, Darsham House, to finance the building of the large modern country home, in which she only lived for 10 months.

Planning permission was finally obtained because of a clause in the planning laws inserted by John Gummer, then Suffolk Coastal MP, during his time as Environment Secretary, which allowed the building of grand new country homes in the countryside if they were of outstanding design.

Last night, Paul Acland, direc-



UNIQUE: The Wilderness in Westleton has been nominated for a top award. Inset: The late Sara Low

Photos: PAUL+O ARCHITECTS and SPIKE POWELL

tor of London based Paul+O Architects, which designed the property, said they were delighted it had been nominated for the *Daily Telegraph* award.

"It's a great building and I think it gets better as it ages because it settles into the landscape," he said.

"The fact that it has been short-listed is really testament to the tenacity of Mrs Low and her determination to get planning permission.

"It got built because of her and I think nominations such as this demonstrate that it was the correct

outcome. "It shows that the people who supported it – which included the local councillors – were right to have faith."

The winners of the award will be announced on July 1 at a presentation at the London Marriot in Grosvenor Square.