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& how to avoid them

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Welcome

A little nugget in the Queen's speech at the end of May confirmed the government's plan to pursue a 'Right to Build' your own home as part of its next housing bill. The initiative, which has cross-party support, would require councils to identify and release shovel-ready plots for self and custom builders. This potentially game-changing policy would open the door for more large-scale projects along the lines of Cherwell District Council's 1,900 home scheme at Graven Hill – as well as smaller ventures, such as Inhabit's innovative five-unit custom build development in south London (see page 146).

If you prefer a more traditional route to a bespoke home, then teaming up with a design and build specialist could be your best bet. These companies offer a variety of support services – from dealing with planning permission through to managing the work for you, or even completing the whole house so you can simply move in when it's ready. Our special section this month, starting on page 83, will introduce you to the merits of these hassle-free self build packages and put you in touch with the people who can help you take your project forward.

Whether you choose to go it alone or not, you'll still be heavily involved in specifying your new home – and this issue is packed with the inspiration and advice you'll need. On page 120, Mike Dade sets out some of the planning permission pitfalls that might catch you unawares – and explains how you can avoid them. We're also giving the lowdown on building with timber frame (page 66), eco-friendly heat recovery systems (page 75) and clever ways to add kerb appeal (page 78). If you're looking at reconfiguring an existing house, the Johnson's stunning update of an Arts & Crafts semi-detached property (page 24) is sure to inspire you. One of their favourite features is their new kitchen-diner extension, and we're helping you to perfect yours over on page 72.

MEET THE TEAM



IFEOLUWA ADEJEGBI is *Build It's* homes & design editor. With a keen interest in architecture, she's got an eye for the latest trends. Don't miss her advice on creating the perfect kitchen-diner (page 72) and the merits of polished concrete floors (page 80).

MIKE HARDWICK

is a consultant and project management specialist. In 2014 he was elected as the self build representative on NaCSBA's executive committee. Turn to page 84 for his insider's guide to working with a design and build package company.



TIM DOHERTY was the founding MD of the NSBRC and is the acting chief executive of NaCSBA. He advises on a range of issues, including finance and budgeting. On page 106, he explores the lighting and electrics we'll need for *The Build It House*.

MIKE DADE

is a planning specialist and *Build It's* plot guru. He's the author of several must-read books on land and planning. This month he helps you avoid common self build planning pitfalls (page 120) and checks out a sloping edge-of-village plot (page 129).



JULIAN OWEN is *Build It's* design doctor and architecture expert. He is a self build architect and the chairman of the Association of Self Build Architects. Read his tips on maximising the potential of workshops, warehouses and other industrial conversions on page 110.

ALAN TIERNEY

is a heritage buildings consultant. He runs Picketts Historic Building Conservation, offering hands-on advice to period property owners. On page 115 he reveals what listed building status could mean for your renovation project.



OPINDER UDDAR is a *Build It* award-winning architect and director of Lapid Architects. He specialises in self build and renovation and is a regular consultant at the National Self Build & Renovation Centre. He created the design for *The Build It House* and is part of our expert team at the *Build It Live* shows.

EDITOR'S FAVOURITE FEATURES

84



72



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August 2015 issue



50



33



24



41

READERS' HOMES

COVER STORY

A piece of home

24

With the help of a sympathetic architect, Tim and Fiona Johnson transformed an urban semi into an open, spacious home with design influences from Fiona's native Australia

Joined-up thinking

33

The Bennetts' Victorian farmhouse didn't take advantage of its gorgeous surroundings, but a modern extension with loads of glass has changed their outlook, in every sense

Bold & beautiful

41

A luxurious self build that's testament to the careful planning and quality control of its owners, the Watsons

Labour of love

50

Coastal builds are often tricky and the Barber brothers' story is no exception. Despite a sloping site and difficult access, they've triumphed with a Californian-style home

Remote possibilities

57

The Norgroves have gradually upgraded their Hebridean property, culminating in a curvy turf-roofed extension that has provided a distinctive finishing touch

RENOVATION & BUILDING

Self build guide: timber systems

66

It's sustainable, versatile and often has a quick build time on site: no wonder self builders are increasingly turning to timber for their projects. Chris Bates outlines the benefits and options of constructing your home this way

Perfecting the kitchen-diner

72

A shared, sociable space that's practical for cooking but also great for entertaining is the ideal that most people now aspire to. Here's how to create a kitchen-diner that works well – from design ideas to potential planning issues

Heat recovery: MVHR explained

75

An important aspect of a modern airtight home, mechanical ventilation and heat recovery systems save you money and allow your house to breathe. Find out how they work and what you need to know when specifying

Front of house

78

A property with kerb appeal maximises its value and makes coming home a pleasure. Pick up smart ideas here – from routine maintenance and quick fixes through to bigger projects, such as new doors or a relaid driveway

COVER STORY



84



78



72



17

DESIGN & BUILD SPECIAL

COVER STORY

What is a package home?

84

Mike Hardwick on how to choose a design and build firm that offers the right level of support for your project

Directory

88

Package builders from every sector, and great projects to inspire you

EXPERT HELP

The Build It House

106

The virtual project forges on, and this month it's all about the lighting and electrical installation. Budgeting expert Tim Doherty is at the helm to cost it all up

Raw appeal

110

Ever fancied living in a warehouse or factory conversion? Julian Owen sums up the appeal of industrial buildings, and explains how they can be turned into characterful homes

What is listing?

115

Conservation expert Alan Tierney begins a three-part series on listed properties, kicking off with why buildings are legally protected, and what it means for homeowners

COVER STORY

Common planning pitfalls

120

Unforeseen issues can add months to the process of gaining permission, but with Mike Dade's comprehensive guide, you might just see them coming

Branching out

129

Find out whether a pretty garden plot full of ornamental trees could offer an opportunity for a self build project

REGULARS

News

11

Build It's favourite finds this month

Oak frame diary

18

The scaffolding comes down to reveal a fine work in progress

Letters

21

MATERIALS: Concrete floors

80

Subscribe today

104

Ask our experts

123

Your project queries answered

Plots for sale

133

Next month

145

Coming up in September's issue

Focus on

146

Custom build specialist Inhabit

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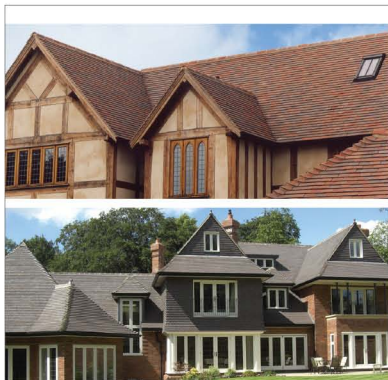
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JEREMY WRIGHT

Modern comfort

Freadman White architects fulfilled a young professional couple's desire to transform their impractical Melbourne townhouse into an inviting contemporary masterpiece.

An open-plan living room and kitchen-diner has been created to maximise the limited space available. The new zone seamlessly connects inside and out via a striking

collection of structural glazed panels and bifold doors, which help flood the interiors with light.

Concrete has been utilised to fantastic effect, both for the kitchen island and the external cladding. The high walled terrace – complete with characterful decking – offers the ideal location for entertaining guests.

For more details visit freadmanwhite.com

PROJECT OF THE MONTH

A glass act by Sculp IT

The task of transforming this five-storey terraced townhouse in Antwerp was awarded to Belgian architects Sculp IT. The firm set about introducing a stunning extension to improve the owners' lifestyle.

By installing a pair of imposing 3m x 6m glazed pivot doors and a fixed 6m x 3m horizontal pane above, the formerly dark internal spaces are now bathed with copious amounts of natural light. Together with the polished concrete floors, these elements beautifully link the garden to the triple height kitchen-diner.

The new extension's interior scheme features clean, sharp lines and a neutral palette that helps to reinforce the sense of multipurpose use. At the centre of this idea is a moveable concrete and timber island – another clever addition that can be rolled away to make even more room. A suspended office cantilevers over the open-plan ground floor space, making great use of the void.



For more information visit sculp.it

Eco build project given go ahead

Oldham council has approved plans for nine like-minded families to construct highly sustainable homes using recycled materials.

The new eco community, which is located on a former breaker's yard that was bought for £200,000 in February 2014, will deliver a variety of custom homes. The group has also received support from the Homes and Communities Agency in the form of a £79,000 grant towards planning costs. For more details visit www.invisible.build

£2,000,000

from the Veterans Accommodation Fund has been awarded to First Choice Housing Association (www.fcha.org.uk) to help ex-service personnel build their own homes. "This successful bid was down to good working partnerships. We are absolutely delighted that we will be able to help so many veterans in Wales whilst building on existing collaborations with military charities and councils," says Hilary Ryan, chief executive at the association.

Queen announces Right to Build

In May 2015 the Right to Build initiative was announced as a core part of the government's new housing bill in the Queen's speech.

The proposed law would task councils with not only keeping a register of those in their area that wish to self build, but also actively identifying suitable plots for them to build or commission their own home. The sites would be available shovel-ready, with services in place. For more information on the plans visit self-build.co.uk/right-to-build

What's on?

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openhouselondon.org.uk

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johncullenlighting.co.uk



Brand new initiative to guarantee a job well done

A government- and Trading Standards-approved scheme will give home improvers access to a website listing only vetted trades. These contractors have agreed they will only receive money for work that's been deemed satisfactorily complete by both parties.

Under the new Home Improvements Guarantee initiative, you won't make any upfront payments until you are happy with the work that's been done. The agreed sum can be deposited into a holding account and then released in stages or in full once the job is finished. Should there be a dispute, an independent surveyor will be invited to give their verdict and help resolve the situation. For more information visit homeimprovementsguarantee.co.uk

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brightonpermaculture.org.uk

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NSBRC, SWINDON
nsbrc.co.uk

industry news

A re-shuffle of policy-makers

The dust is settling after the general election and the major cabinet roles have been filled. Eric Pickles has departed and is replaced by Greg Clark as the new secretary of state for the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). As a former junior minister in the Department looking after decentralisation and planning policy, I suspect he will hit the ground running. He is a keen advocate of localism, which is good news because self build is popular at the local level. He also seems to be what political journalists like to call 'a moderniser'. Hopefully he'll drag the planning process into the 21st century.

I was delighted to see that Brandon Lewis has retained his position as minister of state for housing and planning, a role he took up in July 2014. Although he's only been in post for a relatively short period, he was in the chair for some of the most positive advances on self and custom building for decades, notably continued progress on the Right to Build initiative. A cornerstone of this initiative is the *Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act* led by Richard Bacon MP, which received royal assent and became law in March 2015. It requires that local authorities maintain a register of demand for self and custom build in their areas and consider this in discussion on planning matters. Although this was a Conservative-led initiative, it should be added that the Shadow Secretary of State for DCLG, Emma Reynolds, has been a huge advocate of the policy, as well as being an enthusiastic supporter of self build, too.

I'm delighted that there will be an opportunity for some continuity and a renewed impetus behind the fantastic work done so far to bring self and custom building to the many rather than the few. The aim is to make it a mainstream option and to remove the barriers that have held back so many projects in the past. Shortly before the election, Brandon Lewis personally wrote to every council leader and chief executive of English local authorities stating that: "This government strongly believes that custom and self build housing can play a crucial role in securing greater diversity [in housing supply] and help deliver the homes that people actually want".

In a market dominated by volume developers, it's good to have friends in high places and this tangible expression of support for individual self builders as well as smaller and medium scale house builders, is welcome. Progress like the exemption from the Community Infrastructure Levy and the introduction of a 10-unit threshold for Section 106 contributions shows real intent to deliver and I do hope that the government having a majority in the House of Commons, albeit a slim one, will allow a bit of stability and the basis to push these positive ideas through. I think we self builders can look forward to a period of progress and continued support over the next five years.



MIKE HARDWICK

is a self build consultant and project management specialist. He is the self build representative at NaCSBA and helps to deliver a three day self build course at the NSBRC in Swindon.

Follow Mike's blog online:
self-build.co.uk/blog/mike-hardwick



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£593



These elegant PVCu patio units offer a practical and cost-effective option for connecting your home's interiors with your garden space. They feature toughened low-E double glazing and also include a trickle ventilation system. **French doors**, £593, screwfix.com

product news

Great shopping ideas for your custom home project



↑ TOPPED OFF

Apply this durable covering to your self build scheme in order to achieve a modern finish, using a distinctive material. **VMZinc standing seam roof**, £100 per m², vmzinc.co.uk

→ GOOD COVER

With the capacity to seat up to four people, this FSC-certified trellis arbour is ideal for outdoor entertaining. It has been designed to support climbing plants and to fit into the corner of your garden. **Sorento arbour**, £590, forestgarden.co.uk



↓ OPEN SESAME

These insulated woodgrain-effect panelled garage doors are perfect for those seeking to establish a traditional look. They come with a 10-year guarantee, too. **Georgian Classic**, from £716 each, garador.co.uk



↑ A NEW CLASSIC

Suitable for both period and contemporary settings, this freestanding acrylic bath is a clean-lined modern piece that will add drama and wow factor to your home. **Penrose**, £1,600, heritagebathrooms.com



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2 Rooflite slimline DPX, from £80, sterlingbuild.co.uk



3 Velux Cabrio balcony, from £1,889, velux.co.uk

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interiors notebook

It's never too early to start looking for the finishing touches for your self build



Shopping list

- 1 If you want seating that's been specifically designed with relaxation in mind, this Scandinavian-inspired, blonde ash perch will fit the bill. Leon armchair, £435, grahamandgreen.co.uk
- 2 This contemporary wood and metal light fitting, finished in high gloss white, will add interest to a kitchen, hallway or bedroom. Gaucho pendant, £129, fishpools.co.uk
- 3 Create an intricate design with minimal effort using these mosaic sheet tiles made from glass. Hammered beige mix, £5.49 per m², tilemountain.co.uk
- 4 Allow light to flood into your rooms while maintaining a good degree of privacy this summer with these classic window fittings. Nevada shutters, £240 per m², santafeshutters.co.uk
- 5 Place this elegant art deco style occasional table in your living room to add a touch of opulence to your interior scheme. Huxley table, £245, withinhome.com



An oak frame BUILD DIARY

NAMES Mark & Julia Jones
LOCATION Shropshire
PROJECT Oak frame self build
HOUSE SIZE 235m²
PLOT COST £150,000
PROJECT COST circa £400,000
WORK BEGAN November 2014



The scaffold on Mark and Julia's project has been taken down to reveal a beautiful work in progress

The oak is starting to look really good now as Julia has been using the oxalic acid to clean it; she's done all 21m² of it herself. As I described last month the treatment yields amazing results but it's horrible stuff to work with. The fumes are similar to ammonia and they really do get on your chest a bit if you are close to it and breathe in. Fortunately the job is nearly finished now.

One weekend Julia had a great session with a power washer; blasting the residue off the surface of the oak. As a result, the vapours have now dissipated and the oak looks amazing – just like it did when coming out of the workshop.

A major milestone

The scaffold finally came down and it was almost like the unveiling of a piece of art. I have been waiting for this moment for months; to finally stand back and look at the house in its full glory. I can now see out of the window apertures to appreciate the

Self building is like running a marathon and I have never felt so tired in my life. Work is also extremely busy at present, but the moment 5pm strikes I have to be away to get on site for 6pm. I try to work on the house for at least two or three hours. I'm on my own now as the tradesmen have moved on to other jobs until I get inside the building for first fix electrics and plumbing. I often look at the mountain of tasks in front of me and wonder if I will ever get it all done at this rate. It will be fine, of course; it's just tediously slow and tiring. The weekends aren't so bad because I can get a good run at things, but then it's back to work as usual on Monday.



views – and I've not been disappointed. There's loads more interest from passers-by now, too. No end of people are pulling up and coming over to tell us how nice the house looks. The sense of pride and smugness is worth every penny and hour spent on the project so far. This kind of milestone is what energises you and urges you on to the next one.

I did have one mishap in the sense that the scaffold was scheduled to come down one Tuesday – so I pressured the roofers and plasterers to finish works by the weekend, which they did. That's where the good news ends, though. I'd ordered glass for the ridge light to be delivered on the Friday, ready for me to fit at the weekend. The part arrived on time – but it was in 25,000 pieces, meaning it couldn't be installed before the scaffold was taken down. The supplier, Mid Wales, however, has offered to install it for me using their roof ladders, as they accept that they were at fault on this occasion.

Rising tensions with our neighbour seem to have dissipated for now. We are observing the restricted hours as far as we can and are keeping as many parked cars off the verge and on site as we can practically manage. I suspect the stern letter we wrote warning her that she was causing a risk to all by coming on site may have had some effect.

Stroke of luck

My faith in human kindness has been restored. One of Welsh Oak Frame's clients has recently demolished the house he bought (to make way for a replacement) and had 600 tonnes of hardcore. I asked if he had any spare and he generously gave me 200 tonnes, which has saved us around £2,000. It occurred to me that the self build community should create a website to share materials, as no building project comes away without any waste or left over materials. I



have approximately 600 brand new slates that the suppliers won't take back, plus ridge tiles, bricks, vents and loads of other bits and pieces that I am sure someone else could make good use of.

Ground conditions

Since digging on site commenced I noted that the soil was very loamy in places and that rainwater would stand for some time before dispersing. I was anxious that there was no percolation occurring in the ground. It did not make any sense really as the geology of the area is very sand oriented, which should drain. But our plot seemed to have loads of clay within the soil, which worried me. There's also no mains drainage in the village, so both my storm and foul water will have to run off into acceptably performing soakaways. If this cannot be achieved than I could be facing a huge bill for hiring specialist engineers to come in and assess the situation. One evening I decided to use my digger and started creating holes nearer the front of the house

and at the edge of the plot nearer the road, where the water didn't seem to stand for long. At around 2m deep I hit rich yellow sand. I turned the hose pipe on and couldn't believe it – the water was running for an hour and the pit would not fill. So I've found a perfect soakaway area. I gathered some data and have submitted this to an engineer to create a design to send to the council, which should get that condition signed off.

I am now redesigning my drainage runs and plan on digging trenches at the weekend, all to the front of the site. It's going to be a bit messy as I have service trenches to excavate for electricity, gas and water, so I am going to have channels crossing each other at carrying heights (ie water at 750mm, electricity at 450mm and drainage based upon the fall point, which I need to allow for). I'll have to be careful to note the run locations. But I must admit that I'm happy to have found a solution.



NEXT MONTH

MARK AND JULIA MOVE CLOSER TO A WATERTIGHT SHELL AS THEIR WINDOWS AND DOORS ARRIVE ON SITE – PLUS PREPARATION FOR THEIR SERVICE CONNECTIONS STARTS TO BEAR FRUIT

WIN!

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One reader will win an Ideal Standard Parisi suite and Tonic shower enclosure worth £2,000. The prize includes delivery, but not installation. No cash alternative will be offered. Entry is only open to consumers who are aged 18 years or over and who are resident in mainland UK. Castle Media and other companies involved in the competition may use your details to let you know about other products and services we think may be of interest to you. Occasionally we make names and addresses known to vetted companies. Please state clearly on your entry if you would NOT like your details passed on by ticking the checkbox on the online entry form. Castle Media will use your information for administration and analysis. Please state clearly on your entry if you would NOT like to be contacted by ticking the checkbox on the online entry form. All winners will be picked at random. Names and counties of winners from all the competitions in this issue are available by sending a SAE to Winners August 2015, Build It, Castle Media Ltd, Peasemore House, Newbury, Berkshire, RG20 7JH. The competition closes on 1 August 2015. If you enter after the advertised closing date you will not be entered into the competition.

your views:

Got a funny story, a gripe or some superb self build advice? Write to us at buildit@castlemedia.co.uk or the address below for your chance to win a prize



star letter

Love thy neighbour

The star letter writer wins an Einhell cordless drill, worth £119.99

We are a retired couple with newly won planning permission for our dream retirement bungalow on a great infill plot in an upmarket residential street. We suspect (actually, we know) that our prospective neighbours would much prefer for us to go away. Let's just say that the planning objection letters showed a mixed response. What's the best way to win them over?

We have already embarked on a full-scale charm offensive, which we hope should hold off any potential confrontation until the bulldozers move in. Beyond this, ideas unhelpfully offered by friends so far include: supplying coffee and croissants at 11am each morning in a heated kiosk with detailed information on the benefits of self building – with comfy chairs for visitors to browse through past editions of *Build It* magazine; borrowing a contractor's ladder and washing all neighbouring windows once a week; playing loud (but high quality) music to drown out construction noise; feigning deafness when confronted; and continually saying that things would have been much worse if the developers had got the land. On reflection, though, I think we'll just have to get on with it. I'm sure that they'll love us and we'll love them – eventually!

Kelvin and Joan Pattison, via email

Editor's reply: *Keeping local residents on side is a tricky part of any self build – if you fall out with your builder, you'll sack them and (hopefully) never have to see them again, but you ideally want to live in harmony with your neighbours for years to come. Keeping them aware of what's going on at different stages of the project might be a helpful starting point.*

Dedicated to diversity

It was good to have an instant overview of the best new-builds in your 15

Contemporary Designs feature, and it brought it home to me that there's no one-size-fits-all modern house style these days. It seemed to show that what characterises a contemporary property is not so much style or materials, but eco-friendliness and lots of big views to the outside world. The rest is all about personal taste and fitting in with what's already there (and what the planners allow, of course). Definitely food for thought for anyone who thought 'modern' meant throwing up a plain white render and glass box.

Denise Moore, via email



Perplexed by PV

I thought that one solar photovoltaic (PV) panel was much like another until I read your feature on the subject. Having dallied with specifying solar electric power for our house, I'm now thinking about micro-inverters, integrated panels and combined solar PV/

thermal systems; all things I wasn't really aware of before. So, thanks for the heads-up – but by the time I've got my head around the new products on the market, it will likely have all moved on again.

Les Barron, via email



Editor's reply: *Solar PV technology is indeed moving very quickly, so if you're thinking of investing it's a good idea to engage the help of an independent consultant who may be more up to speed than you on the latest developments. Or alternatively, watch this space – it's without doubt a subject Build It will return to regularly.*

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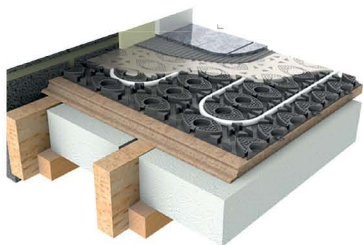
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Readers' homes

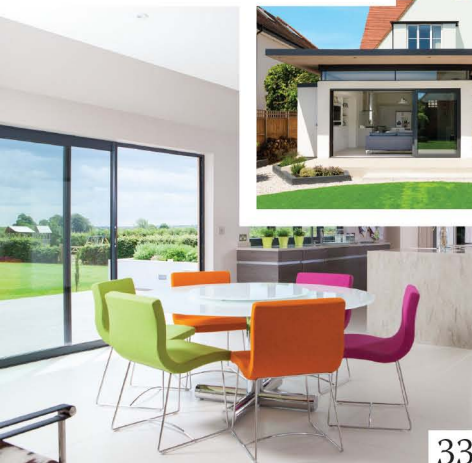
SELF BUILD + RENOVATION + EXTENSION + CONVERSION + IMPROVEMENT



50



24



33



41

24 A PIECE OF HOME

Inspired by the open spaces found in a typical Australian property, the Johnsons have extended their south London semi and made a dramatic difference to the way they live

33 JOINED-UP THINKING

The Bennetts' farmhouse had everything but the view, so they replaced some outbuildings with a modern extension, and upgraded the Victorian house to turn it into the perfect property

41 BOLD & BEAUTIFUL

A meticulously planned and beautifully finished project, the Watsons' luxurious self build is a tribute to their clear-headedness and quest for high quality

50 LABOUR OF LOVE

Building this cliffside Cornish home had its challenges – a sloping site and tricky access – but the end result is a great modern coastal property

57 REMOTE POSSIBILITIES

A programme of renovation, culminating in an unusual turf-roofed extension, has turned the Norgroves' Hebridean home into a cosy, comfortable place to live

MORE ONLINE >>

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A piece of home



A growing family and an entourage of visiting Australian relatives prompted **Tim and Fiona Johnson** to find a bigger property they could turn into their own Antipodean-inspired home

WORDS **JANE CRITTENDEN** PHOTOS **JAMES FRENCH/ANDREW BEASLEY**

A trip back to Fiona Johnson's Australian homeland set the wheels in motion to sell the terraced London house she lived in with her husband, Tim, and their two sons, Louis and Billy. "I'd been visiting my three siblings and I felt so inspired by the way they lived," she says. "I'd been in London for 15 years but I began to crave a home like theirs, with lots of light and space. Our terraced house suddenly seemed claustrophobic – it was so narrow that I regularly banged the pram against both walls when I walked in through the front door."

The couple were also conscious that their boys – then aged 18 months and three-and-a-half years – would need more space and their small garden just wouldn't do. After briefly toying with the idea of moving away from London altogether, the couple decided to stay put in the capital where they run their travel business, Club Europe.

THE JOHNSON FILE

NAMES Tim & Fiona Johnson

OCCUPATIONS Owners of a travel company

LOCATION South London

TYPE OF BUILD Extension & renovation

STYLE Arts & Crafts with contemporary addition

CONSTRUCTION METHOD Steel-frame extension clad in brick & render

HOUSE COST £1,200,000

HOUSE SIZE 307m² including 74m² extension

PROJECT COST £325,000

PROJECT COST PER M² £1,059

TOTAL COST £1,525,000

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED

February 2013

BUILDING WORK TOOK

Five months





“In the past we’d always gone about doing renovations cheap and fast, but this time around we wanted to make a long-term investment in our home”

“I said I’d carry on living here as long as we bought a house that reminded me of Oz, with plenty of room for my Aussie relatives to stay,” she says. “I wasn’t going to compromise on the garden or a drive, and I wanted a house with a wider hallway.”

Tim needed space for visiting family himself, so they began looking for a home that would better suit their needs. The couple went about their search methodically, driving around the local area and earmarking roads where they knew houses had off-street parking and good-sized gardens – no easy feat in London.

A place with potential

One day, a local estate agent alerted the couple to a five-bedroom Arts & Crafts house they’d seen in passing, and mentioned

that the owners might be interested in selling. The couple paid a visit; they liked the look of the outside, but when they walked in, what they saw ticked all the boxes on their wish list.

“We just looked at each other with massive grins,” says Fiona. “The house had been rented out so we could see it wasn’t perfect, but the potential was huge – this property had everything we wanted.” Despite their excitement, the couple weren’t blind to the house’s faults; Fiona knew they’d need to do some serious work to turn it into her ideal indoor-outdoor Australian-inspired home. But as they’d pushed their budget to the maximum to buy the property, they had to sit tight and save up before they could begin work.

One of the main issues with the existing house was the rear extension, which had been built in 2001. There were no direct



Left: The extension steps in to satisfy planning rules about building too far out along the boundary. Internally, an exposed wall was made with brick slips. Above: Kitchen units from Harvey Jones are teamed with grey floor tiles, which continue seamlessly outside

views and no access to the garden, it was starting to rot and the shallow steps in the kitchen were a trip hazard. Outside, more steps led down into the garden, which was about a metre lower down than the extension, and it looked as though the structure had been precariously built onto a plinth. Upstairs, there was little storage, the bathroom was dated, and the master bedroom ensuite had a bath but no shower. One of the worst features was a chimney breast that ran straight through the house, dominating the boys' bedrooms and cutting one of the converted attic's bedrooms in half.

"The biggest drawback was the lack of view to the garden," says Tim. "Fortunately the rooms had all been painted white so it wasn't offensive to live in, which we did for four years before we started work."

Dramatic changes

Towards the end of 2010, the ball finally started rolling. The Johnsons had enjoyed a good year with their travel business and had also spoken to their financial advisor about the project. He recommended a local builder, Billy Heyman from BTL Property, who came over to see the house and hear about their ideas. "We discussed our thoughts for an improved rear extension and Billy came up with some great suggestions, such as removing the chimney

breast and finding some extra storage solutions that we hadn't thought about," says Tim. "We really liked his manner, and as a result of that conversation we began to realise that the whole spec of our project really had to change."

Billy also suggested splitting the house on the ground floor. A defined step down into the planned kitchen-dining-living area would clearly differentiate between old and new. This would also mean bringing the garden level up, to provide a seamless transition to the outdoors. The living area immediately next to the garden could become a playroom, while the raised space behind it could be turned into a study area connected to the new extension.

When the Johnsons saw the quote, it was more than they were expecting at £320,000 – so rather than cut corners and compromise they decided to put the project back on hold. "In the past we'd always gone about doing renovations cheap and fast," says Fiona, "but this time we wanted to make more of a long-term investment in our home. We thought Billy's price was fair for the work and that we ought to follow his advice and do the renovations properly." The Johnsons saved for another year and then in January 2012 picked up where they'd left off. "We did go about the project in a slightly unconventional way as we didn't have drawings and we didn't put the job out to tender," says Tim. "Quite simply, Billy had been recommended and we trusted him."

Compatible personalities

By now, Billy had forged a relationship with local architects, Granit, and suggested the couple speak to one of its directors, James Munro, about drawing up the final plans. "We didn't know anything about the firm but when we met James everything fell into place," says Tim. "We really liked his approach to designing for light and space because it fitted in with what we needed from our new extension."

Tim and Fiona admit choosing the right people for their project was largely based on instinct. "For us, personality and relationships are the critical ingredients," says Fiona. "Cost was important, too, but we felt that if we were going to embark on a project like this then we had to get on with the architect and builder."

James worked closely with the couple on the design, paying particular attention to the family's day-to-day living routines and asking them the crucial question of how they envisaged using their new home. "I said I pictured my kids doing their homework at the

WE LEARNED...

DON'T RUSH DECISIONS as it's easy to make a mistake and this will cost you in the long run. We chose the wrong paint colours – twice!

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE how many plug sockets you will need. We were advised to put in more than we thought we'd need, and we're glad we took that advice as we use them all.

USE EVERY INCH of space. Our architect suggested we put a wine fridge into the dead space under the raised plinth in the extension, which was a fantastic idea.

Below: The raised study area has a sense of separation and seclusion, but a transparent glass balustrade sustains the connection with the rest of the room – with the added appeal of views out to the garden

island while I'm cooking dinner and washing the dishes," says Fiona. "I wanted the computer to be in a place where I could monitor them, and somewhere for all my books because I love reading."

"Our initial idea was to rationalise the back of the house, demolish the existing extension and look to create a strong contemporary yet complementary statement – while keeping the front of the property relatively traditional," says James Munro. "Tim and Fiona like to entertain, barbecue and use the garden a lot so it was important for them to have a good visual and physical connection to the outside." James submitted plans for the 74m² addition in September 2012, and they were approved with no questions eight weeks later. In February 2013 the family moved into rented accommodation in nearby Streatham, and the project was able to get underway.

Levelling up

Once the property had been stripped out, the builders started to demolish the old extension. It was only then they could fully see the extent of the differences in level, hidden under the subfloor. They had to remove an additional 12 skips of soil to correct the levels and allow a seamless transition between inside and out. The new



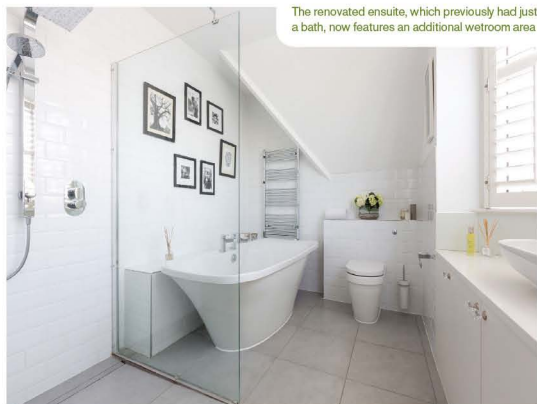
extension's steel frame carries the load of a cleverly-designed cantilevered roof, and the structure is finished in black and white render like the existing house, which helps to visually tie the two together.

There were very few changes on site, with the only exceptions being tweaks to the joinery and floor tiling layout. This helped keep the project running smoothly, and just five months later the house was finished – one month ahead of schedule – allowing the family to move back in. "The team were exceptional," says Fiona. "They were so well organised and came back later on to finish the garden. Having a good relationship with them was invaluable."

The Johnsons' rejuvenated home is a credit to Granit and BTL Property, both of whom were as conscious of the smallest details as the bigger picture. Features like the



The loft had already been converted when the Johnsons moved in, but the two bedrooms have been redecorated, ready to receive guests



The renovated ensuite, which previously had just a bath, now features an additional wetroom area



clerestory windows that run above the bifold doors in the extension have been deliberately placed to draw in extra light, while the removal of the chimney breast has transformed the boys' bedrooms. The couple are bowled over with their new home. "We're so glad we

waited and did the project properly as we absolutely love it," says Fiona. "The light and space is very much like Australian living, and it's lovely to have a connection with the garden, which now feels like an important part of our home, too."

closer look

Crisp detailing...

The Johnsons' extension has an angular clarity to it, the result of a convergence of factors: the underlying steel frame, which allows for large, uninterrupted spans internally; the white rendered blockwork, which creates sharp, well-defined lines; and the glazing's slim grey aluminium framing, which breaks up the blank white walls in a simple, unfussy way. The design steps back on one side, partly as a result of a planning restriction that prevented a longer boundary with the neighbour, but as architect James Munro points out, "it has made the room less boxy and helped with zoning inside to define the living, dining, study and kitchen areas." He adds: "We designed a roof overhang to provide shading in summer as it's south-facing but we also view it as a strong design feature. The sharp thin edge accentuates the idea of a solid roof floating over the top of the glazed clerestory."



Slim-frame glazed doors



Floor plan



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TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m ²	Cost %	Total cost
Building work	£717	67%	£220,000
Kitchen	£81	8%	£25,000
Bifold doors	£91	9%	£28,000
Ensuite bathroom	£49	5%	£15,000
Utility room	£39	4%	£12,000
Landscaping	£81	8%	£25,000
Grand total			£325,000

Useful contacts

ARCHITECTS **Granit Architects** 020 7924 4555 www.granit.co.uk
MAIN CONTRACTOR **BTL Property** 020 3439 0332 www.btlpropertyltd.co.uk
GLAZING **Glass Tec Systems** 020 8500 2818 www.glasstecsystems.com
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Joined-up thinking

Matthew and Jayne Bennett

were inspired to think outside the box in order to sympathetically transform their traditional Yorkshire home

WORDS **HEATHER DIXON** PHOTOS **DAVE BURTON**

THE BENNETT FILE

NAMES Jayne & Matthew Bennett

OCCUPATIONS Lawyer & management consultant

LOCATION North Yorkshire

PROJECT Renovation & extension

STYLE Victorian farmhouse with modern extension

CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Steel, zinc & cedar

PLOT SIZE Three acres

HOUSE COST £905,000

HOUSE SIZE 353m²

PROJECT COST £340,000

PROJECT COST PER M² £963

TOTAL COST £1,245,000

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED

November 2012

BUILDING WORK TOOK

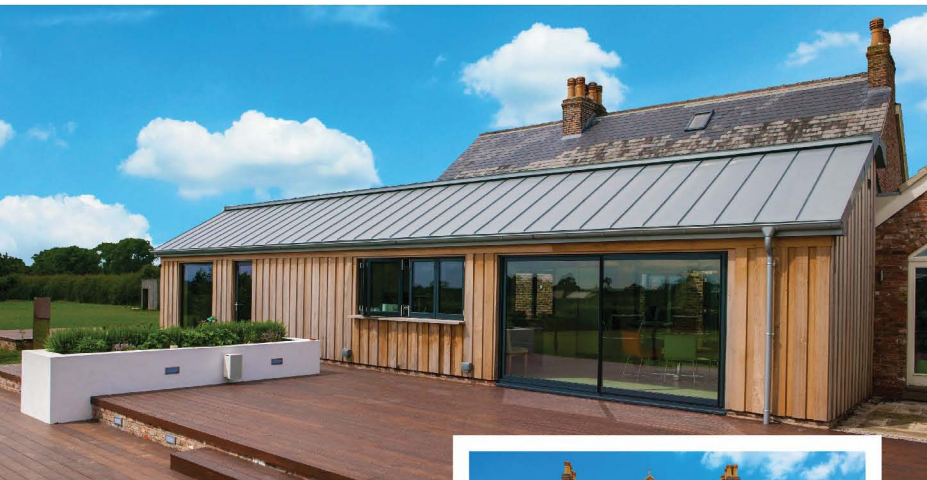
12 months

CURRENT VALUE

£1.5 million



Matthew and Jayne Bennett's family farmhouse had just one major flaw when they bought it: the beautiful views to the rear were restricted by a run of outbuildings. "All you could see from the kitchen was another building across a narrow courtyard, which blocked a wide, open view of the fields," says Matthew. The couple struggled to find a solution, so two years after moving in they called on local architect Elaine Graham for inspiration. "We were keen to try and incorporate the outbuildings into a design for extra living space but we couldn't visualise how it would work," says Matthew. "Elaine came back with four options, which included knocking down the outbuildings completely, and linking them to the main house and garden with glass walkways and bifold doors."



“The house looks exactly the same at the front as when we bought it, apart from the landscaping, but at the back it’s completely different”



A new plan

The couple were keen to simplify the layout of the farmhouse. “Although it had been beautifully decorated by the previous owners, we did think the entrance area was quite disjointed,” says Matthew. “We agreed that if we were going to extend the house we may as well do everything all in one go.”

The couple applied for and were granted planning permission from their local council. Jayne and Matthew then put the work out to tender. This process took over six months because many of the quotes they received came back double the amount the couple had anticipated.

The Bennetts employed architect James Palmer from BWP to draw up the plans for





The new kitchen-diner offers the young family a practical space to enjoy, whether they're sharing a meal together or entertaining friends





Large expanses of glazing open out onto an internal courtyard space that can also be accessed via the formal dining room



Building Regulations approval and to project manage the scheme. They took on board his practical family-oriented design ideas, as well as adding a snooker room, a study and siting an open-ended pantry area behind a wall of kitchen units.

The architect also recommended local builder Geoff Cooper, who was willing to bring samples of all the materials that would be used in the project. "I wanted a fixed price on everything so the detailing of all the different elements took quite a long time," says Matthew. "The costs at this stage included windows but we agreed that we would confirm exactly what we wanted at a later date, as they were going to be crucial to the entire scheme."

One of the key features of the extension is its steel structure. The build involved very little brickwork – apart from some detailing. The plan was to build the extension first and live in the original part of the house, then swap over while the works on the existing property took place.

Quick thinking

The first task was to knock down the outbuildings, clear the site and create shallow foundations to support the steel frame so they could erect the extension to roof level. "The roof was specially designed to create an open void," says Matthew. "The builders had just reached the point where the zinc was about to go on when Jayne

WE LEARNED...

ALWAYS take your time to put the work out to tender. We were shocked by the figures that came back, but found that by meeting with the trades we could find solutions that lowered the proposed sum.

IF THERE isn't a suitable off-the-shelf product, ask whether the supplier can create something bespoke. We've opted for triple-glazed sliding doors that really make the connection between the new and existing property work.

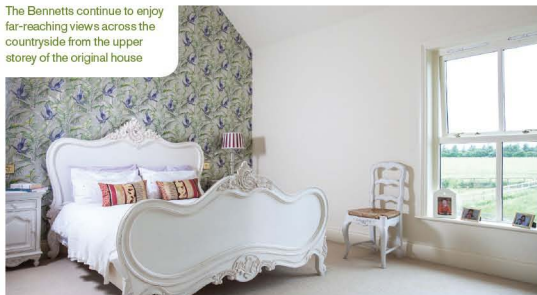
ALTERATIONS will cost you money. Try to ensure that you stick to the agreed plan as changes could lead to huge expenses.



opened the bedroom curtains one morning and said: "I can't see the view." The roofline was two feet higher than the original building, which meant the vital vista across the fields from the upstairs windows would be blocked by the new extension.

"It went against everything we were trying to achieve," says Matthew. "We were gaining the outlook from the ground floor, but potentially losing it from the first floor. It was the worst moment of the build. Everything ground to a halt. We had everyone on site trying to work out a solution, as we didn't want to take the roof off again. There was talk of raising the floor levels upstairs, but that wasn't really an

The Bennetts continue to enjoy far-reaching views across the countryside from the upper storey of the original house



option either. Then it dawned on me that we could take two feet off the top of the roof by shortening all the joists."

The alterations cost an extra £8,000 and six weeks in time, but the result is that the roof is now low enough that the family can enjoy clear views across the countryside.

The next major challenge was choosing the windows. Jayne and Matthew wanted fairly large units, with minimal sightlines, and a glass walkway linking the extension to the original part of the house. They'd also planned that the dining room would open out to the courtyard in the middle.

"No-one could come up with a solution that we liked so we turned to a commercial



company to create custom made triple-glazed windows and sliding doors to our design," says Matthew. "The product we used is more expensive than the domestic version but the U-values are miles better." He was so delighted with the windows that he set up a new company – Neuglas – on the back of the project.

Reconfigured

Once the windows were in, the floors were fitted with water-based underfloor heating and then screeded before the covering was laid. A biomass woodchip boiler was commissioned for the extension and the contemporary kitchen was installed before the builders turned their attention to the original part of the house.

Here, the attic area was reconfigured to create a new staircase leading to two loft bedrooms with a shared bathroom, turning it from a five to a six-bedroom house.

The principal ensuite bathroom was redesigned and the position of a door changed to create space for a shower. Meanwhile, on the ground floor, the original kitchen, entrance hall and dining area has been transformed into a playroom, snooker room and dining zone. "The house looks exactly the same at the front as when we first bought it, apart from the landscaping," says Matthew. "But at the back it's like a completely different property."

closer look

Glazed vision...

The custom made, triple glazed windows were crucial to the design of the extension and the way it links to the



original house. The sliding doors chosen for the connecting walkway were mainly selected for their engineering quality – the partitions can be opened with minimum effort. This takes into account the needs of the young children in the family. When adding significant amounts of glazing, thermal efficiency is always a consideration. The Bennetts specified high-quality windows for the main south and east facing sections of the building, too, and this has significantly improved the performance of the property.

The Bennetts have also added a triple garage with two bays facing forward and one to the rear – deliberately located to avoid a mains electricity point. They built a large decked area across the full width of the extension to the back of the property, too.

"Everyone thought we were mad to have so much decking all in one space – but we were in the Lake District on a boat when I realised it was possible to find a material that would be non-slip," says Matthew. "We eventually used Brazilian Ipe hardwood, which is three times harder than oak, it looks like teak and can last more than 100 years without preservatives. It is quite expensive but it's used on the decks of big ships because of its durability."

The landscaping is the final detail in what has been a major transformation of a traditional farmhouse. "When we moved in the property was well proportioned and very well maintained but, for us, the relationship between the building and the landscape was all wrong," says Matthew. "We wanted to change the emphasis of the house so that the best views were from the back of the property. It was quite challenging at times, but it was very much worth all the effort that we put in. We love the fact that our home is rather traditional from the front, and then once you step in it opens up into this light, open, contemporary living space at the rear. It's not what people expect when they walk through the door."



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m ²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£99	10%	£35,000
Roof (incl revisions)	£110	11%	£39,000
Windows	£85	9%	£30,000
Floors	£38	4%	£13,500
Joinery	£59	6%	£21,000
Plumbing & heating	£51	5%	£18,000
Electrics	£27	3%	£9,500
Kitchen	£113	11%	£40,000
Materials & labour (incl steels)	£146	15%	£51,500
Decorating	£20	2%	£7,000
Landscaping	£113	12%	£40,000
Wood pellet boiler	£44	5%	£15,500
Fees	£57	6%	£20,000
Grand total			£340,000

Useful contacts

ARCHITECTS Elaine Graham Architects 01423 339798 www.elainegrahamltd.co.uk **BATHROOMS** MyBathrooms 01423 581115 www.my-bathrooms.co.uk **BWP Architects** 01252 821114 www.bwparchitects.com **CERAMIC TILES** Interceramica 01423 816200 www.interceramicdirect.co.uk **KITCHEN AND DINING FURNITURE** Townhouse 01423 701555 www.townhousedesign.co.uk **www.reallflooring.co.uk** **INTERIOR DESIGN** Kate Osborne Interiors 0773 3287175, www.kateosborneinteriors.com **LANDSCAPING AND INTERNAL WOOD FLOORING** Real Flooring 0113 264 8212 **WINDOWS** Neuglas www.neu-glas.co.uk



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Bold & beautiful

A triumph of modern design and good planning, the **Watsons'** home-for-life has been well received by neighbours and architecture aficionados alike

WORDS **HEATHER DIXON** PHOTOS **DAVID BURTON**

Large garden plots in the middle of leafy suburbs are like gold-dust in the popular spa town of Harrogate. Tori and Graham Watson, however, struck gold when they got the chance to buy a bungalow in a large, wooded garden – right next door to their existing property.

"We had been interested in the idea of building our own home for several years but we love where we live and we have great neighbours, so we didn't really want to move away," says Tori. "When one of those neighbours sadly died, nobody wanted to see three or four houses crammed onto the site by a developer. So before it even came onto the open market, we bought it with the aim of knocking down the dormer bungalow and replacing it with a single family home for us and our daughters – albeit a much larger one."

Their plan was to create a contemporary house based around two wings of living accommodation, joined by a two-storey glass link. "We did a lot of research beforehand, visiting self-build shows and reading all the magazines," says Tori. "We knew we wanted light, open spaces and a modern, streamlined look. Having two separate wings would mean we all had privacy when we needed it, but everything had to interconnect. Although we could visualise it,

we had no idea how to make it happen." To take things further, the couple employed Ilkley-based architects Sense of Space to design the house and then project manage the build.

The plot already had consent for a replacement scheme, but securing planning permission for the Watsons' revised design for a luxury dwelling – which includes a swimming pool and cinema room in the basement – took eight months. Tweaks were made to the size of the house and its position on the plot, partly to maximise views from each storey and emphasise the close links with the garden.

Digging deep

With approval for the Watsons' scheme finally sealed in September 2011, demolition of the bungalow got underway the very next day. "Graham wanted to swing the first blow and half the street came out to watch – even though it was about eight o'clock in the morning," says Tori. "We started early so that our girls, Bryony and Alice, could watch before they went to school. Within two hours, the bungalow was just a pile of rubble."

The next step was to excavate the footprint of the new house, which involved digging six metres deep to bedrock level, where 50



“We kept our neighbours informed of what to expect during the build – such as when delivery lorries would be coming and going – and I think that helped win their support throughout the process”



steel reinforcement cages would form the basis of the foundations. Much of the hardcore from the demolished property was kept and used for the new house's foundations, as well as for a retaining wall that curves around the sunken lower ground floor. In the end, 40 lorry loads of soil were taken off site – while around half off the 173 trees in the wooded garden were uprooted to make way for the build. Those removed including a number of unwanted leylandii, which are notorious for their effect on soil stability (they suck up so much water they can cause clay ground to shrink significantly).

By Christmas 2011, the concrete slab had been laid and the ground-floor layout was starting to emerge. At this point the footprint looked huge and the sloping garden had been excavated and backfilled to accommodate the lower ground floor swimming pool and cinema area. This gave rise to one of the main challenges of the build. Sense of Space had designed the pool room in such a way that tanking (applying a waterproof seal) was not considered necessary, but the contractor was adamant that this part of the build should be literally watertight and that the entire below-ground

Top: The rear features dramatic double-height glazing, which is particularly effective in the dramatic link with gallery landing. **Inset:** The house's large mass is broken up by an attractive mix of cladding materials – cedar, render and metal panels



THE WATSON FILE

NAMES Tori & Graham Watson

OCCUPATIONS Financial controller & commercial landlord

LOCATION Harrogate, North Yorkshire

TYPE OF BUILD Self build

STYLE Contemporary

CONSTRUCTION METHOD Insulating concrete formwork (ICF), steelwork, structural glazing and a structural insulated panel (SIPs) roof

PLOT SIZE 0.75 acres

LAND COST £495,000

BOUGHT 2010

HOUSE SIZE 808m²

BUILD COST £1,900,000

COST PER M² £2,351

TOTAL COST £2,395,000

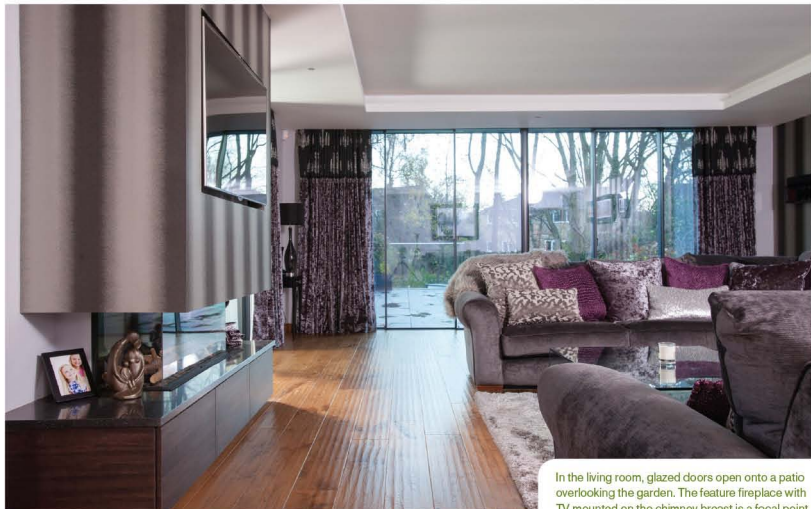
BUILDING WORK COMMENCED September 2011

BUILDING WORK TOOK 18 months

structure should be tanked – adding an unexpected cost to the project. External steps were planned to link a basement-level patio area round the swimming pool to a second hardstanding zone outside the ground-floor dining and kitchen space.

Making a connection

The Watsons were lucky to have a large plot, which meant that materials could be delivered directly onto the site without vehicles having to park up on the public road. Nevertheless, the couple were acutely aware that the upheaval could still have an impact on others living in the suburban cul-de-sac. “We kept



In the living room, glazed doors open onto a patio overlooking the garden. The feature fireplace with TV mounted on the chimney breast is a focal point

WE LEARNED...

DO YOUR RESEARCH when it comes to costs. Even though our budget wasn't strict, there were still a couple of hidden extras that threw us.

THE SCALE of our project, which was really at a commercial level, meant that we needed three-phase electrics. As a result, we had to pay £26,000 just to connect to the mains supply.

YOUR ARCHITECT'S SAY isn't always final. Our pool was designed to be inherently watertight, but our builder was adamant that it should be tanked. In the end we bowed to his knowledge, which brought an additional expense.



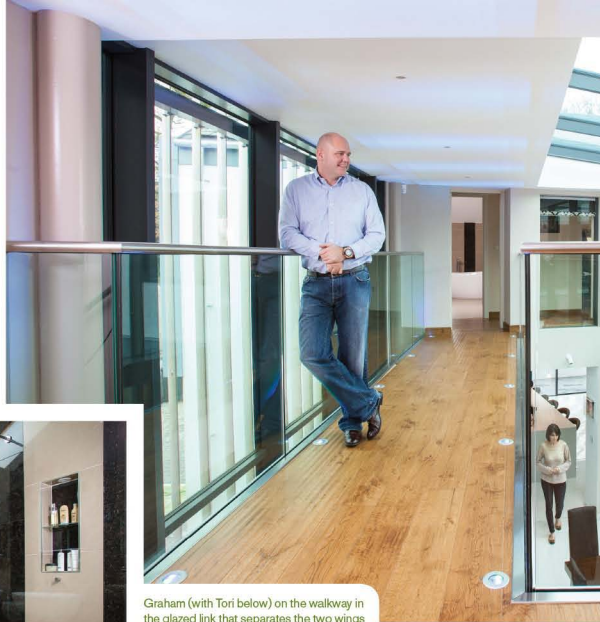
High-spec bathroom sanitaryware and surfaces are representative of the quality fit-out throughout

everyone informed of what to expect during the build – such as when delivery lorries would be coming and going – and I think that helped win their support throughout the process,” says Tori.

The couple's old house – just two doors away – sold within a month of going on the market, so the family moved into a cabin in a local country park for the duration of the build. “We sold all our furniture, too, so by the time we moved into the new house we only had a glass coffee table, our clothes and a few boxes of personal possessions,” says Tori. Fortunately their temporary home was only a few miles from site. As the build progressed, the couple made daily visits to ensure everything was going according to plan.

Mixed construction methods

The basic shell of the house is made from insulating concrete formwork (ICF), a structural system where hollow polystyrene blocks are stacked to create a mould, which is then backfilled with poured concrete. This formwork is then retained to provide an insulating, airtight wraparound for the entire house. Steelwork provides reinforcement throughout the building. Once the project moved past foundation level, the walls shot up. The roof, which is made of structural insulated panels (SIPs), was up by June 2012 – an impressive achievement for a project of this scale. SIPs are load-bearing, pre-insulated building elements that can be used to open up the internal roof space, because there are no trusses to get in the way. Sense of Space used this to full effect, employing the panels to create spectacular, capacious vaulted living zones.



Graham (with Tori below) on the walkway in the glazed link that separates the two wings

The two wings of the house were built as separate structures, with the link going in last. “We just had a hoarding spanning the two sections until the storey-height windows – which were triple glazed and argon-filled – arrived and were slotted into place to create the connection,” says Graham. “Before the windows went in, the concrete openings were cleaned off and measured so the glass panels could be prefabricated off-site to the exact dimensions. It was treated like a commercial build because of the scale. There were often as many as 30 people on site in one day.”

Bridging the gap

Tori and Graham claim the construction phase itself was not in the least bit stressful – especially compared with the hassles of selling their security business, which they say was vital to funding the final stages of the project.

“There was one particularly heart-in-the-mouth day when we were down to our last £20,000 from the sale of the old house and I needed £260,000 to pay the builders,” says Graham. “We had been offered a mortgage but we wanted to be loan-free, so I was stalling until the sale of the business went through. At the 11th hour we managed to complete the sale, leaving just enough time to pay the builders without having to take out the mortgage. I reckon we saved about £10,000 in repayments as a result.”

One unexpected expense was the cost of installing a three-phase electrical system. The large property needed a commercial-scale connection, which in the end led to the whole street being upgraded. The Watsons paid £26,000 for linking into the supply.

With the main structure up and watertight, Tori stepped up her involvement to research and select the floor coverings, kitchen, bathroom fittings, lighting and furniture. The sale of their business provided the funds to buy exactly what they wanted, without compromise, which shows in every part of the high-spec finish.



"We moved in before the build was finished, in November 2012," says Tori. "Graham wanted to wait another month, but I had set a goal in my mind and refused to budge on the timeframe. So for a while we had no kitchen – we managed with takeaways and a microwave – no glass balustrades and just plywood floors. The bathrooms were in and the upstairs rooms were done, but there was still a lot to finish off and the garden was little more than a building site. We couldn't step outside because there were sheer drops in the ground coupled with huge piles of mud."

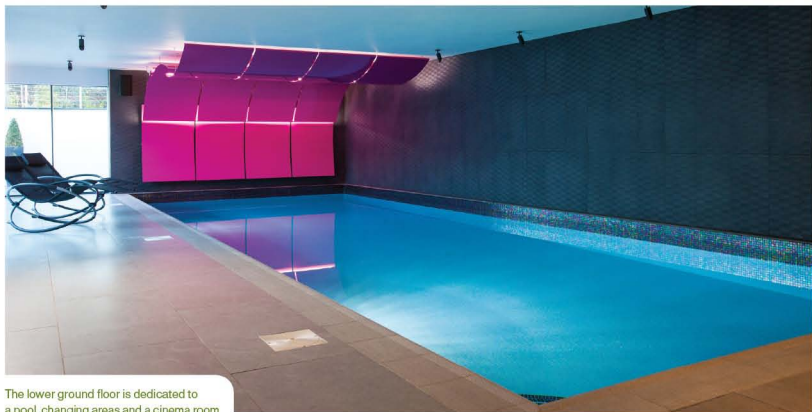


Living the dream

The one low point came when Graham returned home from a trip to South Africa to find the ground floor in chaos. Some of the contractors were attacking a wall with heavy duty tools to try to get a door to fit – but Graham stepped in and within weeks things came together. By January things had progressed significantly: the kitchen units were in, the balustrades had been fitted and all the decorative finishes were completed. Spring that year brought the high point, when the family returned from a break to find that the landscapers had finished their work and the garden was ready to enjoy – and to top it all, their new home had made it onto the shortlist of finalists for the Northern Design Awards.

"It was amazing," says Graham. "After such a long build and living among the chaos for the final few months, it was brilliant to turn into the drive and see it all finished. To find out it had been recognised for its great design was the icing on the cake. We had a big barbecue with the neighbours to celebrate."

The project has lived up to the couple's expectations and they wouldn't change a thing. "We built this as our forever house," says Tori. "We'd be happy to tackle another project, but we wouldn't want to move away. Everything we could possibly want is right here."



The lower ground floor is dedicated to a pool, changing areas and a cinema room

closer look

Energy-efficient glazing...

The Watsons' home features vast swathes of glass, ensuring the interiors are flooded with plenty of natural light and helping to underpin the design's contemporary credentials. Incorporating too much glass can be problematic, however, and requires careful thought to avoid warmth escaping during winter or internal spaces overheating in summer. To offset these negative effects, architects Sense of Space specified a highly insulated ICF structure with excellent thermal protection in the SIPs roof. The windows and bifold doors are all either double- or triple-glazed, with an extra insulating transparent film to improve performance. The south-facing balconies feature overhanging roofs, introducing an element of solar shading that reduces the risk of overheating during the hotter months – but allowing as much warmth as possible to be collected from the low winter sun.

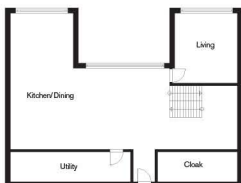


Expanses of glass

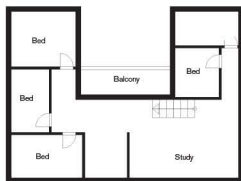


Floor plans

Ground floor



First floor



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TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m ²	Cost %	Total cost
Drainage & external works	£121	5%	£98,000
Foundations (inc. pool)	£186	8%	£150,000
Structural walls & upper floors	£285	12%	£230,000
Internal walls	£30	1%	£24,000
Roof	£173	7%	£140,000
Windows, external doors & glazed link	£117	5%	£95,000
Plumbing	£173	7%	£140,000
Electrics	£155	7%	£125,000
Stairs & balustrade	£87	4%	£70,000
Floor & wall coverings	£186	8%	£150,000
Internal doors	£33	1%	£27,000
Kitchen, bedrooms & wine storage	£161	7%	£130,000
Bathroom fittings	£84	4%	£68,000
Cinema room	£74	3%	£60,000
Misc (inc. demolition, temporary works & external wall finishes)	£486	21%	£393,000
Grand total			£1,900,000

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **Sense of Space** 01943 816480 www.senseofspace-update.net QUANTITY SURVEYOR **Appleyard & Trew** 01423 871471 www.appleyardandtrew.com
BUILDER **Dobson** 01943 609822 www.dobsonbuilders.co.uk STRUCTURAL GLASS & GLAZED DOORS **IQ Glass** 01494 722880 www.iqglass.co.uk WINDOWS
Robert Edwards 01977 689891 www.robert-edwards.co.uk INTERNAL DOORS **Silvelox** 0800 915 1019 www.silvelox.co.uk KITCHEN **Poggenpohl** 0113 388 5222
www.poggenpohlfitted.co.uk BATHROOMS & PLUMBING **Robinsons of Harrogate** 01423 881844 www.robinsonsofharrogate.co.uk LIGHTING **Deluce** 01302 769966 www.deluce-lighting.com Mode 01920 462121 www.modelighting.com **Robinsons** 01423 865129 www.robinsonslighting.co.uk CARPETS **KD Carpets** 01423 875870 www.kdcarpets.com FITTED FURNITURE **Clarity Arts** 01423 781100 www.clarityarts.com LANDSCAPING **Blackburn Robinson** 07976 587211 SWIMMING
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THE BARBER FILE

NAMES Chris & Mark Barber**OCCUPATIONS** Owners of Barber Homes**LOCATION** Cornwall**TYPE OF BUILD** Self build**STYLE** Contemporary**CONSTRUCTION METHOD**

Timber frame & masonry

PLOT SIZE 0.5 acres**LAND COST** £100,000**BOUGHT** March 2010**HOUSE SIZE** 158m²**BUILD COST** £300,000**COST PER M²** £1,899**TOTAL COST** £400,000**BUILDING WORK COMMENCED**

December 2012

BUILDING WORK TOOK

16 months

CURRENT VALUE

£650,000

When the Barber brothers chanced upon an unlikely plot on the south west coast of England, instead of focusing on the awkwardness of the site, they saw the potential to create a fabulous family retreat

WORDS & PHOTOS **ALEXANDRA PRATT**
ADDITIONAL PHOTOS **JAMES RAM / CHETWODE RAM**

Brothers Chris and Mark Barber were keen to apply their ethos of simplicity, attention to detail and quality of design when creating their stunning coastal home in Cornwall. "We've owned and built several cottages," says Chris. "But when it came to this project we felt that it was time to try something completely different." With strong family ties to the area, the brothers were already spending a lot of time in the village. So when they saw that this plot had come up for sale, they decided to snap up the opportunity to build a holiday retreat. "We wanted our kids to come here and go surfing like we did," says Mark.

The site came with outline planning permission, which showed a simple cube form, and that proved inspirational for the brothers. "We liked the idea of designing this place as a box," says Mark. They both also admire elements of Californian architecture and are big fans of cedar cladding. "It gives a timeless finish," says Chris. The design details for the rest of their property were entirely their own

and were drawn up by a technician for submission to the local planning department. "With two combined lifetimes' experience working for the family building firm, we have strong opinions and we know what we want," says Mark.

Making the site work

Securing detailed planning permission for their three bedroom, two bathroom scheme was straightforward. The brothers were pleased and a little surprised at the level of receptiveness they encountered at the local planning office, compared to their experience in their home area of New Forest National Park. Creating the house, however, was not so easy. The plot had significant challenges; it is sited on a slope and most of the half acre grounds were unusable. "A lot of people may have been put off buying the land because of that," says Mark.

The work began with four months of digging to create a level footprint for the house. The brothers estimate they removed



approximately 2,000 tonnes of soil to make way for the home, which required a 50m-long retaining wall. Chris is a mason by trade and this seemed the obvious structural system for the lower storey. "It's built into the side of the cliff," he says. "Rock comes up to the first floor on one side, so a masonry build was the best fit."

With tanking needed on that wall, the brothers found themselves caught between the manufacturer's stipulations regarding not piercing the waterproofing and the council's demands for a radon barrier, both of which had to be continuous. Radon is a particular problem in Cornwall, as uranium and radium are present in the ground. This causes the formation of a radioactive gas in the subsoil, which leaks into the spaces under buildings, creating a real health risk. The only solution they could find was an approved 'slurry', which acts as both a radon barrier and tanking. It proved an easy solution to a potentially serious problem, as it involved little more than painting in onto the foundation slab and retaining wall.

Subject to the elements

The upper level of the property is built using a 'stick' frame cut on site. "One of the reasons we decided on this type of timber build was due to the limited access," says Chris. "On day one, just getting a swing shovel onto site was an issue." There was no possibility of

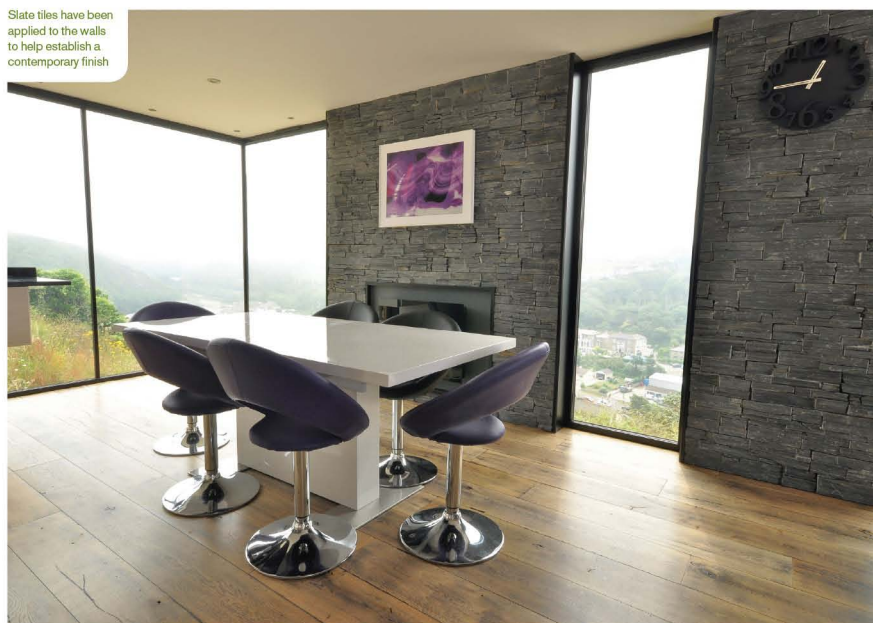
access for the large articulated lorry and crane needed for delivery of a manufactured frame; even the steels only made it thanks to the driver's experience. Site-built stick framing does have its own limitations and requires additional certification to gain a warranty from the National House Building Council (NHBC). That's after the original calculations have been done by a structural engineer, the plans drawn by a technician and checked by the building inspector. It's also slower system than pre-fab panels – and the weather did affect the brothers' build, which took 16 months to complete.

"We knew that if we didn't get it right, the elements would find us out," says Chris. With the construction work going through two winters – which are famously windy in Cornwall and dole out large quantities of horizontal rain – the brothers had to deal with a major setback when an unexpected storm blew in just as the ground floor walls went up. "It took half the house down," says Chris, who says this cost them a three-and-a-half-week delay. "The disappointment was incredible," adds Mark. "If the downpour had occurred on the following day, everything would have all been tied down and secure."

The length of the build was also partly because Mark and Chris were not just project managers, but also worked on site Mondays through Thursdays in the week, before returning to Hampshire. They did use a limited number of sub-contractors; all people they



Slate tiles have been applied to the walls to help establish a contemporary finish



WE LEARNED...

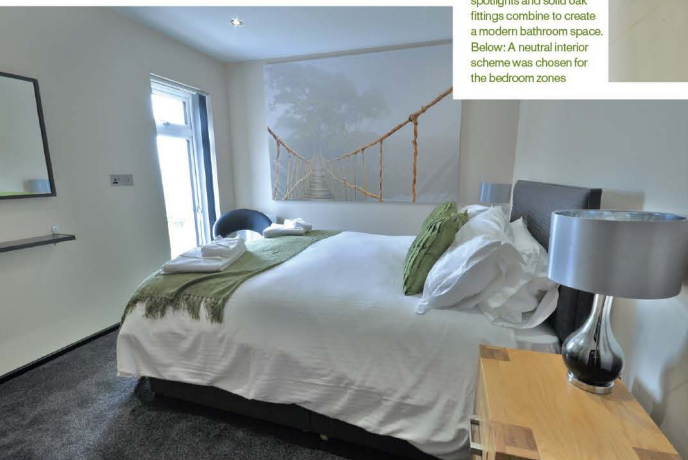
TAKING ON the work yourself may be time-consuming and stressful, but it is well worth the end result.

PACKING IN large amounts of insulation will help establish a home that's energy efficient, saving you money in the long run.

DON'T be put off by an awkward site; ours is on a slope and it offers us the most fantastic seaside views.

knew and trusted from other projects they'd completed for clients in the area. However, they mostly work alone. "We love our jobs and we enjoy doing it right," says Chris. "If it's not correct, it doesn't stay." Getting things right also means keeping things simple; another part of the Barber mantra. This has been their guiding principle in both the design and build stages of the project. For example, the flat roof, made from Cefil (a kind of welded plastic) is set below a parapet so it cannot be seen. "It's very important that it looks dead square," says Mark. "We have black aluminium capping at the top of the wall, to match the windows, and it looks great."

Chris and Mark did not order the glazing until they had the frame in place and could be sure of the exact dimensions. It arrived two



months after the roof went on, in order to give everything time to settle. With the single 7.5m span at the main facade alone costing £8,000, if any mistakes were made it would have been expensive.

Warming up

Once the shell was up and watertight, Mark and Chris could turn their attention to the heating and insulation. Getting the choice of thermal protection product right and correctly installing it are elements they're genuinely passionate about. "Insulation is the most important thing," says Mark. The brothers added 250mm of Celotex



Above: Low wattage spotlights and solid oak fittings combine to create a modern bathroom space.
Below: A neutral interior scheme was chosen for the bedroom zones

in the floor and 270mm in the roof alone, and made sure everything was tightly sealed. The house achieved a permeability score of 2.72 air changes per hour – easily beating the Building Regulations limit of 10. Any better and they'd have had to install a mechanical ventilation system to provide fresh air.

Although they have installed solar panels for hot water, which they say work well, the brothers are not convinced by all forms of renewable technology. "There are so many issues with ground source heat pumps," says Mark, who was tasked with considering their options for heating. His concerns include the carbon footprint of the manufacturing process, the need for a back-up system and the cost. They were quoted £27,000 for a pump with an underfloor heating system, while the thermostatically-controlled electric radiators they installed cost just £2,000. "With the high levels of insulation and the solar gain we receive, the house is comfortable and the heating never really comes on," adds Chris.

Getting the design right also applied to the interior finishes and this fell mainly within Mark's remit. "Little things make a big

difference," he says. The slate interior walls, which are finished in such a way that they cap the window reveals, are just one example. "It's a modern way of employing the material," says Mark. He also included a glass wall to enhance the feeling of space in the living room. In the bathroom he installed an extra large shower, floor-to-ceiling doors and a basin unit made from oak. Mark finished the hardwood floors himself, distressing and staining them black while making sure the grain and indents were visible. He then coated them in water-based lacquer to retain their colour.

When it comes to landscaping, the brothers' experience meant they didn't make the usual self-build error of leaving it right until

the end of the project (which can mean living in a sea of mud until there's more money and/or the builder comes back). Chris and Mark ensured they got the levels right from the start and specified the correct materials. They also designed three separate patios that maximise the benefits of the sun's progress through the day.

Their passion, skill and enthusiasm shines from every surface of this beautiful 'box' and both families are looking forward to spending time here. For Chris, the best moment was when his wife, Alison, first saw the finished property and declared that it took her breath away. "We love what we do," says Chris. "And you don't build this type of property if you don't love it!" adds Mark.

closer look

The big reveal...

For Chris and Mark, the vista offered through the large rear corner window is definitely their favourite feature of the house, as it frames views out over the valley below. The unit has no bar or post at the corner and is supported by a steel frame. The window also has the kitchen sink unit across part of it. To support this, there is a steel plate bolted to the metal frame, which cantilevers out across the glass. The kitchen units are also fixed onto this for stability. It has been installed as such to make it appears as if it is 'floating' across the glass.



Large glass panel



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m ²	Cost %	Total cost
Digging out, retaining wall & foundations	£570	30%	£90,000
Masonry, timber frame & roof	£443	23%	£70,000
Windows	£101	5%	£16,000
Balustrading (glass and wires)	£38	2%	£6,000
Solar heating	£32	2%	£5,000
Kitchen	£63	3%	£10,000
Misc (including floors, decoration, bathrooms, plumbing and electrics)	£652	34%	£103,000
Grand total			£300,000

Useful contacts



BUILDERS Barber Homes 0238 0863485 **GROUNDWORKS A**
Wherry 01872 320087 **PLASTERERS** Chivers & Co 01872 540667 www.chiversandco Cornwall.co.uk **ELECTRICS** Richards Eslick 01209 218707
PLUMBING Biddlecombe Plumbing 0238 0870055 **CARPENTRY** Stewart Cooper 01209 822776 **TILING** SW Ceramics 01726 851850 **DECORATION**
Julian Couch 01872 222018 **BUILDER'S MERCHANT** Elliotts 0238 8022
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Remote possibilities



John and Lorna Norgrove's Hebridean house is no longer the draughty home they bought in the 1980s, thanks to the addition of a cosy, curvy extension with a turf roof **WORDS JENNY MCBAIN PHOTOS LEILA ANGUS**

When your house is a short distance from a steep cliff that faces directly out to the Atlantic Ocean, making sure it's weatherproof becomes a major priority. John and Lorna Norgrove bought their two-storey pebbledash property on the Hebridean Island of Lewis in 1981; it had been built in the late 1950s and when they first took up residence was in a run-down state. "When we moved into the house it was leaky and draughty. Water used to hit the bay windows and sort of spray through them," says John.

The couple enjoyed the views afforded by the large windows but they wanted to make the place more modern and comfortable. So began a slow programme of renovation and improvement that culminated in a decision to build an extension.



John is a retired civil engineer, so he drew up some preliminary sketches. "The plan I did myself was very functional, but it lacked flair," says John. "I wasn't happy with it."

Close connection

Architect Stuart Bagshaw, who is based on Lewis, is a friend and former colleague, so it made sense for the Norgroves to approach him with their clearly illustrated brief to extend the kitchen and create a sunroom. "Stuart knows this place well; in fact, he house-sat for us once when we were on holiday in the 1980s," says Lorna. "He has such good ideas. We would never have thought of extending at an angle and putting in all these curves."

Stuart's design uses a mixed palette of timber, blockwork, slate and stone. The small timber section that houses part of the kitchen is constructed from untreated larch. Both this and the block portion to the side of the house are bordered by a masterful dry-stone wall, complete with turf window ledges. There are two roof sections, one finished in slate and the other topped with turf and edged in copper.

The internal layout was tweaked, too. "I originally planned to have steps from the culinary zone to a low-level dining area and sunroom, but Stuart kept the main spaces all on the same plane and introduced a door to the outside from the kitchen," says John. "The sunroom is down a level, with large windows and patio doors that mirror the bay units in the sitting room and the bedroom."

Lorna made sure that additional windows were incorporated into the design. "I wanted to be able to look out to the west in the evenings so we could see the summer sunset," she says. "I also wanted a Velux rooflight above the dining area."

"Advances in glazing technology have totally revolutionised living in the Hebrides," says John. "There used to be old-fashioned, small sash and case windows, placed away from the prevailing winds. Now you can have large, sealed windows facing the view."

Opposite page: The old culinary zone was small and narrow; it has now been incorporated into a new kitchen/dining area. Lorna especially wanted the Velux windows over the dining table

THE NORGROVE FILE

NAMES John & Lorna Norgrove

OCCUPATIONS Charity administrators

LOCATION Isle of Lewis, Outer Hebrides

TYPE OF BUILD Extension

STYLE Contemporary addition to a 1950s house

CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Timber frame with concrete blockwork skin and larch cladding

PLOT SIZE Four acres

BOUGHT Already owned

HOUSE SIZE 189m² (including 49m² extension)

PROJECT COST £105,989

PROJECT COST PER M² £2,163

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED September 2010

BUILDING WORK TOOK 50 weeks

The will to carry on

Getting permission to build was straightforward, and a plan of action which involved John taking on the role of project manager was soon in place. Work had just started when the Norgroves' lives were turned upside down in terrible circumstances. In October 2010, their daughter Linda, an aid worker based in Afghanistan, was kidnapped and then killed during the course of a failed rescue



mission by US forces. The couple subsequently set up a charity in their daughter's name to assist Afghani women and children suffering the consequences of war and social inequality. Meanwhile, they carried on with their extension project – despite the stress and media attention surrounding their daughter's death. "The work was actually a very grounding thing and helped us with the grieving process," says Lorna. "It kept us going and occupied our minds."

The building contract had been put out to tender and a local firm had secured the bid to take on the major part of the work. Luckily the couple had a place to stay in the form of a studio, which John had built so that Lorna could pursue her love of painting. "At first we lived in the house using the existing kitchen. Then we went away on holiday when the wall was knocked down between the existing house and the extension. On our return we lived in the studio until the new kitchen had been completely finished," Lorna explains.

Taking to the drawing board

John was comfortable in his role as project manager. "The builders' foremen only came on to the site three or four times; I was dealing with the joiners and bricklayers on a day-to-day basis, liaising between them and the architect and helping them to interpret the design details," he says. He even ended up using his engineering skills to design the supporting beams for the turf roof. Then, when it proved impossible to source satisfactory ready-made doors to connect the sitting room to the elevated area above the sunroom, John went back to the drawing board once more and made up his own design, which was then passed on to the joiners.

While the bulk of the materials were sourced by the builders, John ordered the wooden flooring for the kitchen and the travertine for the sunroom. "Unfortunately the marble flooring is cracking around the edges because one area sits on firm concrete while another is

“I wanted to be able to look out to the west in the evenings so we could see the summer sunset”



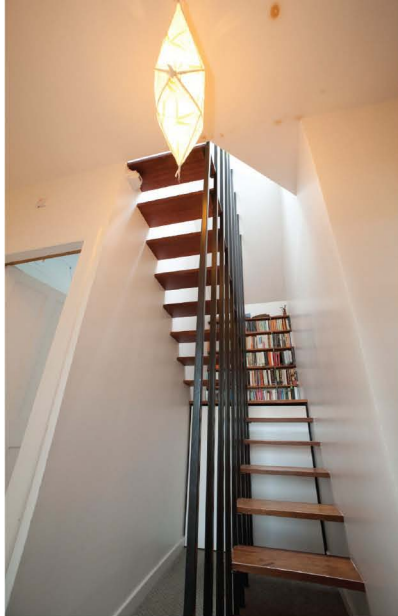
WE LEARNED...

ARCHITECTS in general have great ideas but they tend to run away with themselves, so watch out for that – and keep an eye on the costs.

WE USED a lighting designer to devise a scheme for us. We're happy with it but the initial plan was a bit over the top – their job is to sell you loads of lights after all!

WE MANAGED to move some of the plants and small trees that were on the site of the extension by getting the digger driver to shift the soil elsewhere.

Below: A bookshelf has been integrated into the wall between the dining area and sunroom. Bottom: The bay-windowed sitting room showcases the Norgroves' colourful eclectic style



mounted on insulation material, which has a certain amount of give. So there is tension between the two levels," he says.

The Carrara marble worktops in the kitchen, which John also sourced, are pleasing to look at and very sturdy, but they have their drawbacks. "At first I found it made a bit of a clanging noise when you put a pot down on the hard surface in such a big open space – but it's not so much of a problem now that we have furniture and curtains in place," says Lorna. "It does stain a bit though, but we decided that was OK – we came to the conclusion that the kitchen was for working in, not staring at."

The services of a skilled plasterer were required to deal with the curvy contours of the house. Luckily the Norgroves managed to find the perfect tradesperson for the job. "The plasterer we hired was over 70 years old and he initially had a young lad working with him. Unfortunately the assistant had a football accident and broke his arm so he did the whole thing himself. He was amazing," says Lorna.

Putting the copper edging on the roof was also tricky because of the curves; it was a costly design feature, but John thinks it was worth it because it's a low-maintenance finish.

Warmth, light and space

When it came to settling on a lighting scheme, the couple decided to enlist the help of experts. "In summer we are out a lot, so we don't need the lights on, but in winter they're on all the time. We got a schematic drawn up by David Brown Design, which is based in Edinburgh," says John, who particularly likes the glass globes that have been used in the sunroom. "They're like looking through a bowl – they highlight the colours in the room."

John says he enjoys the way the building flows visually through from the inside to the outside, all on one plane. He and Lorna also appreciate the extra warmth (and lower bills) that having a larger but better-insulated space has brought.



Now that life has settled down into the routine of ongoing work for the foundation – which has to date raised £750,000 – visits from family and friends, and painting sessions, Lorna is appreciating her creatively modified home and the way it has made a difference to their lifestyle. "It changes the way we live in the house," she says. "It is lovely to have so much light after working in a dark kitchen for so long. The old zone was small and poky so we tended to eat our evening meal in it and then go through to the sitting room. Now we live in the extension, and it's great when our grandchildren visit. They can lay out their toys and have loads of space to play."



closer look

Seamless curves...

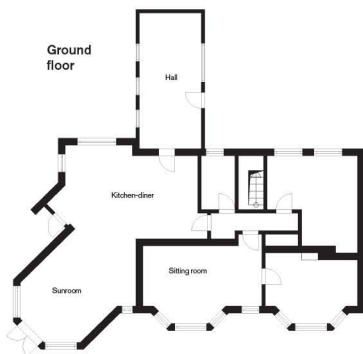
The steel columns and beams that support the Norgroves' turf roof have a fairly complex design and John – a retired civil engineer – designed them himself. "If we lived closer to a main town then it would have been easier to have the architects do the calculations but, given our remote location, it made sense for me to take it on," he says. There are three beams: one very curvy section that frames the glazing at the building's perimeter (pictured), one completely straight piece at the threshold between the dining area and the sunroom, and one in between with a more subtle curve that bridges the transition. The turf roof has its own irrigation system to prevent it drying out, fed from a tap that's cleverly concealed behind a hinged stone in the wall.



Steel framework



Floor plan



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TOTAL PROJECT COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m ²	Cost %	Total cost
Site set up	£72	3%	£3,525
Excavations, foundations & blockwork	£204	9%	£10,011
Structural steel	£84	4%	£4,113
Roof structure	£215	10%	£10,546
Windows & external doors	£183	8%	£8,989
Electrics	£112	5%	£5,464
Plumbing & heating	£215	10%	£10,516
Joinery	£332	15%	£16,274
Decoration	£107	5%	£5,288
Plant & equipment hire	£45	2%	£2,209
Flooring	£97	5%	£4,738
Glass balustrade & handrail	£28	1%	£1,381
Light fittings	£61	3%	£2,982
Kitchen	£137	6%	£6,734
External works	£112	5%	£5,499
Fees	£158	7%	£7,720
Grand total (extension only)			£105,989

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **SBA Architects** 01851 704889 www.sbaarchitects.org STRUCTURAL ENGINEER **Harley Haddow** 0141 332 3031 www.harleyhaddow.com
 BUILDER **Lewis Builders** 01851 705015 www.lewis-builders.com WINDOWS & DOORS **NorDan** 01786 406380 www.nordan.co.uk WOOD FLOORING
Hawwoods 01524 737000 www.hawwoods.co.uk TRAVERTINE FLOORING & MARBLE WORKTOP **Stone Source** 01463 238222 www.stone-source.co.uk
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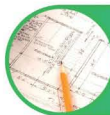




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66

66 SELF BUILD GUIDE: TIMBER SYSTEMS

Timber construction is very popular for new build homes, and there are many ways to use this sustainable, versatile material. Chris Bates outlines the benefits and options

72 PERFECTING THE KITCHEN-DINER

Everyone wants a space where cooking and sociable gathering are on an equal footing. Here's how to design a kitchen-diner that can do it all

80



78



75 HEAT RECOVERY: MVHR EXPLAINED

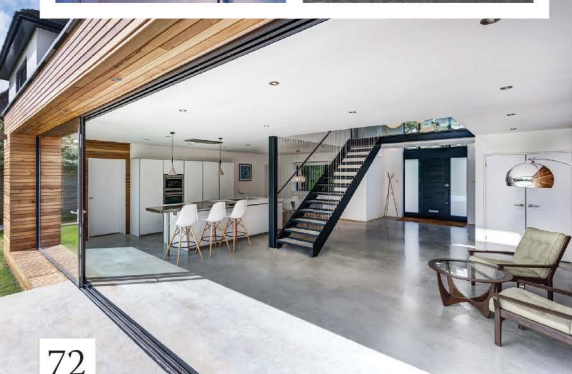
A must for modern airtight homes, MVHR systems save you money and allow your house to breathe. Here's what to consider when buying one

78 FRONT OF HOUSE

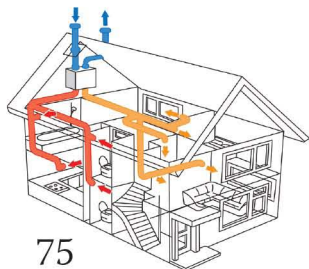
How to give your property more kerb appeal, from routine maintenance to bigger projects and planting ideas

80 POLISHED CONCRETE FLOORS

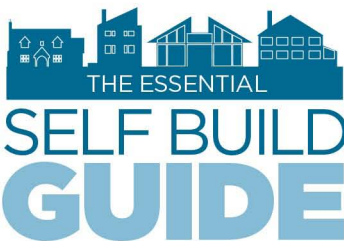
Stylish, low maintenance concrete makes excellent flooring, but installing it is a specialist job. This guide walks you through the process



72



75



Part 5 Timber structural systems

Offering a wealth of design options, competitive prices and quick construction times, timber frame is a self build favourite. **Chris Bates** reveals why you should consider this method for your project

With a viable plot in the bag and planning permission secured, it's time to get started on the detailed structural makeup of your new self build home. Ideally, your architect or designer will have given some thought to a potential construction method when drawing up the scheme. This is important because different systems lend themselves naturally to different design elements. Open-plan living is easy to achieve with timber framing, for instance, while you'll get best value with prefabricated techniques by working to standard panel sizes (much as you would with follow-on materials, such as plasterboard).

For many self builders, timber frame is a leading candidate for the structural shell of their home. Natural, straightforward and speedy on site, and suitable for pretty much any style of project, there are lots of reasons to recommend this system. This month, we're looking at why you should consider a timber build.

The basics

Modern frames comprise a series of storey-height structural panels, which slot together precisely on site to form a house's load bearing external walls. These engineered panels are made of studwork sheathed in a wood-based sheet material, such as oriented strandboard (OSB). Insulation is packed into the gaps between the studs in order to create a thermally efficient walling element.

The internal partitions, first floor structure, ceiling joists and roof trusses will form part of the package, and the whole kit will usually be erected by the supplier's expert team or a recommended contractor.

The beauty of opting for a timber frame system, then, is that you get the shell of a house designed to your specification, delivered and erected on site all in one neat bundle – ready for you to finish inside and out. The skeleton of a fairly standard project should take around 12 weeks to produce and as little as one to two weeks to put up. So while there's a fairly hefty lead time, the frame will rocket up – whereas wet systems such as masonry will take much longer on site and tend to be more exposed to potential delays at the hands of the UK climate.

Given that this route offers such a sizeable suite of materials and services, it's no surprise that many suppliers operate as so-called package house builders. These companies can deliver a variety of services to assist you in realising your dream home. So on top of the basic structural design-and-erect bundle they may allow you to bolt on architectural services, oversight of planning and Building Regulations applications, supply of additional materials, project management and even – in some cases – full 'turnkey' delivery of your new house (right down to the internal fit-out). For more on selecting a design and build package, turn to this month's special section on page 83.

Cost-wise, conventional timber frame is on a fairly even keel with brick and block – so there's little to choose between them on this score. As the two leading structural systems in the UK, you'll be hard-pressed to find trades who aren't completely familiar with both, too. One thing to consider with panelised systems, however, is that they do require extreme accuracy in the foundations. A tolerance of plus or



This series is sponsored by the Self Build Academy. Design and build specialist Potton has partnered with *Build It* to offer an educational series of courses to guide self builders through the exciting journey of creating a bespoke home. The independent sessions will cover everything from building with masonry or structural timber, to project management and finding land.

Next sessions:

How to plan & start your build 24th July

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minus 6mm is fairly standard; if your ground-workers don't achieve this, the erection team simply won't raise the frame. So be sure to get the foundations checked and properly signed off before the kit is delivered.

You also need to consider the fee structure; the frame is tailored to your scheme so can't be easily resold. You can therefore expect to pay a deposit of 30%-50% prior to manufacture and the rest on delivery/erection, so you'll need to ensure you've got funds in place at the right time.

Design flexibility

Most suppliers are more than happy to work with your own architect; although if you're partnering with a package company they may offer an in-house design service. With the latter route, typically you can either tailor an existing range or create a bespoke scheme from scratch. Both paths offer you the opportunity to create a unique, one-off home – so the choice really comes down to which professional designer you feel more comfortable with.

The scope and style of timber frame self build projects across the UK is breathtakingly varied. With a specialist company in tow, you can achieve anything from a simple box-shaped home right up to complicated schemes with clever cantilevered overhangs, unusual roofscapes, vaulted ceilings and other inspiring features. What's more, you can use the full gamut of cladding materials; subject to the planners' whims, you could go for wood boarding, render, brick, metal or any number of options for the external finish of your scheme. So whether you're dreaming of a cosy brick bungalow or a contemporary glass-and-render super-home, this system can deliver.

Depending on the complexity of the project, load bearing internal walls can be pretty much completely designed-out, therefore allowing you the flexibility to choose either open-plan or partitioned layouts to suit your family's requirements. Your supplier should look to value engineer the frame as far as possible, but ultimately getting an economical result stems from a good working partnership between the manufacturer and your architect. If budget is a big consideration, for



Timber frame package

Located on the edge of a conservation area, Jenny and Mark Wisdom's plot had a contentious planning history – but working together with the local council and their design and build package supplier, Potton, they came up with a bespoke scheme that fulfilled all the family's requirements. The brick-clad timber frame was delivered on a design, supply and erect basis and took around a week to go up, after which the Wisdoms managed the rest of the build themselves using Potton-recommended trades. The four-bedroom, 340m² house was completed for £340,000.

example, try to keep panel spans and storey heights within standard limits to ensure efficient use of materials. Measures such as this will minimise the requirement for any expensive reinforcing steels or similar supports.

Various technical decisions need to be made on timber frame projects that can help with the design and building stages of your project. For example, opting for metal web floor joists (which are super strong despite the open voids they contain) will make it easier to run services and ducting. Up on the roof, standard trusses are the default choice – but if you want a habitable loft, you could upgrade to attic trusses to free up space. Some suppliers may also be able to offer a hybrid of systems to suit your scheme – Potton, for example, works with timber frame and structural insulated panels; with the latter being a great option for a pre-insulated room-in-the-roof.

Panel options

The two most prevalent forms of timber frame are open panel (sometimes known as open cell) and closed panel (or closed cell). The difference between the two comes down to the degree of prefabrication involved while the components are still in the factory.

With open cell, the panels are delivered to site with the studwork, outer OSB sheathing and a layer of external breather paper in place. Breather paper is waterproof externally, but allows vapour to permeate from the internal side – so moisture can escape from the structural fabric rather than getting trapped. A similar membrane is

applied to the roof, so you end up with a fundamentally weathertight shell. Apertures for doors and windows are pre-cut, with bracing and support beams designed-in where possible. Once the structural envelope is up, insulation is added to your or your architect's specification

Alternative timber systems

Oak frame is a much-loved building system where posts and beams of this durable timber are either handcrafted or machined to create a load-bearing skeleton. Unlike many other methods, with oak the frame forms the core of both the house's structure and its aesthetic, as the beams are usually left exposed internally to add natural warmth and character to the living environment. To conform to modern requirements for energy efficiency, most oak frames are encapsulated with insulating panels. Variations on the theme include Potton's Douglas fir system and the iconic glass-and-timber Huf Haus design. **Suppliers:** Border Oak, Oakwrights, Welsh Oak Frame

Log construction is more traditionally associated with Scandinavia and North America, but has gained some traction in the UK. This type of house is typically constructed using whole or half logs, with the structure either manufactured or handcrafted in a workshop so that it will slot together neatly on site. You can usually choose between a kit to build yourself, a supply-and-erect service or a full turnkey package. **Suppliers:** British Log Cabins, True North Log Homes

Structural insulated panels (SIPs) are a variant on closed-panel timber frame. They're formed of two sheets of OSB, which sandwich a core of injected insulation that bonds the panel together. This creates a strong, thermally-efficient structural element that can be used for walls, roofs and even as floor cassettes. The main advantage of SIPs over standard timber is that there are no studs in the panels, which significantly cuts down on the potential for cold bridging. It's also very easy to make airtight. Good energy efficiency is built in as standard, then, but SIPs do attract a 5%-10% price hike over conventional panels. **Suppliers:** Kingspan TEK, Potton, SIPs@Clays



Architect-designed timber home

Lakeland Timber Frame produced the engineered timber shell for Elspeth Jones and Fiona Inglis's stunning contemporary house according to their architect's design. Steel supports were inserted to carry the loads of the cantilevered first floor and the large overhanging eaves, as well as to allow for the dramatic corner glazing that makes the most of the surrounding views. The cladding is a mix of rendered blockwork on the ground floor and durable larch on the upper storey. The three-bedroom, 267m² house was completed for £367,000.

and the open side is closed off. Depending on the supplier, this might be achieved directly with a vapour control layer, battens (to create a service void) and plasterboard; or another layer of OSB may be included first.

There's very little to choose between the two panel types. Opting for an open cell arrangement can be extremely cost-effective, gives you a slightly greater degree of control over sourcing the materials, a corresponding sense of more hands-on involvement in the scheme and offers a touch more flexibility. So it's a good choice if you can't quite decide where to locate electrical

outlets and other services. However, it does require more labour on site.

Closed cell construction is broadly similar, but as a minimum the units come with both sides enclosed and the insulation factory-fitted. You can opt for even higher degrees of prefabrication – from pre-fitted door linings and service conduits through to panels with windows and doors already installed. The big plus with closed panels is that more of the work is completed off-site to computer-controlled degrees of accuracy, which makes for an ultra-fast build and takes a lot of the potential for human error out of achieving good insulation covering and air tightness.

One potential downside is that the initial costs will be higher (although a basic closed cell frame should come in at a similar price point to using open cell once labour is considered). You'll also need to stay very true to your original design – altering the panels on site to accommodate last-minute revisions can be expensive and negates the point of choosing this system in the first place.

Energy efficiency

Whichever option you choose, a typical internal panel will be around 140mm–145mm thick, to allow for enough insulation to meet modern standards of energy efficiency.

Part L of the Building Regulations requires designers and builders to work to overall efficiency standards for the entire fabric of a new home (governed by 'dwelling emission rates' that set a maximum level for annual CO₂ emissions). Your architect or house designer should

therefore take a holistic approach to energy performance – but as a guide, the regs set a notional U-value threshold of 0.18 W/m²K for walls, which is easily achievable with standard timber frame.

Deeper panels can accept more insulation and therefore deliver better performance – although it's more common to stick to 140mm and add another layer of protection internally once the main shell is up, prior to fixing the plasterboard. This is actually the route we decided to take with *The Build It House* (which continues on page 106, this month focusing on lighting and electrics).

Our virtual project features 140mm-thick open panels filled with rigid polyisocyanurate (PIR) insulation – available from the likes of Kingspan and EcoTherm – with another 40mm of PIR applied internally. This extra thickness helps to reduce 'cold bridging', where useful heat escapes via studwork or similar elements crossing the structural fabric, by providing a near-continuous layer of insulation. Combined with a render-and-block outer cladding and Gyproc wallboard internally, our construction is designed to achieve a U-value of 0.14 W/m²K. With thicker panels, figures as low as 0.10 W/m²K are eminently achievable.

Another area where timber frame really shines in comparison to many other systems is in its capacity to achieve excellent air tightness. The prefabricated, precision-engineered panels help to ensure everything's level and plumb – which makes sealing the joins a relatively simple job. This can make a sizeable contribution to ensuring you end up with a low-energy home.

The essential guide to self build

To lead you through the process of creating a bespoke home, this 10-part series will cover everything you need to know to carry out a successful project. Here's a list of what to expect in the coming months:

- 1 Steps to self build success
- 2 Budgets & finance
- 3 Finding the ideal location
- 4 Designing your dream home
- 5 Timber structural systems
- 6 Masonry structural systems
- 7 Project management
- 8 Heating your home
- 9 Final checks
- 10 Troubleshooting

CONTACTS

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Perfecting the kitchen-diner

Strike the right balance between functionality and appeal to ensure the hub of your home is the place everyone wants be in, says **Ifeoluwa Adedעי**

Above: John Cullen has achieved a layered lighting scheme in this kitchen, using Contour HD24 (£117 per m) above the units to create a long, linear effect. Both single (£151) and double (£205) Square LED downlights provide task lighting to the table and island

When it comes to home improvement projects, establishing a stylish open-plan culinary zone is at the top of many people's wish lists. And for good reason, too – when the design is well executed, kitchen-diners become multi-functional rooms that different members of the family can occupy and enjoy at the same time. The space can also offer the ideal set-up for sharing meals and entertaining guests, with many designs configured to open out to the garden and create an al fresco experience.

Establishing the space

If your kitchen and dining areas are small separate rooms, a quick route to fashioning a more spacious and

practical zone might be to remove the dividing walls between them. Do get your builder to check whether any partitions are load-bearing, as a structural engineer might be required to confirm if steelwork is necessary to support your upper storeys.

Another option, if you have the external space available, is to extend out to the rear of your home. A single-storey extension is one of the most popular routes to follow, as the government's permitted development (PD) policy means that planning permission is usually not required for small additions.

This solution should make it easier for you to plan a light-filled zone that connects well with your garden space and receives plenty of light. "If it's

viable, try to incorporate sliding glazed panels, bifolds or elegant double doors that lead out to a deck or patio area with outside dining. This will help to blur the lines between the two spaces, creating a seamless link," says Opinder Liddar from Lapd Architects.

The layout

It's important to develop a floorplan that works with the space you have, so once you know the zone's dimensions speak to a kitchen company that will be able to use computer software to design the best set-up.

If you're on a tight budget then stick to standard units – this way you can come away with a fitted kitchen for as little as £8,000. Higher end retailers can offer more tailored solutions and made-to-measure cabinets, but expect to pay anything from £20,000 for this service. If you have a clear idea of what you'd like to achieve then take your drawings along with you to ensure you get the space you want.

Key to the success of any kitchen is ensuring the working triangle between the sink, hob and fridge is clearly defined. You could use an island to help you establish a link between the appliances; site your hob or sink on this central base and work the other two elements around it.

Don't be afraid to plan in some comfortable seating, such as a window bench, sofa, or at a breakfast bar. This will enable you to engage with your children, partner or guests while preparing food. "The key thing for this space is that whoever is in the kitchen feels like they're a key part of the conversation," says Opinder.

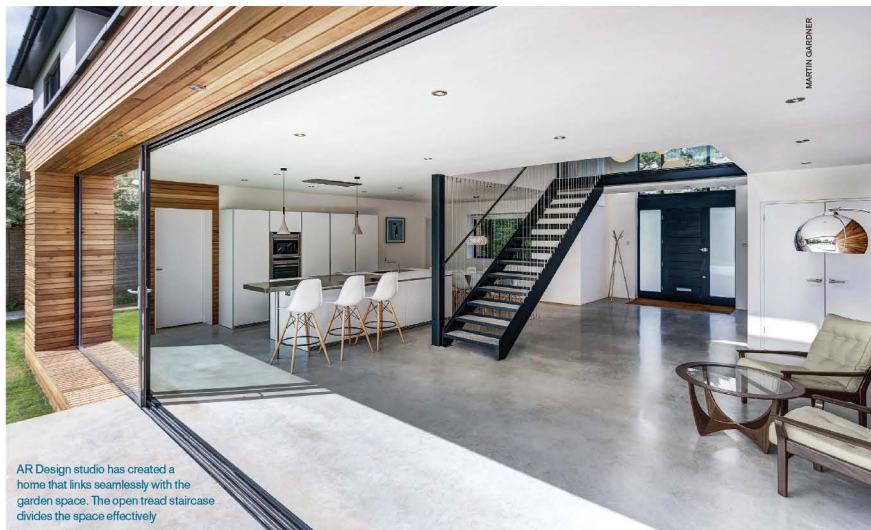
Another aspect to consider is how you will keep the zone warm in the winter. "You tend to have less wall space to hang a radiator in this new

require specific consent to build. PD only applies to extensions that don't front the main highway. But it does come with caveats, and one of the main restrictions is that single-storey additions must be no taller than 4m. For this type of extension, you can extend out by 3m on a terraced property and 4m for a detached home (these limits are currently doubled in England). However, the addition shouldn't exceed 50% of the total garden amenity around the house.

Further restrictions may apply to your scheme if you live in a conservation area or a listed building, where you're likely to need the relevant consent from your local authority to make any alterations to the property (for more on listed buildings see page 115). Even if you don't have to apply for

HELPFUL DESIGN TIPS

- Plan your socket and switch locations carefully. There's less wall space available in open-plan zones, so consider incorporating hidden electrical outlets into kitchen islands and cupboards.
- Adding the latest tech could allow you to maximise on space. Install a boiling water tap and you won't need to store a kettle on your countertop, while a combination steam oven and microwave could also help you make more room for storage.
- In an extension the areas furthest away from the external window and door openings are prone to becoming dark. You can remedy this situation by incorporating oversized windows that capture more light, borrowing brightness via glazed internal doors and choosing bright, reflective surfaces and finishes.
- Artificial lighting can play a substantial role in helping to create a division between the zones. Place shadow free task lighting over your food prep area, and use dimmable downlights in the dining zone to establish an intimate ambience.



AR Design studio has created a home that links seamlessly with the garden space. The open tread staircase divides the space effectively

open-plan zone," says Opinder. "As a result discreet underfloor heating is a great alternative." You could install a stove to create a focal point that guests can gather round, or switch to tall, slender contemporary radiators rather than bulky traditional models.

The rules and regulations

Most extension projects fall within PD rules, which means you may not

permission, ideally you should still obtain a 'certificate of lawful use', which will prove that you didn't need consent to create the addition. For more information visit www.planningportal.gov.uk.

While planning consent may not be required, you'll always need to comply with the Building Regulations. For instance if you're dreaming of a largely glazed contemporary extension, then

you might have to make improvements to the rest of your home, such as adding more insulation in the loft to bring the efficiency rating of your property in line with current standards.

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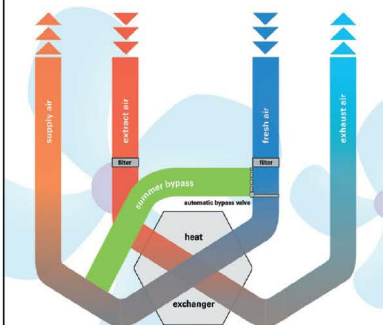
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HEAT RECOVERY: MVHR EXPLAINED

A mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system can optimise your energy usage while providing you with fresh, filtered air – creating a comfortable and eco-friendly living environment, says **Duncan Hayes**

As energy costs rise and Building Regulations regarding energy efficiency become more stringent, mechanical ventilation and heat recovery (MVHR) makes very good sense for many self-build projects. This clever technology extracts energy from stale, warm air as it leaves a house and uses it to heat a fresh new supply from the outside – satisfying the ventilation demands of highly airtight modern homes while simultaneously helping to reduce utility bills.

"Traditionally, trickle vents, extractors and windows were relied on to change the air in our homes. Taken together, these leakage points can contribute up to 50% of a building's total heat loss," says Clarissa Youden, associate director at Total Home Environment. This is significant when you consider that 75% of the energy used in the average home is for heating and hot water. Effectively, MVHR allows you to optimise your energy usage by repurposing the heat in your home. A well-specified system will typically recover a minimum of around 90% of the warmth that would otherwise be lost. "This can take a third off the average heating bill," says Clarissa.

Once up and running, the system performs constantly in the background, providing whole-house air changes, recycling heat and removing odours and pollutants (such as carbon dioxide and volatile organic compounds – VOCs – from furnishings and paints) from the living spaces. In addition, pollen filters can be fitted to significantly lower the number of external allergens entering the building. An MVHR system will also help reduce house mite populations, minimise unwanted external noise and cut the condensation by removing excess moisture from the environment.

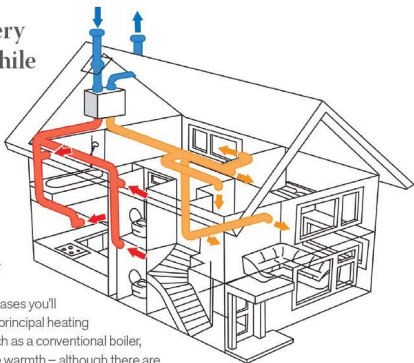
What to consider

An MVHR setup should always be designed by a specialist company that will tune the schematics to your home's requirements. This technology will only work effectively in a building that's highly insulated and airtight, which means you need to factor in a system

at the planning stages with your architect or designer.

In most cases you'll still need a principal heating system, such as a conventional boiler, to generate warmth – although there are high-end MVHR units available that incorporate micro heat pumps to produce heat and even offer some cooling capacity in the summer. "This kind of hybrid system can provide an extra 2kW-2.5kW of heat energy into the house, meaning you need less space-heating elsewhere," says Clarissa. In ultra-efficient homes, such as Passivhaus projects, there may be no need for a boiler; backup sources, such as small electric towel rails or underfloor heating (UFH) in the bathroom, may be sufficient to maintain comfortable internal temperatures in tandem with your MVHR unit.

At the design stages, you'll need to allow for external vents and sufficiently deep floor levels to accommodate ducts. The project



Above: This diagram by Xpelair shows a typical system with two sets of ducting. One supplies fresh air to the habitable rooms; the other extracts warm, stale air from wet zones, such as the bathrooms and kitchen, in order to recycle the heat



Left and above: This Passivhaus in Golcar, Yorkshire, features a Novus 300 MVHR unit by Paul, supplied by the Green Building Store, housed in an upstairs plant room. The system cost £5,000 and works in tandem with a gas boiler to provide efficient warmth for the 261m² property

CLOSER LOOK

The Samson family wanted an MVHR system for their large self build home in Oxfordshire. The unit would work in conjunction with central heating, recovering as much warmth as possible to keep utility bills down. They opted for a Passivhaus-certified Renovent Excellent unit from Dutch firm Brink Climate Systems, supplied by CVC Direct, alongside rigid steel ducting. The main heat recovery hub is located in the loft. "The arrangement has created a fresh and comfortable home that's a pleasure to be in," says Peter Samson. A similar system would start from around £3,000 excluding installation, based on a 200m² property.



manager needs to have an eye for detail to ensure air tightness and insulation levels stated on the drawings are actually put into practice. It's also important not to nail or screw into pipe runs in ceilings, as a pierced duct will compromise air tightness. Keep a plan of the layout once installation's completed to avoid future headaches.

How it works

The heart of the system is the heat recovery (HR) unit. This is available in various capacities to suit the size and heat loss parameters of your home, and is usually located in the loft.

Building Regulations state that the unit must have a boost facility above standard fan speed to deal with excess humidity and similar issues. Some models have automatic sensors for moisture and carbon dioxide that trigger automatic switching. Good quality systems should have two or three speeds that work with constant flow motors, allowing you to vary the output to ensure it is meeting the specified volume of air changes. Most have a condensate drain, which is connected to the house's waste system, to remove moisture collected from the air. Check that the set-up also has an automatic summer bypass. This will switch off the heat recovery aspect when the external temperature reaches a predefined level.

Inset: Genvex's Optima controller features a 24-hour, seven-day timer. The unit tracks key system information such as operating temperatures and also provides filter maintenance alerts



The specification of the ducting has a direct impact on performance and efficiency, with a range of dimensions on offer in rigid, semi-rigid or flexible configurations made of steel, aluminium or PVC. Flexible, concertina-style ducting can be crushed and its ribbed profile introduces increased air resistance when compared to smooth-walled rigid types, so it's not as effective. Your designer should aim for the shortest possible runs with minimal bends, with as large a diameter of ducts as possible to keep the air flowing and the machine running at its optimum efficiency. In addition, any ducting outside the warm envelope of the house must be highly insulated to prevent heat loss and condensation.

Internally, you'll need to install ceiling diffusers or vents, which should be sited according to the MVHR design. "The positioning of the internal vents is important," says Tim Bartlett, director at CVC Direct. "They must be strategically located so that they draw air through the room, creating a flow that will help direct moist air away from windows where it may otherwise form condensation." On the roof or gable end you'll have external supply and extraction vents, and these mustn't be positioned too close together in order to ensure there's no cross contamination.

As far as maintenance is concerned, the most important consideration is regular cleaning and replacement of filters on the diffusers and vents. This will ensure unobstructed air flow and maintains efficiency by preventing the motor from straining to overcompensate.

The costs

Because the system must be specifically tailored to the property, prices vary considerably. While the actual HR units have a fixed cost depending on the model, the length and specification of the ducting will have a big impact on the overall sum. But you get what you pay for with MVHR, and it's worth investing in a high-quality system as it will offer more durable and efficient components, with some systems offering lifespans of more than 20 years.

Based on a typical 200m² new build house, a Genvex GES Energy 1 unit starts from £3,800 plus VAT, including rigid safe-seal ducting, insulation and a Genvex Optima controller – but not design and installation. Fitting would take three days, spread over the first- and second-fix stages of the build, with a final day for commissioning and testing. Always check installation costs before signing up.

Retrofit units

While it's possible to install MVHR into an existing building, the system's reliance on good insulation and air tightness means that it really only makes sense on a project that's having a major overhaul. The scheme will need to include significant works to improve overall energy efficiency and reduce heat loss. Sufficient space must be allowed for the ducting, which can look invasive in a renovation unless major works are planned to ceilings and floors. Boxing out or containing ducting within fitted wardrobes can help to conceal vertical runs.

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Front of house

A property that creates an appealing first impression maximises its value and makes coming home an even greater pleasure, says **Emily Brooks**

You'll walk through your front garden, or down your driveway, almost every day of the year, so ensuring these areas are as well-presented as possible makes sense if you want to enjoy your home to the full. It's also a great way to increase the value of a property (not to mention make the neighbours jealous). From a quick lick of paint to more involved projects, these ideas will boost kerb appeal.

Clean, repair & declutter

Take an objective look around to identify jobs that need doing. Blocked, overflowing guttering not only looks bad but can lead to water ingress and maintenance issues, so clear it out and replace broken sections if necessary. Cracked or missing roof tiles should also be replaced to prevent bigger problems further down the line.

Wiping down dirty fascias and soffits can give a house an overnight facelift (many larger window cleaning firms offer this service). Your home's main

facade can also be washed, but be as gentle as possible as high-pressure water can damage certain materials; loosening mortar, for example. What's more, the patina of age is a desirable feature, especially on period houses, so think twice about removing it if it's not doing any damage.

Declutter by pulling out weeds and removing fallen leaves, and consider concealing your wheelie bins behind a willow screen or in a timber hide. And don't forget the driveway and paving – give them a wash to blast off algae and other grime that could make the surface slippery underfoot.

Finishing touches for the front door area include replacing or polishing the ironmongery; adding decorative window film to side lights and over-door lights; and replacing door names and numbers with modern versions.

Paint, render & masonry

Timber window frames and front doors (as well as elements such as metal railings and wooden fencing) benefit

from a new coat of paint every few years. This isn't simply to make them look better but also to offer a coating to protect against the elements.

Keep an eye out for cracked or damaged masonry, which could lead to damp problems inside. Repoint brickwork where necessary (the rule of thumb is, if the mortar has recessed to more than its height, then it needs attention), and use masonry filler to repair minor cracks and holes in render before finishing with a coat of masonry paint. Always apply products that are suited to the age of your property – older homes were built with porous lime render and mortar, so they're not a good match for non-breathable cement.

Larger projects

Replacing dated front and/or garage doors can have a transformative effect. Look for companies offering matching products to create a neat, unified look – try Urban Front for its contemporary oak ranges, for example. While modern units can refresh the look of some older properties, houses with a very definite period feel (a 1930s semi or rural barn, for example) tend to look better when paired with styles that match their original features.

Above: Fitting new matching garage and front doors can transform an existing property. This house features a Parma automated garage door in European oak, £13,200, and Parma E80 doorset, around £9,600 including side lights, both from Urban Front

A new driveway is a serious investment, but one that can make a profound difference to your home's exterior. However, large amounts of paving can have an effect on drainage if it's non-permeable. "Look at how to create a balanced front garden, with sufficient beds for drainage or a soakaway," says Claire Blake, head of domestic product management at Marshalls. Clever design can make a uniform driveway less boring. "There's a trend for using different products together to break up the space, such as natural stone setts in small areas combined with concrete – for example, a pathway can be done in an unusual material," says Claire. "Walling, edging and even a water feature can all make a space flow properly."

Lighting

Front-of-house illumination has a practical purpose: guiding your car on to the driveway; allowing you to see to get your key in the door; or providing an additional element of security. Drive-over lights, incorporated into the paving, are designed to take the heavy load of a car, while low bollards add height and a sculptural element to an otherwise flat space. Choose products with movement sensors (PIRs) if you only want the lights to come on when you're in the vicinity.

Green it up

Large, uninterrupted swathes of paving can look pretty bland. Good planting not only softens those hard edges but it also creates height and



A coat of paint and some easy-maintenance pots give a doorway a fresh new look. Door in Celestial Blue intelligent exterior eggshell paint, £29 for 1L, Little Greene

structure for visual interest. Beds can be incorporated into a new driveway, bordered by attractive edging stones that match (or contrast with) the rest of the paving. "Too many people pave over the front garden. It prevents drainage – but it also stops you having anything pretty," says garden designer, Dawn Perkins, who suggests a greener alternative to a small paved driveway. "You could have two strips of bricks for the car, with ground-cover planting underneath, or decorative gravel." For a front garden to have kerb appeal it must look good all year round. "Use a succession of flowers, but lots of structure, too, such as by teaming yew topiary balls with evergreen climbers," says Dawn. "Opting for good-quality materials is important as they will be more on show in winter."

Window boxes and planters by the front door are good quick fixes. Topiary balls or standard shrubs give a smart architectural appearance that's great for modern or urban properties, while flowering plants, spilling over the top, give a softer, more profuse look.

Left: Use different colours, shapes and materials to break up large areas in a driveway; this curved example uses Marshalls' permeable Drivesett Tegula Priora in Traditional and Pennant Grey. Below left: If you're replacing an existing driveway, you won't need planning consent if you use permeable paving because it helps contribute to flood prevention. SureSet's resin-bound paving is smooth and seamless, costing from £54-£60 per m² including installation

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materials spotlight:

Polished concrete floors

Ifeoluwa Adedeji explains the benefits of installing this chic and durable alternative to natural stone

Right: The owners of this terraced home in London wanted to establish a striking, yet low-maintenance space for their young family. Their project, designed by Architecture for London, involved adding polished concrete flooring, which runs from the living space straight out to the courtyard-style garden to offer a durable connection between indoors and out

With the popularity of the industrial design trend firmly established (see page 110), it's no wonder that materials that were originally cast on the factory floor – literally – are now being adopted in the home. Polished concrete is a sleek and stylish, yet hardwearing and low maintenance covering. It can be used to achieve the luxury look of granite or marble without forking out on the hefty price tag, making it a solid solution for a self build or renovation project.

What are the benefits?

If you want a low maintenance stone appearance then polished concrete, which typically costs anything from £80 per m² to £150 per m², is ideal. The material works well with that self build staple underfloor heating (UFH), because it is a good conductor and will retain the heat produced. It even stores warmth acquired from solar gain (through windows etc) and recycles it as internal temperatures cool – helping to maintain an even climate. You can also choose from a range of colours to complement your interior scheme.

Where can it be used?

Polished concrete floors are ideal for creating a seamless link between inside and out, especially when connecting a kitchen-diner with the garden. The light – reflective and robust material will hold up well in high traffic areas, which is why you'll find it on many shop floors. Depending on its condition, it may be possible to polish existing concrete, which is common in basement conversions or when transforming warehouses and industrial structures. It's generally easiest to install in a new build project, where you can plan for an arrangement that supports the weight of the material. However, retrofitting scenario is also possible to achieve. When applying concrete retrospectively you will need to consider whether the floor structure can take the extra weight (around 200kg per m²). You should also allow for the fact that the ceiling height within an existing property will be reduced by a least 100mm.

Installation process

Concrete is made by combining cement, gravel, sand and water. The mixture is then usually poured onto a



steel and fibre-reinforced mesh, which minimises the risk of cracking.

If you're fitting UFH, the concrete should be installed on top of the pipes. Either way, it will then be levelled and compacted using internal or external vibration to remove any air pockets and surface voids, which could reduce the strength and durability of the material.

Depending on your desired finish, a plain or coloured hardener (known as a dry shaker) is added to the surface of the concrete. This is smoothed in using a power float machine, which features a large round flat disk, for rough grinding the concrete. This can be repeated between four to eight times to achieve the desired effect.

It's crucial that the treatment starts when the concrete is hard enough to hold the weight of the machine and the operator, but not so dry that the power floater cannot trim the high spots or fill the lows effectively. Most polished concrete floors are cast in one section, temporarily covered and left to cure, which is a much faster process in the warmer months. After a month the concrete is uncovered, cleaned, mopped and burnished to remove any inconsistencies or footprints. At this point some companies will simply apply a matt, satin or gloss sealant to achieve the desired appearance.

Technically a true polished concrete floor is created by using a diamond

grinding machine that evens out the surface, which is then treated with a chemical densifier to reveal a blemish-free shine. It is not considered polished concrete until a level of 400 grits is reached to achieve a glossy finish.

What to consider

At least 28 days must pass before freshly poured concrete can be polished. However, works such as kitchen installations can continue. It will be six – 12 months before the concrete truly reaches its full strength, but the floor will be usable much sooner.

Sudden temperature change is the biggest reason for cracks in floors. However, as well as the reinforcement mesh that's laid before the concrete is poured, control joints can also be cut into the concrete surface at predetermined locations. This creates a deliberate weak spot so the polished concrete will shrink (crack) in a neat straight line to look like tiles and avoid breaks elsewhere. The joints should be added with a neat saw within 24 hours of installing the concrete.

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E: build@timberinnovations.co.uk

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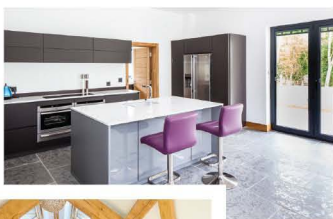
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84 HOW TO BUILD A PACKAGE HOME

Mike Hardwick explains how working with the right company can offer a hassle-free route to completing a bespoke self build project on time and on budget

88 DESIGN & BUILD DIRECTORY

Find the right specialist for your scheme in our directory of Britain's best home builders

93 NEW ENGLAND-STYLE HOME

This timber-clad bungalow was built using a fixed-price package for the main shell

97 TURNKEY BUNGALOW

With busy working lives, the Hines wanted a full package service to take their scheme from start to finish

101 OAK FRAME HOME

Relying on the experts ensured the Leech family made the most of their choice of a specialist structural system

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HOW TO BUILD A

package home

Every self build is different, requiring a bundle of planning, design, management and construction services, as well as your own DIY input. **Mike Hardwick** explains how to choose a design and build firm that delivers the right mix of support for your project

There are various routes to realising a dream home – from using a custom build facilitator that can provide a serviced plot and create a bespoke turnkey home on it, through to those hardy souls who undertake every aspect of their project themselves on a DIY basis. While it's the low-risk route, custom build will tend to be at the expensive end of the scale. Conversely DIY, although easily the cheapest way to reach your goal, comes at the expense of piling all the risk and stress onto the individual self builder. As a result, the majority will take a course somewhere between these two extremes.

For most of us, it's usually easier and more comfortable to involve a professional such as a general builder or project manager to look after the construction phase. However, there is still the interface between the architect or designer to deal with, not to mention the major hurdles of gaining planning permission, navigating Building Regulations approval and ensuring compliance with an ever-increasing set of rules. A way of bringing all of this together is to use the services of a package company to undertake the design and construction process for you.

What do package companies do?

In the early days of self building, it was perfectly possible for someone with a lot of enthusiasm but not a lot of expert knowledge to construct a house. Over the years, the rules and regulations have tightened up considerably and these days the process has become far more complex, particularly when it comes to complying with energy efficiency standards. By the same token, obtaining planning permission is rarely a simple process and remains a major hurdle for most self builders. Quite often sites are not straightforward and require the involvement of planning professionals to get the best results.

Package companies will take you from the point where you have identified a plot of land (although some can assist with this, too), through to the design process and planning permission application. Once consent has been granted, they provide the Building Regulations and



Jill and Lloyd Smith were looking for a fast, no-nonsense route to building a new home in Hampshire – which led them to prefabricated timber frame specialist, Baurfitz. The company uses modular construction techniques and sustainable materials to create tailor-made, eco-friendly homes. Built into a sloping site, this 280m² project (pictured above and top) cost £800,000 and was completed in just 26 weeks including the internal fit-out.

construction drawings, followed by the timber frame or package of materials. It should be a seamless process, helping you to finish the build with as much or as little involvement as you want, depending on your particular needs. The result will be a house that is individually tailored to your plot, your budget and your lifestyle.

Choosing a supplier is usually guided by the method of construction you've opted for. Timber frame packages are more common than masonry ones, because the frame tends to be erected by whoever designed and manufactured it, so those services have historically always been bundled together. The design and build stages of brick-and-block homes have traditionally been seen as separate entities – but a number of companies supply masonry packages, including Design & Materials, Feeling Homes and Revolution Homes. Many timber frame suppliers have also crossed in to SIPs construction, and there are also package firms for more specialist building methods – for example, Welsh Oak Frame for green oak or Baufritz for off-site manufactured, turnkey dwellings.

An example masonry package

It's easier to explain the typical package routes for masonry and timber builds by singling out two particular companies. Design & Materials (D&M) specialises in bespoke brick-and-block construction, including modern masonry techniques such as the thin-joint system, though it has successfully undertaken SIPs projects, too. Its secret weapon is its head of design, Beverley Pemberton, who has a great track record when interpreting client briefs, and I speak from experience – she designed my home!

Once a client has identified a viable plot, D&M carries out a project appraisal and writes a brief, which is agreed with the clients. It then creates initial drawings and, when the client is happy, takes the scheme through the planning process. With consent granted, it looks after the building control approval process and produces the construction drawings. D&M will also take care of the SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) and structural calculations.

The firm puts together a price for this package, which will include the materials to build the superstructure of the house. If the price is agreed, it will assist with the tendering process and help to find a builder, often sourced through a network of proven contractors. D&M doesn't offer a project management service and the contract to build is between the client and the chosen trades, but they will always have someone available to offer advice and support to the client. All of this comes within the inclusive package price, so you can get a feel for overall costs at this early stage of the project by combining the cost of the land and build with builder's price to complete the work.

"Clients really appreciate our bespoke design service and the 44 years of knowledge we've amassed in the industry," says Bruce MacDonald, managing director at Design & Materials. "The number of customers who come back to use our service again shows how much they appreciate being able to call on us for help and advice."

An example timber package

Potton is a leading timber frame provider that recently celebrated 50 years in business. The company's show home complex and training academy near St Neots in Cambridgeshire is well worth a visit. It provides a similar service to D&M, but its focus is on timber frame and SIPs packages. The big difference is the scope and scale of its services, as well as its network of project managers who can undertake the build process on the client's behalf.

Potton provides anything from a basic timber frame through to the construction of weathertight shells and, in some areas of the country, a fully managed build service using their in-house project managers. While it is fair to say that it was once more associated with having an extensive catalogue of designs, what is not so well known is that despite the thousands of Potton homes built, no two are the same. It now offers a totally bespoke architectural service for clients that includes SIPs and post and beam options, as well as its trademark timber frame. The customer profile is interesting; only around 1% are pure



Steve Morris took an unusual route to achieving his family's 375m² three-storey home. Using SketchUp software, he designed the house himself – then took the plans to the main shell supplier, SIPs Eco Panels, to translate them into a buildable scheme. The supply and erection of the structural insulated panels made up £63,760 of the total £376,000 construction cost – with Steve acting as project manager throughout.



Over 30 years after their first self build, Tony and Sheila Shelford decided to have another go. With the help of Oakwrights and partner architectural designer, Pete Tonks, they created a characterful 328m² oak frame home for £510,000. The couple used Oakwrights' services for the design, planning and structural shell (including the main frame and encapsulation panels) but led the rest of the project themselves with the support of another local self builder, who acted as a consultant.

DIY self builders, with most opting to either self-manage the work (40%) or use one of Potton's project managers to oversee it (40% again). Around 5% ask the firm to do everything from the foundations through to a weathertight shell, leaving the client to finish off the project themselves; while the remainder (around 14%) will employ a general builder to oversee the project from start to finish.

"By using our service, clients have a large company to fall back on – so there is always professional support to address problems. Small firms just can't do that as well," says Paul Newman, self build director at Potton. "Nothing is getting simpler in the construction business and we are able to help customers navigate the maze of regulations – such as the new Construction and Design Management (CDM 2015) rules, as well as energy efficiency and sustainability targets – while helping them with the myriad choices that need to be made during the build."

What don't they do?

The packages supplied by these companies usually only include the materials and labour needed to create a weatherproof shell. You have to provide a viable building plot and a sensible budget with which to fund the development. The level of internal finish they'll undertake varies, too. Most firms won't supply kitchens, bathrooms, electrics, heating or plumbing as part of their standard kit as these are all for the client to source and install – usually through their builder, depending on the quality required and the balance of funds available. That said, some UK firms do offer the full 'turnkey' level of service, which was pioneered by European providers such as Baufritz and WeberHaus. Do note, though that even these firms will not include the foundations as standard, since they vary so much depending on the site conditions.

All package companies will require a topographical survey of your plot showing the levels and features of the site to help with the design process and while they are

happy to introduce third-party service providers such as environmental or flood risk assessors, these will all invariably be paid for by the client as an additional cost.

Why should I consider taking the design & build route?

The rules and regulations around building your own home have not got any easier, and having the experience of a package company behind you can therefore be a real boon. Although you will be obliged to use the materials or timber frame provided by the firm if you wish to use their design, the 'front-end' costs are usually remarkably low; expect a typical outlay of around £3,000 to get to the point where you have an agreed design with planning permission. That's significantly less than using a traditional architect service. Building Regulations and construction drawings will be included as part of the agreed package price once the client decides to go ahead with the build.

Apart from their outstanding in-house design facilities, I think the best advantage is the support and advice on offer, which is there whether you are a 'hands-on' or 'hands-off' client. It's easy to make expensive mistakes and the package suppliers know how to avoid the pitfalls. There are cheaper ways of building, but few offer better value for money. For me, the balance of cost and risk reduction, not to mention the lower levels of stress involved, makes using a package company a very sensible option, especially for first time self builders.

CONTACTS

Baufritz 01223 235632 www.baufritz.co.uk
Design & Materials 0845 404 0400 www.designmaterials.co.uk
Feeling Homes 0330 068 1180 www.feelinghomes.co.uk
Oakwrights 01432 353353 www.oakwrights.co.uk
Potton 01767 676400 www.potton.co.uk
Revolution Homes 01323 886401 www.revolutionhomes.co.uk
SIPs Eco Panels 01787 377388 www.sipscopanel.co.uk
Weber Haus www.weberhaus.co.uk
Welsh Oak Frame 01686 688000 www.welshoakframe.com

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0845 40 40 400

www.designandmaterials.uk.com

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Design & build Directory

Who will help you to build your dream home? Our essential guide to design and package companies will assist you in choosing the right partner

This directory of package home suppliers will give you a great starting point for your project, helping you to identify who's out there and the level of service they offer. The majority of these companies use some form of timber frame construction (such as open panel framing, green oak or structural insulated panels). Firms that principally use brick and block are marked with a grey house symbol, while those using alternatives such as insulating concrete formwork or straw bale are denoted with a pink house. Additional services and corresponding symbols are outlined in the key (shown on each page).

A

Advanced Housing Systems

Shirley Holms, 4 South Park Drive,
Gerrards Cross, Bucks, SL9 8JH
T: 020 7193 1461
www.advancedhousingystems.co.uk

Creates custom homes using its TotalBuild or ManagedBuild services. Works with a variety of construction systems, including SIPs, green oak and natural building methods.

Allwood Buildings

Talewater, Talaton,
Exeter, Devon, EX5 2RT
T: 01404 850977
www.allwoodtimber.co.uk

Timber frames supplied and erected to your specifications. The company will work with your own bespoke plans or has an in-house design team that will create something for you. Works nationwide, but focuses on the south west.

Amvic Building Solutions

Amvic House, Unit 5 Linfit Court,
Colliers Way, Clayton West,
Huddersfield, HD8 9WL
T: 0800 756 6399
www.amvicbuild.com

Offers a strong insulating concrete formwork system, which is available in two main specifications.

B

Baufritz (UK)

The Workplace, Oakington Road,
Girton, Cambridge, CB3 0QH
T: 01223 235632
www.baufritz.co.uk

German company Baufritz specialises in bespoke, closed-panel prefabricated homes (usually three to five bedrooms) and provides a guaranteed completion time. Design, planning, manufacture and project management are all offered.

Beco Wallform

Albert Street, Brigg, North
Lincolnshire, DN20 8HQ
T: 01652 653844
www.becowallform.co.uk

Supplies an insulating concrete formwork (ICF) system that is quick to build with and ideal for achieving low U-values and zero-energy buildings.

Benfield ATT

5-6 Castle Way, Severnbridge
Industrial Estate, Caldicot,
Monmouthshire, NP26 5YG
T: 01291 437050
www.benfieldattgroup.co.uk

National company with a dedicated self build division. Specialists in efficient engineered wood and cross-laminated timber buildings – using FSC and PEFC certified timber. Can design and build from scratch or simply supply materials.

The Border Design Centre

Harelaw Moor, Greenlaw,
Duns, Berwickshire, TD10 6XT
T: 01578 740218
www.borderdesign.co.uk

Established in 1961, The Border Design Centre specialises in one-off country homes and vernacular Scottish houses. Operates nationwide.

Border Oak

Kingsland Sawmills, Kingsland,
Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 9SF
T: 01568 708752
www.borderoak.com

Border Oak designs, manufactures and builds oak frame homes. You can work with your own architect's plans, choose from a standard set of designs or use their in-house service. Plot hunting assistance is available for customers in the Hereford and Shropshire area.

British Log Cabins

Woolston, Shropshire, SY6 6QD
T: 0121 288 2840
www.britishlogcabins.com

Specialises in designing and building handcrafted log cabins in traditional and contemporary styles. Can manage the entire project on your behalf, from initial drawings through to completion, or provide a kit for self-assembly.

Build It Green

Unit 4 Longham Business Centre,
168 Ringwood Road, Ferndown,
Dorset, BH22 9BU
T: 0845 900 0326
www.builditgreen.co.uk

Designs and supplies engineered timber building systems using energy efficient SIPs or conventional timber frame. Offers a full turnkey solution.

C

Carpenter Oak

The Framing Yard, East
Cornworthy, Devon, TQ9 7HF
T: 01803 732900
www.carpenteroak.com

Specialists in the design, production and erection of timber and oak frame homes, extensions and garden buildings – plus follow-on products such as staircases, glazing and insulating SIPs wraparounds. Carpenter Oak works with Roderick James Architects to supply a design service, or you can take your existing plans along

The contacts
you need to
make your
dream home
happen

to them. Offers a list of recommended tradesmen for all aspects of your project.

Carpenter Oak & Woodland

Thickwood Lane, Colerne,
Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN14 8BE
T: 01225 743089

www.carpenteroakandwoodland.com

Bespoke green oak homes handcrafted in a traditional or contemporary style. Offers support throughout your project, whether you want just the structural shell, an entire house or anything in between. Will work from your plans, with your architect or help you draw up something new with its in-house designers.



Cartledge Timber Frame
Fairfield Enterprise Centre,
Lincoln Way, Fairfield Industrial
Estate, Louth, Lincs, LN11 0LS
T: 01507 617799

www.cartledge-timberframe.com
Precision-engineered open- and closed-panel frames to your architect's plans. Will provide an on-site team to erect the structural shell if required.

CB Homes

13 Portal Business Park, Eaton
Lane, Tarporley, Cheshire, CW6 9DL
T: 01829 730244

www.cbhomes.co.uk

Provides a full turnkey package from concept through to completion – including design, site surveys, working drawings, planning and Building Regulations applications and site management.



The Complete Oak Home
Forest Gate, Pewsham, Wiltshire,
SN15 3RS

T: 01249 479891

www.thecompleteoakhome.co.uk

Designs and builds oak frame homes – from feasibility and concept drawings through planning permission, Building Regulations and the construction stages.

The company will take full responsibility for everything involved in the delivery of your project.



Country Homes

The Mill House, Marsh Farm,
Cross Keys, Withington,
Hereford, HR11 3NN
T: 01432 820660

www.country-homes.org

This timber frame company offers a complete building service for its standard range of customisable homes. Will also deliver bespoke projects either to your own specification or according to your architect's drawings.



Crown Oak Buildings

Gabriels Farm, Marsh Green,
Edenbridge, Kent, TN8 5PP
T: 01732 866910

www.crown-oak-buildings.co.uk

Specialist in traditional-style oak frame homes and garages. Offers a bespoke design service or will work from your own architect's plans. Can deliver a full project managed package in locations within an hour of its base.



KEY

Services
offered by
each company



PLANNING
ADVICE



PROJECT
MANAGEMENT



PLOT FINDING

Structural
system (if not
timber frame)



BRICK & BLOCK



ALTERNATIVES



CASE STUDY: CHARACTERFUL HOUSE BY THE COMPLETE OAK HOME

What Five-bedroom, 320m² house **Where** Buckinghamshire **Build method** Oak frame with prefabricated infill panels
Build cost £570,000 (£1,871 per m²) **Package type** Full turnkey **Package supplier** The Complete Oak Home



It pays to use package companies when it comes to specialist build systems such as oak frame, because they will be intimately familiar with how to design a home that gets the most out of the material, as well as the planning and Building Regs side of things.

That's exactly what the Howards did when they replaced their old farmhouse with a brand-new dwelling designed and constructed by The Complete Oak Home. Having dismissed the idea of a major remodelling project, the couple opted to start from scratch. They didn't want to give up the sense of character of their old farmhouse, but were set on a home that was comfortable and cheap to run, so oak frame appeared to tick all the boxes.

"The Howards wanted the whole project to be taken care of with minimum hassle, from the design and planning stages through to the specification and construction, right up to moving in day. But they were also keen to be involved in choosing the design and materials," says Tim Burrell, director at The Complete Oak Home. With an experienced team in place to take care of obtaining planning permission, as well as a detailed and transparent cost plan that fitted with their budget, the Howards could relax and put their focus on choosing fixtures, fittings and other details. Their beautifully finished house was completed in under nine months, and they were even able to move in two weeks ahead of schedule.

Contact The Complete Oak Home 01249 479891
www.thecompleteoakhome.co.uk

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enquiries@cbhomes.co.uk www.cbhomes.co.uk

D

Dan-Wood

1 Wilderhaugh, Galashiels,
Selkirkshire, TD1 1QJ
T: 01896 752271

www.dan-wood.co.uk

Energy-efficient timber-frame homes, manufactured in Poland and delivered on a fixed price. Houses come fully fitted, right down to the decor if required, with all work carried out by the in-house assembly and finishing teams. Standard designs available for properties up to five storeys; or take a bespoke route.

**Design & Materials**

8 The Point, Coach Road,
Nottinghamshire, S81 8BW
T: 0845 404 0400

www.designandmaterials.uk.com

Specialises in brick and block self build homes. Provides a comprehensive service, including bespoke design, securing planning permission, tendering to proven builders and providing back-up support throughout your project.

**Donnybrook**

Units 10 Maritime Court,
Bedwas House Industrial Estate,
Caerphilly, CF83 8HU
T: 029 2086 0891

www.donnybrooktimberframes.co.uk

Factory-made timber frames delivered on a supply-only or supply-and-erect basis. Has a selection of home designs, but can also work to your own specifications.



E

EcoHaus

The Ole House, Barkla
Shop, St Agnes, Cornwall,
TR5 0XN

T: 01872 555768

www.ecohaus.org.uk

Timber frame supplier offering a turnkey design and build service. The company provides a fixed-price quotation that includes planning, demolition, groundworks, construction, internal fit-out and landscaping.

**English Brothers**

Salts Road, Walton Highway,
Wisbech, Cambridgeshire,
PE14 7DU

T: 01945 427985

www.eb-bespoke.co.uk

Designer, supplier and manufacturer of bespoke timber frames and joinery elements, offering a fixed fee architectural service – or you can use your own architect. English Brothers' package can be tailored to your exact needs, from supply and erection of the frame through to a fully managed build.

**English Heritage Buildings**

Woods Corner, East Sussex,
TN21 9LQ
T: 01424 838643

www.ehbp.com

Green oak frame structures including homes, garages and outbuildings. Offers 32 standard styles or can create a scheme to your spec and see it through planning. Works with The Complete Oak Home for the design and build phases.

**English Oak Buildings**

Bassett Farm, Claverton,
Bath, BA2 7BJ
T: 01225 789978

www.englishoakbuildings.com

Houses, extensions and historic building conservation, all constructed using green oak and tailored to your brief and budget. Will work alongside your architect or can recommend a trusted partner. Planning consultancy and project management services available.

**Evo Frame**

Unit 1, Hillside Industrial Estate,
Draycott Cross Road, Cheadle,
Staffordshire, ST10 1AB
T: 01785 430002

www.evoframe.com

High-spec modular timber buildings manufactured off-site, delivered and installed to your requirements. Standard package comprises structure, insulation, membranes, doors and windows.

**Evolved Design**

4 Firs Close, St Martins, Oswestry,
Shropshire, SY11 3LT
T: 01691 778846

www.evolved-design.co.uk

Provides a complete design and planning service for self build and refurbishment projects. As certified passive house designers and members of the Passivhaus trust, the company specialises in low-energy homes. A project management service is also available.



F

Facit Homes

1 Mentmore Terrace, London
Fields, London, E8 3PN
T: 020 8986 0241

www.facit-homes.com

Makes bespoke, low-energy modern homes as part of a turnkey offering, using its 'D-Process' to transform 3D digital designs into engineered timber components. Offers bespoke joinery facilities for staircases, kitchens and additional items.

**Falshaw Homes**

Blacksmiths Cottage, Abbeylands,
Stafford Road, Weston, ST18 0HX
T: 01889 270322

www.falshawhomes.co.uk

Offers an in-house design service that can produce plans and submit them to your local authority for approval. Will manage your brick and block project from concept to completion.

**Feeling Homes**

The Studio, Unit 4 Vinnetrow
Business Park, Chichester, West
Sussex, PO20 1QH
T: 0330 088 1189

www.feelinghomes.com

Self build projects delivered according to your choice of package: full turnkey; project management; watertight structure; or design/engineering and watertight structure.

**Fjordhus**

Langhaugh Industrial Estate,
Galashiels, TD1 2DT
T: 01896 668050

www.fjordhus.com

Supplies and builds Scandinavian timber-frame kit homes throughout the UK. Standard designs can be customised to your specification.

**Fleming Homes**

Station Road, Duns,
Berwickshire, TD11 3HS
T: 01361 883785

www.fleminghomes.co.uk

Timber-frame homes based on in-house standard designs or produced from your architect's own plans. Full planning and Building Regulations services can be provided. Frame kits available on a supply only or supply-and-erect basis.



KEY

Services
offered by
each company



PLANNING
ADVICE



PROJECT
MANAGEMENT



PLOT FINDING

Structural
system (if not
timber frame)



BRICK & BLOCK



ALTERNATIVES



KEYServices
offered by
each company**PLANNING
ADVICE****PROJECT
MANAGEMENT****PLOT FINDING**Structural
system (if not
timber frame)**BRICK & BLOCK****ALTERNATIVES****Flight Homes**Earls Colne Business Park,
Earls Colne, Colchester,
Essex, CO6 2NS
T: 01787 222336www.flighthomes.ukDesigns, manufactures and erects homes,
roof trusses, staircases and bespoke
joinery. Supplies a hybrid closed-panel
system that combines the benefits of
SIPs and timber frame.**FormWorks UK**32 North Street, Lewes, East
Sussex, BN7 2PH
T: 01273 478110www.formworksuk.comHigh performance ICF construction for
energy efficient, sustainable buildings.**Frame Technologies**Broadaxe Lane, Presteigne,
Powys LD8 2LA
T: 01544 267124www.frame technologies.co.ukTimber frame specialist focusing on eco
homes built to your design. Will assist
with developing your scheme to ensure
buildability within your budget.**Frame UK**Jenson House, Cardrew
Industrial Estate,
Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1SS
T: 01209 310560www.framehomes.co.ukDesigns, manufactures and installs
structural timber frames for homes and
extensions. Works with open- and closed-
panel systems, and also produces roof
trusses and other components.**G****Genesis Timber
Engineering**Units 11A & 11B, Mill Place, 90
Bristol Road, Gloucester, GL1 5SQ
T: 01452 331222www.gte-uk.comCarpentry specialist that designs and
manufactures timber frame homes and
engineered flooring and roofing products.**GPML Construction**Unit 21, Bybow Farm, Orchard
Way, Wilmington, Kent, DA2 7ER
T: 0800 046 0266www.gpmlconstruction.co.ukBuilders working in a range of methods,
including brick and block, timber frame
and SIPs, from extensions to whole
house projects.**The Green Oak****Carpentry Company**
Langley Farm, Rake, Liss,
Hampshire, GU33 7JW

T: 01730 892049

www.greenoakcarpentry.co.ukSpecialist in green oak, offering
traditional and contemporary houses and
outbuildings. In-house design service.**Green Oak Structures**20 Bushy Coombe Gardens,
Glastonbury, Somerset,
BA6 8JT

T: 01458 833420

www.greenoakstructures.co.ukDesigns and builds green oak and
Douglas fir timber frame houses,
extensions and outbuildings.**Guardian Homes**Bouthwood Road, Sowerby
Woods Business Park,
Barrow-in-Furness, LA14 4QR
T: 01229 870522www.guardiantimberframe.co.ukWorks to architect's or in-house plans to
design, supply and erect timber frames
homes for self build projects.**H****Hanse Haus**Buchstraße 1-3, 97789
Oberleichtersbach, Germany
T: 0845 658 9780www.hanse-haus.co.ukOff-site manufactured, custom-made low-
energy homes from Germany. Offers full
turnkey service or shell-only solution.**Haus UK**The Basement, 8 Hampton Lane,
Winchester, Hampshire, SO22 5LF
T: 01227 470122www.haus-uk.comArchitects offering one-stop-shop for
design and construction of eco-friendly
houses using prefabricated systems,
including to Passivhaus standards.**Heritage Designs**Unit 25, Pentodd Enterprise Park,
Cardigan, Ceredigion, SA43 3AD
T: 01239 614462www.heritagedesigns.co.ukDesign and erection of timber frames,
offering a full- or part-build service.**Huf Haus**Seven Hills Road, Cobham,
Surrey, KT11 1EU

T: 01932 586550

www.huf-haus.comPost-and-beam homes prefabricated in
Germany, with an emphasis on energy
efficiency. House designs are modular
in wood and glass. Offers a bespoke
approach, with turnkey service available.**ICF Scotland**9 Turnbull Way, Livingston,
EH54 8RB

T: 01506 240279

www.icf.scotSuppliers of the Nudura range of insulated
concrete formwork in Scotland.**ICF Southern**Hardham Mill Business Park, Mill
Lane, Hardham, Pulborough, West
Sussex, RH20 1LA
T: 01798 874576www.icfsouthern.co.ukSupplies the Nudura insulated concrete
formwork system in southern England.**ICF Supplies**Victoria Studios, Langdon Hills
Golf Club, Lower Dunton Road,
Bulphan, Upminster, Essex,
RM14 3TY

T: 01268 542748

www.icfsuppliesltd.co.ukAuthorised distributor for the Nudura ICF
system. Works throughout the south east.**Innovation On-Site**Maulden Vale Business Park, 29
Clophill Road, Maulden, MK45 2AA
T: 01525 404794www.innovationonsite.co.ukRange of timber frame options, including
closed panel and SIPs. Can deliver fit-out
with partner company, Maulden Vale.

CLOSER LOOK: NEW ENGLAND-STYLE HOME BY POTTON

What Four-bedroom, 204m² bungalow **Where** East Sussex **Build method** Timber frame **Build cost** £316,000 (£1,549 per m²) **Package type** House design & structural shell (incl. insulation, windows and external doors) **Package supplier** Potton



Self building wasn't high on Jeffrey and Lorraine King's agenda when they bought a small bungalow on the Sussex-Kent border in 2010. Having been let as a holiday home, it wasn't in top condition – but the couple decided to spend 12 months in the property acclimatising themselves to their new surroundings before planning a project.

In summer 2011, they gained consent to extend the bungalow and build a detached garage with a bedroom and ensuite above. The couple were hoping to create a low-maintenance, low-energy home – but a visit to a sustainability assessor led to a dramatic rethink. "The expert said we'd be better off starting from scratch if we were serious about an eco house," says Jeffrey. "We'd not considered building a new property, but once we realised it was an option and that we could design something tailored to us, we were both very excited!"

Self build may have been new to them, but the Kings didn't have to think long before appointing the right partner for their project. The couple had already encountered Potton back in the 1980s when they were considering adding a new unit to the hotel business they had at the time – so going back to the company for their dream home felt like a natural fit.

Having flicked through Potton's ideas book in early 2012, the couple spoke to one of the team's self build consultants, who encouraged them to visit the company's show centre in St Neots, Cambridgeshire. Here they could see how the houses were built and get a feel for the finishing touches. "It was a brilliant

experience and we came away really enthused about the project," says Jeffrey, who soon settled on what style of home he wanted. "With its New England references, the Hazelhurst was the ideal starting point. We borrowed elements from some of the other inspirational houses, too, and were able to tweak the plans to exactly what we wanted."

The Kings worked closely with Potton to finalise the design, and the company submitted a planning application on the couple's behalf in February 2012. Despite the fact the replacement bungalow would be twice the size of the original, consent was granted without a hitch. Clever touches, such as setting the new house in the middle of the slightly sloping plot, helped to reduce its visual impact compared to the old building. The choice of white shiplap timber cladding was popular with the planners, too, as the finish would be in keeping with other homes in the area.

The couple agreed a fixed price of £91,000 for Potton's package – including the design, manufacture and erection of the main shell. They hired a main contractor, recommended by the firm's self build consultant, for the rest of the works. They opted for Potton's closed panel timber frame system. This method involves a high degree of prefabrication, with all the shell components precisely manufactured – which helps to ensure a quick, accurate build. Once on site in June 2012, the frame went up in just a week. The rest of the project was completed in under six months.

Contact Potton 01767 676400 www.potton.co.uk



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Solo Timber Frame are leading Designers, Engineers, Manufacturers and Builders of Beautiful Bespoke Timber Frame Houses.

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self build timber frame specialists

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www.solotimberframe.co.uk

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We provide our customers with a unique one-stop shop service, not only for coordinating the manufacture and delivery of the timber frame structure, but also the supply of windows, external doors, internal door sets, stairs, architrave, skirtings, finishings insulation, plasterboard and a whole lot more.



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01444 455 455

K

Karlin Timber Frame

9 Maple Way, Aycliffe Industrial Park, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, DL5 6BF

T: 0845 345 4277

www.karlintimberframe.co.uk

Select the service you need, from kit only through to watertight structural shell – including windows, doors, skirting and more. Offers a number of standard plans or you can work with a consultant to create a bespoke design.

**KD Haus**

Mariners Wharf, 8 Holyrood Street, London, SE1 2EL

T: 020 7378 0078

www.kd-haus.co.uk

Engineered post-and-beam timber frame homes prefabricated in Germany. Offers design and build of shell for completion by owner, or full turnkey service.

Kingspan TEK

Pembridge, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 9LA

T: 01544 388601

www.tek.kingspan.com/uk

Provides sustainable, innovative and cost effective SIPs solutions.

Kingston Timber Frame

14 Mill Hill Drive, Huntingdon, York, YO32 9PU

T: 01904 762589

www.kingstontimberframe.co.uk

Design, supply and erection of timber kit houses, with flexible service levels tailored to your needs.

Kirkwood Homes

Kirkwood Business Park, Sauchen, Inverurie, AB51 7LE

T: 01330 833595

www.kirkwoodtimberframe.co.uk

Manufactures kits for standard plans (from bungalow to stately home) or can work to your design. Operates within a 60-mile radius of its Aberdeenshire HQ.

L

Lakeland Timber Frame

Unit 38c Holme Mills, Camforth, Lancs, LA6 1RD

T: 01524 782596

www.lakelandtimberframe.co.uk

Translates your architect's drawings for houses and extensions into a cost-effective timber frame structure. Can also supply an in-house team of joiners to erect the shell on site if desired, with options for insulation and cladding.

Lindisfarne Timber Frame

197 Rosalind Street, Ashington, Northumberland, NE63 9BB

T: 01670 810472

www.lindisfarnetimberframe

ltd.co.uk

Manufactures, supplies and erects timber frames, with kit houses built by the same workmen that produce them off-site.

Lochdhu Cottages

19 Kanachrine Place, Ullapool, IV26 2TX

T: 01854 612820

www.lochdhucottages.co.uk

Self build timber kit houses supplied across the UK. Styles range from croft houses through to Scandinavian designs. Can also work to architects' drawings.

Logix

55 Balena Close, Creekmoor Industrial Estate, Poole, Dorset, BH17 7DG

T: 0845 607 6958

www.logix.uk.com

Energy-efficient insulated concrete formwork specialist.

Lowfield Timber Frames

Lowfield, Marton, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 8JX

T: 01743 891922

www.lowfieldtimberframes.co.uk

Supplier of bespoke engineered wood products to self builders, including timber frames, SIPs and glulam. Kit only or supply and structural fix (walls, floors and roof).

M

Meisterstueck-Haus

Boston House, Grove Tech Park, Wantage, Oxfordshire, OX12 9FF

T: 0845 003 1383

www.meisterstueck.com

Contemporary prefab post-and-beam or closed-panel houses, available in standard

designs or tailored to your architect's plans. Offers four stages of completion: structural shell; shell and technology; undecorated; or fully finished.

**Millwood Designer Homes**

Bordyke End, East Street, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 1HA

T: 01732 770991

www.millwooddesigner

homes.co.uk

This developer's design and build wing specialises in bespoke timber houses.

**Model-D Homes**

Sylvan Stuart, Old Rayne, Inch, Aberdeenshire, AB52 6RX

T: 01464 851208

www.modeldhomes.com

Sustainable timber frame rural homes with a unifying contemporary aesthetic that combines high-quality design and construction with affordability. Package options include kit supply only, erection to weathertight or full turnkey.



N

Neatwood Homes

Unit 6, Westwood Industrial Estate, Pontillas, Herefordshire, HR2 0EL

T: 01981 240860

www.neatwoodhomes.co.uk

Design and manufacture of bespoke timber frame homes and standard kit houses. Self builders can choose a supply-only or supply-and-erect package.

**New World Timber Frame**

Gransden Road, Caxton, Cambridgeshire, CB23 3PL

T: 01954 714870

www.newworldtimberframe.co.uk

Standard and custom-designed timber frames supplied or erected.

O

Oakmasters

The Mill, Isaacs Lane, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 4RZ

T: 01444 455455

www.oakmasters.co.uk

Supplies and erects both traditional and contemporary-style oak frame buildings. Offers a free initial design consultation

KEY

Services offered by each company

PLANNING ADVICE

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

PLOT FINDING

Structural system (if not timber frame)

BRICK & BLOCK

ALTERNATIVES



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ADVICE** **PROJECT
MANAGEMENT** **PLOT FINDING** **Structural
system (if not
timber frame)** **BRICK & BLOCK** **ALTERNATIVES**

and project management through its regional contacts.


Oakworth Homes

Sustainable Building Centre,
8 Orgreave Close, Handsworth,
Sheffield, S13 9NP

T: 01142 889554**www.oakworthhomes.co.uk**

Provides an in-house service for bespoke one-off homes, or will supply and erect a frame to your architect's design. Standard timber frame plans also available.


Oakwrights

The Lakes, Swainshall,
Hereford, HR4 7PU

T: 01432 353353**www.oakwrights.co.uk**

UK oak framer offering a service that includes design, manufacture and erection of both the oak frame and an insulating encapsulation panel system.


P**Pennine Timber Frame**

Birch House, Doctor Fold
Lane, Heywood, Lancashire,
OL10 2QE

T: 01706 361876**www.penninetimberframe.co.uk**

Homes, garden annexes and cabins in a variety of styles and designs, with a range of services for the self builder, including 'foundation to construction'.


Potton

Eltisley Road, Great Gransden,
Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 3AR

T: 01767 676400**www.potton.co.uk**

Self build home specialists offering a complete set of services, from supply and erect to full turnkey. Customise an existing design – such as barn-style, heritage-inspired and eco-friendly contemporary dwellings – to suit your needs or go for a bespoke route.


R**Rayne Construction**

Rayne North, Inverurie,
Aberdeenshire, AB51 5DB

T: 01464 851518**www.rayne-construction-ltd.****freeserve.co.uk**

Designs and constructs log buildings in Douglas fir. Full design service, or advice and quotations given on customers' own designs. Interlocking kits can be erected by in-house team or by self builder.


Revolution Homes

18 Tasmania Way, Eastbourne,
East Sussex, BN23 5PA

T: 01323 886401**www.revolutionhomes.co.uk**

Provides a full package, from design to completion, in a range of structural systems, including brick and block, ICF and timber frame.


Rob Roy Homes

Dalchonzie, By Comrie,
Perthshire, PH6 2LB

T: 01764 670424**www.robroyhomes.co.uk**

Designs and manufactures timber frame homes, with flexible options from kit only through to a full package build.


Rockingham Oak

Welham Lane, Great Bowden,
Market Harborough,
Leicestershire, LE16 7HS

T: 01858 468064**www.rockinghamoak.co.uk**

Traditional green-oak frames designed, handcrafted and erected for homes, barns, conservatories, garages and roofs.


S**Scandia-Hus**

Scandia-Hus Business Park,
Felcourt Road, Felcourt,
East Grinstead, Sussex, RH19 2LP

T: 01342 838060**www.scandia-hus.co.uk**

Standard or bespoke panellised timber frame designs in both contemporary and traditional styles, made in the company's West Sussex factory using hi-tech Swedish components and techniques to create energy efficient homes.


**Scotframe Timber
Engineering**

Inverurie Business Park, Souterford
Avenue, Inverurie, AB51 0ZJ

T: 01467 624440**www.scotframe.co.uk**

Nationwide supplier of customisable standard kits and bespoke timber frames.

Offers both open- and closed-panel configurations, plus supply of windows, doors, insulation, stairs and more.

S Harlow Period Oak

Mersham-le-Hatch Business
Village, Hythe Road, Ashford,
Kent, TN25 6NH

T: 01233 501988**www.oakhouses.co.uk**

Designs and erects standard or bespoke oak homes. Frame-only or fully project-managed service available.


Shire Timber Engineering

Knowsthorpe Gate, Cross Green
Industrial Park, Leeds, LS9 0NP

T: 0113 249 2120**www.shiretimberengineering.co.uk**

Nationwide supply and erection of timber frames, SIPs and engineered products, including joists and roof structures.

SIP Building Systems

Unit 2, Expressway Industrial
Estate, Turnall Road, Dilton,
Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 8RB

T: 0151 420 1404**www.sipbuildingsystems.co.uk**

Manufacturer of SIPs panels with a wide range of finishes, including stainless steel, GRP, plywood, OSB and colour-coated Plastisols.

SIPs Eco Panels

South Suffolk Business Centre,
Alexandra Road, Sudbury,
Suffolk, CO10 2ZX

T: 01787 378567**www.sipsecopanel.co.uk**

Offers SIPs frames with planning and Building Regulations drawings, and has contact with project managers and builders across the country that can help you with your project's needs.

SIPCO

Unit 2, Expressway Industrial
Estate, Widnes, WA8 8RB

T: 0844 335 3997**www.thisepcompany.com**

Provides a design, manufacture and installation service for SIPs panels – with over 200 frames completed. Kit house frames can be supplied and erected, or order individual components.



CLOSER LOOK: TURNKEY BUNGALOW BY REVOLUTION HOMES

What Four-bedroom, 190m² house **Where** Berkshire **Build method** Thin-joint blockwork **Build cost** £310,000 (£1,632 per m²) **Package type** Full turnkey **Package supplier** Revolution Homes



An increasingly common feature of masonry builds, thin-joint systems use aircrete blocks with a glue mortar as opposed to sand and cement; this results in better thermal performance than a traditional cavity wall system, as well as faster build times, so projects get to weathertight stage quicker.

It was thin-joint's thermal properties that especially attracted Kevin and Karon Haines to this system. Having lived in their cold, draughty bungalow in Maidenhead for a while, they wanted to build a new home in its place that would be highly energy efficient, warm and cosy. They looked into modernising the bungalow, but soon realised that it would be just as effective to knock it down and start again, building something that would give them extra space, make better use of the plot and be much more pleasant to live in. The busy couple decided that a package build on a turnkey basis – where everything was taken care of from start to finish – would be the best option, and approached Revolution Homes to take on the project.

Because their package included the planning and design work, it meant that Kevin and Karon could handover the stress of gaining planning permission to Revolution. "The challenge was to create a 190m², four-bedroom house with an open-plan kitchen-diner that would take advantage of the fantastic views to the rear across open fields – all the while operating within the very small increase in footprint that the local planning authority was willing to accept," says Andrew Edwards from Revolution

Homes. "The goal was to maximise the internal layout and available living space by building into the roof!"

As well as the use of thin-joint blockwork, which was employed for the internal leaf of the cavity walls, the couple opted for several other sustainable measures including an air source heat pump and rainwater harvesting. The house has delivered on the promise of airtightness and energy efficiency, with the external walls recording a U-value of 0.18 W/m²K. And despite a tight budget, the funds also stretched to a luxurious internal finish – with top-spec ceramic floors and a high-performance underfloor heating system – as well as new landscaping to enhance the house's setting. On the top floor, the bathrooms and other spaces are laid out in the roof space, with rooflights to bring in as much natural brightness as possible.

For Kevin and Karon, the package build route turned out to be the only viable option, as Kevin was given an unmissable opportunity to work in America for 12 months when the build was due to take place. The couple were happy to put their faith in Revolution Homes to deliver the project in their absence, with regular Skype calls, videos and pictures providing reassurance – though they did manage to attend three site visits over the 10-month build programme.

Contact Revolution Homes 01323 886401
www.revolutionhomes.co.uk

KEYServices
offered by
each company **PLANNING
ADVICE** **PROJECT
MANAGEMENT** **PLOT FINDING** **Structural
system (if not
timber frame)** **BRICK & BLOCK** **ALTERNATIVES****Solo Timber Frame**The Old Dairy, Hodore Farm,
Parrock Lane, Upper Hartfield,
East Sussex TN7 4AR
T: 01892 771354www.solotimberframe.co.uk

Standard or bespoke designs as supply-only or supply and erect frames. A number of extras are offered to self builders, such as a full planning service and provision of construction handbooks.

Southern Timber FrameUnit 1-4, Longdown Estate Yard,
Deerleap Lane, Southampton,
SO40 4UH**T: 023 8029 3062**www.southerntimberframe.com

Timber frames available supply-only or supply and erect, nationwide.

Stommel HausStommel Haus Agency UK
and Ireland, Stumpsweg 10,
53819 Neunkirchen-Seelscheid,
Germany**T: 0800 068 1611**www.stommel-haus.co.uk

German premium manufacturer of bespoke high-quality timber houses with very low energy cost; devoid of any toxic substances. Specialises in contemporary design and turnkey packages, with on-time, in-budget delivery within three to four months. Shell build also available.

SunblocEuropa House, 16A High Street,
Tenterden, Kent, TN30 6AP
T: 01580 767701www.sunbloc.co.uk

Offers an advanced insulating concrete formwork system designed and manufactured in the UK and suitable for most types of construction, from simple extensions to self builds.

The Swedish House CompanySeabridge House, 8 St John's
Road, Tunbridge Wells,
Kent, TN4 9NP**T: 01892 509230**www.swedishhouses.com

Bespoke energy-efficient homes designed in-house or by your own architect and prefabricated in Sweden – complete with triple-glazed windows, external doors and built-in insulation.

Swift Timber Homes2 Etherley Bank, High Etherley,
Bishop Auckland, County Durham,
DL14 0LG**T: 01388 835222**www.swifttimberhomes.com

Designs, manufacturers and erects open- or closed-panel timber frames built to your specification.

Sylva4 Southill, Cornbury Park,
Charlbury, Oxfordshire,
OX7 3EW**T: 01608 811543**www.sylvagroup.com

Design and construction of bespoke buildings in timber frame, SIPs and other structural options. Service levels include supply-and-erect and Sylva's 'Concept to Keys' package, which takes you from clear plot to watertight.

Sylvan StuartOld Rayne, Insch, Aberdeenshire,
AB52 6RX**T: 01464 851208**www.sylvanstuart.com

Design and construction of lodge-style homes manufactured in Douglas fir, with 10 standard designs available to tailor to your requirements – or the company can work with your own architect to create a unique building.

T**Tailor Made Designs**Twyford Road, Rotherwas
Industrial Estate, Hereford,
HR2 6JR**T: 01432 355046**www.tailormade-frames.co.uk

Supplies and erects timber frame homes to your architect's design, and also provides engineered products such as floor joists and roof trusses.

Target Timber Systems29 High Street, Billingshurst,
West Sussex, RH14 9PP**T: 01403 782600**www.targettimber.com

Translates your design into a buildable, economical open-panel timber frame structure that's delivered on a supply and erect basis. Windows, doors and other key first-fix elements are available as optional extras.

Taylor Lane Timber FrameChapel Road, Rotherwas Industrial
Estate, Hereford, HR2 6LD**T: 01432 271912**www.taylor-lane.co.uk

Supplies bespoke timber frames to clients' specifications, as well as steel fabrication, roof trusses, floor structures and external and internal joinery.

The Timber Frame CompanyRed Cross Hall, High Street,
Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0AJ
T: 01749 814951www.thetimberframe.co.uk

Oak or Douglas fir frames for everything from barn-style homes to contemporary eco projects. Works with your architect or can recommend affiliated designers.

Thomas CarterGlenbrook, Foxhole Lane, Kent,
TN12 7ES**T: 0845 263 8250**www.thomascarter.co.uk

Specialises in the design and construction of energy-efficient structures using Kingspan TEK SIPs panels. In-house design and full turnkey options available.

Timberpeg Homes UKPO Box 416, St Albans,
Hertfordshire, AL1 1XN**T: 01727 823032**www.timberpeg.co.uk

New England-style post-and-beam homes. Offers 50+ standard designs to customise, but most projects are bespoke.

Timber Frame It3 Napier House, Elva Way,
Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex,
TN39 5BF**T: 01424 213400**www.timberframeit.co.uk

Timber frames supplied and erected or comprehensive services right up to completion of your home. Principally operates in and around Sussex.

Timber Routes42 Armoury Square,
Easton, Bristol, BS5 0PT**T: 07929 474197**www.timber-routes.co.uk

Bespoke post-and-beam frames in green oak or Douglas fir. Partner

CASE STUDY: LOW-ENERGY HOUSE BY HANSE HAUS

What Four-bedroom, 200m² house **Where** Devon **Build method** Hybrid structural insulated panels **Build cost** £299,500 (£1,498 per m²) **Package type** Full turnkey **Package supplier** Hanse Haus



ALEX NICHOLS



This cedar-clad contemporary home was built by Hanse Haus for Nick Sole and his wife Gill. The couple wanted an ultra-efficient house with excellent thermal performance and air tightness, relying on solar gain to provide a free source of heat. Local architect Annie Martin drew up a modern design that would suit the plot, which sailed through planning. The only sticking point was the budget: "Annie thought it would cost £1,600-£1,800 per m² to build, which would have taken us outside of our initial £300,000 budget," says Nick. "But when we found Hanse Haus, they told us it could be done for significantly less!"

After selecting the final design and spec – which involved a visit to Hanse's factory, where the couple got the chance to see many of the products in the flesh – they were given a final price of £230,000. The Soles' turnkey package didn't include the groundworks and foundations (although they did use Hanse's recommended groundworkers), and they also bought their kitchen, bathroom and flooring finishes independently.

The house is made from hybrid structural insulated panels (SIPs), which is extremely quick to build with; the on-site work took just seven-and-a-half weeks. Hanse Haus delivered exactly what they promised," says Gill. "The team arrived in mid-May and everything was finished in July." It also delivers on the energy-efficiency side, costing around £130 a year to heat.

Contact Hanse Haus 0845 6589780
www.hanse-haus.co.uk

services available for plot finding, project management and follow-on trades.



Treewrights

Gosford Sawmill,
Longniddry, East Lothian,
EH32 0PX

T: 01875 871018

www.treewrights.co.uk

Traditional green oak timber frames for houses, conservatories, garages, barns and a range of other structures, made from locally sourced Scottish oak.

True North Log Homes

26 Jennings Road, St Albans,
Hertfordshire, AL1 4PD

T: 01727 851558

www.truenorthloghomes.com

Custom-designed Canadian buildings, available either as self build kits, on a supply and erect basis, or as turnkey projects. Offers a 25-year 'zero air infiltration' warranty.



Turner Timber Frames

5C Wyke Street, Hedon Road,

Hull, HU9 1PA

T: 01903 719332

www.turnertimberframes.co.uk

Manufactures, supplies and erects timber frame kits for self build homes. High-quality, pressure-treated timber is used, which is sourced from sustainable forests.

Tuscan Property Services

Wakelyns Cottage, 4 Lewes
Road, Ridgewood, Uckfield,
TN22 5SL

T: 01825 766788

www.tuscanpropertieservices.co.uk

Design and build contractor that specialises in timber frame homes, with a turnkey service available. The firm works nationwide, but the south east is its key area of operation.



V

Viking House

35 Hamilton Street, South
Circular Road, Dublin 8

T: 0035 3876 558 699

www.viking-house.ie

Designs and builds low-energy and passive

houses in the UK and Ireland using timber frame, SIPs and other systems.



W

WB Timber Innovations

Units 18 & 19, Monkspath
Business Park, Highlands Road,
Solihull, West Midlands, B90 4NZ

T: 0121 314 7735

www.timberinnovations.co.uk

Specialists in innovative energy efficient homes in timber frame or SIPs. Tailored service from initial design through to complete turnkey solution.



WeberHaus

Fountain Court, 2 Victoria Square,
Victoria Street, St Albans,
Hertfordshire, AL1 3TF

T: 01727 867900

www.weberhaus.co.uk

Precision-engineered German timber homes designed to be both healthy and highly energy efficient. Standard ranges are available or choose a bespoke service on a shell or turnkey basis.



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offered by
each company **PLANNING
ADVICE** **PROJECT
MANAGEMENT** **PLOT FINDING****Structural
system (if not
timber frame)** **BRICK & BLOCK** **ALTERNATIVES****Welsh Oak Frame****Belmont Yard, Station Road,
Caersws, Powys, SY17 5EQ
T: 01686 688000****www.welshoakframe.com**

Combines heritage craftsmanship with modern engineering techniques to create bespoke green oak frame homes – either contemporary or traditional in style. In-house design available or use your own architect's plans.

**White Haus****Whites Carpentry, Unit 9a, Drove
Road, Gamlingay, Cambridgeshire,
SG19 2HX****T: 01767 651076****www.whitescarpentry.com**

Experienced in all aspects of carpentry work and general building services.

**MATERIALS****Antique Buildings****Dunsfold, Godalming,
Surrey, GU8 4NP
T: 01483 200477****www.antiquebuildings.com**

Leading supplier of antique oak frames, beams, oak floorboards, reclaimed roof tiles and handmade bricks.

Bebington Brick Services**Rock Farm, Bradley Lane,
Bradley in the Moor,
Cheadle, Staffordshire,
ST10 4RB****T: 01538 755598****www.bebingtonbrick.co.uk**

Brick and tile tinting to match pre-existing buildings; brick-finding service available.

Bovingdon Brick**Ley Hill Road, Bovingdon,
Hertfordshire HP3 0NW
T: 01442 833176****www.bovingdonbricks.co.uk**

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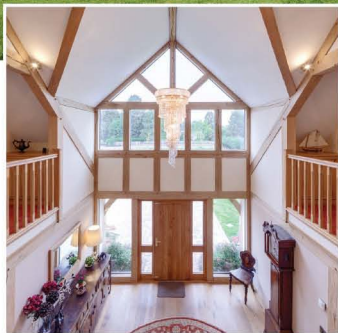


CLOSER LOOK: OAK FRAME HOME BY WELSH OAK FRAME

What Three-bedroom, 308m² house **Where** Powys **Build method** Oak frame **Build cost** £250,000 (£812 per m²)
Package type Design & erect to weathertight shell stage **Package supplier** Welsh Oak Frame



WELSH OAK FRAME



The foundations for a house were already in place when Colin and Pamela Leech bought their 0.5-acre plot in Powys. Welsh Oak Frame had pointed the couple in the direction of the site – the company had already designed and started work on a house there a few years ago, but the owners had divorced and no progress had been made since. The Leeches picked up the project, made a few tweaks to the scheme (which needed revised planning approval) and were soon ready to build.

Welsh Oak Frame took care of the new design and erected the frame – which took just three weeks – before Colin and Pamela then hired the contractors to finish the job. They lived on site in a mobile home and took on a local project manager, Glyn Brown, to oversee everything, but they were pretty hands-on as well. “In the evening, when the trades had gone, we’d pick up where they left off,” says Colin. The only major hitch was the time it took to get services on site. “We’re really grateful to our neighbours, because it took us six months to get permanent power and water,” says Pamela. “They very kindly let our electrician run some cables across so that we could use their supplies until we were connected up properly.”

Now the house has been completed, the Leeches are enjoying the fruits of their labour. Their new home is so efficient that they hardly needed to turn the heating on at all over their first winter, relying instead on their multi-fuel stove. The beamed interiors are complemented by solid timber flooring and plenty of warm, tactile natural materials have been used throughout the interiors. Highlights include the grand, spacious galleried hallway and landing, and an imposing Inglenook fireplace – complete with oak mantel – that houses the stove.

The Leeches once again relied on Welsh Oak Frame’s expertise when they went back to the company to design and build an extension, with the idea that an extra downstairs bedroom might accommodate Pamela’s elderly parents. “That’s the beauty of this structural system – you can alter it fairly easily,” she says. “We had French doors at the back, so we simply removed those and extended out. Welsh Oak Frame were brilliant – they managed to complete the addition in just six weeks.”

Contact Welsh Oak Frame 01687 688000
www.welshoakframe.com

HELP & ADVICE**Architects Registration Board (ARB)****T: 020 7580 5861****www.arb.org.uk**

The UK's statutory regulator of architects; all professionally qualified architects are listed on its register.

The Association of Self Build Architects (ASBA)**T: 0800 387310****www.asba-architects.org**

Network of architects who specialise in self build projects. Search its online directory to find a member local to you.

Build It Website**www.self-build.co.uk**

Build It magazine's online self build and renovation hub is packed with inspirational homes and expert advice; including our Interactive Build Cost Calculator at **www.self-build.co.uk/calculator**

Building Research Establishment (BRE)**T: 0333 321 8811****www.bre.co.uk**

Consultancy that researches construction products and materials. Runs the BRE Innovation Park in Watford where you can see its vast expertise in action with a number of completed projects.

BuildStore Plotsearch**T: 0345 223 4445****www.plotsearch.co.uk**

An online land-finding tool offering thousands of plots for sale.

Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT)**T: 020 7278 2206****www.ciat.org.uk**

Professional body for architectural technologists (specialists in the practical applications of design and construction). Search for a local practice on its website.

The Concrete Centre**T: 020 7963 8000****www.concretecentre.com**

The UK's cement and concrete industry development organisation. Offers help and advice on specification and researches sustainable construction.

National Custom and Self Build Association (NaCSBA)**T: 01452 610051****www.nasba.org.uk**

A membership organisation for the self and custom build industry, representing consumer interests. Lobbies for more self build opportunities in the UK, through methods such as council land release and has been instrumental in the development of the Right to Build initiative.

National Self Build & Renovation Centre**T: 0845 223 4455****www.nsbrc.co.uk**

A permanent visitor centre for self builders, offering help and advice as well as plot finding opportunities and information on finance.

Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS)**T: 0131 229 7545****www.rias.org.uk**

The professional body for Scottish architects operates a searchable database of practices on its website.

Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)**T: 020 7580 5533****www.architecture.com**

Membership organisation for British architects. Has a directory of qualified professionals on its website.

Royal Society of Architects in Wales (RSAW)**T: 029 2022 8987****www.architecture.com**

The Welsh arm of RIBA. Provides free information to the public on selecting and working with architects.

Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA)**T: 028 9032 3760****www.rsua.org.uk**

Architectural body for Northern Ireland with search function on its website.

Self Build Academy**T: 01767 676400****www.selfbuildacademy.co.uk**

Offers self build courses, including how to plan, manage and control your project. Courses are run at Potton's St Neots HQ.

Structural Timber Association**T: 01259 272140****www.structuraltimber.co.uk**

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PLANS & FINANCE**BuildStore****T: 0845 223 4888****www.buildstore.co.uk**

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Liam Collins, Potton Customer.



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129

110



106



115

106 BUILD IT HOUSE

The virtual project has come a long way, and now it's time for the lighting and electrics to be installed. Budgeting expert Tim Doherty costs it all up

110 RAW APPEAL

Architect Julian Owen's guide to industrial style, advising how to create a space that's functional and stripped back – yet still feels like home

115 WHAT IS LISTING?

In the first of three features about protected properties, heritage specialist Alan Tierney explains what to expect when you own a listed home

120 COMMON PLANNING PITFALLS

Even a well-prepared self builder may face unforeseen planning problems. Mike Dade's guide to these lesser-known issues will help the process run more smoothly

129 BRANCHING OUT

Could consent be gained for a house on a sensitive garden plot full of ornamental trees? Mike Dade rates the chances

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THE Build It HOUSE



PROJECT: Four-bedroom family home
CONSTRUCTION METHOD: Timber frame
NUMBER OF STOREYS: Two (with potential for a loft conversion)
HOUSE SIZE: 155m² (internal floorspace)
BUILD BUDGET: £240,000
COST PER M²: £1,548

10: Electrics & lighting

Tim Doherty sets out the basic spec for our virtual project's lighting and electrics – from cabling through to fittings and sockets – and reveals the cost of this stage of the works

Much like with the plumbing work on a home building project, the electrical installation for *The Build It House* will be divided into two distinct stages known as first and second fix.

During the first fix phase, the structural skeleton of our open-panel timber frame remains open on the internal side, allowing the electrical cables and purpose-built ducting to be installed in the wall and floor cavities. Once this carcassing is complete and the wall and ceiling surfaces have been applied (plastered and often partially decorated), the second fix work of fitting all the sockets, switches, light sources and other fixed electrical appliances will be tackled.

You should think of the lighting and electrics as a crucial architectural element of the project. With that in mind, the design for your scheme should be completed well in advance of works getting underway. The cabling may be installed at first fix, for example, but if you don't know where the light fittings and sockets are going to go, it becomes difficult to specify the scheme accurately. You'll get the most out of your

project if you bring in specialists early on to work in tandem with you and your designer. Our virtual self builders require a fairly typical installation specification for their home that will cover most eventualities for modern family life. There's no need for hi-tech automated systems – such as whole-house audio – but they do want enough power and network outlets to cater for growing demand in the future.

Hiring a contractor

It's important to note that electrical installation is not something that can be undertaken by a novice – in fact, the Building Regulations state that all but the simplest of jobs must be either carried out or approved by a competent person. The term 'competent' can be taken to mean a contractor or engineer qualified to work to IET (Institution of Engineering & Technology) standards.

Electricians always seem to be busy, so it's a good idea to appoint yours early on in the process. They generally charge a little more for their time than other trades due to the level of

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BUILD IT HOUSE

This virtual project intends to provide a reliable model that self builders can refer back to when planning their own home. We've based the project around a young family, but it's flexible enough to be shaped to other schemes. The accompanying articles are an in-depth guide to the processes and materials that would go into our benchmark home.

We've set a construction budget of £240,000 for *The Build It House* (excluding design fees and preliminaries) on the basis that our self builders have decided to project manage the scheme themselves. This means they'll be hiring in subcontractors, as well as dealing with certain suppliers directly. Some trades will bring their own materials, while some products will be specifically obtained on a supply-and-fit basis – but our self builders will not undertake any of the physical site work themselves. For advice on how different management options affect costs, visit www.self-build.co.uk/which-building-route.

Our budget exercise works on gross internal area (GIA) rather than gross external area (GEA). It's important to clarify this with suppliers, as the difference between the two can be quite staggering. Our two-storey model house, for example, has a GIA of 155m² (the figure we'll be using for budget purposes). But the GEA would be at least 180m² after accounting for the thickness of the walls. The GIA rate for *The Build It House* works out at £1,548 per m², while the GEA rate is £1,333 per m². It's wise to include a contingency in your budget to cope with unforeseen issues or delays, normally around 10%-15% (so our maximum budget for the project is £276,000).

The Build It House was developed by the magazine's editorial team and designed by Opinder Liddar from Lapid Architects. Log on to www.lapidarchitects.co.uk for more about this award-winning practice.



What is *The Build It House*?

This virtual project is intended as a benchmark to help you better understand the self build process and get a realistic grip on what it costs to create your own home

expertise they need to have. These are specialists who must be well-versed in the latest regulations – so always ensure you select a contractor who is proven to be qualified and is capable of properly registering the work with building control under Part P of the regs.

To furnish you with a fixed quote, an electrician needs to know the full scope of the works. In commercial contracts, electrical drawings are usually provided to facilitate this – but very few self builders (or house designers) actually reach this stage on domestic schemes. Instead, the electrician is usually tasked with designing the detail of the system – and in many cases the structural shell will already be erected before this happens. To mitigate against a nasty uplift in prices, be sure to draw up a schedule at the tender stage. This should include target quantities for light fittings, sockets, telephone and network points, audio requirements etc for the electrician to price. This way, the only changes to your agreed price might be for any variations in these quantities (usually upwards at the client's request) or due to any unforeseen access issues.

Electricians will usually supply their own materials. This means they're in control of specifying the exact fittings in the right quantities, ensuring compliance and obtaining all the specialist components for an installation. Typical contract terms would include one stage payment after first fix, followed by the balance once the project is complete – subject to any agreed retentions.

Consumer unit & cabling

Formerly known as the fuse board, this is the hub of a home's electrics, with each of the circuits starting here and ultimately returning in continuous loops. The consumer unit should be located in a safe but relatively accessible place – in our case, it will be situated in the utility room.

Lighting rings are usually divided by storeys; for instance, one for the ground floor, one for the first and another for the loft (it makes sense for us to complete the carcassing for this space now, even though our virtual self builders don't intend to finish the zone until their family grows). Depending on capacity, it may be necessary to have more than one circuit per storey. The same principle applies to the ring mains (power circuits), which would typically be divided into at least three or four individual loops.

Each ring is protected by a mini circuit breaker (MCB). This will be graded for sensitivity (in Amperes) according to the intended use, fittings and appliances. Items such as immersion heaters for hot water cylinders and cookers are usually given their own circuit with thicker cables and a higher Amp rating to cope with the amount of power needed to operate them. Care must be taken to ensure that all the cables are run neatly, travelling vertically or horizontally to the wall fittings. Never position them at an angle, as this will increase the chances of the wires being damaged by



future works. They should also have some flex (surplus that will allow capacity for adjustment).

It's often a good idea to select an oversized consumer unit. This will give you spare capacity for any changes, such as supplying future extensions, garden buildings or garage conversions. Manufacturers produce their own MCB and residual current devices (RCDs) or circuit breakers with overload protection (RCBOs). These aren't generally interchangeable – so it's worth purchasing spares at the time of installation. The consumer unit itself will cost anywhere between £50 and £100, RCDs/RCBOs £20-40 and MCBs £4-£5. We're expecting to pay a total of £700 for this stage of the works on a supply and fit basis.

QUICK GUIDE: RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY

Generating your own electricity on site can make good sense. A variety of technologies is available to help you reduce your household's reliance on mains supplies – but in practice there are two leading options. This is because very few of us are likely to have a suitable watercourse on our land that can power a small hydro-power unit, while not many houses are sufficiently exposed or have enough space to accommodate a decently-sized wind turbine.

The best recognised generators are solar photovoltaic (PV) panels. A typical 4kW assembly mounted on the building's roof is likely to cost between £5,500 and £9,000 including installation. It should ideally be sited on a south-facing elevation with no shading. Typically, you can expect to recover the costs within five to seven years – through three main routes. Firstly, using site-generated electricity reduces the amount you need to buy from the grid (reducing your energy bill). Secondly, provided you've used an eligible product and installer, you'll be paid 12.92 pence for every kilowatt hour (p/kWh) of electricity the panels generate via the Feed In Tariff (FIT). Finally, any electricity you don't use can be exported back to the national grid – for which you'll be paid 4.85p/kWh.

An interesting alternative is to fit a combined heat and boiler (known as micro CHP or cogeneration). Powered by gas or biofuels, these appliances are similar in size and shape to conventional boilers – but they generate a small amount of electricity as a by-product of heating water. Micro CHP is also eligible for FIT payments (currently set at 13.45p/kWh).



Above: For this scheme, Brilliant Lighting (www.brilliantlighting.co.uk) incorporated powerful downlighters that deliver shadow-free task illumination for the central island unit. Accent fittings built into the kickers and window sill add interest and texture, while the pillar-mounted units throw light in both directions and wash the ceiling with brightness to help lift the space

RENEWABLE HEATING SYSTEMS

Building element	No.	Cost	Cost per m ² (of floorplan)
Electrical installation (all supply & fix)			
Consumer unit	1	£700	
Power points (doubles)	32	£1,920	
Light points	50	£2,250	
One-way switches	30	£1,350	
Two-way switches	4	£400	
Three-way switches	1	£100	
External power points	2	£130	
External light points	3	£135	
Network points (including Cat 6 cabling)	5	£390	
Telephone points	2	£120	
TV & satellite	6	£360	
Shaver point & mirror light	2	£170	
Cooker point	1	£70	
Boiler points & heating controls (part supply only)	1	£370	
Immersion points	2	£140	
Smoke detectors	3	£240	
Mechanical ventilation and heat recovery point (in lieu of extractor fans)	1	£70	
Security alarm with three PIR detectors	1	£450	
Subtotal for electrical installation		£9,365	£60.42
Light fittings (supply only)			
LED bulb and recessed spotlight fitting	35	£700	
LED bulb only (for pendants)	7	£70	
Wall light and bulb	4	£80	
Strip lighting for wall cupboards	4	£80	
LED security light with PIR detectors	3	£120	
Subtotal for light fittings		£1,050	£6.77
Total for electrics & lighting		£10,415	£67.19

Electrics & networking

Dividing ring-mains between storeys ensures each floor can be controlled by a separate RCD or RCBO. The unit will automatically switch off the circuit the moment any earth leakage is sensed to minimise the chance of electric shocks. On small projects, the ground floor power and first floor lights might be grouped together (and vice versa). This means that if one storey loses power, you still have some lighting.

In practice most self build homes will have several circuits: the kitchen may have its own ring, for instance. Indeed, the kitchen and utility rooms in our virtual house will have plenty of double sockets, so that the standard small appliances (toaster, kettle etc) each have their own dedicated outlet. Relatively speaking, it's inexpensive to increase quantities at the specification stage and save yourself the irritation and hold-ups of finding you don't have enough later in the build.

The main downstairs reception areas (the kitchen-diner and sitting room) and all four bedrooms will have network points. This is sensible in modern homes as, while Wi-Fi has come on leaps and bounds, newer foil-backed insulations can disrupt wireless signals. This means running Cat 6 cable from a central hub location – the sitting room – to each of the outlets. This will allow us to deliver internet access in each of these rooms, as well as providing entry-level infrastructure for whole-house audio or visual systems. If you want full home automation, then it's important to seek specialist input early on so that the system and cabling can be comprehensively thought through before first fix construction work ends.

Light fittings

With a new build it's easy to specify low energy lighting throughout – indeed, our SAP rating calls for exactly this. Using compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) is the cheapest option, but they tend to take a few moments to reach optimum output. Our virtual self-builders feel that LEDs (light emitting diodes) are now the best option, as they can easily achieve the lighting levels they want at a very low wattage.

Depending on the application, a typical halogen lamp will be rated somewhere between 20w and 50w. The LED equivalent for a 50w halogen bulb requires just 5w of power – and while they still cost more up front, LEDs have a fantastic lifespan (more than 10 times better at around 25,000 hours). At an individual cost of £8-£10 per LED compared to approximately £2 per halogen lamp, the former are proven to save money in the long run.

The light cast by LED bulbs is measured on the Kelvin scale (for colour temperature), ranging from a very blue/white all the way through to warm yellows. The variety available in modern products is astounding, so there's no longer any need to compromise when choosing low-energy fittings and lamps. We're specifying a mix of sources according to the demands of each room. The kitchen-diner, for instance, will feature 10 recessed ceiling spotlights, a pendant above the table and four lighting strips beneath the wall cupboards. We'll also be using LEDs externally for security flood lighting (at a cost of around £50 each). These will offer a significant energy saving compared to traditional 300w-500w tungsten lamps.

NEXT MONTH

The decoration gets underway as Tim reveals the ins and outs of finishing walls and ceilings

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Julian Owen reveals the key architectural elements required for establishing a pared-back industrial finish

For many of us there's a clear distinction between the design of residential properties versus that of public buildings, such as restaurants, shops and hotels. But the popularity of the industrial trend for both domestic interiors and commercial premises demonstrates how the line between them is now being blurred.

This utilitarian style is believed to have originated in 1970s New York. Manhattan had become too expensive for struggling creatives so they took over nearby buildings that were designed for the storage of food, clothing and other commercial goods, which were far cheaper to rent. The inhabitants could not afford to make radical changes to the existing industrial materials and finishes so instead of trying to hide them, they incorporated them into the interior scheme. They demonstrated that a warehouse or factory can be turned

RAW APPEAL

into a home without making major changes to its existing character. The use of roughly finished and salvaged objects for furnishings results in an affordable, stripped back appearance that is in tune with the original building, but also makes a modish contemporary home.

Get the look

The style works best with large, tall spaces that can accommodate the kitchen, dining and living areas in an uncluttered open-plan design. Although it is sometimes used for new houses, the most suitable structures include old warehouses, industrial buildings, barns and abandoned telephone exchanges – they provide a ready-made starting point. The objective is to achieve a



The Limehouse kitchen from Neptune.com blends cutting edge design with a pared-back finish, perfect for the industrial trend

look that appears unfinished but is thoughtfully planned. Aim to reveal the existing character of the building and add elements that will make it workable as a home. Any alterations or additions to the fabric of these

structures should be minimalist and functional, with little or no decoration.

A revealing finish

Assuming that you are converting a building, the existing materials and

structure should be celebrated and exposed where possible, along with any of the services, fixtures and fittings. Rather than concealing them behind plaster, brick or stone, walls should be cleaned up and left in their natural condition as should any timber roof trusses or steel columns.

A dramatic addition to the interior can be made using concrete floors or walls, either polished to a high gloss finish (see page 80 for more on this) or left in its raw state with the impressions of nail heads, seams and shuttering marks exposed. Concrete can also be used to form surrounds to sinks and baths or for fireplaces.

Domestic clutter can spoil the effect of functional efficiency so lots of storage is essential. Discreet handleless cupboards, with doors that open when pressed or rows of steel locker-style units are practical and consistent with the trend. Metal staircases also fit in nicely but timber can be used, provided that the treads are formed by large sections rather than the more domestic method of using multiple thin planks.

Complementary decor

New furnishings should be minimal with strong, clean lines that can be mixed with utilitarian salvaged objects

KEY MATERIALS

Metal
Concrete
Wood
Iron
Brick
Cotton
Hessian
Linen
Wool
Leather

Opposite: This award-winning warehouse conversion was transformed by Project Orange, who extended up using a powder-coated steel volume that complements the brick structure. Left: Airhouse Design Office paired concrete units and rough finishes to deliver an effective utilitarian aesthetic in this space





in neutral tones, or made from raw and unfinished materials such as metal or timber. Consider upcycling objects: wooden crates can be used to support table tops, while a workbench can become a kitchen worktop and a ladder turned into shelves. Furniture can be vintage style, either the real thing or reproduction designs inspired by factory or laboratory equipment. Design features can be created by using redundant and discarded items such as workbenches, old

parking meters, telephone booths, wooden pallets, bar stools, fishermen's nets and typist's chairs. The more shopworn and battered they are, the more authentic they will look. Furnishings such as large comfy sofas, with simple padded cushions free from frills or decoration provide an opportunity to soften the hard edges of the rest of the interior. Upholstery works best if it is in neutral colours or has a natural textured finish, such as hessian, cotton or leather.

If any new material, fitting or furniture would look out of place in a functioning warehouse or industrial building it is probably not a good choice. Additions should follow the industrial theme; metal finishes and fittings are ideal yet they should not shine or sparkle like new, but instead have a matt patina to suggest they have been well-used. Metals can be employed for walls and doors, and a stainless steel kitchen can be



practical as well as eye-catching. Timber contrasts well with this material, especially if it is in the form of chunky structural features or rustic style furniture such as a reclaimed or new farmhouse dining table.

Effective artistic decorations commonly used in these spaces include pulley wheels and old road signs, along with new large abstract artworks, murals or oversized black and white photographs. Works of art chosen as features usually have bold graphical design often incorporating large-scale numbers and letters.

From the inside out

Tall windows are a common feature of many industrial buildings and help to flood the converted space with daylight. Ideally curtains and even blinds should be avoided because of their close association with domesticity. External timber or steel grilles can be fitted to screen out the sun and reduce solar gain, and privacy can be maintained by frosting the glass at low levels.

Externally any existing features should be kept where possible and any alterations or additions should preserve the scale of the original, particularly in the case of window and door openings. It isn't essential to tidy up the exterior materials since the

industrial-style ethos promotes a 'rough and ready' appearance, with plenty of clues left to indicate the previous use of the building.

Completely new industrial-inspired houses are relatively rare in the UK but extensions to converted buildings are more common. Profiled steel, zinc and boarding of unfinished timber (such as larch) have all been successfully installed as new external cladding. A current trend is the use of Corten steel, the metal which consists of sheets that are left to oxidise to a deep orange colour. The layer of rust protects the steel from deterioration and occurs evenly across each sheet, ensuring a consistent, low-maintenance finish.

If you're sizing up a prospective unit for conversion, once you've established that the structure is sound, prepare a sketch plan to try out your ideas. The nature of this type of project is that you will have to adapt yourself to live in it, rather than the inverse. Large, high open-plan spaces should be preserved, with private zones such as bedrooms and bathrooms being the only areas that are sectioned off. It is usually a mistake to try to cram in an extra floor and squeeze in lots of bedrooms because this will probably destroy the character of the building.

Above and right: German Factory lights from Skinflint Design have been incorporated into this former commercial space, converted by architects Airhouse Design Office

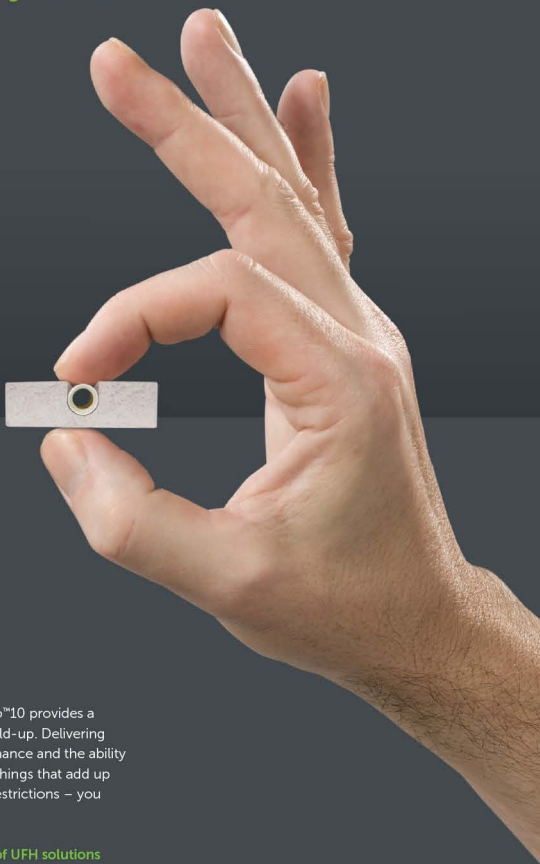
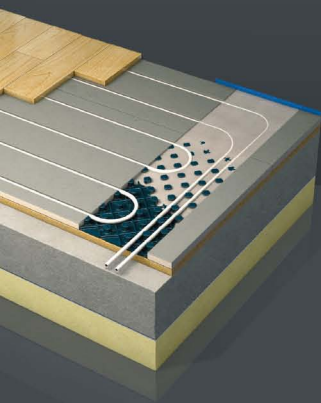
JULIAN OWEN



Julian Owen is an East Midlands-based chartered architect and author of several books on self build and house alterations. His publications include *Self Build*, *Home Extension Design* and *Kit and*

***Modern Timber Frame* homes. He's also chairman of the ASBA Architects network. To find out more visit www.asba-architects.org**

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1 What is a listed building?

In the first of three features about listing, **Alan Tierney** gives us the lowdown on what it means if your home, or one you're looking to buy, has this status

In the UK we're lucky to have inherited an amazing stock of period properties, with almost half a million of these being listed. They range from grand country houses to humble cottages. Many are the subject of renovation or refurbishment projects and, in a number of cases, listed building consent is required for any alterations that might affect their special interest. While people are generally aware that there are limitations on what work can be done to listed buildings, what does this designation mean in practice?

What makes a listing?

During the Second World War, many important historic buildings were unfortunately lost to bombing raids, and this catalysed the creation of an official list to record those that survived. This in turn led to moves to protect these buildings for the future, and the first legislation aimed at doing so was passed in 1947.

In other areas of the country, the process has developed slightly differently – and in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, conserving these assets has become the concern of the relevant national heritage bodies. While this article refers to the process in England, the principles involved are broadly the same across the UK. In England there are three categories of listing:

Grade II Buildings that are of special interest, warranting every effort be made to preserve them.

Grade II* Important properties that are of more than special interest.

Grade I Buildings that are considered to be of exceptional interest.

Selection is based on architectural or historic value. Only 2% of all listed buildings are considered unique enough to qualify as Grade I, and about half of these are places of

worship. The majority of listed properties (92%) are categorised as Grade II, so chances are this will be the status relevant to most people.

The primary qualifying factor for listing is age, with all structures dating from before 1700 – that contain a significant proportion of their original fabric – being listed, as well as most of those built between 1700 and 1840. After this date the process

becomes more selective depending on individual merit, while properties under 30 years old are only listed in exceptional circumstances, such as where they represent a superior example of an architectural style.

Most historic listing was carried out during a series of major programmes, but a surprising number of properties were missed. If you are concerned about an un-listed building that you

“When buying a listed building it is essential to check that any work carried out in the past was done with consent. Liability for unauthorised work lies with the owner of the building, and this passes to the new owner when a house is sold”



Left: Both the original fabric and the Victorian porch on this 17th century cottage are covered by the listing

Right: While the outbuilding attached to this townhouse has a completely different character, it's nevertheless covered by the main building's listing. Below: This 16th century wall painting is not specifically mentioned in the property's list description – but is still protected



feel is of important historical interest you can apply online via Historic England (or the relevant body) for it to be considered. If it's deemed as being of interest, the organisation makes a recommendation to the department that is responsible for the statutory list. In an emergency, such as if the building in question is at risk of demolition or serious alteration that

might affect its architectural or historic interest, the local planning authority can serve a temporary preservation notice. This remains in force for six months, until the secretary of state has decided whether or not to formally go ahead and give it a grade.

Is my house listed?

Before embarking on any work to a property that may be listed, it is essential to establish its status. It is not safe to rely on estate agents' particulars or on the previous owner's account of the situation – lack of knowledge is no defence if unauthorised works are carried out.

The good news is that checking whether a property is listed is relatively straightforward. Local authorities have a database of listed

buildings in their area, while Historic England maintains *The National Heritage List for England*. The equivalent register for Scotland is held by Historic Scotland, for Wales by CADW and Northern Ireland by its Department of the Environment.

What does listing mean?

You'll need to obtain listed building consent for any alterations that have the potential to affect a property's special architectural or historic interest (often referred to as its 'significance'). This doesn't mean that you can't make changes, but rather the intention is to enable alterations while protecting what is particularly interesting about the building. In fact, for Grade II listings, there is now a presumption in favour of appropriate alteration and adaptation.

The consent process is managed by the local authority, invariably with the involvement of the conservation officer. This is separate from the planning process. So some projects will require both listed building and planning approval, while some only need one or the other. The good news is that there is no fee for a listed building consent application.

Due to each building's individuality, it is not possible to give a definitive indication of what work will require consent, as the same degree of alteration may have no effect on the significance of one building but a considerable impact on another. Because of this it is always advisable to consult the conservation officer at an early stage to find out both whether work will require consent and whether it is likely to be granted.



Right: This barn is in the curtilage of a listed farmhouse and is therefore covered by the listing

Breaching the rules protecting listed buildings can have serious consequences. Local authorities are granted extensive powers ranging from enforcement action (eg requiring reinstatement of lost or damaged features or fabric) to resorting to legal measures that can result in large fines or even imprisonment. It is worth noting that these matters are covered by criminal rather than planning law.

A peculiar characteristic of the law is that liability for unauthorised work lies with the owner of the building, which means liability passes to the new owner when a house is sold. When buying a listed building it is therefore essential to check that any work carried out in the past was done with the right consent. If not, the local authority can take enforcement action to make the new owners put it right at their own expense.

What's involved?

Every listed building has a description in the statutory register. It is often assumed that this identifies the important elements of the building and so tells you what is protected. However, this is not the case; rather this description is only for the identification of the building.

Once listed, every element is subject to the same degree of protection, and this applies just as much internally as it does externally. Furthermore, everything fixed to the building is protected – as is any structure built before 1948 that is within the curtilage of the property at the date of listing. Curtilage can be quite difficult to define but for most purposes it can be thought of as the building plot. Because of this situation, past alterations to the property are protected in just the same way as the original fabric and features, even if they are not as sympathetic as you might wish them to be. Alterations tell us a lot about the history and development of buildings and how they were used or lived in by former occupants. Hence they can sometimes be just as important in helping to understand social and architectural history as the original structure.

What's more, the setting of a heritage asset is also protected within the planning process. So the effect of any proposed development in the vicinity of a listed building on its setting is a material consideration when deciding on the planning application for that development.



NEED TO KNOW

Listed buildings can be altered – the purpose of the system is to control how alterations are done in order to protect the character of the property, not to prevent necessary modifications.

Listing covers the entire building – in addition to the exterior and the items in the list description, the inside, including fixtures, and any structure within the curtilage are also protected.

Liability for unauthorised work lies with the current owner – this applies even if alterations were carried out by a previous owner, so be sure to check the status of completed work prior to purchase.

Modern structures can be protected – while most graded buildings are old, an increasing number of exemplary 20th century ones are being added. There is no minimum age limit.

Local listing is not the same as national listing – these do not have statutory protection although there may be local planning restrictions.

Local provisions

Some authorities maintain a local register of important or significant buildings, separate from the statutory list. There is often confusion between these and officially graded buildings. However, while there is no legal safeguard for these properties, they often have a layer of protection that comes through in local planning policy. Sometimes the purpose of this style of listing is just to bring the owner's attention to their unique character in the hope they will respect this in making any alterations.

Left: Modest buildings can also be listed; the PVCu windows here are an unauthorised alteration that any future purchaser could be required to replace

CONTACTS

CADW 01443 336000 www.cadw.gov.wales
 Historic England 020 7973 3700 www.historicengland.gov.uk
 Historic Scotland 0131 668 8600 www.historic-scotland.gov.uk
 Northern Ireland Environment Agency 028 9054 3095 www.nidirect.gov.uk
 Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings 020 7377 1644 www.spab.org.uk

ALAN TIERNEY



Alan Tierney is a historic building consultant and conservation specialist. He runs Picketts Historic Building Conservation (pickettsconservation.co.uk), offering hands on advice to period property owners.

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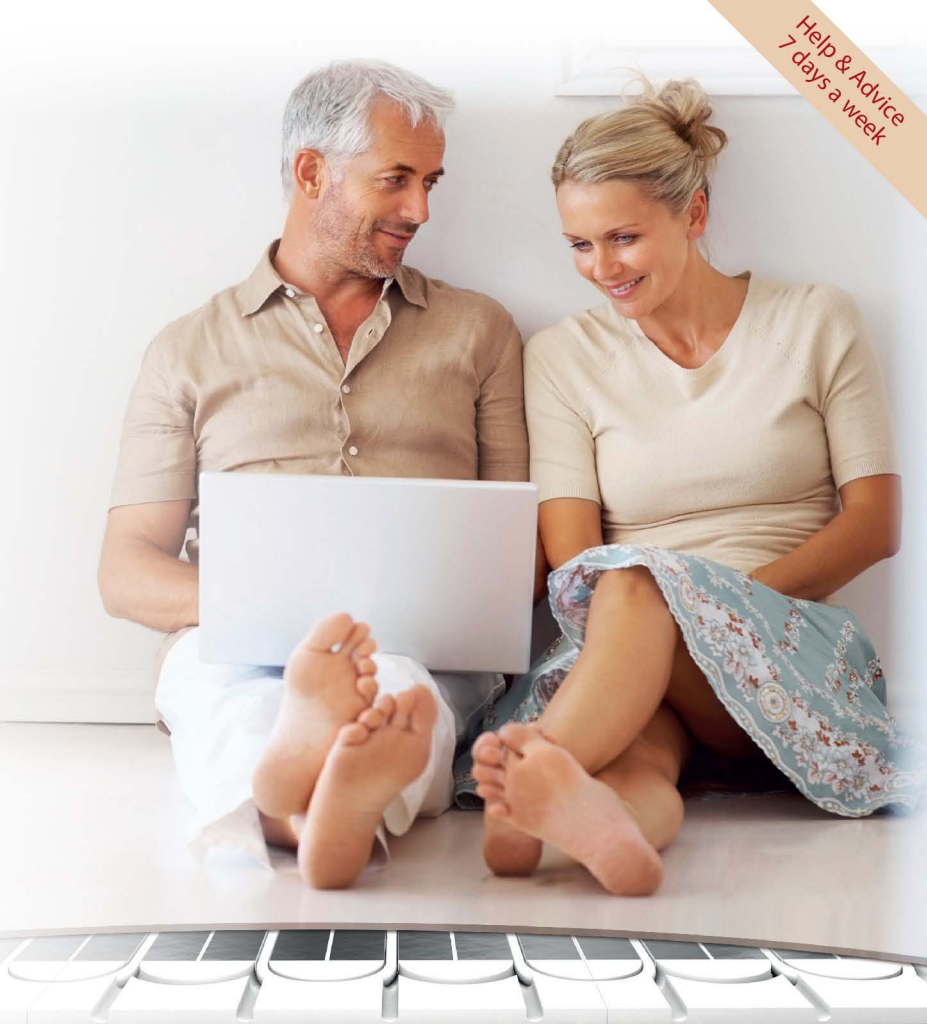


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Common planning pitfalls

From changes in policy to local politics, the most well-prepared self builder can still fall foul of the vagaries of the planning system. **Mike Dade** flags up some of the unforeseen problems you might encounter

In an ideal world, gaining planning permission would be a simple administrative procedure. The reality can be a little different, with unexpected costs, delays and disappointments all-too-common occurrences. So, what are the major pitfalls, and how can you avoid them?

Relying on pre-app consultations

You may think you can avoid issues by seeking pre-application advice from your local council. This is indeed a great service, and its use is encouraged by most councils. The fee charged, amount of detail that needs to be submitted and the time taken to consider the matter all vary considerably between councils.

What they all have in common, though, is that pre-application advice comes with a proviso that it's not the formal decision of the council and that you can't place any reliance on it.

So, never assume that because you have been given the thumbs up at the pre-app stage, your application will

automatically sail through. You should always allow time for further design or layout adjustments over the course of the formal application.

Shifting goalposts

Planning policies are constantly being reviewed, both at government and local level. Court and appeal decisions can place a new emphasis or interpretation on planning policy or law, too. This can bring uncertainty as to whether your application is in line with policy or not. It's always advisable to check whether local policies are under review, and whether any likely changes could affect your scheme. Speak to the council's planning policy section to find this out.

Mid-application changes

Given it takes eight weeks to determine a planning application, you might think any minor concerns a planning officer has could be addressed during the course of the application. All too often, these minor changes are demanded right at the end of the process and

you're left with the unenviable choice of withdrawing the application or having it refused. Either way, while you might not have to pay a second application fee to the council, you'll need to amend your drawings and resubmit. If you factor in running your amendments past the planning officer, this could add up to three months to your project schedule.

Failing to engage with neighbours

It can be particularly frustrating to amend your scheme in response to pre-app advice, only to have the council change its mind later. This might happen because a different planning officer deals with the formal application, or because a consultee, such as a neighbour, raises an unforeseen issue. Avoid the uncertainties of local politics by doing what you can to engage with neighbours and get them on board with your vision. If you do receive objections, bear in mind that they may not all be genuine 'material' considerations.

Committee lotteries

Even when you've had good pre-app advice from the planners and they're supportive of your formal application, there's no guarantee of success. Local political influence, who knows who and even sharp practice always have the potential to hold a scheme back.

For example, a neighbour who objects to your application could lobby the local councillor to get your application to go before the planning committee. The outcome of this meeting can be something of a lottery, as councillors aren't bound by the advice of planning officers.

So as well as engaging neighbours, talk to your parish or community council

Below: Even if you've take pre-app advice – like the Inderwicks did for their Dorset extension – it's worth leaving time to make further adjustments during the full application



and speak to your local district or borough councillor early in the process to ensure they're on your side.

Planning conditions

The majority of planning applications are approved, although this is usually subject to conditions. These might control such particulars as the external materials for the house and landscaping schemes, which will have to be agreed with the council before building works commence. So, the granting of permission doesn't necessarily mean you can get started on your project immediately. If timing is crucial, discuss this with the planning officer as early as possible, and consider submitting samples of materials or a landscaping scheme with your formal application, to speed things up.

Designations

Many of the UK's most attractive towns and villages are conservation areas, while individual houses can hold listed building status (see page 115). These and other designations can constrain opportunities to build, renovate or extend on affected plots – or even on sites near to protected areas – as a scheme's impact on its setting will be more heavily scrutinised. It's by no means impossible to develop such sites, but there will be more consultees and consents involved and plans must be carefully presented to gain approval.

Ownership issues

It's easy to imagine that, just because you have planning permission for something, you can build it. It might seem obvious, but you must own or control all the land included in the permission in order to press ahead. You do not have the right to cross someone else's land to get to yours. Instead, you will have to separately negotiate to buy that right – and it could prove expensive.

Fanning the flames

Your project must comply with the Building Regulations. This includes a requirement for adequate access for a fire engine. Rules set locally determine how close it must be able to get to a house in the event of a fire. New houses with long drives – notably backland sites that have been formed from one or many rear gardens – might have to provide a much wider than usual drive to allow for this. This and ownership issues

are fundamentals that you need to get resolved early in the planning stages – ideally before you even buy a plot.

Protected species

Wildlife such as bats and dormice are rarely an insurmountable problem for self-builders. If protected species are suspected on your plot or in your building, get a survey done. Protection or relocation measures can then be devised as conditions of your planning permission. The pitfall is that not all species can be surveyed all year round. For instance, bats frequenting a building to be demolished or converted can only be surveyed from May to September. It can be a major blow to your timetable to discover an application you thought to submit in November has to wait until the following May so that it can be accompanied by a suitable bat survey.

Troublesome trees

They may help to lend character to a plot, but mature trees can also provide one of the biggest challenges to a scheme's viability – and are therefore a major hurdle for planning applications. Never assume you can simply remove any examples that would block the ideal position for your new home – some may be subject to tree preservation orders (TPOs) or other protections. Developing a good replacement planting scheme will help assuage the planners.

Wrong position or height

The consequences of building a new house or extension in the wrong place, too high, or otherwise not in accordance with permitted plans can be grave. Technically, if you build something that's not quite the same as what's shown on your planning permission, then the whole structure won't have consent. Numerous projects have been stopped in their tracks for being marginally in the wrong place – usually too near a neighbour's boundary – or too high. But most minor mistakes can be resolved by submitting new plans showing what's actually been built. More serious errors don't fare so well and the worst case is that an incorrectly built house has to be demolished. To avoid such disasters always get accurate plans drawn up, and stick to them. It's as simple as that.

Unexpected costs

Following changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section



106 (S106) affordable housing payments last year, self-build projects are exempt from most planning contributions (beyond the standard application fees). However, S106 immunity is proving controversial, and some schemes are still being slapped with hefty charges by councils attempting to resist this government-led exemption. *Build It* has heard of some cases where fee demands have been successfully quashed at appeal – and the Planning Advisory Service (www.pas.gov.uk) notes that the S106 exemption should usually be considered a material consideration that overrides local policy.

Conclusions

The worst pitfalls in planning can always be avoided, so make sure whoever is designing and building your house understands them. Knowledge of your particular council's policies and procedures can help you avoid unforeseen delays and expenses, and careful lobbying of neighbours and councillors reduces problems of a political nature. Nonetheless, you should always allow not only a financial contingency in your project, but also a time buffer, to ensure your schedule is flexible enough if planning delays occur.

Above: Sensibly, the Proctors paid for a bat survey ahead of their planning application to knock down an old cottage and replace it. Since these surveys can only take place from May to September, they can significantly hold up planning

MIKE DADE



Mike Dade is a land and planning specialist, and *Build It's* plot guru. He's one half of Speer Dade Planning Consultants and the author of several must-read books on plots and planning.

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CONSERVATION



Alan Tierney is a historic building consultant and conservation specialist. He runs Picketts Historic Building Conservation (www.pickettsconservation.co.uk), offering hands-on advice to period property owners.

UNDERFLOOR HEATING



Heather Oliver is the product development manager at Nu-Heat (nu-heat.co.uk). Prior to working with the UFH specialists, she spent 15 years working in civil engineering on both infrastructure projects and domestic housing schemes.

BUDGETS



Tim Doherty was the founding MD of the National Self-Build & Renovation Centre and a founding member of NaCSBA. He runs Dobant Property Consultants (www.dobant.com), a specialist surveying & building consultancy for the residential and commercial sectors, including surveys and site appraisals, project management and custom build solutions.

RENOVATION



Mike Hardwick is a self-build consultant, project management specialist and NaCSBA's self-build representative. Mike Hardwick has first-hand experience of the process involved and helps to deliver a three-day course at Swindon's National Self-Build and Renovation Centre (www.nsbrc.co.uk).

DESIGN



Opinder Liddar is a director at Lapd Architects. The practice specialises in residential projects from extensions to new build, making him the ideal person to answer all your home design questions.

PLANNING

Will I be able to build on my land?

I own a plot, which is adjacent to my current home in the north of England. Would my council's lack of a five year housing land supply plan give me a good chance of getting consent to self-build and can you advise on how I should approach my local authority?



Unfortunately the lack of a planned supply does not mean that you will automatically gain consent. Government policy states that when a local authority doesn't have an adequate supply of land for new development, then their housing policies should be regarded as out of date. In such cases presumption in favour of sustainable development (a natural planning policy) should prevail. This can offer the possibility of gaining permission on plots close to settlements, but is not a guarantee that you'll be able to build in your desired location. Make sure that this land is not in an area designated as green belt, and have an informal conversation with your planning department to see whether they'd be happy for you to develop the site.

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DESIGN

Do I need to hire an architect?

I have a garden plot and would like to have a go at building a bungalow for me and my partner. We are approaching retirement age and want to create a single-storey dwelling. I feel that this will be fairly simple to achieve as we just want a practical two-bedroom house using the traditional brick and block build method. Do I need expert input at the design stages?

It's always helpful if you have a good idea of what you'd like to achieve, but you'll only be able to take your design so far on your own. I always encourage clients to put a scrapbook together. But you really do need a professional to help assimilate those proposals and turn them into something that will really work.

Your design will need to comply with a whole raft of rules and regulations, not only from a planning perspective, but on the structural side, too. Architects are trained to formulate solutions and develop ideas that you may not even have thought of, so it will be crucial that you engage an expert.



PLANNING

The council is being rigid about my application

I've bought a tumble-down timber bungalow that I'd like to knock down and replace, but I'm having difficulties with planning. Despite the building being tucked away in the countryside, in pre-application discussions the council are being really prescriptive about the design of the proposed property. They don't like what I'd prefer, and I don't like what they want! Where do we go from here?

Councils aren't supposed to be too prescriptive about a scheme, beyond the requirement that projects should exhibit a high standard of design. It's different in conservation areas, or built-up locations where there's a strong local style. In these more sensitive situations clearly anything new needs to blend sympathetically with the established character. However, in a secluded countryside location there's less justification for this. Government planning guidance (in the National Planning Policy Framework) says that

RENOVATION

How can we get our money back?



We completed the renovation works on our house a few months ago, but we're still in disputes with our plumber about the standard of the service he provided us. He didn't complete the work and we have had to employ someone else to finish the job off. Unfortunately we paid for everything up front. Do you think there is any way to get our money back?

It's never a good idea to pay trades everything up front, and if I were asked for full payment before completing the work, they simply wouldn't get the job because I would strongly suspect they were trying to rip me off.

In normal circumstances, you should pay for work that has been done to a satisfactory standard, but if you have told the contractor that what they've done is unsatisfactory or incomplete you should give them a reasonable notice period (two weeks or so) to rectify the work – or in this case, finish what they started. If they don't do so, then you can hire someone else and reasonably withhold a portion of the agreed fee to cover it. However, as you've handed all the money over, this is no longer an option.

If it's a substantial amount but below the £10,000 threshold, I would try claiming a suitable proportion of the money back through the small claims court. However, this assumes you can track the tradesman down. If he was a fly-by-night who has taken the money and run off with it, it's probably a lost cause and one to chalk up to experience. Next time, I'd suggest agreeing a price, putting that in writing (an email will do) and only paying in full when the job has been satisfactorily completed.

local authorities should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles.

The advice does go on to say that it's proper to support local distinctiveness, which can be a stumbling block if you're hoping, for instance, for something contemporary in a rural setting. But good design should be able to bring locally distinct themes into a modern scheme. This is probably a situation where you should try to find some areas of consensus and – even if you don't come to a complete agreement – make an application. What planners say they'd like in a pre-application discussion, can differ from what they'd feel obliged to accept via a formal application. Make sure your drawings show the design off sympathetically and get support, if you can, from neighbours and your parish council.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Send all your self build, renovation and conversion questions to buildit@castlemedia.co.uk for our panel of experts to answer. Please note all correspondence may be published in the magazine



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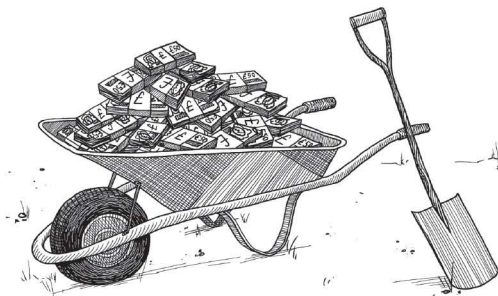


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Hanley Economic (Accelerator)	85% (OPP)	80%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	5.79%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Hanley Economic (Accelerator)	85% (OPP)	80%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	4.69%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Melton Mowbray (Accelerator)	85% (OPP)	75%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	4.89%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
ARREAR STAGE PAYMENT MORTGAGES							
Cumberland Building Society	75% (DPP)	75%	Flexible	Flexible	Call branch	Branch operating area	0845 601 8396
Dudley Building Society	50% (DPP)	75%	Six	Damp proof course	4.99%	Postcode restricted	01384 231414
Ecology Building Society	85% (OPP)	85%	Flexible	Flexible	4.90%	National	0845 674 5566
Furness Building Society	66% (DPP)	80%	Eight	Excavation	5.99%	Local	0800 781 4311
Hinckley & Rugby BS	No	80%	Four	Footings	5.64%	England/Wales	01455 894083
Loughborough Building Society	75% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	4.99%	England/Wales	01509 631950
Newbury Building Society	66% (DPP)	75%	Flexible	Foundations	4.95%	Postcode restricted	Contact local branch
Norwich & Peterborough BS	80% (DPP)	80%	Seven	Foundations	4.89%	England/Wales	0845 300 2522
Progressive Building Society	No	75%	Four	Wall plate	Depends on scheme	Northern Ireland	Contact local branch
Scottish Building Society	80% (DPP)	80%	Flexible	Foundations	5.99%	Scotland	0131 313 7700
Vernon	75% (DPP)	80%	Four	Wall plate	4.95%	England/Wales	0161 429 6262
ARREAR STAGE PAYMENT MORTGAGES (exclusives available from www.buildstore.co.uk)							
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Furness Building Society	75% (OPP)	80%	Six	Wind & watertight	4.99%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Furness Building Society	75% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	5.20%	Mainland Scotland only	0345 223 4647
Hanley Economic BS	75% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	5.69%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Holmesdale Building Society	85% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	5.29%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Ipswich Building Society	75% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	4.99%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Loughborough Building Society	75% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	4.99%	Central England	0345 223 4647
Mansfield Building Society	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.99%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Newcastle Building Society	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	5.25%	Eng/Wales/Mainland Scot	0345 223 4647

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PLOT WATCH:

Mike Dade *investigates*

Branching out

The Owens want to build a modern home in a sensitive location. Their potential plot is in the garden of a listed house, and is dotted with ornamental trees and shrubs. **Mike Dade** suggests the way forward for planning success

WHO Karl and Louise Owen

WHAT A section of the garden of Karl's parents' house, a listed vicarage. It's just outside the village development boundary but the council doesn't have an adequate supply of land to meet housing needs for the next five years, so normal planning rules may not apply

WHERE Lincolnshire

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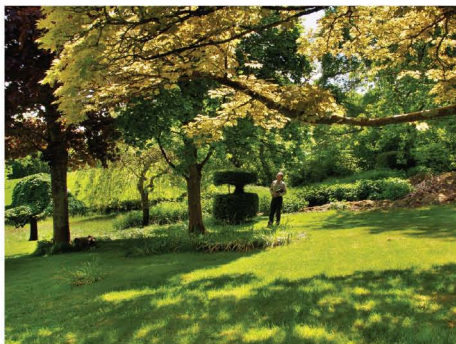
Karl and Louise Owen have been looking for some time for a suitable plot around the Lincolnshire village where Karl's family reside, but have found nothing suitable. However, his parents live in a vicarage on the edge of the village, which includes an area of trees and ornamental shrubs separated off from the main house and garden by a brick wall. Could an innovative design be created that would provide the accommodation that Karl and Louise are looking for, without necessitating destroying all the trees?

The project

The couple want to build a modest two-bedroom house. They love contemporary design, but have struggled to find suitable land on which to accommodate such a scheme in and around the village where they hope to live. They would like a good-sized garden, but big plots tend to come with planning permission for large houses, with correspondingly hefty price-tags. Karl's parents' land is of the right size and in the right place, but on the face of it suffers from several planning challenges.

The plot

The site is to the side of the vicarage and has a slight slope down, away from the road. It has a wide variety of mature ornamental trees and shrubs, loosely grouped among mown grass. Its character is clearly that of a garden, but it is separated from the more formal landscaping of the vicarage by a brick wall. It extends to about 0.1 hectares, although its rear boundary isn't defined by any fence – the mown lawn just runs up to the longer grass of an adjoining paddock.



Planning considerations

There are three main issues to contend with here. Firstly, is the plot in a location where permission is likely to be granted? Secondly, could a design be devised that wouldn't impact on the setting of the adjoining listed vicarage? Finally, is there a way of preserving at least the most significant of the trees, so as not to destroy the existing attractive character?

Planning principle

The plot lies just outside the village development boundary, which is defined in the local plan. Being the wrong side of these lines would generally rule out development, but here the council doesn't have an adequate supply of housing land to meet anticipated needs over the next five years. In these situations, plots adjoining village development boundaries are often granted permission, provided the location is sustainable (meaning reasonably well-related to the facilities of the settlement). The setting here, adjoining the vicarage and close to the village church, shop and school, should meet the criteria, in principle.

The plot is close to the existing listed house, but is to the side, on lower ground, and clearly separated from it. Unless a new house was particularly large or tall, it wouldn't be seen in the same context as the vicarage

YOUR TURN

If you'd like Mike Dade to cast his expert eye over a plot you're considering for your build, and flag up any potential problems, send your details and those of your potential site to buildit@castlemedia.co.uk



when viewed from the road. Since Karl and Louise plan quite a modest house, it should be completely feasible to design something that doesn't interfere with the setting of the listed building at all.

The issue of trees is an unusual one here. The existing specimens are not especially large, and are ornamental varieties, rather than native species. They form an attractive part of the overall garden. Whether the council would view their replacement or removal as a matter of concern is difficult to say. If there were mature native species – oaks for example – it would be fairly certain that there would be resistance. At the other extreme, the layout of a garden, location and types of shrubs and small ornamental trees would normally be viewed as being a matter for the landowner, rather than the council.

First steps

The couple needs to look closely at the plot and work out which plants might have to be lost, in order to fit in a house. One point they should watch out for is that planners are sensitive to the potential for future pressure on trees, where houses are built near them. So, the mere fact that Karl and Louise might not mind living among trees doesn't guarantee that a future occupant would feel the same way. Loss of light, danger from falling limbs and leaves blocking gutters are all reasons a homeowner could use to justify additional tree removal in future.

A solution to the problem might be to take out selected trees before the application is made. This pre-emptive strike approach doesn't always go down well locally and it can make an enemy of the council's tree

officer. That said, some limited thinning out might make the potential of the plot much more obvious and reduce any misgivings the planning officer might have.

The way forward

Because the question of the trees is central to success with this plot, a sensible first step would be to consult an arboriculturist. An initial appraisal would reveal if any specimens are in poor health, unstable and so on. It should also reveal something about the council tree officer's likely attitude towards ornamental species. A preliminary house design could take on board that early feedback. At the formal application stage an impact assessment will be needed, which would categorise the trees, identify any to be lost, and specify protection measures for those remaining during the build.

Karl and Louise have some ideas to help deal with the tree issue. They suggest that a timber-clad building – perhaps even set on low stilts – could have the character of a large treehouse and be a fitting design for such a verdant site. That idea could well have merit, not least because the stilts would actually be piled foundations, which would have minimal impact on any tree roots in the vicinity. A low-profile, timber-clad structure in this leafy environment would also have minimal impact on the adjoining listed vicarage and would certainly not affect its setting.



application advice from the council. The drawings don't need to be overly detailed at this stage, but it would be helpful if the layout plan were to show the new building's relationship with the trees and existing vicarage.

It's important to demonstrate, even at this preliminary stage, that they've thought carefully about the setting of the listed building and are keen to preserve the trees to the greatest extent possible. A brief

supporting statement should be sent in, addressing these points. If they can get the planning officer to come out to the site, so much the better. The relationship between the plot and the vicarage looks closer on a plan than it does on the ground, since both the brick wall and the slope of the site create a sense of separation between the two. If the officer won't visit the plot, some photographs would help to illustrate this point.

When seeking pre-app advice it pays to ask the council to confirm what information it wants to be submitted with the formal application. A tree report is to be expected in this case, but due to the sloping site, a topographical survey and section drawings are likely to be needed, too. The additional costs of these items will be easier for the couple to swallow if they get a positive reaction to their preliminary plans.



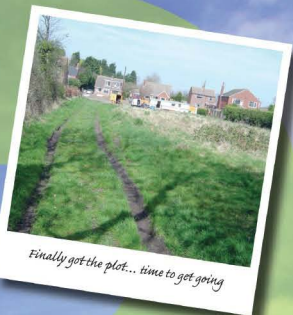
Strategy

Subject to the initial feedback on trees, Karl and Louise should get a set of sketch plans drawn up and seek pre-

Conclusions

Karl and Louise might well have found a viable plot that meets their needs. A cautious approach, sensitivity to the constraints of the site and a well-considered design will give them the best chance of success.

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The screenshot shows the homepage of self-build.co.uk. The header features the 'Build It' logo with the tagline 'Making your dream home happen'. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links: 'to self build', 'Plots & planning', 'Homes & design', 'Building routes', 'Products & materials', 'Costs & finance', and 'News & events'. A search bar is also present. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Reader's homes:** A featured article titled 'Georgian-style self build home' with a photo of a large house.
- News & comment:** A list of recent news items, including 'Controversial Eco Home' and 'CIL Survey by NaSBA'.
- Self build explained:** A section with articles like 'Why self build?' and 'What to LED lighting?'.
- Latest Features:** A section with articles like 'What is custom build?' and 'Handmade brick'.
- Product directory:** A section with articles like 'Heating systems by Robsons Systems'.
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Price

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Plot number

126385

Description

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Agent

Murchison Law

Location

Cumbria, Carlisle

Price

£200,000

Plot number

126621

Description

This site comes with outline planning permission for a detached property. It is located on the fringe of the sought-after village of Wetheral, and is just a short walking distance from the local amenities. These include the village shop, post office, coffee shop, a restaurant and a leisure club. It has a semi-rural outlook and good access to the A69 and M6 motorway.



Agent

Hayward Todd Associates

Location

North Yorkshire

Price

£600,000

Plot number

126906

Description

Outline planning permission has been granted for the change of use of the existing barn into a four-

bedroom property. There are 32 acres of land included with the property. Located in the picturesque village of Giggleswick, the building sits on the bank of the River Ribble. Nearby is a primary school, a well-known 16th century public school, two pubs, a church and village shop.



Agent

JRHopper & co

Location

Suffolk

Price

£200,000

Plot number

126694

Description

This plot is offered with outline planning permission for a bungalow, or a one-and-a-half storey dwelling. The house will be set in the established gardens of The Willows. The site is very well screened from the road and neighbouring properties and it benefits from a huge variety of mature shrubs and trees, with the whole area being a haven for wildlife.



Agent

Mortimer & Gausden

Location

Cornwall

Price

£275,000

Plot number

126950

Description

This plot is offered with detailed planning permission to construct a house located in a beautiful Cornish setting. The approved design includes new vehicular and pedestrian access, and provisions for a garage. The 293m² house will be arranged over three storeys and will include a utility/laundry room, a cellar store, a master ensuite bedroom and two other good sized bedrooms.



Agent

Stags

Location

Anglesey

Price

£105,000

Plot number

125969

Description

This plot has been granted detailed planning permission for the construction of a south facing two-storey, four-bedroom detached house with an attached garage. The proposed scheme will yield a living space of approximately 155m² (excluding the garage). The site is situated in the desirable rural setting of Anglesey, it's well-placed for travel to the local bays.



Agent

Dafydd Hardy

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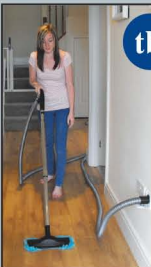
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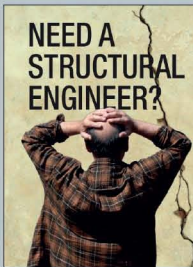
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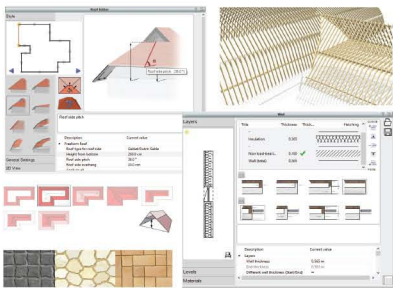
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focus on:

Chris Bates speaks to **Gus Zogolovitch**, founder and CEO of London's first custom build enabler, **Inhabit**, about how the company is helping to deliver one-off homes in the city



What inspired you to launch Inhabit?

My interest stems from having been a self builder myself. As a consumer I want choice, so I don't like the classic developer 'like it or lump it' attitude – and it's such a shame when they finish a home,

only for the buyer to end up ripping out the kitchen or bathroom to replace it with something that better suits their needs. I think it's this lack of choice that pushes people towards self building. Research suggests that 75% of us would never buy a standard new house; while a recent survey by the National Custom and Self Build Association (NaCSBA) indicated that 13 million people in the UK would like to create their own home from scratch.

Taking the custom build route doesn't involve doing the work yourself; with Inhabit you get a plot and a finished structural shell as a minimum. But it's as close as you can get without the pain and headaches of going solo. And I should know – it took me five years to complete my own project, and having spoken with other London-based self builders it seems like I managed to do it pretty quickly.

What projects are you working on at the moment?

Our current flagship scheme is Blenheim Grove in Peckham Rye, a custom build development of five architect-designed terraced homes with internal floorplans ranging from 92m² to 170m². These sustainable, contemporary houses are all set over three storeys, each with a roof terrace and bike storage. A couple will have gardens and all will offer ultra-low running costs.

The projects have been designed around the Solidspace split section configuration, which arranges the living zones around a double-height void. This offers a great balance of private and open-plan areas. It gives more light, spaciousness and character than a standard terraced floorplan and makes the homes feel bigger than they really are. We received planning permission on 7 April and aim to start work on site in late summer this year.

What's innovative about this scheme?

We're launching an entirely new model at Blenheim Grove, whereby you can choose your preferred level of finish. The 'Raw' option (also known as shell and core) is our best value package. Your

home comes watertight and insulated – complete with high-quality composite windows, external doors, capped off utilities and temporary stairs – and then you take control of how you design and fit out the interiors. This is a great option for those who are looking for good value and have the time to devote to sourcing economical fittings, such as ex-display kitchens, to reduce costs.

The next step up is the 'Option' finish, which offers a set palette of products, materials and layouts to choose from for the internal fit-out. For instance, you could select carpet, timber or tiled flooring for the living room – and you might even switch between a spacious three-bed and a family-friendly five-bed configuration. You get to do all of this from the comfort of your own home and we take care of the rest – you just move in when you're ready.

The 'Bespoke' finish allows you to choose a custom fit-out (within the constraints of the planning consent and Building Regulations) that's perfectly tailored to your family's lifestyle, via one-to-one consultations with our designers. We'll manage the project and undertake the work on your behalf – and you'll have a dedicated team member helping you to achieve exactly the home you want.

How much does it cost to custom build in London?

It depends on the specification you go for and the size of house you're buying. It's not about the number of bedrooms; it's about how much space we build for you and how luxurious you want the fit-out to be. However, this route can be hugely competitive in comparison to buying an existing home in a similar city location. For example, at number 56 (which has a 92m² floorplan) we have a guide price of £599,995 for the Raw finish – and you might expect to pay another £100,000 to kit out the interiors. The same house sold off-the-peg by a speculative developer might cost around £950,000.

The bespoke route includes all your management and other fees at a fixed price – but you would cover the cost difference between your product and finish choices and what's included on the standard 'Option' list. We're working towards an estimated handover of Spring 2016 for homes built using the Raw package, with Option and Bespoke projects completing around six months later.

Inhabit will soon launch its next London-based custom build scheme, on Weston Street in Southwark. Visit www.inhabithomes.co.uk to register your interest.



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