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HOMEBUILDING & RENOVATING

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HOW TO REMODEL A KITCHEN

An Expert Practical Guide

BORING TO BEAUTIFUL

Using Ordinary Materials in Extraordinary Ways

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OTHER WAYS WE CAN HELP YOU

Homebuilding.co.uk

Our website archives a huge amount of content — from readers' homes and expert solutions to your problems, to advice features on all aspects of self-build and renovation

Plotfinder.net

Looking for a building plot or renovation opportunity?

Plotfinder.net is the UK's leading database of building plots. See page 69 for more, or visit the website

Visit the Shows

Homebuilding & Renovating and Home Improvement Shows provide an invaluable resource for self-builders and renovators. See homebuildingshow.co.uk for information

My Building Project

Get a detailed estimate of your building costs and find a reputable tradesperson in your area at mybuildingproject.co.uk

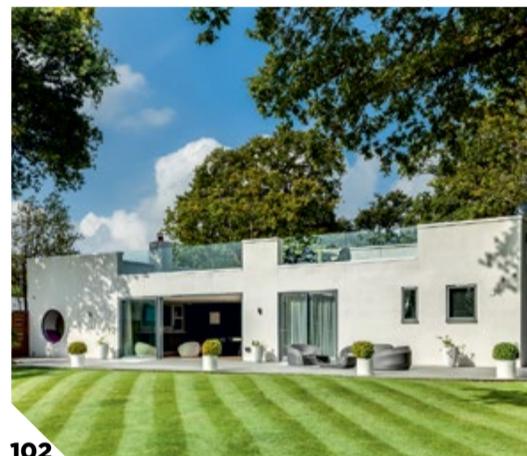
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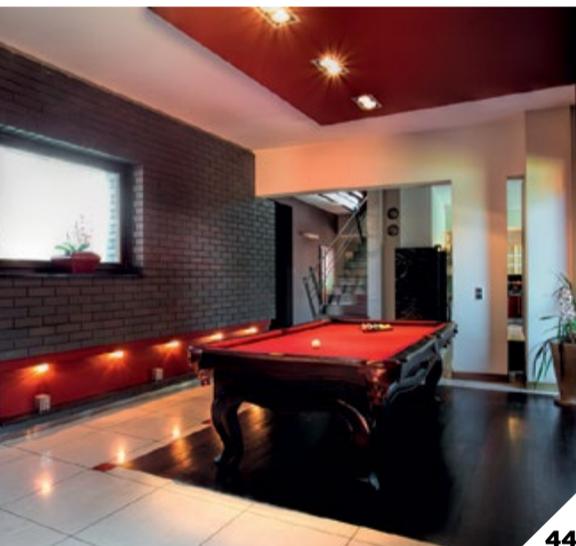
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HB&R

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Fun: The Missing Element

JASON ORME IS THE EDITOR OF HOMEBUILDING & RENOVATING MAGAZINE

Over the years, visiting hundreds of individually designed houses (undoubtedly the best bit of my job), I have developed a rather grudging admiration for a certain type of homeowner. This is the type of person who feels confident enough in their own design capabilities that they can take on all sorts of commonplace building materials – from cheap engineered timber (ply and the like) to quite industrial concrete – and turn them, without a hint of trepidation, into a feature wall, a staircase cladding, or knock them up into some cool kitchen units. Speaking as someone who somehow manages to apply a reverse cool touch to the best materials, making the very best-looking raw materials look somehow insipid and disappointing, I'm always a bit sickened with envy.

Using ordinary materials in extraordinary ways is one of the signs of greatness when it comes to individual homes and I would encourage all of us to embrace our (often very well hidden) creative spirit and check out our guide to this technique on page 86. Self-builders and renovators need plenty of vision (particularly in the dark days of a wintry building site) and, as a sure-fire way of adding wow-factor, it could transform your home.

“2015 certainly promises to be an exciting year”

Homebuilding & Renovating is Britain's best-selling and most in-depth magazine for anyone building or renovating their own home. We aim to give you the confidence to take on your own project and provide you with the very best independent expert advice, design ideas for inclusion in your own home and the best examples from others who've already done it



One other key thing lacking in a surprising number of newly created one-off homes is, to put it simply, liveability. It's quite a difficult term to pin down, but what it means for me is that you can really enjoy living in your new home, that it works for you, makes simple daily tasks easier and, Heavens to Murgatroyd, even allows you to have fun. We all know about the simple things like home cinemas, but we've come up with many more brilliant ideas beside that can turn your home into somewhere truly pleasurable to live in. Read more on page 44.

2015 certainly promises to be an exciting year. As profiled on page 11, members of the Homebuilding & Renovating team have been spending quite a bit of time as part of NaCSBA (the National Custom and Self Build Association), campaigning to make life easier for those wanting to build their own homes. And we've had some big wins recently, not least in securing the exemption for self-builders from Section 106 Agreements, and the big news story for 2015: the Right to Build Bill which, we all hope, will become law before summer and will make finding a plot significantly less painful than it is at present. We've been working very hard on your behalf, and will continue to do so throughout the year.

So what does 2015 bring for you? Perhaps a new project? If so, I hope that we can bring you plenty of wisdom, ideas and motivation along the way. Enjoy the issue. ■

In Between Issues

Homebuilding & Renovating experts and staff contribute daily to blogs and more at homebuilding.co.uk; you can also keep in touch with us through social media on Facebook, Pinterest, LinkedIn and Twitter

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“You’d Think with the Housing Crisis that They Would be Delighted with Applications”

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RENOVATE OR DEMOLISH?

I’ve found a 1930s detached property that I am interested in buying, but it hasn’t had any work done on it for 60 years. The floor slopes and there are substantial cracks in the external walls. It needs completely gutting and remodelling, and even the window openings would need modifying to make the most of the views.

The vendor says he commissioned a structural survey which says it is salvageable and could be renovated at a cost of £100,000. I described it to a property developer acquaintance who told me that Building Regulations are such these days that it’d probably make more sense to demolish and start afresh than try to renovate it.

The house is not listed, but it’s quite distinctive and it seems a shame to erase it. However, if it’s being gutted, aren’t you almost starting from scratch anyway? It’s difficult to work out which is the best option.

Susan Reed, Kent



We welcome your opinions and take them into account when producing the magazine. We also want to hear about your project.

Email us at mailbag@homebuilding.co.uk or write to us at Mailbag, HB&R, 2 Sugar Brook Court, Aston Road, Bromsgrove B60 3EX.

Letter of the Month

KEEN TO COMPLETE

My husband and I have recently bought one half of a house that was previously split in two. Our half has its own lease and is registered with the Land Registry as its own legal entity. The problem is that there isn’t a completion certificate for the house split, and so we are now trying to do everything we can to make the changes to our half of house in order to gain this certificate. The changes we need to make are relatively small, including the addition of a few fire doors and a partition wall.

However, once we’ve completed our changes, can we get a completion certificate for our part of the property (which is legally now separate), or does the owner of the other half of the property also need to complete their changes? The issues that need addressing regarding the other half of the property are far more complicated, and we’re worried that they aren’t as motivated to make the changes, when all we want is to put this behind us.

Sumi Ejiri, via email

PLANNER PROBLEMS

Reading Andrew Down’s letter in your December issue regarding the planners, I couldn’t agree more with his views. We submitted a planning application in 2011 and, following a recommendation for resubmission, we were still refused. Thankfully, the planning committee saw sense and approved our application in 2013.

We had emails from the planning department early on as things got worse, and our applications were passed to at least three planning officers. We submitted brick samples twice as on the first occasion they said they were lost, and they also denied receiving letters from us — we would often ask for receipts but were told they did not issue receipts.

Things then got worse when our planning consent was only granted on the understanding we made a lump sum payment as part of the

Section 106 Agreement and Community Infrastructure Levy. We reluctantly paid the excessive sum on completion of the build. What we didn’t realise was that our mortgage lender would then refuse to lend us the money to build the house because of the agreement we had signed. It took over a year to go back to the council and have the wording of the agreement changed, pay their legal costs again and, even then, the council only agreed to make the changes if we agreed to increase the sum to pay under the Section 106 Agreement.

Throughout the whole process the local planning department put obstacles in our way, when you would think with this housing crisis we’re supposedly having that they would be delighted with applications from self-builders?

Alison Wakeling, via email

Digital Mailbag

WHAT YOU’VE SAID ONLINE THIS MONTH

This month on social media we’ve been boggling your minds with **drastic before and after transformations**, such as **John and Wendy Bullen’s dramatic barn conversion** (ABOVE), which



proved to be the catalyst for many dream projects, with Hester McQueen calling it “inspirational” and Georgina Gordon saying: “**This house was the inspiration for our project** (which is equally as ambitious/crazy).”

Linda Davies-Came also commented on Facebook, saying: “I’ve always wanted to do something like this,” while Emma Sword said she’d love to do a similar project, “**if there was enough money in the bank to cover it.**”

To join the discussions across our social media communities, or if you want to let us know how your project is going, visit homebuilding.co.uk/social-media.



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UPFRONT

News

Section 106 Exemption Confirmed for Self-builders

People building their own homes will no longer have to pay potentially £10,000s in local fees to get their project started. Jason Orme reports

People building their own homes will now be exempt from Section 106 Agreement payments to local authorities, the Communities Secretary Eric Pickles announced. The exemption, originally trialled back in February, will come into force immediately and could affect hundreds of self-builders currently going through the planning process.

Of the announcement, Eric Pickles said: “This will also be a massive boost to the self-build and custom build sector. Overnight, in many parts of England, it will be cheaper to build an extension, a family annex or just build your own home.”

Section 106 Agreements are designed to provide financial benefits for the local community from the granting of planning permission and have traditionally been used to extract incentives from developers. These may take the form of new playgrounds, crossings and even schools depending on the size of the development. In recent years, many one-off

self-builders have found that local authorities are demanding a payment under Section 106 before granting planning approval — often in the £1,000s. In one case, a self-builder was charged £140,000 (in Dorset) to build their home.

“This is a massive boost for self-build and custom build in this country,” says Michael Holmes, Content Director of *Homebuilding & Renovat-*

ing and Chair of NaCSBA (the National Custom and Self Build Association) which campaigned for the exemption. “To effectively tax people wishing simply to provide a home for their family with none of the profit motive enjoyed by developers was always, in our opinion, a misuse of Section 106s. We can expect to see many more self-builds start as a result of this announcement.”

The exemption for self-builders (and indeed anyone building less than 10 units up to a maximum floorspace of 1,000m² — the unit threshold can be reduced to five in special designated areas) will come into force immediately.

The call to exempt self-builders from Section 106 Agreements was campaigned for jointly by NaCSBA and *Homebuilding & Renovating*. ▶

SECTION 106 EXEMPTION FAQs

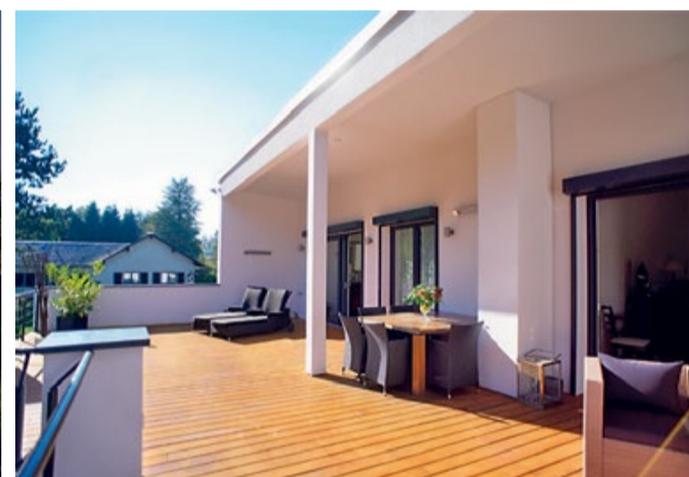
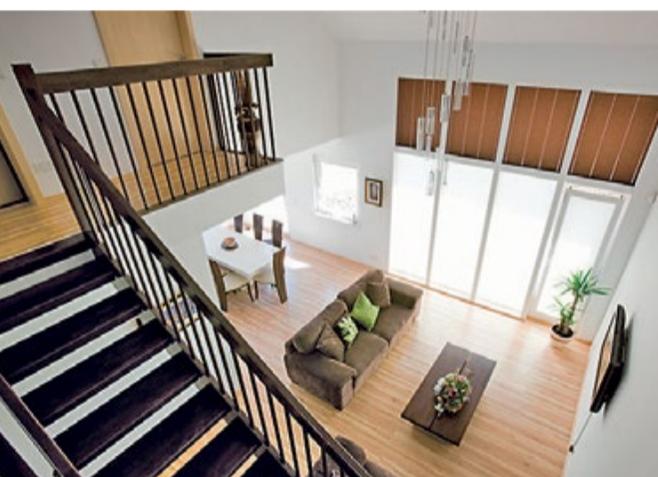
with our Planning Expert and NaCSBA Technical Advisor Sally Tagg

Where does it apply? Planning is devolved and this exemption only applies to England.

What if I have paid my local authority already — can I claim it back? If you have paid a contribution and are building a scheme then you would be unlikely to claim costs back as the guidance only came into force on the 28 November 2014.

What if I have agreed to pay a Section 106 Agreement but not yet paid? Planning obligations can be renegotiated at any point. If permission has been granted and you have not yet signed your legal agreement then you are able to renegotiate and this is something that the local planning authority (LPA) should facilitate. If negotiations should be unsuccessful then another application would be required.

Do I need to prove I am a self-builder and if so, how? There is no requirement to provide proof of being a self-builder; the requirements are specifically related to the overall housing numbers and the floorspace threshold.



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Eco

Renewables “Still Too Expensive”

Replacing fossil-fuel boilers with greener alternatives is proving a difficult sell, reports Lindsey Davis

Cost is the main barrier to the wider take up of renewables, according to research carried out by renewable solutions provider Daikin UK. The survey, which provides a useful insight into the public's awareness and experience of renewable technologies, states that 61% of people said that they had heard of at least one of the following systems: air-to-water heat pumps, ground-source heat pumps, solar thermal, solar PV (photovoltaic) or hybrid heating systems. However, just 17% of those surveyed had any sort of interaction with a renewable technology, and just 4% had one installed at home.

The key reason cited for the lack of uptake of renewables was consumers being put off by initial costs. Nearly half (46%) of those included in the survey stated that they had considered a renewable system, but not gone ahead because of costs.

However, 45% of people saying the capital cost is too high were also not aware of the domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).

Nancy Jonsson, Daikin UK's heating and renewables product manager, comments: “This research paints a very interesting picture of current attitudes towards renewable technologies amongst UK homeowners. Some of the findings are extremely encouraging, demonstrating a healthy level of awareness of the technologies.

“However, with capital cost the most common barrier to adoption cited, and return of investment a concern, it is very concerning to see a general lack of awareness of the domestic RHI.”



What Is It?

According to the survey, almost four out of 10 people hadn't even heard of renewable technologies

Perhaps it is not surprising that awareness of the RHI is highest amongst people living in off-gas properties whose circumstances lead them to seek cheaper heating systems than those fuelled by electricity, oil or LPG. While 44% of off-gas homeowners were aware of the scheme, only 32% of on-gas people were.

ZERO-CARBON EXEMPTION PROPOSED

The Government has announced that it will be reviewing whether small sites – of 10 units or fewer – will be forced to build to the zero-carbon standard. The zero-carbon regulations will be enforced from 2016 and will require new homes to be built to a higher level of energy efficiency than they are today. Worries about the cost implications of this for smaller developments have led the Government to consider an exemption.

The UK Green Building Council's chief executive, Paul King, expressed disappointment in the Government's plan to consider exemption, which could “potentially condemn households to higher energy costs for decades to come”. Self-builders, of course, traditionally build homes to green standards well in excess of the commercial market.

Eco

Green Schemes Update

Keeping up with the various Government eco incentive schemes is not easy, to put it mildly. Luckily for you...

GREEN DEAL HOME IMPROVEMENT FUND RELAUNCHES

After the original scheme ran out of funds back in July, some six weeks after launching, another £30m has been pumped into a second phase which started on 10 December 2014. Offering up to £4,000 for solid wall insulation (up to 67% of installed cost) and another £1,000 from a list of other measures (including other insulation types, heat recovery etc.), it requires a Green Deal Assessment or EPC and a quote for the work advised. Get in quick.

● decc.gov.uk

BIOMASS RHI TARIFF REDUCED

Biomass is the soaraway success story of the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme which offers tariff payments for heat produced by certain renewable technologies. As a result, the tariff payment has been reduced from 12.2p/kWh to 10.98p/kWh for applications from January 2015.

● gov.uk/domestic-renewable-heat-incentive



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Eco

Hybrid Boilers Become a Reality

The launch of a new combined heat and power (CHP) unit could potentially change the way we efficiently heat our homes, reports **Lindsey Davis**

Back in the early 2000s *Homebuilding & Renovating* first began to run reports on a new generation of boilers that produced electricity as a by-product of heat and could therefore, in theory at least, power the lights as well as the radiators. It all sounded too good to be true and, for a disappointingly long time, it was. The first model was called the WhisperGen and somewhat appropriately it hasn't been heard of in quite a while despite occasional promise of its arrival.

Well, the good news for those of us interested in this eminently sensible idea (and no doubt attracted by the Feed-in Tariff that such a boiler would receive) is that the combined heat and power (CHP) unit is back on the agenda. The Baxi Ecogen, which costs around £5-7,000 installed, launched in 2010 and enjoyed first-to-market advantage, producing 1kW of electrical output while the boiler worked at maximum capacity.

A new launch in January 2015 aims to make the intriguing world of CHP units available to the mainstream population (on gas or LPG) who, by and large, are unwilling to invest large extra capital sums with marginal ongoing benefit in running costs. The Flow boiler, from Merseyside-based Flow Energy, costs around £1,800 – about the same price as a top-end gas condensing



Affordable CHP

The Flow boiler produces electricity as well as heat and costs £1,800

boiler – and, according to Flow, has the potential to generate up to 40% of a home's annual electricity requirement. This saving of around £200 is boosted by an estimated £300 benefit through the Feed-in Tariff payments.

Tony Stiff, Flow's CEO, said: "After 10 years of development and 60 million pounds worth of investment we are thrilled to see this product come off the production line. We aim to install 20,000 boilers in our first year, and are confident that Flow Energy will become a household name in the very near future."

● flowenergy.uk.com



News

HB&R Working for Self-build

The recent Right to Build Summit at the Houses of Parliament – designed to inform industry and MPs of the progress and likely outcomes of the Right to Build legislation currently passing through – featured a strong *Homebuilding & Renovating* contingent. The event, chaired by Content Director Michael Holmes and co-organised by Editor Jason Orme, featured contributions by Planning Expert Sally Tagg and an impassioned speech on the benefits of wider adoption of self-build by our contributor, broadcaster and architectural designer Charlie Luxton. ■



Testifyin'

Charlie Luxton gives an impassioned vision for how self-build might transform the UK building industry at November's Right to Build Summit at the Houses of Parliament

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Ideas for January

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Redring's Xpressions Shower Range

The new electric Xpressions shower range from Redring – which includes the Xpressions, Xpressions Plus and Xpressions Premier – offers simple fittings thanks to multiple water and electrical entry points. The models are available in a range of power options up to 9.5kW, as well as a choice between three and six spray patterns. They are also easy to operate, with a rotary temperature and flow control, and a push start/stop button providing a 'set and forget' solution. POA.

● Redring: 0844 372 7750



WallArt's 3D Tiles

The new 3D wall tiles from WallArt – made from bagasse, the fibrous residue of sugarcane – come in 20 eye-catching designs (shown above in Ellipses) and are 100 per cent degradable, yet strong enough to handle the general knocks that life will throw at them. The tiles can also be painted or lit up with LEDs. All tile designs cost £78 for a pack of 12.

● WallArt: mywallart.co.uk



British Gypsum's Lifestyle Wall

The new Lifestyle Wall from British Gypsum uses innovative building board technology, which allows homeowners to screw shelves, curtain poles and even TVs straight into the wall without the need for drills or specialist fixings. It is also designed to be stronger and more durable than standard plasterboard. POA. ● British Gypsum: british-gypsum.com



The Astral Oro Range from Magnet

Set to start the new year with a dash of colour, the new Astral Oro is the latest range from kitchen supplier Magnet, which has blended a contemporary finish with retro styling to create a unique look and feel that lends itself perfectly to the modern home. The zesty and distinctive pale yellow doors and drawer fronts provide a perfect accent colour, and can be combined with any Astral kitchen for a crisp, clean look. Made from durable acrylic, in a high-gloss finish, Astral Oro has a contemporary feel that is designed to last, and can also be specified in a handleless design. POA.

● Magnet: magnet.co.uk



Extra-Wide Slat Shutters from Shutterly Fabulous

Combining function with form, the new extra-wide slat size from Shutterly Fabulous makes the perfect contemporary addition to any home. Currently the only shutter company in the UK to offer this extra-wide slat, this product is suited to larger rooms, particularly on floor-to-ceiling windows or doors. All shutters can be measured and fitted to any window or door type, making them ideal for even the most awkward of shapes. Prices start at £290/m² for standard colours and custom finishes are priced at £320/m² (including home consultation and installation). ● Shutterly Fabulous: 0800 012 6615



The Geo Basin from William Garvey

Combining an oriental aesthetic with a contemporary silhouette, this wall-mounted Geo basin from William Garvey is perfect for creating a spa-style bathroom, and thanks to the teak marine polish finish, is also easy to clean. The basin measures 500x400x150mm and is priced at £760 excl VAT. ● *William Garvey: 01404 841430*



Rust-Oleum Anti-Slip Spray

Rust-Oleum's quick-drying Anti-Slip spray paint creates a clear, aggregated finish that creates grip on even the most polished surfaces, making it ideal for use on garden paths, front steps, decking, tiles and around the home. Suitable for indoor and outdoor use, Rust-Oleum Anti-Slip spray paint is easy to use, and is the quick answer to helping prevent slips around the home. The 400ml can costs £9.99. ● *Rust-Oleum: rustoleumspraypaint.com*



ESSE's G500 Vista Gas Stove

The new flued G500 Vista gas stove from ESSE features a realistic 3D flame and log effect, and boasts 72.2 per cent efficiency. As one of ESSE's flagship gas appliances, the G500 Vista could easily be mistaken for a real wood-fuelled stove – but doesn't have the maintenance – and comes with an option of a digital remote control or manual as standard. POA. ● *ESSE: 01282 813235*

Britannia and Cornishware's Collaboration for Range Cookers

Britannia has teamed up with the brand Cornishware, which has been creating blue and white striped crockery since 1926, to unveil its Cornishware range cooker as part of the launch of its latest Colourange service. The service provides a choice of Britannia range cookers as blank canvases, and the option to select any colour to be matched. POA.

● *Britannia: 0844 463 9705*



Chamonix Parquet Tiles from The Baked Tile Company

Providing the beauty of distressed wood without the maintenance, the Chamonix parquet tiles from The Baked Tile Company add warmth to a space and are available in beige, white and grey. The tiles can be used both inside and outdoors as well as on walls and floors. Made from porcelain, they benefit from an easy-clean finish and measure 60x60cm, costing from £18.20 per tile. ● *The Baked Tile Company: bakedtiles.co.uk*



Manhattan Showers' Single Panel Swiftseal Bathscreen

Manhattan Showers' new Single Panel Swiftseal bathscreen is manufactured from 6mm toughened glass. The patented arm easily folds down and clips in place, creating a water-tight seal when showering, and neatly folds away when not in use. The panel is easy to clean and comes with a lifetime guarantee. It measures 1,570x870mm and costs from £249. ● *Manhattan Showers: 01282 605000*



Kinross Arabascato Basins from Catchpole & Rye

The Kinross Basin – originally commissioned for Kinross House in Scotland – featuring Arabascato marble, sits on an intricate frame that can be specified as either chrome-plated, silver nickel or polished brass. The beautifully crafted oval basin from Catchpole & Rye measures 800x900x700mm and is priced from £3,950. ● *Catchpole & Rye: 020 7351 0940*

PROJECT PORTFOLIO

Take Inspiration from the Best New Individual Homes



Timber Triumph

In order to break up the white rendered façade, battens of iroko were introduced to add warmth and texture. The timber also sails across the many large shards of glass, wrapping around the property to offer privacy to the top floor windows, as well as the front elevations. The timber will fade to grey overtime



CALIFORNIA DREAMING

An awe-inspiring new build in Oxfordshire, built on a narrow green belt plot, takes its cue from West Coast-style pads to become the ultimate contemporary riverside home

NEW BUILD | OXFORDSHIRE | SIZE: 395m² | COMPLETED: 2013
ARCHITECT: SELENCKY PARSONS (07775 863854; selenckyparsons.com)

It goes without saying that if you're going to do something, then do it well. And so when architectural practice Selencky Parsons was approached to design a contemporary home to replace a 1970s bungalow on a river valley site in Oxfordshire, there was no question that the results were going to be extraordinary.

"The clients approached us just before they bought the plot, so we were on board right from the very beginning," begins Sam Selencky, the project's architect. "The site was within green belt land and so, although planning wasn't a given, the presence of the existing bungalow gave the owners the confidence to go ahead and buy

it. They knew they wanted to build a contemporary, sustainable house, so we took them through a series of images and ideas based on things they liked, and the design went from there."

With the local planning authority buying into the concept of the sustainable new house, the planning process went by without a hitch. "Because the previous '70s bungalow also had a pitched roof, we were able to argue that while some of the elements of the new home would be higher, other parts would be lower than what was previously on site and so wouldn't impact on the green belt," explains Sam. "We submitted planning in two

Inside Out

Large full-height sliding glass doors allow the back of the house to open out onto the rear amenity space, while a large canopy provides shelter for the outdoor dining and seating area





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stages, even though we designed the house as a whole. The first application was for the house above ground, and then we went back and made a second application for the basement. There are a couple of new-build properties with white render and a few '70s bungalows in the surrounding area; it's a bit of a mishmash, so there wasn't really a set vernacular guideline we had to abide by."

As the plot was narrow and located in green belt land, Sam was limited in terms of volume, and so introducing a flat roof offered a solution to maximise on the floor area without impeding on the horizontal, river valley site — in fact, the result actually complements it. The basement then worked well to create the additional living space the clients required, and also presented the opportunity for an interesting entrance — a bridge over a lightwell (which provides light to the rooms below ground, along with a water feature, SHOWN ABOVE) leads towards the main entrance and succeeds in referencing the river, located at the end of the garden, as well as creating a sense of arrival to the property. Water continues to carry through the house, from the water feature at the front to the swimming pool and linear water feature found at the rear.

"The clients liked the idea of something sharp and modern, but we felt that this would need to include some

Making an Entrance

The dramatic entrance to this new home takes its cue from the River Thames at the end of the garden, with a bridge over a lightwell (and a waterfall complete with weir) providing the main access.

The use of timber battens screening the front façade also gives the appearance that white rendered planes are floating, as well as offering privacy

warmth and so the use of white render is counterpointed by the richly toned iroko timber battens, which give texture and depth to the elevation and also sail across the window," says Sam of the exterior. "The untreated iroko — traditionally used in boat-building — references the river and has the effect of making the white planes float." The timber will naturally silver as the building ages, and this is reinforced through the reflections from the entrance water feature and swimming pool on the white soffits of the canopy.

Thanks to the use of aluminium-framed glazing and flush-threshold sliding doors, which allow the rear to open up and flow out into the garden, there is an open feel to the house; this continues with the removal of corridors. Being limited on volume, the internal area needed to work as hard as possible and so no space has been wasted. When you enter the double-height hallway, it's clear that the house is largely open plan, with just a glass enclosure dividing the kitchen diner.

Instead of corridors there's a series of touchstones throughout the building. "Due to its open nature, it was important to define zones around the house, and we have done this in two ways: the first is with the floor finishes, with limestone and timber inlays used alongside each other in the different circulation spaces, ▶



to separate the living areas,” explains Sam. “The second way we introduced zones in the house was through varying ceiling heights. The kitchen diner is a key example: while it may look like one space, the kitchen area features the limestone floor and a lower ceiling height, while the dining area has a raised ceiling height with the timber inlay floor finish — this continues outside past the threshold in order to zone the outdoor dining area under the canopy, blurring the boundaries between inside and out.”

During the build, while the steel frame construction and above-ground works went smoothly, the building of the basement wasn’t hugely straightforward due to the site’s high water table. Pumps were needed to run continuously in order to drain water away until the foundations were in. Waterproof concrete was also used for the basement construction, with a cavity drain in place for extra protection from water ingress. Fortunately, while the river is at the end of the garden, the sloping nature of the site means the house is not within a floodplain and is above the 100-year flood zone.

In order to meet the client’s brief for an energy-efficient home, the house is built to Code for Sustain-

Contemporary Living

Bold, crisp lines work to great effect on this modern home, while the open plan interiors successfully use clever detailing to zone areas, such as the varied ceiling heights, which define circulation spaces (as ABOVE RIGHT in the living room), as well as timber inlays within the limestone flooring, which achieve the same result (ABOVE RIGHT and LEFT)

able Homes (CSH) Level 4+. “We didn’t want it to be defined as ‘eco,’” says Sam. “It was important that the home didn’t become a slave to its sustainable nature, but is instead noted more for its quality architectural design. The CSH is almost like a tick-box exercise, and we looked at the different levels and we knew we wanted to do better than Level 4, but in our own way. There’s plenty of insulation in the walls and floor – well above what Building Regulations require – and we’ve also installed a biomass boiler, mechanical ventilation heat recovery system, photovoltaic panels on the garage roof, and sedum on the roof of the house — it’s a mix of different components nestled within the architecture without causing any distraction.”

The house took a year to build and finishing touches are still taking place, with the water feature to the front only recently completed, and landscaping works ongoing.

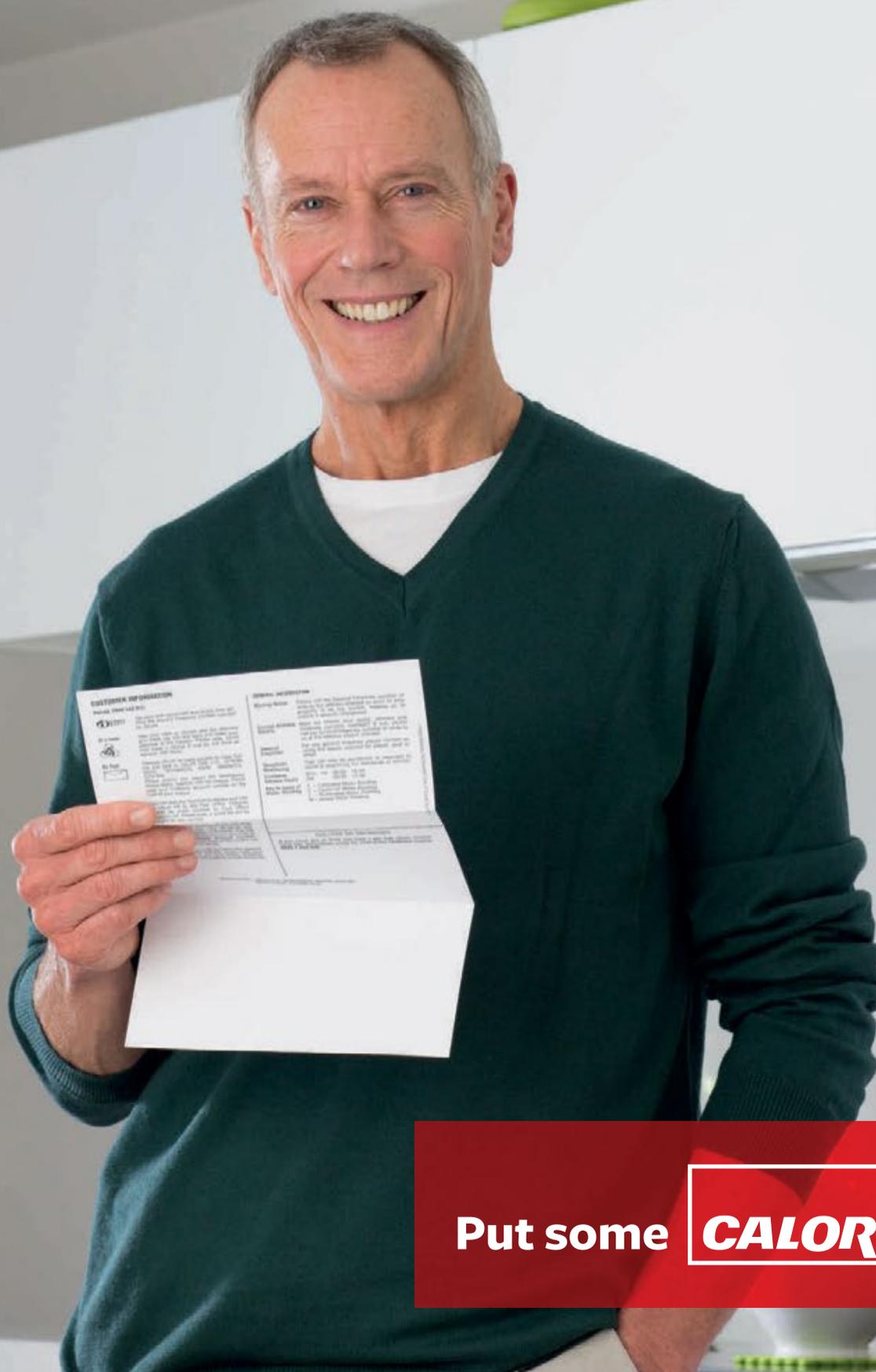
“The success of any house is really down to the inhabitants’ reactions to it, and our clients were overwhelmed with the result. They love it,” concludes Sam. “They have two teenage boys and so the basement works really well as a hideout for them, and it is really a great space to live in, with the design holding true throughout.” ■

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“These Aren’t Just Any Old Carpenters”

Following the impressively swift erection of the oak frame structure, the pace of work on site slows down a little too much for self-builder **Darren Findlow’s** liking



DARREN FINDLOW

Darren Findlow and his partner Anthony are first-time self-builders. They are building an energy-efficient oak frame house on a woodland plot in Cheshire.

As promised, at 8am on a lovely sunny Monday morning, our oak frame arrived on the back of a lorry — looking like a huge Jenga puzzle. It was swiftly and methodically unloaded and this step seemed to have been calculated so that the pieces were in the right place for when they were needed.

Work got underway and it wasn’t long before the first piece of

the jigsaw was carefully manoeuvred into place. All the while, drawings were being checked and the crane was prepped for the next piece.

One thing that stood out from the very beginning was the air of calm that the team from Carpenter Oak possessed. There was no running around the site, throwing things, puzzled faces or head scratching. They were straight on with the job.

They also made their own lunch on site and a veritable feast it was too with camembert and apple and pear chutney! When it was time for a brew, out came the cafetière and fresh coffee. These aren’t just any old carpenters — these are Carpenter Oak carpenters!



With the frame up, the last couple of weeks have since seen the SIPs (structural insulated panels) installed, extra insulation added, battening begun and the oak frame sandblasted. Oh, and we also planted 1,000 bluebell bulbs in the woods and sowed 20,000 bluebell seeds.

What we should have perhaps been told is that the sandblasting should have taken place before the insulation was put in — as the pressure tore through the insulation when tested. We ended up having to pay a day’s labour for the insulation to be protected from the sandblasting; a cost we hadn’t factored in.

The sandblasting also put a stop to other work on site. The noise alone is reminiscent of a dentist’s drill (only much louder). If that doesn’t get you then the constant cloud of dust and sand certainly will. Indeed, the chap undertaking the work was suited up like a deep-sea diver from yesteryear.

We’re hoping that the floor will be the next thing to go down, as we can then progress the works. The air-source heat pump has been promised for next Monday and the week after that we are hoping to begin the glazing.

After a couple of slow weeks where not much has changed in the appearance of the house, we’re really hoping that we can pick up the pace once again. ■

● Check out the latest with Darren’s project online at homebuilding.co.uk/classof14



CLASS OF 2014

Each month we’ll catch up with one of our four Class of 2014 projects: real self-builds and renovations as they happen. Follow them all, live, online at homebuilding.co.uk/classof14 — don’t forget to send them your questions too! Meanwhile, meet the rest of the Class:



GILL MELLER

River Cottage head chef, Gill Meller, is renovating a summerhouse near Lyme Regis in Dorset. He hopes to turn it into the perfect sustainable home by the sea, with the help of his wife Alice.



JOE SHIMBART

Joe is building an oak frame home on a triangular plot in Hampshire. He plans to incorporate a number of eco-friendly technologies and methods into his build.



ASH THEASBY

Ash Theasby has demolished a dilapidated industrial building in a Cornish Conservation Area. He is replacing it with a traditional cottage-style home.

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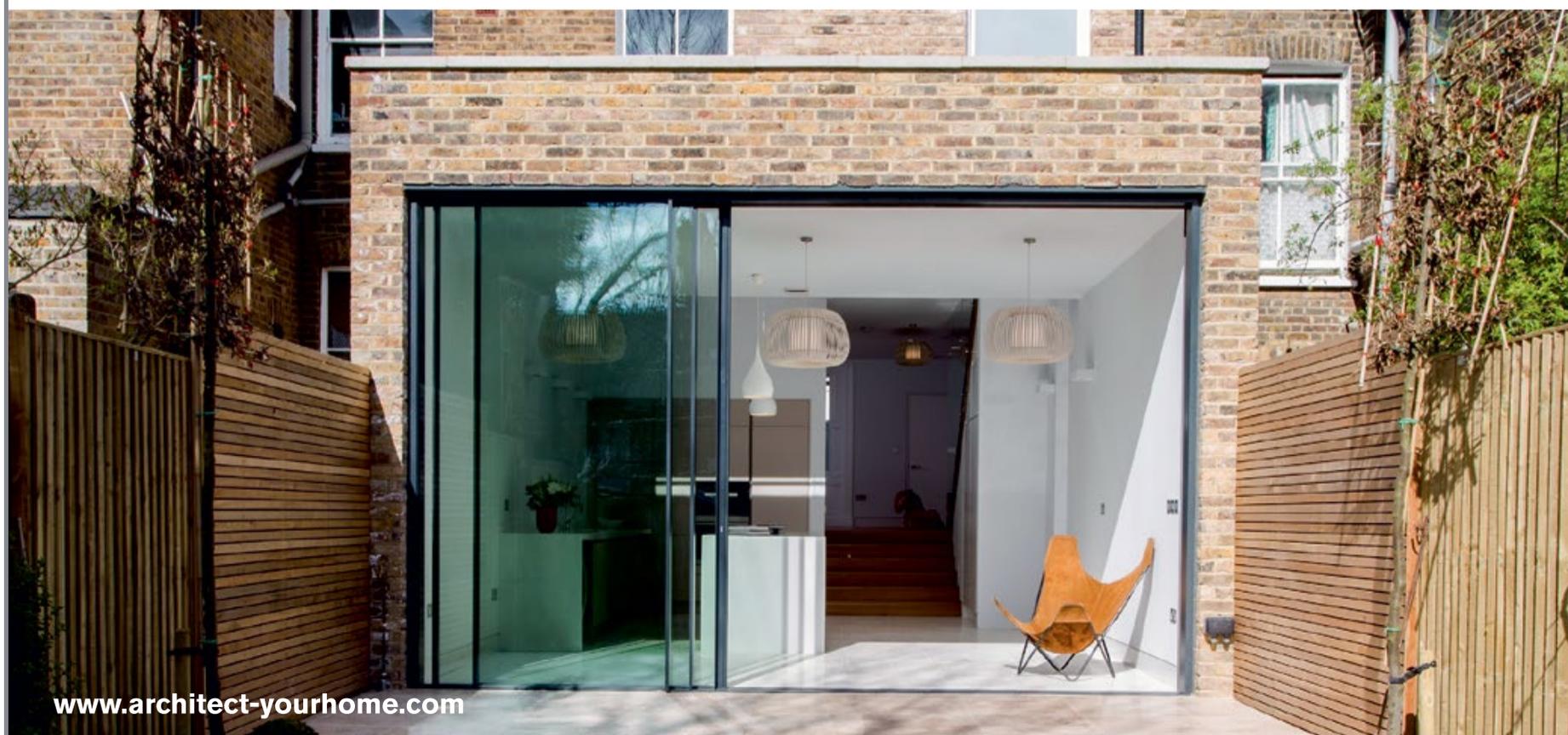
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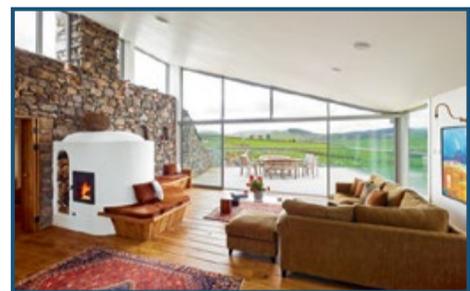


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Modern Masterpiece

A difficult sloping site was no match for the architects at Robert Dye, who have embraced the challenge in creating this outstanding London home, which represents the best in residential design

NEW BUILD | NORTH LONDON | JUL 10 - JAN 13 | SIZE: 500m²
HOUSE COST: UNKNOWN | BUILD COST: £1,710,000 (£3,420/m²) | VALUE: UNKNOWN

WORDS: KAREN DARLOW | PHOTOGRAPHY: C/O ROBERT DYE ARCHITECTS

The Daily Telegraph
**HOMEBUILDING
& RENOVATING**
MAGAZINE
AWARDS 2014

**WINNER
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*A series of boxes
stack and interlock
on top of a solid
concrete base*



Looking up at this solid, striking structure, not afraid to make a big impression on its north-west London neighbourhood, no one would have ever guessed that this latest brainchild from Robert Dye Architects had such humble beginnings — nor that its creation involved what can only be described as an uphill battle.

The appropriately titled ‘Uphill House’, as the architects now call it, started out as a fairly standard commission to extend an average 1970s home. However, due to the hill on site, an extension was out of the question. “The clients were wonderful and very much engaged with the process from the start, but there’s quite a slope here — the original house was out on a limb, perched on the hill and very divorced from the rest of the plot,” explains Jason Coleman, long-time collaborator with Robert Dye and lead architect on the project. “The owners approached Robert in 2005, wanting to extend the house to give them room for their young family and space to entertain friends. Knowing that they wouldn’t be able to extend at the back because of the position of the house and the nature of the site, they asked us to look at a front extension.”

Jason, along with the founder of the award-winning practice, Robert Dye, proposed an initial set of plans back in 2006, which involved excavating back from the road under the house to create a new entrance and forecourt at street level, extending underneath as well as forwards on the upper floors. The planning process

Front Elevation

An innovative solution to this challenging, sloping site was to incorporate the gradient by creating a series of interlocking boxes to make a feature of the changing levels both inside and out. The use of rendered concrete and burnt larch cladding further mark the difference

went by smoothly, with the plans for the front extension approved without a hitch. However, in the intervening period, the clients had begun to wonder whether they could take the build further, and so another set of plans were produced and passed to extend at the back.

With all the changes, it wasn’t long before the client was asking the practice what it would cost to simply demolish and rebuild the whole thing. As it turned out, there was such a minor difference in price between extending the existing house and knocking down and starting again that the answer was obvious. Robert Dye Architects then proposed a new scheme to demolish the house entirely and provide a contemporary new build roughly to the same footprint as the original plans outlined in the 2006 extension proposal.

“The planning consents had established a volume for the house — an envelope that didn’t interfere with the neighbours,” explains Jason. “And so the question was, what could we do with it? How could we be architectural with it? And it got a lot more interesting for us then.” The sloping site was always going to be a challenge here, but it was one the practice was happy to take on, and by mid 2010 the build was at last underway.

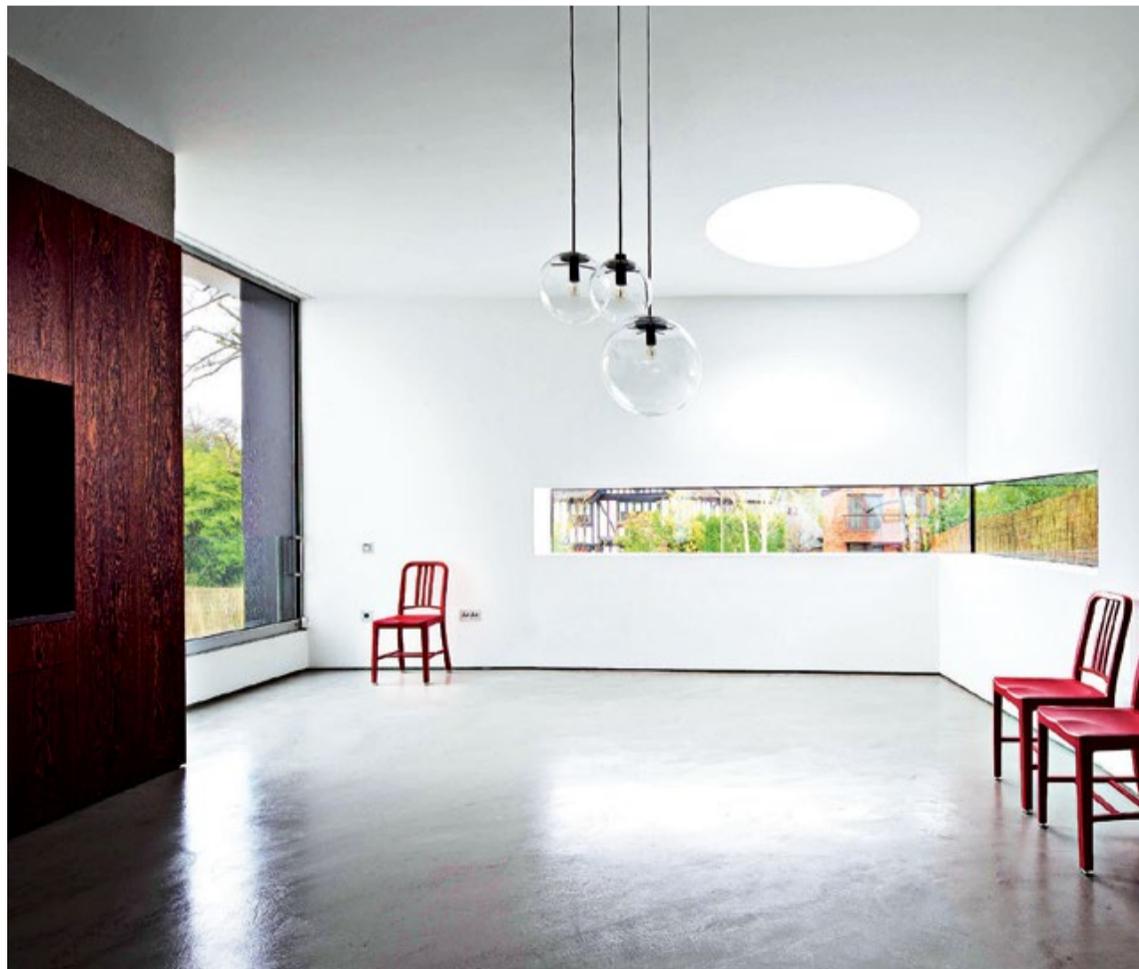
“We tried to engage the hill and move it inside the house,” says Jason of the design concept behind the family home, which consists of a series of boxes that stack and interlock on top of a solid concrete base. The split-level floors allow the house to follow the natural gradient of the site, and this approach has resulted in a footprint ▶



of 500m². At street level, a reflective pool (a favourite drinking and paddling space for the family's dog) leads to the front door, set within the concrete-clad 'stone box', which in turn forms the base of the timber frame master bedroom 'box' clad in burnt larch directly above.

"This is a Japanese technique, and a first for a domestic building at the time of the planning consent," explains Jason of the burnt larch. "The cladding should be good for about 20 years without any treatment." A further burnt larch-clad box housing the dining room can be found to the side of the front elevation, which is cantilevered out above the garage. Conscious of the traffic noise and keen to maintain their privacy, the clients didn't want any of the family spaces to have windows facing the road. The dining room, for example, features a round, domed skylight and a letterbox window (RIGHT), positioned to put the horizon at eye level when you're sitting at the dining table. The only opening window in this space is sideways over the courtyard.

At ground level, and with a huge window and a cill wide enough to sit at the pool's edge, there is an entertaining room, incorporating a games and music area, home cinema space, and a zinc-clad bar inspired by Parisian cafés. Floors in béton ciré (waxed concrete) also make this a practical space for parties. Behind this, a gym with shower room and the control centre for the





Inside Story

The interiors are cool and minimal in the main family living space on the first floor (ABOVE LEFT), which feature béton ciré floors from Lazenby. Oak floorboards have been used to clad the central feature staircase and act as a contrast. At street level (RIGHT) the base of the burnt timber-clad box can just be seen as it overlaps the solid concrete base of the house





The Lowdown

SELECTED COSTS

Preliminaries	£205,000
Demolition	£32,000
Groundwork and below-ground drainage	£151,000
Brick/blockwork	£121,000
Steelwork	£124,000
Roofing	£47,000
Carpentry	£24,000
Power and lighting	£170,500
Plumbing and heating	£147,000
Plaster and dry-lining	£93,000
Joinery	£267,000
Glazing	£102,000
Flooring	£35,000
Stonework and tiling	£41,000
Door and window furniture	£4,000
Decoration	£18,000
Landscaping and external works	£130,000

technology incorporated into the house, are located, along with access to the integral double garage.

The central concrete staircase – positioned under a skylight – is a real highlight in this property, with its treads bridged out from the wall and the sides clad in sawn oak floorboards. The stairs wind their way through the various levels of the house, alongside a central void, which brings light in and traps heat from the top of the house, bringing it back down to be circulated.

Sitting above the ground floor (which is heavily built into the hill at the back), the main hub of the home is the epitome of well-conducted zoned living and features an open plan kitchen/dining/play/family space cleverly designated by furniture and slight changes in level. A central stack offers a place to conceal cabling for the house's technology, which includes smart lighting, security and audio-visual distribution to name but a few. It also provides a place for the flat-screen TV.

Designed by local firm Barget, the ultra-modern kitchen features units by Bontempi and worktops in reconstituted stone, while sliding doors both here and in the play area meet the garden at the back of the house, offering space for outdoor dining — cleverly shaded and weatherproofed thanks to the cantilevered bedroom level above.

Not just delivering on exceptional quality of accommodation, rebuilding allowed for the house to adopt a more ecological approach too, including green roofs, rainwater harvesting and a full mechanical ventilation heat recovery system. Incorporating these sustainable elements along with passive techniques cleverly worked into the design – such as solar shading and construction providing high thermal mass – has allowed the house to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 and a BREEAM EcoHomes rating of ‘Very Good’.

Throughout the project, the homeowners remained involved at every step. “It’s been a very healthy design relationship,” says Jason. “Robert and I really enjoyed the process and I know the clients did. They’ve been almost like very engaged students, wanting to understand why we do things in a certain way and often sending us sketches and ideas — we joked that at the end of it, we’d almost given them a diploma in architecture!”

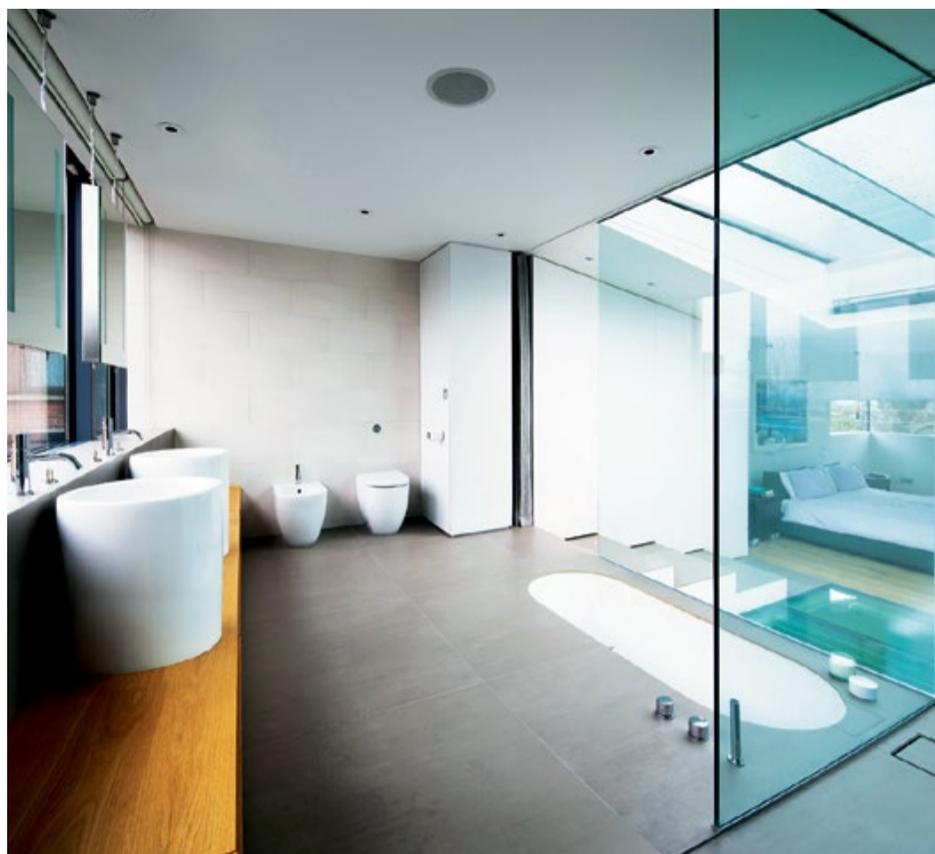
Somehow, from the clients’ sketches and questions regarding interpretations and refinements, this striking house now meets – and towers – over the hill that once threatened its very beginnings. From the dramatically modern architecture to the careful attention to detail, and the almost seamless changes in levels, this magnificent home is a credit to the close collaboration and constant dialogue between client and architect. The house took on the hill, and it won the battle — big time.

THERMAL MASS

“With a construction of this kind, where we built into the hill, we took our lead from the environment and made use of the natural qualities of the materials we were using,” explains lead architect Jason Coleman. “The base level of the house is, in effect, a heavy stone box — it’s a pure concrete construction. It’s not a case of the concrete being on the outside, with insulation inside; all the insulation, around 13cm thick, is on the exterior with plaster directly applied, so the building is essentially a mammoth heat sink.

“In summer the concrete cools the house and in winter it distributes the heat. It’s so effective that during the build, before the heating was on, you could sit in the house in short-sleeve shirts even in the depths of winter. The downstairs stone box section heats and cools more slowly, but in the upstairs bedroom spaces, where you want heat more quickly, the light, insulated timber frame gives a far quicker response time than the solid concrete — so you end up with a heavy and a light zone for heating, mirroring the external finish of the house.

“There are two heat recovery systems,” continues Jason, “one for the public spaces, recirculating the air from the void where it’s hottest and redistributing it at the bottom, and a second on the bedroom floors operating in a similar manner. The slab between the two living floors is probably the most experimental technically. The underfloor heating is within the structural concrete and there are no extra applied finishes, so you get maximum benefits of thermal mass in the building. You don’t need to pump cool air through — it just cools by thermal mass, and while the initial outlay is greater because of the materials, over time you save a lot on heating. ■ ▶



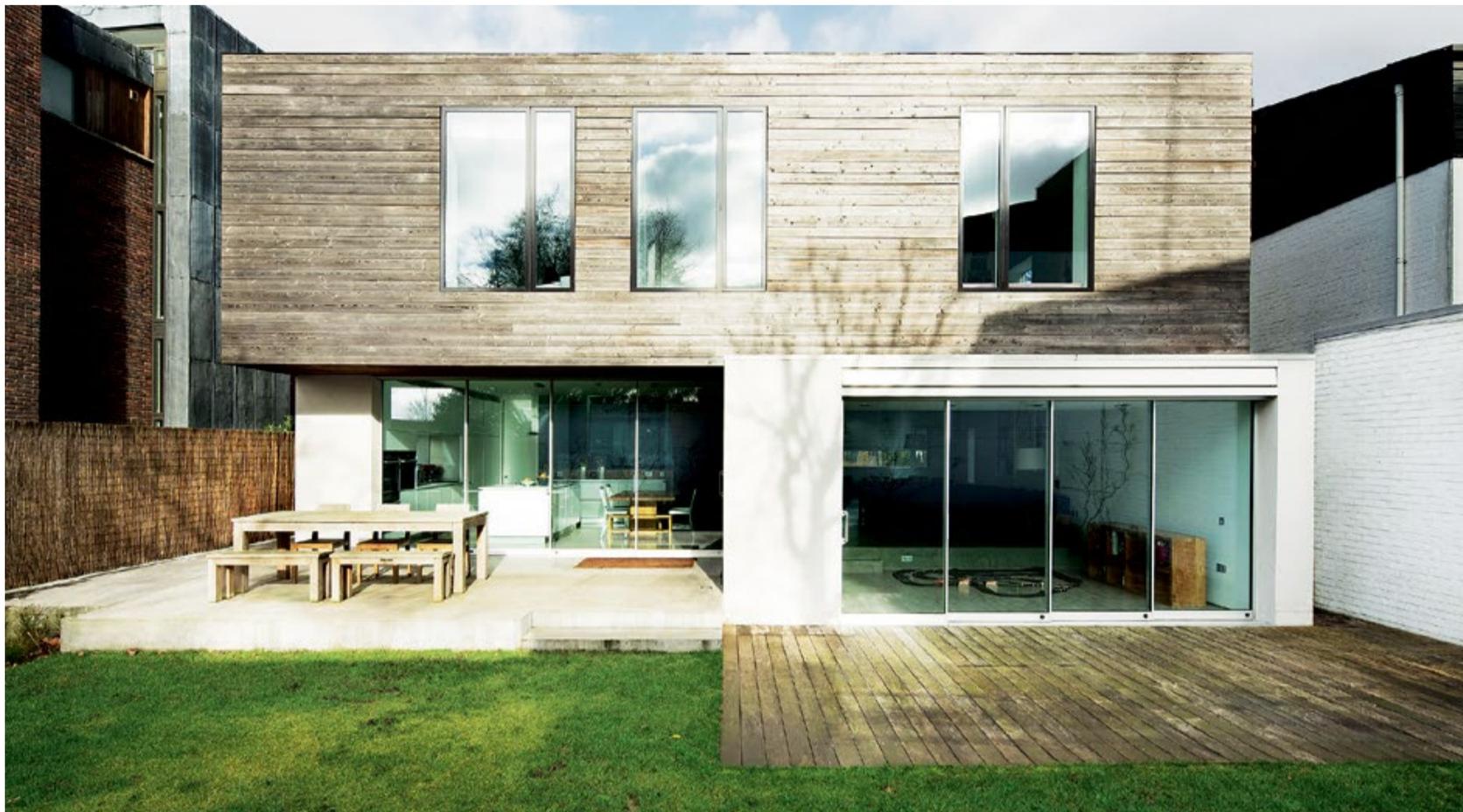
Glazing

A floor-to-ceiling glass wall (FAR LEFT) turns the downstairs public area into the perfect space for entertaining, particularly as a wide ledge offers extra seating right at the edge of the pond;

ABOVE: The master en suite on the top level features further glazing as well as a sunken bath from Tiles & Baths Direct and deep basins from Keuco. Steps connect the two sections of the room (RIGHT), making a feature of the house’s transition between different levels



Not just delivering on exceptional quality of accommodation, rebuilding allowed for the house to adopt an ecological approach too

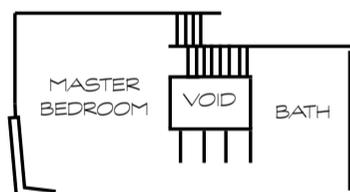


SUPPLIERS

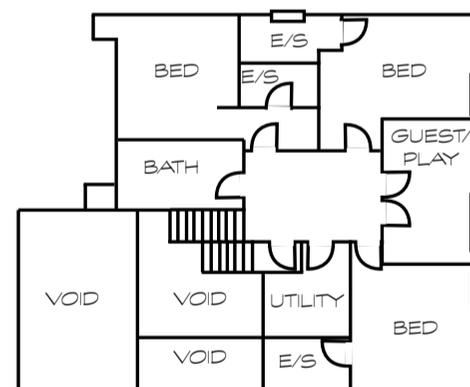
Architect	Robert Dye	..... 020 7267 9388	robertdye.com
Windows	Fineline Aluminium	..... finelinealuminium.co.uk	
	Velfac	..... 01223 897100	
Front door	Square Circle Engineering	..... 07960 611989	
Garage door	Portmann Doors Ltd	..... 01204 596026	
Staircase	Concrete by Lazenby	..... 01935 700306	
Roof covering	Bauder	..... 0845 271 8800	
Builder and timber frame	Ship Shape Construction	.....
		..... 020 7706 5200	
Béton ciré floor	Lazenby	..... 01935 700306	
Timber floors	Parquet Flooring 020 8458 6037	
Porcelain tiles	Porcelain Tiles Ltd 020 8731 6787	
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Basins (master en suite)	Keuco 01442 865220	
Sanitaryware	Tiles & Baths Direct 020 8202 2223	
Rainwater harvesting	Aquatek	..... 01249 467363	
Mechanical ventilation heat recovery (MVHR) system			
	Helios Ventilation	..... 01206 228500	
Home technology design and installation			
	James and Giles	..... 020 7250 1001	

Floorplans

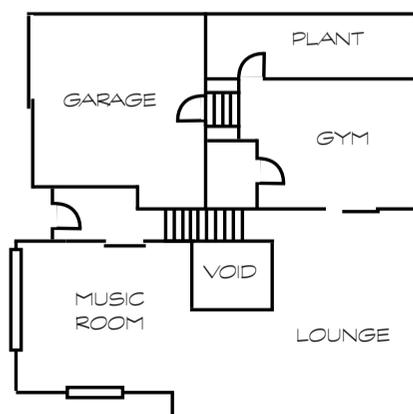
Due to the sloping site, the changes in level work with the contours of the plot to maximise on available space. At street level (the ground floor), a large entertainment area provides space for family fun, with a gym and integral garage leading off. The central staircase provides access to the first floor, which acts as the hub of the home with an open plan kitchen/dining/living area with a sunken playroom and a separate room for a home office – the dining area is placed within the side 'box' seen on the front elevation. Three en suite guest bedrooms are situated on the second floor while the private master bedroom complete with en suite is located on the top floor within the burnt larch-clad 'box'.



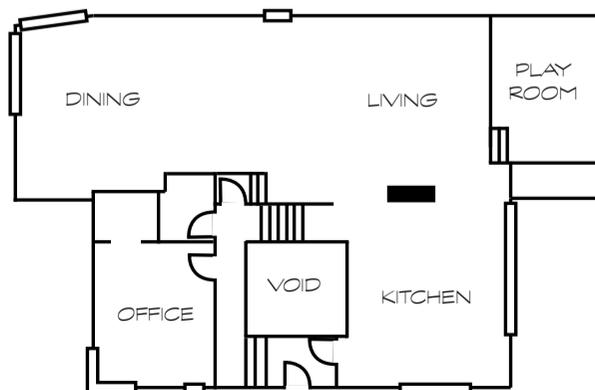
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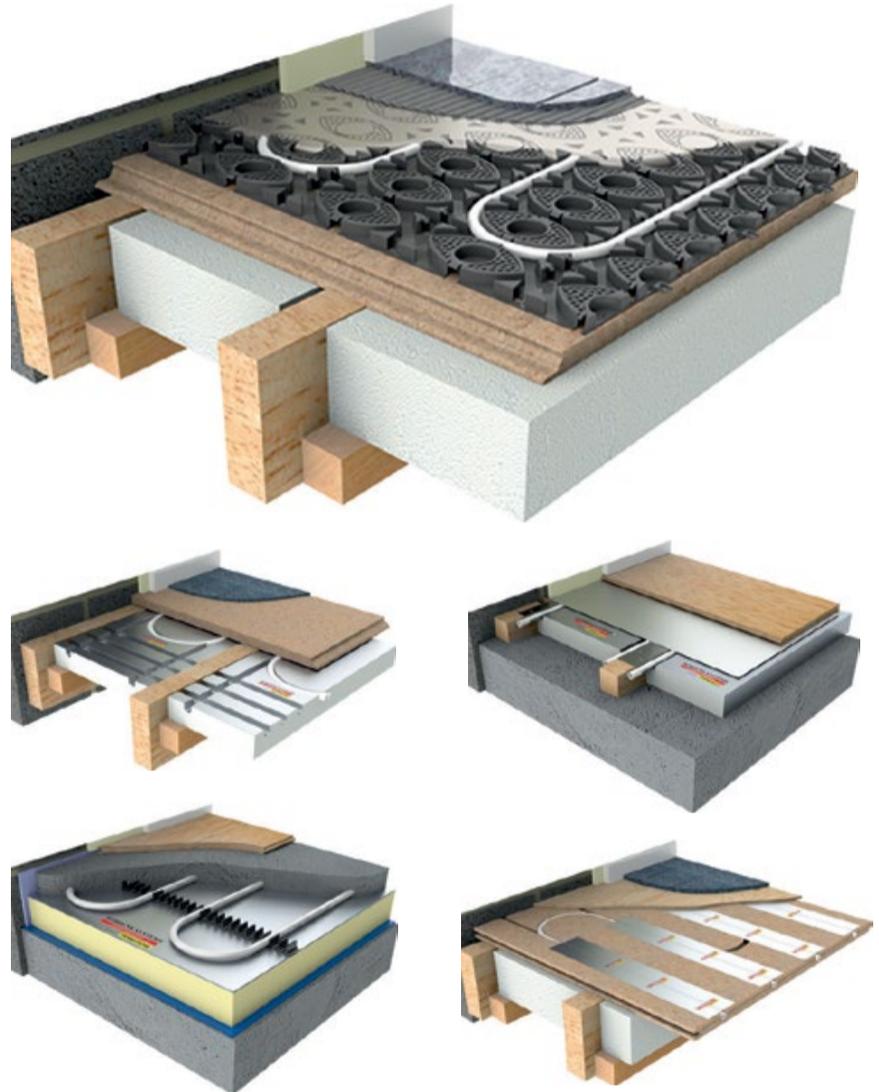
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Home Truths

Charlie Luxton

WRAP IT UP

Charlie Luxton explains why, when looking to create a low-energy, sustainable building, it pays to take the time to research and get the insulation right



Charlie Luxton

Combining television and designing since graduating from the Royal College of Art in 2000, where he specialised in sustainable residential design, Charlie is director of four-person practice Charlie Luxton Design. He has made programmes about architecture for the main broadcasters in the UK and is currently presenting 'Building the Dream' on More4

When people are approached on the subject of insulation, it's rarely met with enthusiasm. It's seen as dull and unsexy, and I am often gently mocked for my nerdish interest in the stuff. But (and it's a big but), insulation is the single most crucial thing in sustainable architecture in the UK. For many self-builders it is the low-carbon technology that beeps and sparkles with flashing dials that gets them excited. Heat pumps, rainwater harvesting and the like often command a disproportionate amount of their interest, design time and budget. However, in our climate, it is predominantly high levels of insulation that make low-energy buildings really work — the other stuff is just the cherry on the cake.

I have seen projects where the solar panels are on the roof, the rainwater harvester is in the ground, and the mechanical ventilation heat recovery system is threaded lovingly through the structure, but the walls are about as insulated as a northern lass on a Saturday night out! The sad fact is



IMAGES: STOCO.UK; SHUTTERSTOCK

that, despite what the homeowners believe, this kind of set-up will never be a truly sustainable home – let alone comfortable – and while you can replace and update all those glitzy technologies in the future, the insulation is there for good.

If you are building a house and want to do it properly, then you need to get interested in insulation. The types available vary greatly and the choice you make will have a huge impact on your home. If you consider that we spend around 90 per cent of our lives inside buildings, then the quality of the internal air becomes a priority. Many types of insulation are made from petrochemicals and exotic gasses, and the long-term impact these have on human health is not clear.

Performance is another area to consider, as the effectiveness of one insulation compared to another varies enormously. High-performance insulation is often higher in price than the simple, lower-performance stuff, but going the cheaper, thicker route can provide the same level of insulation at no extra cost. The level of insulation (U value) quoted for a given construction is a theoretical

measure and is always a best-case scenario. So if you are relying on a thin layer of super-duper foam to achieve your super-warm house, then any gaps or issues with degradation of the insulation will, over time, have a significant effect. Any house built now will, at the current rate of house renewal, stand for over 2,000 years, and there are concerns about the long-term performance of some types of insulation as they slump, settle, degrade, off-gas and get eaten by insects or even vermin.

And what about installation? Rigid insulation in solid sheet form can be hard to work with and needs to be carefully cut and fitted to the gaps in the structure of your house. If this is done badly you can end up with thermal bridging — heat going straight through the open joints. If you look at many houses with a thermal imaging camera, you will see multiple spots with little or no insulation where heat is being lost, leading to higher bills as well as the potential for mould, which will bring with it significant health impacts. Try and use multiple layers of rigid insulation and stagger the joists to reduce the chance of this occurring. In many cases, using flexible or blown insulation is better as it is more likely to fill all the little gaps and spaces — I am increasingly using blown insulation on my projects for its gap-filling properties.

Another issue around installation is keeping it dry during construction. This is critical, as getting it wet will significantly reduce the performance, and even when it dries out the effectiveness will be decreased.

My final point may seem esoteric, but I believe it reaches the very heart of sustainable building: the construction of a house produces a huge amount of CO₂ even before someone has moved in and turned on the lights and heating. This is called embodied energy and is the energy used to manufacture, transport and erect a building. It needs to be considered in any project, as most types of insulation use a lot of chemicals and energy in their manufacture. Wood and cellulose



“It is predominantly high levels of insulation that make low-energy buildings really work”

fibre insulations, however, do not, and using them actually locks in the carbon from which they are made. Burning wood in a stove or boiler puts the carbon recently sequestered from the atmosphere back into the air (bad for global warming), so making it into useful insulation and sticking it in a house for hundreds of years is infinitely more preferable. The result is carbon-positive buildings that actually reduce the CO₂ in the atmosphere as a result of their construction. With this way of thinking, thick walls of wood or cellulose fibre make the most sense in terms of lower bills, healthier homes and a healthier planet.

The world of insulation is very complicated and you need to do your own research, but if you are tackling a building project then you need to engage in this seemingly uninspiring area. Looks can be deceiving. ■

The Importance of Insulation

Keeping homes ‘wrapped up’ with high levels of insulation is key to keeping buildings warm and low on energy, as Charlie suggests. This PassivHaus home (LEFT) for example, by Seymour-Smith Architects, is wrapped in the StoTherm Classic EWI (external wall insulation) system, with Sto-Turbofix adhesive foam used for an airtight finish (sto.co.uk)





Traditional



Contemporary



Replacement



Period

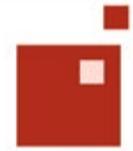
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THE FUN HOUSE

How to Include Leisure and Entertainment in Your Home

After all the effort that goes into a building project, the resulting home had better end up being a place you enjoy living in. Luckily, there are plenty of ways to inject fun. **Daisy Jeffery** lists the top 10



Games Room

Fun and games go hand-in-hand, and there's no greater way of injecting a little fun into your home than including a games room. If you're self-building, you have the opportunity to really go to town here, but adding a dedicated games room is still just as possible if you're renovating an existing property.

The ideal location for this type of room would be off a family area such as a kitchen diner or an informal living space, creating a natural progression of rooms — whereas locating a games room near a home office or library is not a good idea. Loft or basement conversions, or even studio spaces above garages, make perfect places to host games rooms, too.

When planning this room, carpets are best avoided in the event of any spilt drinks, and soundproofing the walls will help minimise noise levels. Then, organise the space according to what you intend to include. Pool tables will be best placed in the centre, and poker tables or arcade games in a corner. Comfy seating should then be arranged where you can best view the goings on, or perhaps in front of a flat screen to play video games.

Nothing says James Bond quite like a hidden door leading to a private room

Secret Doors

Nothing says James Bond quite like a secret hidden door leading to a private room. Incorporating such a door into your design scheme is the perfect way of adding a fun feature that will keep you and your guests entertained for years to come.

If you are planning on including a secret door, you'll need to decide what type of door you're after: do you want a trap door or a door/passageway hidden by a static object, such as a bookcase, staircase, or even a Narnia-style 'faux wardrobe'?

Secondly, think about what room this door will be hiding and how practical this will be. A secret door leading to a hidden playroom, office, bedroom or media room are all sensible choices, but using a trap door to walk down to a kitchen with the complications of carrying (balancing) food up the stairs to the dining table is a recipe for disaster.

Finally, how will the door be operated? Depending on the style of door, this could either be opened manually or electronically operated — as this hatch door leading down to a basement room on a London home demonstrates.





Play Rooms

When planning your family home, it's just as important to dedicate space for a children's playroom as it is to save space for a quiet sanctuary for the adults to retreat to.

The space you have available will obviously have an impact on creating such a room. If you are limited on space, sectioning off an area within an open plan kitchen diner will allow you to keep a close eye on the kids while preparing dinner. Clever storage here will be key, and built-in cupboards and drawers can make for great places to store toys which can then be shut away from view when you're entertaining guests.

Should you have an additional room, planning in a separate playroom will offer the children a dedicated space to have fun without allowing the mess of toys to cause tripping hazards around the rest of the house. Don't be afraid to think outside the box when designing this space: toy boxes, bean bags, homework desks, Scalextric race tracks, TVs and games consoles are also ideas — so too is a climbing wall (LEFT), as Matt White from MATT Architecture opted for when designing his own fun family home.

Planning in a separate playroom will offer the children a dedicated space to have fun without allowing the mess of toys to cause tripping hazards around the house

Room for Wine

Making the top five of any homeowner's wishlist, a dedicated wine room or home bar is a sure-fire way of bringing the party to your pad.

Whether you are a wine connoisseur, or just enjoy the odd tittle, installing a wine cellar – or in the case of this project from Sorrells (sorrells-wineracks.co.uk), a wine room – in your home is a great way of making room for your collection — or starting one. If you're short on space, expert wine storage company Spiral Cellars (spiralcellars.co.uk) can build or retrofit a custom wine cellar accessed via a trap door in the floor, complete with spiral staircase, holding up to 1,870 bottles.

Another popular option is the home bar, which could be as humble as a built-in cupboard housing shelves of spirits, glasses and a wine fridge, or as opulent as a mirrored glass bar in a party room, complete with bar stools, distillers on racks, and your own drinks menu of household favourites — just keep a lock on the door for the kids.



IMAGES: SIMON MAXWELL X 2; NIGEL RIGDEN; JEREMY PHILLIPS



Leisure Facilities

At the higher end of the budget bracket, the indoor swimming pool complex is unquestionably a fun addition for any home. It's certainly a statement feature, and is a great way to enjoy weekends with the children, not to mention the health benefits swimming brings. If you want to go all out, why not add a sauna or steam room for the full spa-like experience in the comfort of your own home.

If you're planning to include a pool in your home, do make sure you check with your local authority from the outset to see whether you will require planning permission or whether it will fall under Permitted Development (if the pool is indoors), and seek specialist advice with regards to room ventilation and how you will heat the pool.

If a swimming pool is out of your price range, then a hot tub or jacuzzi could be the solution. These can be bought at a more reasonable price, and you have the option of built-in or freestanding, with many bathroom suppliers now offering a range of models, too.

If you prefer to enjoy your exercise on dry land, however, a home gym is the perfect way to have fun working out at home. Whether you designate a room in the house for this, or utilise the space above a detached garage or annexe, or even convert the garage, there are plenty of options.

A media room is easy to achieve with simple space planning



Media Room

The media room is fast making its way into many homes. For those who are major movie buffs, a home cinema is the ultimate luxury. Staggered seating is ideal, and consulting a home cinema expert in order to gauge the best positioning of the seating, screen, surround-sound system and projector, etc., and who can also undertake the installation, is the best means of achieving such a room. This can make a cinema room an expensive option, however.

If you're limited on space or budget, a media room is still easy to achieve with simple design and space planning. Orientate plush seating around a large screen, allow for DVD storage, and position surround-sound speakers in your desired format to get the best audio experience. Dimmable lighting will complete the look. ▶

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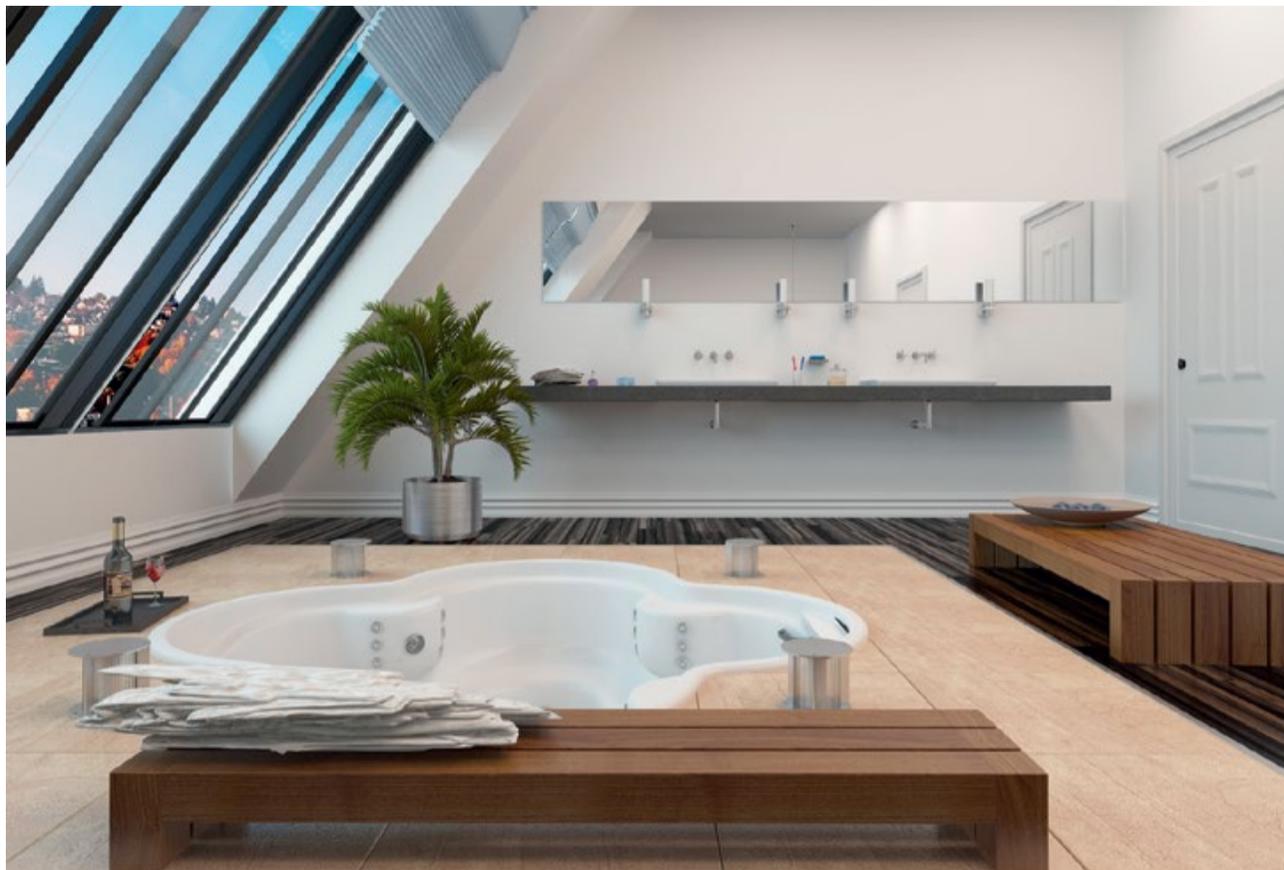


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Spa Spaces

If frequenting the local spa is your way of unwinding from life's day-to-day stresses, you can bring an element of this into your own home — and it won't necessarily break the bank.

True, you could specify sunken baths, a walk-in steam room, sauna and jetted rainfall shower with mood lighting, but creating a spa experience can also just as easily be achieved thanks to freestanding baths, streamlined basins, heated towel rails, large showerheads and a handful of candles — all of which are available from a variety of manufacturers with ranges to suit all budgets and room sizes.



Creating a spa experience can easily be achieved, with ranges to suit all budgets



Moving Around

When it comes to travelling from floor to floor, or even different rooms, your home doesn't have to conform to the boring staircase. More architects are designing in slides as a way of moving around the home, and this example by Des Ewing Architects shows how this unique design idea can work in a family home. Cleverly built behind a wall of kitchen units, the slide is hidden from view and provides easy access to the hub of the home from the first floor. If you prefer stairs over slides, however, opting for a more interesting format such as spiral staircases can be a good option — not to mention make a real focal point.

Don't Forget the Outdoors...

While us Brits may not benefit from good weather year-round, there's nothing to say the great outdoors still can't be enjoyed with the help of large overhangs and verandas — promoting indoor/outdoor living while staying dry no matter the weather.

Fire pits and built-in barbecues are another great way of enhancing your landscaping scheme. Think summer barbecues with friends or winter nights cosying up around the fire roasting marshmallows with the family. And don't forget the seating — hammocks, hanging chairs, outdoor dining tables, and even a treehouse; there's plenty of options to choose from.

One final element to consider when planning your garden is the use of garden 'pods'. If you fancy a home office with a twist or a games room with a view, these pods are a great way of creating rooms outside, and come in particularly handy if you're short on space in the house. ■



light touch

Richard and Gill Harris' renovation of an old farm building has restored its original character while hugely improving its liveability and performance

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WORDS: JASON ORME | PHOTOGRAPHY: NIGEL RIGDEN



Living Room

Originally the hayloft, then converted into three bedrooms in the previous renovation, the new living space features an exposed stone wall on the south-facing side, where there is the greatest potential for net solar gain. Richard and Gill have replaced brickbat patching with original stone recycled from elsewhere in the property, and repointed the wall using lime mortar

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Handmade Kitchen

The oak and elm cupboards were all custom-built by a local firm to Richard and Gill's design in the first floor kitchen diner, with surfaces and tiling in honed granite, riven slate and oolitic limestone



As an example of how to renovate an old property, Richard and Gill Harris' project is textbook. Packed with history, the Grade B listed home, which was originally the service/farm building for a grand rural Highlands estate, is now not just comfortable and warm but has been restored to bring out its original purpose after years – pretty much the whole 20th century – of being prodded and poked and 'improved'.

"The building was originally used as part coach house and coachman's accommodation, part byre and stables, part hayloft and part dairy," explains Richard, an entrepreneurial inventor who, with his designer and artist partner, Gill, came across the property after searching for a rural, characterful retreat that took full advantage of the outstanding natural landscapes in this part of the world (it seems they found it!). "It had been subdivided

Single-Glazed Windows

Richard and Gill restored the original windows and then commissioned insulated wooden shutters, to the same Arts & Crafts-inspired design that they used for the kitchen units, to provide year-round insulation



with blockwork partitions and suspended ceilings to domesticate it in the early part of the 20th century, and fell into dereliction after the estate which it served – owned by one of the Carnegies – was sold following World War II. Indeed, the byre part was used as a toilet block for 20 years by the nearby campsite, and it was only in the late 1970s, when a local builder took it on, that it was saved.”

The builder, it turned out, did a pretty good job in saving much of the structure — taking off the long-suffering harling that had endured a series of patch concrete-based repairs back to the stone (it was probably originally harled). It became a working family home, including a self-contained holiday flat, while the dairy part was itself domesticated.

“The builder saved the property and deserves a lot of credit,” explains Gill. “However, when we came across it, it suffered from a series of issues — mainly design based, in that it felt like a very ordinary collection of small rooms with no real connection to the large spaces of the building it occupied.”

Richard adds: “The other problem was heating, in that it was uninsulated and was partially and ineffectively heated by a system that would have been somewhat cheaper to run if we had fuelled it by burning £10 notes. Our challenge then was to renovate and update the building in a way that restored its original character, was sympathetic to its history and importance, and made it into a low-impact living and working environment for ourselves, our businesses and our pets.”

Because the building is listed and forms part of a larger complex (Richard and Gill effectively have half of the building, with the other half comprising three self-





Steeped in History

Stronvar Farm is the major part of a steading complex of a style typical of the great estates of the rural Highlands. Now Grade B listed, it was originally the service building for nearby Stronvar House — itself the centre of the old Carnegie estate. Stronvar Farm included haylofts, a byre and stables, the dairy, coach house and coachman's accommodation. It was turned into a house in the 1970s



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contained flats), exterior alterations were impossible, so the project became, in essence, a question of reworking the internal spaces and making them as well insulated as possible. In doing so, Richard and Gill have no doubt (and quite rightly so) upset many estate agents by reducing the number of bedrooms in the 307m² property from six poky ones to four generous ones, and totally opening up the house. A long, dark corridor and the three bedrooms that lead off it have become an open plan living hall with a 4.5m ceiling, a walk-through library and an en suite study/bedroom. It feels in many ways like a conversion rather than a renovation, such is the sense of the building's original purpose. The suspended ceiling in this open plan space was removed to uncover the original hayloft, now reused as a mezzanine study and storage space enjoying views over the living hall.

Elsewhere upstairs, a kitchen dining space (featuring lovely rustic bespoke units and a mix of oak and elm surfaces) and the master bedroom take full advantage of those fabulous ceilings. Downstairs is given over to bedroom space and a more informal living/music room.

Of course, the brief for the property was as much about structural and efficiency performance as it was about redesigning the space. Richard, working with an architectural technologist to model the best compromises between insulation, ventilation and visual impact, seems to have taken particular pleasure in researching 'best practice' on this front. The original building had 900mm-thick solid stone walls and the introduction of insulation, which had to be fitted internally as the couple wanted to retain the existing exterior facing, posed a problem. "The issue with installing loads of internal wall insulation is that it brings the dew point (where cold air turns into moisture) further into the wall rather than the outside (whereas external wall insulation makes the whole wall warmer and so dew points are less of a problem), potentially causing condensation. By providing an air gap, then solid insulation with a breathable ▶



Opening Up

Much of the house had been fitted with lowered false ceilings over the years. In the hayloft area, where there were no lower tie beams across the space, Richard and Gill left the whole expanse open to the above high tie beams to create a double-height living room



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Ground Floor

Richard and Gill insulated, installed the wet underfloor heating, screeded it and topped the whole lot with a mixture of oak wide-board flooring and riven slate. The en suite is a wet room



membrane, plasterboard sheeting and a plaster skim, this problem has been alleviated and the walls' U values are in the region of 0.2: remarkable for a house this age with walls so problematic. Elsewhere, the roof and floors have been installed with underfloor heating and the old electric storage-based heating system replaced with a (borehole-based, rather than flat ground arrays) ground-source heat pump." (For more information on the structural energy improvements Richard and Gill made, see the box, RIGHT).

Using a series of specialist subcontractors, the result is to the very highest standard. Curved arrises on the internally plastered walls – which are notoriously difficult to get right – are brilliantly executed and give a soft, characterful finish that ordinary owners would have never thought about. Likewise, the stone wall on the south-facing elevation has been left exposed – “thanks to its thickness, it’s a net contributor in terms of heat over the year,” explains Richard – plus, it’s a simple signifier of the building’s origins.

It would have been so easy to compromise on this project, but Richard and Gill’s secret was that early on ▶

INSULATING THE OLD HOUSE

ROOF

Richard and Gill chose to insulate between the rafters with solid insulation, leaving a ventilated air gap under the sarking. They then added multi-foil insulation above the rafters before sheeting the whole structure. With the installation of a new ventilated roof ridge and concealed ventilators for the air gap, this gave them a delivered U value of about 0.18 for the roof.

FLOORS

The floor of the east wing, above the stables and plant room, has been insulated with 300mm of blown Warmcel insulation.

WALLS

The solid stone walls are around one metre thick. Richard and Gill created an insulated shell inside these walls, providing an air gap, then solid insulation, with a breathable membrane, plasterboard and a skim. Overall U values for the walls as built are 0.21 to 0.23.



they realised that greater renovation was actually not what this building needed. It was a reassessment of the domestication that had gone before, and a stripping back – more of a restoration, really – to the original farm use and then a conversion. By opening it up, letting the spaces breathe and introducing a series of structural efficiency improvements that in many ways could be reversed if necessary, their light-touch project has resulted in the ultimate example of thoughtful renovation.

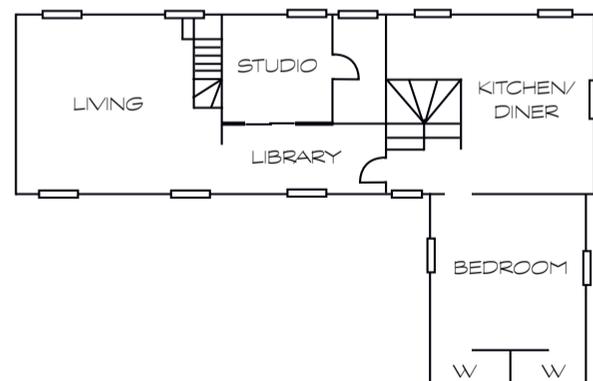
“The whole house is warm, airy and, in our view and that of our visitors, inspirational,” says Richard. “The quality of the house now matches that of its architecture and history — all of it in harmony with the stunningly beautiful surroundings of the National Park. Of course, it cost far more than we ever anticipated, and it took five years of blood, sweat and tears to deliver, but the whole now matches and exceeds the vision we had even before buying the place. To say that we’re very happy with it would be an understatement.” ■



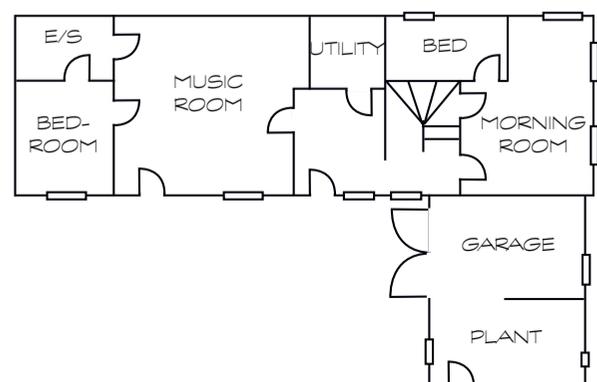
Floorplans

Due to the couple’s light-touch approach, the most-used spaces are now located on the first floor, where a library corridor joins the light-filled living space (with mezzanine level above) with the studio and kitchen diner; the master bedroom is also located on this level. The ground floor comprises two bedrooms, both leading off recreational spaces, and functional rooms such as the garage and utility.

FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



What We’ve Learned

Which element of your new home are you most proud of?

It has to be the lovely sense of light-filled space. Even on dark days during the winter months, the main living spaces are suffused with natural light.



What was the key challenge here?

Getting the layout right. We spent over a year just absorbing the feel of the place and making endless sketches of how we thought it might work!

Any key tips to pass on to people starting out on similar projects?

Keep telling yourself “it’ll soon be over”!

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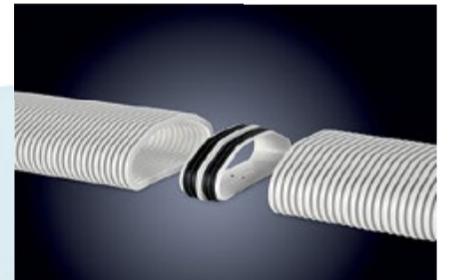
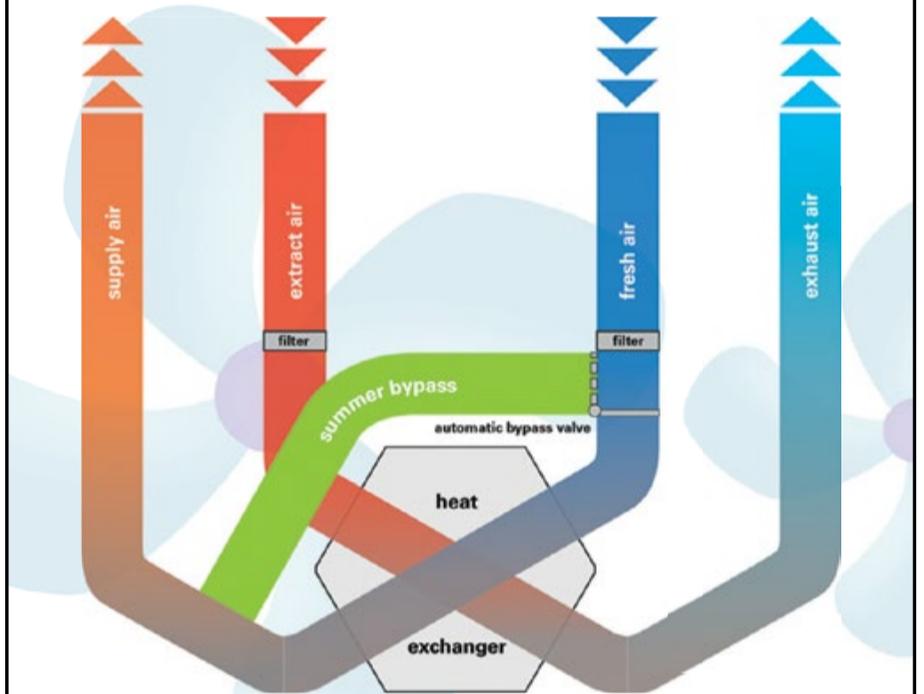
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A Blank Canvas

Installing a new kitchen in an extension provides you with a completely blank canvas, unrestricted by existing pipework, allowing you to specify exactly how you want the new space to work

HOW TO REMODEL A KITCHEN

Replacing, extending or relocating a kitchen can be a complicated business — we tackle the issues involved and offer simple solutions to ensure your project runs smoothly. By **Natasha Brinsmead**

The Kitchen Rip-Out and Replace

WITH SERVICES AND ELECTRICS IN PLACE, THIS CAN BE A STRAIGHTFORWARD PROJECT

For many people, a new kitchen means ripping out the existing kitchen first, whether it is falling to bits, is rather old-fashioned or has a layout that just does not work. In some respects, replacing old with new is fairly straightforward — the pipework and wiring that goes hand-in-hand with kitchens will probably already be in place, for example.

Of course this scenario also has one extra job that the other routes to achieving a kitchen discussed over these pages do not — you have to get rid of what is there before you can begin. You should take care when taking out the old kitchen; ripping it out, damaging walls and potentially pipework and wiring will only mean more time and cost afterwards. You may find that there are some items worth salvaging and if you are on a budget, reusing the existing unit carcasses if they are in a reasonable state of repair could save you money. Most of the ripping-out stage, including removing old units, can be carried out on a DIY basis too.

“Don’t assume you have to stick to the same layout and configuration of units,” adds Graeme Smith, Senior Designer at Second Nature and Metris Kitchens. “There is always

Key Issues

- Water supply pipes, waste and wiring may need to be moved;
- Additional sockets will need to be put in place;
- A new lighting scheme will be necessary;
- Your new kitchen plan will be constrained by existing windows and doors;
- You will have to be without a kitchen sink, cooker and dishwasher for a (hopefully) short period of time.

scope to enhance a layout, be it replacing a table with a multifunctional island or a run of fitted units with a freestanding dresser; this not only opens up the space but gives the impression of a bespoke design that’s very much to your individual taste and reflects your personality. You may also wish to review the key appliances in the kitchen, perhaps opting for a range cooker in



place of separate oven and hob, or a statement fridge. If you are planning to relocate appliances or the sink, ensure that the services will work with the new arrangement.”

Perhaps the most disruptive part of this type of project is that you will be without a kitchen for a period of time. If you have a utility room that offers a sink and additional space in which to locate your fridge and freezer then you can make use of these. You will also be at an advantage if your cooker runs solely on electricity as it can be moved to a temporary location more easily than one that runs on gas.

You should also bear in mind that a rip-out and replace will not simply be a case of replacing like with like. A new layout will likely mean a new lighting scheme too, additional electrical sockets and new flooring. You should not forget that if you plan on having a larger cooker, you will need a higher spec extractor hood — in fact many old kitchens lack adequate means of extraction.

On the plus side, you should have a good idea of where the natural light enters the room, how you use the space and what does and doesn’t work with the current layout — meaning you can get your new design spot on.

A New Layout

ABOVE: Don’t feel you have to stick to the layout that was used previously. This kitchen has been fitted with Second Nature’s Milbourne Shaker range in Stone finish. From £9,000 (sncollection.co.uk);

LEFT: Moving or extending plumbing for a central island should not be an issue when installing a new kitchen. Caple’s Chester Oak and Ivory kitchen here costs around £247 for a 600mm base unit (caple.co.uk)



MAIN IMAGE: DAVE BARBOUR



The Kitchen Extension

THE PERFECT BLANK CANVAS FOR YOUR NEW KITCHEN

One of the main reasons people decide to extend their homes is down to wanting a bigger kitchen — the side return extension or rear single storey extension are favourite ways of gaining this new space.

The beauty of this type of situation is that you get to start from scratch, designing not just a new kitchen but a whole new space.

“If you have the luxury of space to extend, then this really opens up the design possibilities available to you,” says Graeme Smith of Second Nature and Metris Kitchens. “It’s very much about planning the extended space to suit your lifestyle, but also ensure that you futureproof it for changes in your circumstances.

For example, if you are planning a family, then think about curved cabinetry and softening the lines to reduce sharp edges, and consider storage for toys and games.”

Kitchen extensions are not only a great means of gaining additional room but also present the perfect opportunity to enhance your existing spaces. Opening up a middle room to become one large area with the new kitchen, or using your new kitchen as a way of drawing light into otherwise dark spaces, are popular options — but not without issues that will need careful consideration.

Open plan spaces are a good case in point. While they have many good points — allowing you to be part of the action while cooking, keep an eye





THE EXTENSION RULES

The key issues here lie more with the extension than with the new kitchen itself. Once you have found an architect or house designer and like their plans, you should have a good idea of whether the proposed extension falls under Permitted Development, or if you need to apply for planning permission — in which case your architect can submit plans for you. Bear in mind that regardless of whether or not you need planning permission, you will still need to obtain Building Regulations approval. You can choose between a local authority inspector or private approved one which may be quicker.

If you live in a terraced or semi-detached property, you may also require approval under the Party Wall Act. Not only does this refer to work that may affect a wall that stands on either side of a boundary of land belonging to two or more owners, but also to works with foundations within certain distances of said walls.

on the children and add to a general feeling of space and continuity — there are also drawbacks. Cooking smells need to be addressed through efficient extraction, and a separate utility is a must if your mealtimes are not to be ruined by the noise of the washing machine resonating throughout the room. Kitchen clutter needs somewhere to hide too.

Choose an extractor designed to minimise noise as well as smells — Siemens make one that uses magnets rather than screws to reduce vibration. On the subject of noisy appliances, choosing a boiling water tap over a kettle reduces noise, as do integrated dishwashers.

Aim for a breakfast bar with a raised section to act as a visual barrier between your kitchen and other spaces in this layout too — it will provide somewhere to conceal all the mess that goes hand-in-hand with cooking and preparing food. ▶



IMAGE: SHUTETRSTOCK

Key Issues

- Unless your extension falls within Permitted Development, you will need to submit plans and wait for approval before you can begin work;
- Open plan spaces need careful planning if they are to work well;
- A structural engineer will probably be required if you are opening up spaces and removing load-bearing walls.



Starting From Scratch

ABOVE: The Verso kitchen in black and white Zingana from Rational costs from £8,000 (rational.de); LEFT: The Suffolk kitchen, hand painted, from Kit Stone costs from £10,000 (kitstone.co.uk)



Built For Purpose

ABOVE: Building an extension with a new kitchen in mind lets you decide exactly how you want the space to work; LEFT: This Linear kitchen in cashmere and porcelain from Metris is priced from £20,000 (metriskitchens.co.uk)

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The Kitchen Relocation

OFTEN A SLIGHTLY TRICKIER OPTION,
BUT USUALLY WORTHWHILE

There are instances where it can be a good idea to move your kitchen from one room to another — for example, to take full advantage of a particular view, a bigger space that is currently not used, or one that receives more natural light during the day when it is often needed in kitchens.

“If you’ve always hankered after a larger kitchen, which would become the key living space in the home, then swapping a smaller kitchen for a larger lounge space may be the answer,” agrees Graeme Smith, Senior Designer for Second Nature and Metris Kitchens. “Alternatively, if there’s an integral garage which tends to be a dumping ground, rather than used for parking the car, then this may be just the space to create your new kitchen.”

Although the common solution for those looking to add space to their homes is to create a rear extension and house a kitchen, dining and family room within the space, have you considered moving the kitchen to the front of the house instead?

Perhaps you live on a busy road where traffic noise is an issue while you are trying to sit and relax in the living room, or maybe you get passers-by peering in while you are watching television. But there are practicalities involved in this type of kitchen relocation.

The main expense here lies in bringing the utilities – the water, the waste, and maybe the gas – to a different area of the house where there has been none before.

Bringing water in should not be too much of an issue — plastic plumbing is flexible so it can be run through voids in the floor and around corners in a way that can be harder or more time-consuming to do with copper plumbing.

Waste tends to be more problematic. Not only will you have to consider your sink, but also a dishwasher and perhaps a washing machine too.

Key Issues

- This option usually causes the most disruption to those living in the property — you will temporarily lose two rooms of the house, rather than just one, and it can be hard to contain the mess;
- Utilities will have to be brought into the kitchen;
- Getting the waste out to the drains from an area where it was previously not an issue can be tricky, messy and expensive.

Where your drains are located will play a large role — in semi-detached houses they are often to the side of the house, but if they are at the back and your new kitchen will be located at the front of the house, then getting what is a fairly large pipe to and from the right points can be tricky.

If you need a gas supply, floorboards will in all likelihood need to be lifted, or channels made in concrete floors. None of this is impossible, but will undoubtedly add to costs that would not be incurred if you chose to keep your kitchen in the same spot. ■



Swapping Spaces

TOP: This kitchen is part of the Loft range by Team7 (wharfside.co.uk); MIDDLE: This kitchen is from Metris' Linear collection and costs from £20,000 (metriskitchens.co.uk); LEFT: This Henley kitchen from Kit Stone costs £15,000 (kitstone.co.uk)





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Project Clinic

Bob Branscombe

Winter Working for the Wise Project Manager

Bob Branscombe explains how to maximise project efficiencies during winter through a rigorous programme of trying to mitigate the potential issues

We can't do much about it, but the outside world obviously influences and impacts on our projects — and the art of effective project management is the proactive consideration of this.

Your programme and works package contracts will have placed a performance requirement on the works, and in an ideal situation this will progress without a hitch. However, we are never lucky enough for an ideal situation to arise. Taking your eye off the ball is almost subconscious when it happens, but is very hard to recover from in practice. Once something has affected or delayed the works, or has been 'fudged' to fix it, the impact of this will be felt in every follow-on trade, and possibly be one of those issues you will have to live with in the final product for years to come.

This type of problem can manifest itself in design-based issues such as not focusing on partition thicknesses when purchasing door casings and linings, for example. A typical off-the-shelf lining set will be 115mm thick, which will mean that your partitions will need to be 115mm thick overall prior to architraves being fitted to achieve a neat and satisfactory look. Therefore, focus in on the partition build-up — the thickness of studwork, insulation requirements, plasterboard and skim coat thickness — to ensure that the 115mm is not increased. The econ-

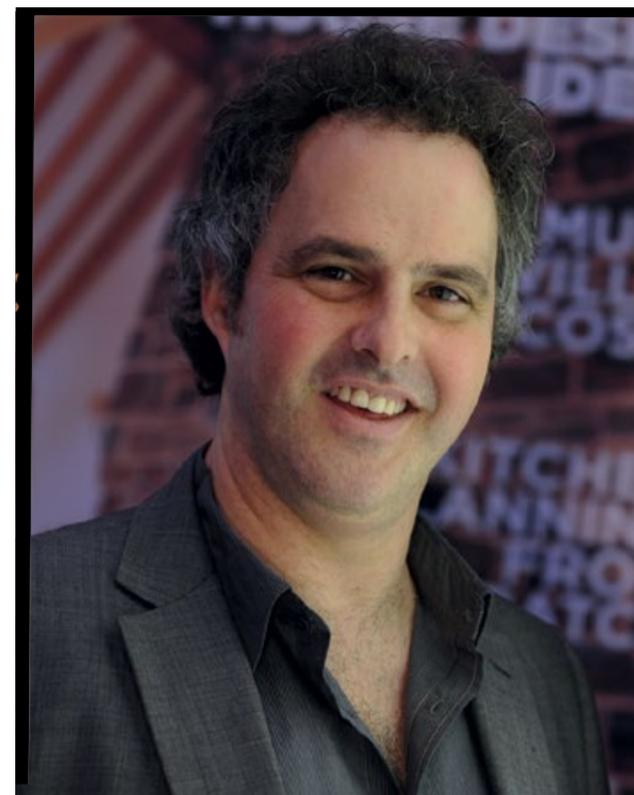
omy of using a standard door lining set will soon be offset if each door opening requires additional timber planted on to make it cover the full width of a partition.

You need to consider the wider impacts on the scheme as well. Let's take the issues of building in winter, for instance. By predicting the impacts, you can begin to mitigate.

COLD TEMPERATURE

Certain works will be adversely affected during low or freezing temperatures. Take brickwork for example — if below freezing, the water content in the mortar may freeze, which will stop it mixing throughout the mortar, and the resultant mix can fail due to cement and sand pockets being unbounded. In addition, frozen water expands, which can and does cause cracking to the brickwork. Building Control will insist on areas affected in this way being demolished and rebuilt. Disruption to this particularly critical path will impact on the programme, as well as the cost of more mortar, bricks and labour. The same applies to any 'wet' trade, so concrete, render and so on are all affected.

While we cannot predict temperatures completely, we can anticipate



Our Expert: Bob Branscombe

Bob is a project consultant with experience of managing schedules and costs on commercial and domestic building projects

the time of year in which we are at the most vulnerable to cold issues and try to commence the works to avoid this. Focusing on the actual time of year rather than just the individual timings in the programme can mitigate these issues.

WINTER WORKING

Building sites are inherently dangerous and unpleasant environments, made no less so by the onset of winter. The mobility of workers is decreased due to layers of clothing, risk of slipping and sliding is heightened, and the use of gloves is particularly inhibiting. The management of safety on site is all of our concern, and we need to anticipate additional measures to ensure safety as the weather worsens.

Let's also consider our own productivity during the bad weather — we tend to slow down, lose focus a little, and certainly strug- ▶

“I have found a Friday morning site visit armed with ‘posh coffees’ is a good way to make sure everyone is on time”



gle to maintain full motivation for the day. It would be naïve in the extreme to think that this does not occur on site. By focusing on this issue, as project manager you can look to mitigate the effects of the winter weather conditions partially by locking programme performance compliance in to the builder's contract, programming the works to be slightly less productive during the poor weather, and maybe looking for ways to make the site a better motivated and convivial place during the poor conditions. Certainly I have found that a Friday morning

Winter Blues

Try and build a bit of slack into your winter construction schedules for reduced daylight and general slowness due to cold temperatures

full days can be maintained, and as project manager you need to make sure that this is provided during the worst of the winter. While you can incorporate this requirement into the prelims of your contracts, look for the 'gaps' between the contracts — if the bricklayers finish up and clear away from site, they will of course take their floodlights with

“We don't want our sites packing up at 3.15pm every day”

site visit armed with 'posh coffees' is a good way to make sure everyone is on time and happy to be there (the cost of a round of coffee is a lot less than lost hours of production).

The point is that as managers we need to consider the environment in which we are engaging operatives in. The pressures and conditions are the same for us, so let's focus in on them, consider them, mitigate and cater for them to ensure that the works proceed according to our realistic and accurate programme.

The onset of shorter hours of daylight also impedes progress unless we mitigate — floodlighting and site heating are essential to ensure

them. The carpenters will bring new ones along, but what happens if they are delayed or there is a problem? In many cases you may look to provide plant and equipment of this nature as part of the site management. There is no perfect solution or answer, but my point is that you consider and debate the issue towards an acceptable solution. We don't want our sites packing up at 3.15pm every day during January!

SECURITY

Building sites are excellent sources of scrap metal, building materials, high-value items, tools and plant. Many a 'ne're do well' makes a liv-

ing from preying on small building sites for their whole income. Major construction sites with large on-site overheads have budgets and facilities for full-time security, and as such are hard to pilfer from.

Our sites are smaller and often with a large number of different organisations and individuals coming and going, rather than one main contractor in possession of the whole site for the duration of the project. The efficiencies and savings we make when doing our own project management are often at the expense of the overheads — security, safety, logistics and neighbourly issues.

At this time of year, the increased hours of darkness are an obvious boon for the thief. The bad weather tends to see sites more unmanned than usual, and the nature of the 'multi-trade' approach makes the presence of a new person on site less noted or worried about by neighbours or passers-by.

Think about how you can mitigate these concerns. Budget often precludes security personnel, but you may look to engage a firm for the fit-out stage when the high-value items are on site.

CCTV accessed via the internet is a good means of monitoring the project, but often CCTV simply increases the number of 'hoodies' appearing on site! Additionally, CCTV is often only useful for seeing what has already happened rather than preventing it from happening in the first place.

The management of the programme can be an oblique yet effective means of enhancing security — sage project management advice leads us to getting the superstructure completed during the summer, to avoid winter working outside. We then tend to forget the possible impacts of bad weather as the building is secure and weathered in. So we then get deliveries of high-value items such as kitchens, copper wire, sockets, boilers and the like. My advice at this point is to try to stagger the deliveries to suit the fixing schedule, to avoid these high-value items sitting around tempting fate while the site is possibly less occupied than usual. Certainly the would-be thief will understand a building programme and be waiting until the good stuff is being delivered! ■



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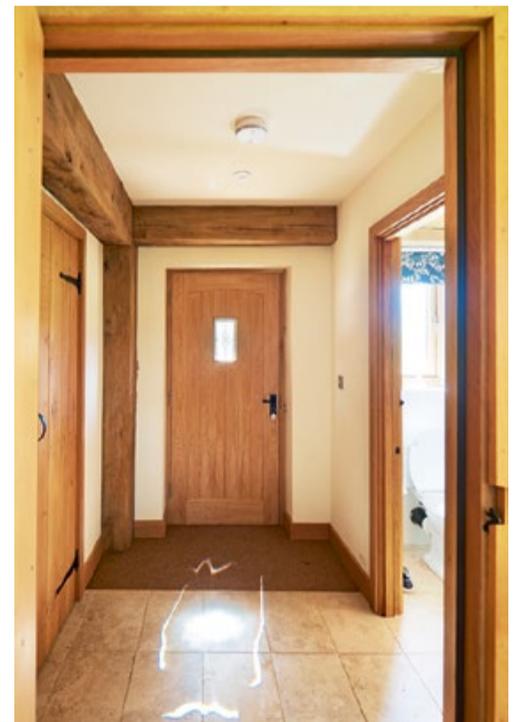


perfectly formed

John and Sue Beech's new oak frame home is a masterclass in how to achieve instant character, and architectural 'wow' on a modest footprint

**SELF-BUILD | SUFFOLK | MAR - OCT 2012 | SIZE: 144m²
BUILD AND LAND COST: £400,000 | VALUE: £600,000**

WORDS: **JASON ORME** | PHOTOGRAPHY: **C/O OAKWRIGHTS**





“**W**e have an adventurous spirit,” says John Beech as he and wife Sue show *Homebuilding & Renovating* around their Suffolk self-build project. In many ways, it’s a bit of a shock to the system because we show up in the midst of a delivery and what appears to be the early stages of a serious building site. But, it quickly becomes apparent that John and Sue are already building again, next door to the one that is the subject of our visit today.

It is indeed ‘the annexe’ that we are here to see and, annexes go, it’s pretty un-annexey. Some 144m² with a large detached garage (with studio above) and next to a new ‘barn’, which is in itself quite something, Phase One of John and Sue’s self-build epic is more than impressive enough. “We lived in a really nice house locally but, upon selling our business, wanted to create our dream home,”

“At night, the house looks amazing with light washed inside and out”

Ground Floor

The open plan downstairs space provides kitchen, dining and living areas. The triple-aspect living space is separated out by a central woodburning stove, which, according to John and Sue, is “hardly used” given the natural warmth of the house. The kitchen and internal doors were made by a local joiner

says John. “We found this two-acre site, which was then occupied by an old run-down college. It had planning permission for two houses, but it was the ideal opportunity for us to create that perfect home.” Surrounded by trees and with glimpses over private countryside, it is the dream plot no one could turn down (assuming they could afford it, of course).

“Above all else,” begins Sue, “we wanted an oak frame home. It offered the best of both worlds for us — instant character and style, but the ability to live in a modern home with all the benefits of comfort and technology.” The couple met and got on well with Tim Crump, Oakwrights’ owner and great oak frame enthusiast, and engaged with Pete Tonks, a freelance house designer who Oakwrights use a lot. “We had played around with a few ideas, sketching out some layouts and so on,” says John, “but when Pete came out to see us, he just got it. He came up with a brilliant, original scheme and with very few modifications we were ready to proceed.” ▶

Homes

The brief was simple. This phase of the works was to consist of a small, open plan and simply fashioned two bedroom house complete with a detached garage. Additionally, a large barn-style structure would serve eventually as the central point of the site — one large room that could multifunction as a party room, dining hall, storage space or whatever. Architectural ‘wow’ was the key. This barn would also be the central point for all the systems, feeding the annexe and, eventually, the second new home, which is where John and Sue plan to end up.

In many ways it was the humble bat that got the project off on this slightly unusual track. The obvious thing would have been to build all the house, with its various buildings, at the same time. However, living in a “shack” on site (as John calls it — actually a run-down old part of the college that stank of all the traditional aromas associated with students) they discovered bats, which, as any rural housebuilder or converter knows, means trouble. “We ended up having to delay the build of the main house by so much that we decided to get on with the annexe,” says Sue. ▶

John & Sue’s Suppliers

Oak frame	Oakwrights.....	01432 353353
Architectural design	Pete Tonks.....	01480 414580
Lighting designer	Ben Allen.....	07812 199086
Underfloor heating	Floor Heating Warehouse.....	01481 725511
Wooden flooring	Jewson.....	jewson.co.uk
Windows within oak frame	GJ Williams Ltd.....	07800 917711
Biomass boiler	Froling.....	froeling.com/en
Kitchen	Ashford and Brooks.....	ashfordandbrooks.co.uk
Other joinery including oak rafter feet, internal doors, door furniture, garage doors, barn doors and all trims	James Allen Joinery Ltd.....	01473 277130
Sanitaryware	Bathstore.....	bathstore.com
Roof tiles	Lifestiles.....	01787 237057
Copper rainwater goods	Good Directions.....	01489 797773
Insulation	Celotex.....	01473 822093



The Site

The ‘annexe’ has its own detached garage and, right of shot, a separate barn, which has multipurpose use and houses the main plant. The jettied south-facing elevation contains plenty of glazing. The Restoration handmade clay roof tiles are from Lifestiles



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Moving into a house nearby while work commenced, John and Sue were able to see their oak frame dream become a reality before their eyes. Oakwrights supplied and erected the oak frame itself, while the couple worked locally with a project manager to run the rest of the build around it.

The beauty of this project is three-fold. Firstly, of course, there is the particular appeal of Pete's design and the way it – to use a slightly tired old phrase – looks like it could have been there forever. The roof pitch that flares at the foot; the offset window and porch positions and shapes; the strong, glazed gable end. Inside, the spacious open plan ground floor is zoned thanks partly to the bays of the oak frame itself, but also thanks to interior features such as the woodburning stove. Even in a property of 144m², introducing a double-height space – a galleried landing – gives instant charm and architectural appeal. The upstairs rooms with their vaulted ceilings feel impressive, too, but also perfectly homely in scale. Working with the barn and the detached garage, this new annexe is an impressive mix of rural farmhouse and achievable grandeur. In so many ►

'Wow' Space, Small Footprint

Pete Tonks' design is a masterclass in how 'wow' can be incorporated into even the most modest of floor areas (the house is 144m²) with vaulted ceilings in the bedrooms and a galleried landing



BIOMASS DISTRICT HEATING

District heating is the concept of using a centralised boiler to provide heat for a number of different buildings. It can be used to power a number of homes or alternatively a number of buildings forming the same home (e.g. barns and outbuildings). Using biomass makes particular sense for district heating for two main reasons: firstly, at heating requirements in the 100s of kW (as opposed to most domestic boilers, which tend to be in the 20-40kW region) the difference in price of gas and oil boilers compared to biomass is less than it is at the lower levels (or if you had to buy a number of smaller boilers); and

secondly, because of the very high burn temperatures that biomass is capable of generating, it is efficient to use the heat produced on a large scale. Individual buildings would have a kind of mini substation, into which the heat system's flow and returns are fed, and controlled accordingly. Insulated pipes are ground looped.

John and Sue Beech's Froling biomass system cost, according to John, "slightly upwards of £30,000", which sounds a lot but, compared to the need for three or four individual systems, becomes a bit more realistic. It qualifies for the non-domestic Renewable Heat Incentive too.

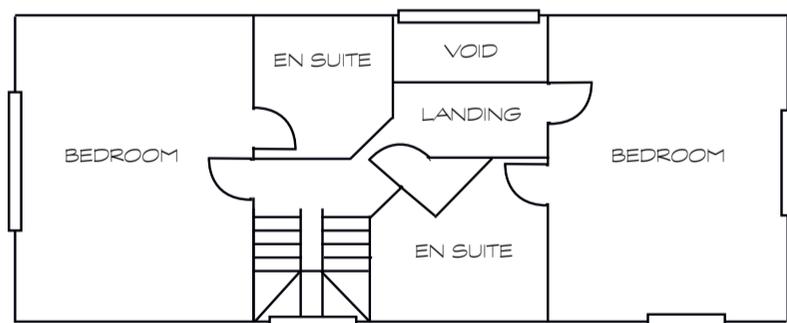


Outbuilding
The oak-clad garage incorporates a studio above

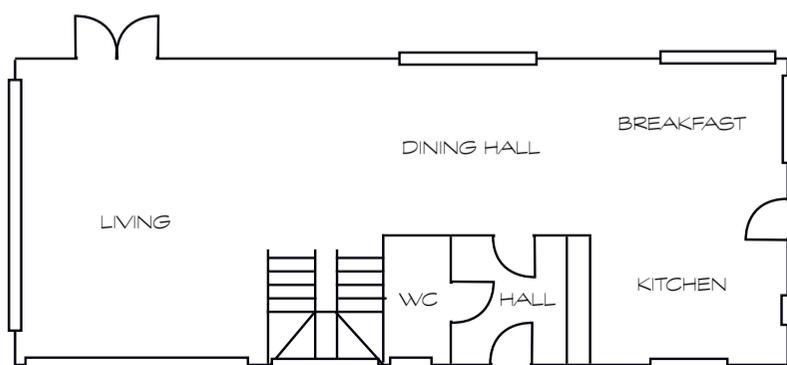
Floorplans

Offering comfortable accommodation on a modest footprint, the open plan ground floor allows the spaces to flow with ease, while the kitchen, dining hall and living areas are zoned thanks to the exposed oak frame within the interiors. On the first floor, a galleried landing leads to two good-sized bedrooms, both complete with en suites. A detached garage (not shown) houses a studio above.

FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



ways it's refreshing to see an oak frame house – usually associated with size and ambition – work so well on a more relatable footprint.

Secondly, it is the introduction of modern technologies into the scheme. Oak frames and 21st-century technology aren't always a happy mix – in all those vaulted spaces, where do the lights go, for a start? – but here John and Sue used a very talented lighting designer to create a scheme that is subtlety itself. There's a mechanical ventilation heat recovery system, Cat 6 cabled network and pre-programmed lighting controls, and, best of all, "at night, the house looks amazing with light washed inside and out," says John. Even slightly less high-tech elements of modern innovation, such as built-in vacuum systems, make life easier.

Lastly, it is the additional choices and specification – bringing the project home – that makes it so fabulous. John and Sue agonised over the windows and ended up choosing dark aluminium frames rather than traditional wooden ones. Exposed rafter feet look wonderful, as does the lime-based pink render. Best of all is the brilliant wood-encased windows in the triple-aspect living space, closely followed by the copper rainwater goods and the internal doors and kitchen. Starting out with something as wonderful as Pete's design and the oak frame are all very well, but it would have been easy to mess it up. John and Sue's thoughtful approach has paid dividends.

"We made a lot of decisions as the house went up," concludes John. "We found it quite difficult to visualise things on the plans, and so the construction process demanded a lot of attention. We're delighted with how it has turned out. The house is warm and a joy to spend time in, and full of character. The open plan ground floor makes it very sociable, too. I really feel like we have done the site justice." All in all, not bad for an annexe... ■



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FITTING AN ENGINEERED FLOOR

Totally stable but offering a real wood finish, engineered floors are a popular choice. **Natasha Brinsmead** explains how to fit one in a weekend

Engineered timber floors are hugely popular — and for good reason. They are quicker and simpler to fit than solid timber boards, offer greater dimensional stability, yet still have the beauty and warmth of a solid wood floor, unlike laminate flooring.

Fitting an engineered timber floor is well within the capabilities of most, but there are often a few common questions to address first.

Most engineered boards come supplied with tongue-and-groove joints and are designed to be laid as a floating floor, needing no nailing or gluing. They can be laid over pretty much any subfloor, such as concrete or particleboard, but also over existing floors such as stone, tile, linoleum and old timber floors. They are also suitable for use over wet underfloor heating systems, but not always with electric mat systems.

In the case of concrete subfloors, it is advised that a 0.2mm polyethylene film is used as a moisture barrier between the two floors, to avoid any moisture in the subfloor coming in to contact with the engineered floor. You should also always use a 0.2mm polyethylene film under the underlay

to act as a moisture barrier when introducing a wet underfloor heating system.

Before you even think about beginning the installation of your engineered floor, the flooring should be acclimatised to the climate of the room in which it is being fitted. Keep the boards in the sealed, unopened boxes for at least 48 hours, laying flat in a room with a temperature of at least 18°C and on a floor surface temperature of at least 15°C.

When you are ready to lay the floor, bear in mind that in general, engineered flooring looks best when laid parallel to light entering through the windows, but you can lay it whichever way you think works. The only restriction is on boards laid over an existing hardwood floor, where the boards should be laid at a 90° angle to each other.

Before you begin, measure the width of the room and divide this figure by the width of the engineered boards — this will give you the number of rows and the required width of the last row. If the width of this last row turns out to be less than 60mm wide, you should aim to cut the first row lengthways so that the last row can be left a little wider. You must



Achieving the Real Wood Finish

This Heritage Natural Oak Real Wood Flooring from B&Q's new Colours Collection gives the effect of a solid wood floor (diy.co.uk)

SOLID, ENGINEERED OR LAMINATE?

Solid timber floorboards, as the name suggests, consist of solid timber, often with tongue-and-groove joints, while engineered products are a solid layer of timber bonded to several layers of softwood glued together at angles for stability. The thicker the solid top layer, the better. Laminate boards are not timber at all, simply a photograph of timber covering a composite wood product with a clear layer placed on top.

also plan to include expansion gaps of approximately 10mm around the flooring where it meets the walls, door frames and around pipes, to account for shrinkage and expansion.

You should begin installing the boards by starting in one corner with the tongue side of the panels facing the wall. Use spacers between the edge of the boards and the wall. Connect the second board by inserting it at an angle then tapping it indirectly using a hammer and push block. Cut the last panel in the row to fit and then use the off-cut to begin the next row, creating a staggered pattern, unless the off-cut is less than 500mm long, in which case it is advisable to use a new panel. ■

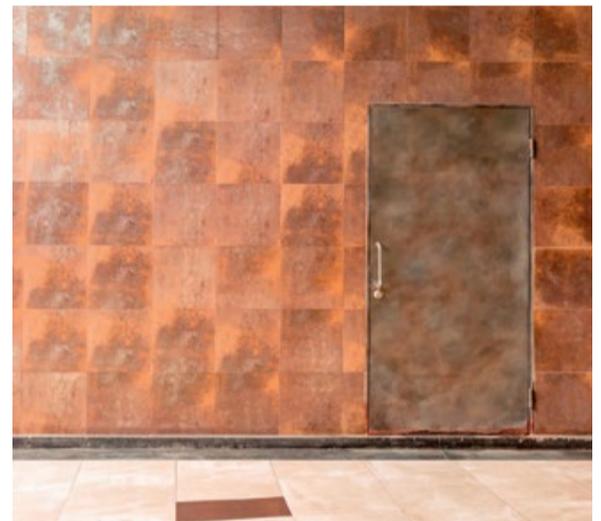
CUTTING AROUND PIPES

Measure the position of the pipes and mark them on the board (keeping in mind the expansion gap required). Next, drill a hole 16mm bigger than the pipe diameter to allow for expansion, and saw at a 45° angle to the holes. Apply glue to the sawn-out section and fit, not forgetting spacers.

EXTRAORDINARY USES FOR ORDINARY MATERIALS

Materials previously considered ugly, mundane or purely functional are now being appreciated for far more than their practical uses. By **Natasha Brinsmead**

Long hidden away, materials traditionally viewed as useful for nothing more than construction and deemed to be concealed forever behind plaster, tiles or timber cladding – materials that we are comfortable with seeing and living with – are now being allowed to shine. The raw beauty of these functional materials is currently in vogue — and for good reason. Not only do these ‘ordinary’ materials offer some considerable cost savings over those conventionally beautiful finishing materials, but they also offer striking results too as these examples go to show.

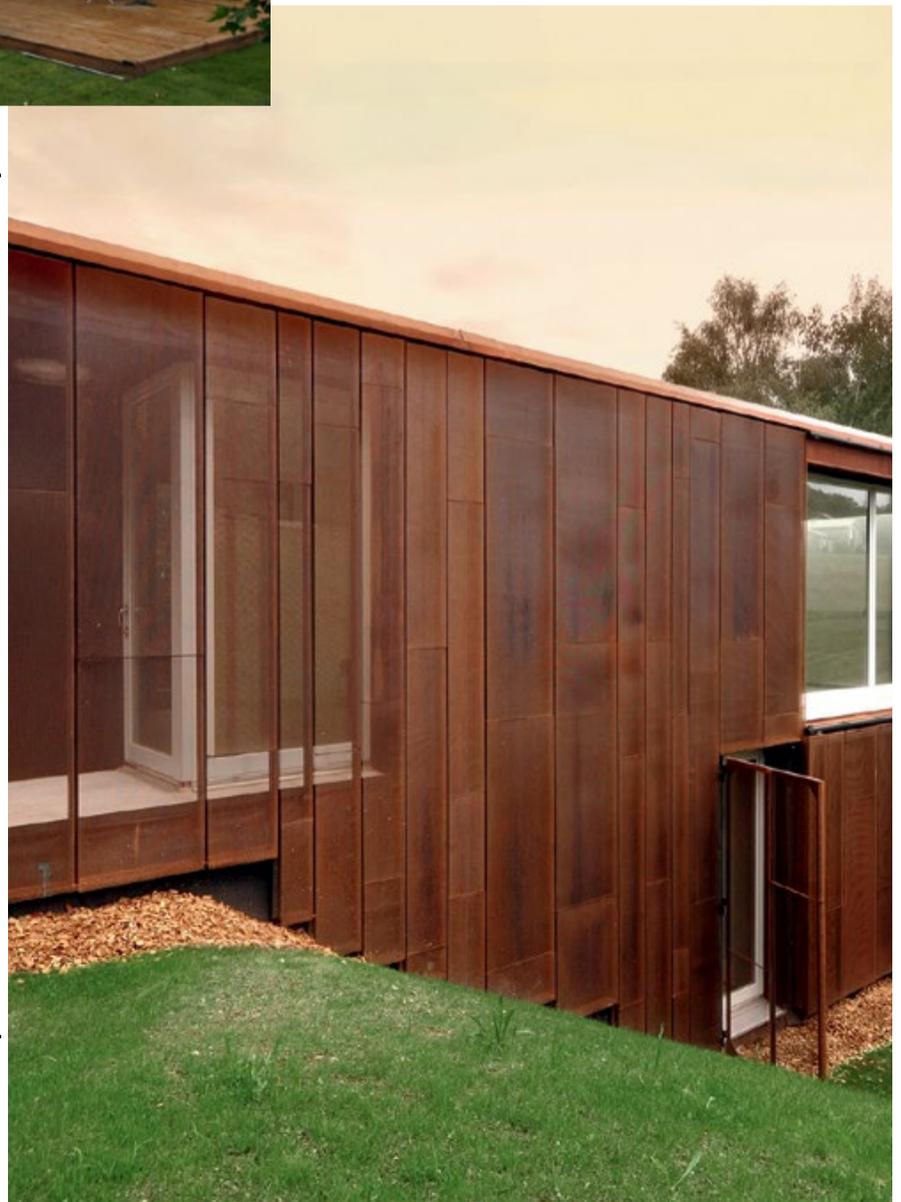


METAL

It would have been hard to have missed the recent trend for warm metals such as copper, brass and bronze sweeping the world of homes and interiors of late. However, while everything from lighting to sanitaryware has been given the metallic treatment, something you may not have considered is cladding your internal or even external walls, kitchen units or worktops in metal sheets.

There are several companies out there supplying both pre-cut and cut-to-size sheets available for bonding to walls or for use as worktops (try metalsheets.co.uk). And if an entire metal wall seems a bit dramatic, take a look at the huge range of metallic wall, floor and even ceiling tiles out there too.

Copper, brass, zinc, aluminium and bronze can also be used as exterior cladding. Usually supplied in prefabricated panels, shingles or sheets, metal cladding is lightweight, durable and weathers beautifully over time.



CONCRETE

While concrete may be becoming a far more familiar sight in mainstream homes these days, it is no longer restricted to the floors of super contemporary homes. Exposed or 'fair-faced' concrete offers a perfectly neutral backdrop, suited not, as many people think, just to modern homes, but also to more rustic, traditional settings too.

Fair-faced concrete can be constructed in two different ways: it can either be poured in-situ or made off site in precast sections. Polished concrete flooring is usually poured on site and honed or polished as it cures. For walls, board-formed or shuttered concrete works really well. It's again constructed on site: timber or steel boards are made up to form a mould into which the concrete is poured and left to set. The mould is then removed, leaving the imprint of the shuttering material on the concrete — resulting in some very striking effects.

In retrofit situations, or for those wanting just an element of concrete in the home as opposed to an entire floor or wall, precast wall panels can be used. They're often made from glass-reinforced concrete for its lightweight properties.

Worktops can be poured in-situ or precast off site too. The in-situ method tends to be favoured as there are no joins, with the concrete being mixed and poured on site then left to set before being polished — a process which usually takes around 28 days. Although having precast worktops fitted is a great option for those remodelling or renovating, bear in mind that the worktop will be very heavy and awkward to lift into place. ▶



Concrete Jungle

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: This shuttered concrete wall, with wood grain imprint, features in a house designed by PAD Studio (padstudio.co.uk); These light-weight, easy to install PANBETON® custom-made wall panels by 'Concrete by LCDA' feature a raw concrete side which can be customised. Available at Holloways of Ludlow (020 7602 5757); These concrete worktops are from Johnny Grey Studios (johnnygrey.com)





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ENGINEERED TIMBER

One of the biggest interior trends to emerge in recent years is engineered wood products, such as OSB (oriented strand board), chipboard and plywood, being used as a final finish. In the past, these products have been used primarily as part of the structure, for floors, worktops, furniture and the like, before being boarded, tiled or upholstered over. Now, however, more and more people are recognising that these products can actually look rather beautiful left exposed.

That said, one of the main concerns among those considering such materials as a final finish is that such materials can feel rough or are a constant source of splinters – or perhaps, over time, start to shed flakes of wood, in the case of OSB.

Firstly, it is important to ensure they are well-sanded. Next, some kind of finish will be required to avoid 'flaking'. While some choose to paint OSB for some very striking results, others opt for a clear polyurethane finish.



A New Take on Timber

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Almost all the interior fittings in this barn conversion are of OSB; Plywood has been used to stunning effect in this kitchen; Engineered timber here has been used inside and out for a striking effect



OSB, CHIPBOARD AND PLYWOOD — WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

Plywood is different to both OSB (oriented strand board) and chipboard as it is made from thin layers of solid wood, as opposed to flakes or chips. Several layers or 'plies' of wood veneer (usually five to nine in total) are glued together, with the grain direction alternating between each layer. These layers are then heated and pressed in order to make one single board.

OSB is far less expensive. It uses chips (or strands) of wood rather than continuous veneers, which are lined up at right angles to one another (or oriented) to make the board strong in all directions.

Adhesives are added to the wood flakes before they are compressed into a board and coated with sealant to protect the material from moisture.

Finally, chipboard — the cheapest and arguably least reliable material of the three. Similar to OSB, chipboard (also known as particleboard) is made up of smaller chips of wood - not dissimilar to sawdust in some cases - bound together by resin and pressed into a board. It lacks the moisture resistance and strength of both plywood and OSB, making it the least attractive option in most instances.

BRICK AND STONE

Not exactly a new material, brick is usually seen as purely structural or as a cladding for external façades, yet there is a raw, earthy beauty to bricks which can add a surprising element of warmth to interiors. Of course, it is important to select your bricks wisely — cheap, brightly coloured engineering bricks tend to hint at the interior of a local leisure centre rather than lending industrial chic.

Whether you are working with an existing brick wall or building with the knowledge that certain walls will be left exposed, some kind of treatment is advisable to keep the bricks in good condition. In the case of walls that have been exposed, having been covered with plaster for some years, or if buying reclaimed bricks to use as a final finish, you will need to clean the bricks. While a power washer may be a good idea for external walls, it is going to make an almighty mess inside your home, so using a wire brush, although more time-consuming, is a better idea. If bricks are very dirty, using a mixture of washing-up liquid and salt to scrub away dirt and debris works — but wash the wall well afterwards with a damp cloth.

Badly damaged bricks can be removed and replaced (it may be enough to simply turn the damaged bricks around and put them back in). If the mortar is loose in places, scrape it out and replace, but make sure the new mortar will match the old, or else repoint the entire wall.

Finally, seal the bricks using a brick sealant with a matt finish, though avoid glossy polyurethane sealants which tend to leave the bricks looking rather unnatural. Using a paint sprayer to apply the sealant saves time, but you may wish to go over it again with a roller to ensure the whole surface is completely covered.



MAIN IMAGE: DARREN CHUNG



Raw Beauty

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:
Bare brick adds a rustic warmth to these otherwise contemporary interiors; Exposed stone walls act as the perfect foil for this sleek Neil Lerner kitchen (neillerner.com); Interior architect Thomas Griem used exposed brick for this home office/studio (tg-studio.co.uk)

PLASTERBOARD AND CEMENT BOARD

Plasterboard and cement board, normally thought of as materials reserved for the interior of a building, are now being used externally. Although plasterboard is not a material usually praised for its ability to handle damp conditions, new technology is making this possible.

“With cement particleboard, installers are required to leave a 3-8mm gap between boards to allow for expansion, but this compromises airtightness. By contrast, the dimensional stability of certain thermal plasterboards means that installers can create a simple, airtight layer, with expansion accounting for as little as 0.10mm,” says Steve Hemmings, Head of Sustainability at Siniat (formerly Lafarge).

With cement board, a product such as Knauf’s Aquapanel Exterior Cement Boards provides a solid, dry base that can withstand wind, rain and snow and can act as a substrate for directly applied render. Once taped and jointed it can be left unfinished for up to six months and is also easily curved. ■



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10 Ideas for MAKING AN ENTRANCE

The entrance sets the tone for the entire house and the interiors beyond. **Claire Lloyd** takes a look at 10 design ideas for achieving a visual impact, and for gaining useful additional space too



The Multifunctional Porch

The entrance to your home fulfils a multitude of functions: it should be designed carefully so as to create a sense of arrival but must also be a cohesive part of the exterior scheme, and in practical terms, it should aid with the smooth running of daily life. Designed badly, however, a porch can have a negative impact on kerb appeal.

While a simple canopy above the front door will shelter visitors from the rain, a designated 'porch' - whether it's a portico, an open-sided structure supported on columns, or entirely enclosed - is an altogether more useful addition.

Take this contemporary 'porch' (CENTRE) which visually breaks up and softens the wide expanse of drystone walling, but also provides sheltered seating for pulling off boots and for storing wood for the stove inside. Insetting a porch

within the footprint of the house is another idea; this can impede on internal floorspace, yet provides much more protection against the elements for storage and for sitting out with an evening drink (as ABOVE). Alternatively, an enclosed porch can be the perfect place for storing away coats and for getting the kids ready (RIGHT).

Another solution is to introduce two entrances: one for guests and an informal entrance which fulfils the roles described. "You may even have a couple of porches with the second serving the boot/utility room. The design of this should be of a similar nature to the front porch and it should be slightly subservient in its proportions so as not to compete with the 'star-player'," advises Pete Tonks, HB&R's design expert and architectural designer for Oakwrights.





A Healthy Dose of Colour

Whether it's a bold front door or a vibrant door surround (LEFT), a burst of colour is one sure-fire way of drawing visitors' eyes towards the entrance. It's particularly effective on contemporary homes with understated entrances; as RIGHT, bright yellow marks out the front door against the cladding. Picking up the same colour throughout the interiors is a great way of creating a sense of cohesion between the inside and exterior of your new home, too. ▶





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Sloping Site Solutions

Sloping sites can present a particular challenge — how do you create a welcoming, practical entrance (not to mention one which is accessible, complying with Part M of Building Regulations) without introducing an imposing set of steps? Thankfully, some rather innovative solutions from architects across the country have set a precedent for show-stopping entrances to homes on difficult plots. Among them, the 'bridged' entrance (TOP RIGHT) is somewhat of a trademark feature to some of the homes designed by Stan Bolt Architects — no strangers to sloping sites, having worked over a portfolio of coastal self-builds. Meanwhile the entrance to the ABOVE project by AR Design consists of a glass box protruding from the flat roof of the 180m² home below, which is barely visible from street level. "It's the name of the house; visually it provides a structural backbone," says architect Andy Ramus of AR Design of the glazed entrance space.



IMAGES: NIGEL RIDGEN X 2; ALISTAIR NICHOLLS; SIMON MAXWELL



The Hidden Front Door

The entrances to some contemporary homes are so discreet that they can even confuse the postman, blending in so as to allow the materials to do all the talking. One such example is the new build home of Giuseppe Sironi and Todd Copper (ABOVE), whose front door and garage have been purposefully designed to disappear into oak-strip cladding; even door furniture is minimal. "It

does sometimes confuse people, but we didn't want to distract from the overall look of the entrance," explains Giuseppe.

Again, the front door to this contemporary home, designed by MATT Architecture (LEFT), lacks traditional door furniture, with the oversized house number indicating where to enter. (What's more, when the bell is rung, the door illuminates the word 'hello' in the render.) ▶

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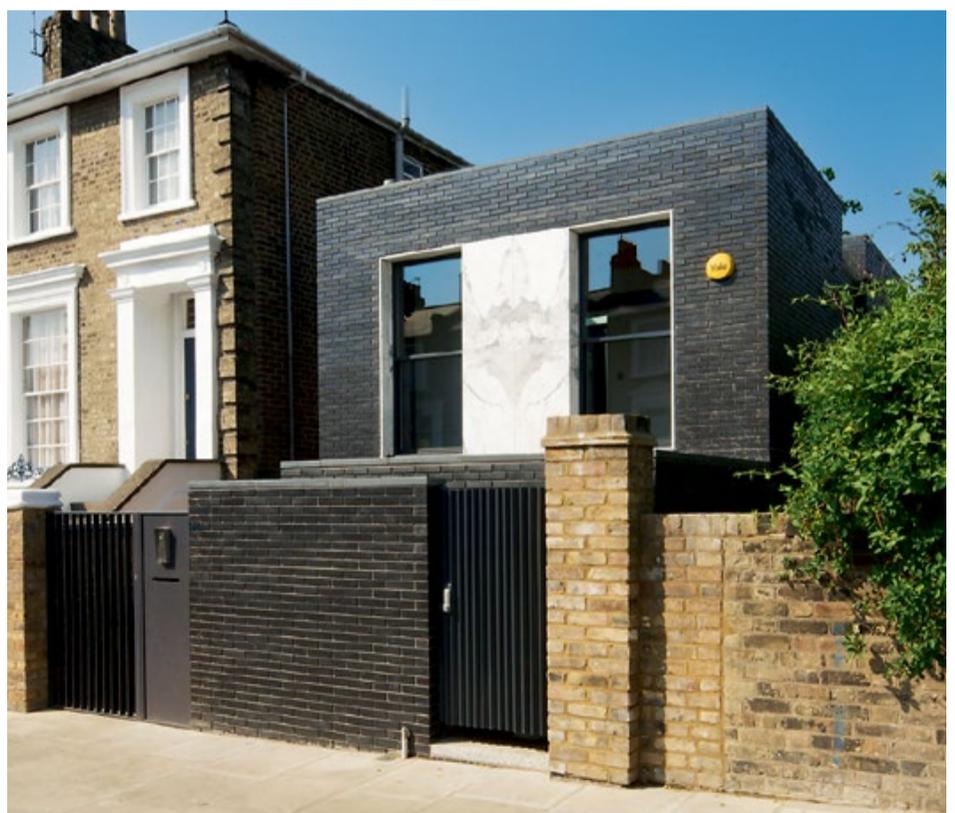
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Making an Entrance

The Cottage Classic

The quintessential oak frame porch is a characterful addition to the cottage-style home, but attention to detail is required to ensure this addition looks just right. Pete Tonks, the Oakwrights (oakwrights.co.uk) architectural designer behind this stunning design (LEFT) explains: "If you plan on a traditional project then why not consider a classic gable-fronted oak frame porch on posts? The ridge of your porch should be set below the eaves (gutter) line if you want to create a cosy cottage feel, but if you want to make it more imposing then the ridge could be up higher, with valleys cut into the main house roof. You also need to keep an eye on scale: there is a fine line between too small and too large. Your designer or architect should be able to advise on this. Roof pitches should be kept steep - starting at around 42° up to 50-55° - for a classic look, too.

"You may also want to consider a porch wide enough to stack logs on one side and to drop boots and dog leads off on the other," concludes Pete.



The Internal Courtyard

A particularly good solution for the urban home, the internal courtyard not only brings privacy, but provides a place to tuck away the bins and for outdoor storage. These London-based properties (by Liddicoat & Goldhill, RIGHT, and Designcubed, ABOVE), both built on incredibly tight plots, are cases in point.

IMAGES: C/O OAKWRIGHTS; SIMON MAXWELL; TOM GILDON C/O LIDDICOAT & GOLDHILL

Making an Entrance



The 21st-Century Carport

The porte-cochère or 'coach door' – an open-sided architectural addition which grew in popularity in the 18th century – was originally designed to accommodate carriages at the entrances to large homes and buildings – enabling wealthy travellers to step out of their carriages without being exposed to the elements (heaven forbid!). Fast forward to the 20th century and to the rise of the carport: this addition for our modern-day carriages was popularised by architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

Today, a porte-cochère or carport can be designed in to suit both

period (CENTRE) and contemporary (ABOVE) houses alike, forming a practical arrival space: a dry spot to load and unload the contents of the car (the shopping, flatpack furniture, dogs, kids, you name it). Such additions can also provide useful outdoor amenity space.

There's a further benefit, as this stunning barn conversion (CENTRE) reveals: a porte-cochère can be an ideal means of creating extra floorspace above (housing a first floor en suite bedroom in this case). The key to introducing such additions is in ensuring that they do not impede on light entering the ground floor rooms.



Extending the Roofline

Extending the roofline can be a seamless means of creating an arrival space or amenity area below. For the modern home, continuing a flat roof above the front door is a sleek idea (see LEFT) – what's more, the space can provide extra floorspace or, in this case, a terrace, above.

While catslide roofs – a roof designed to continue down below the main eaves to provide depth – can work well on traditional-style properties (ABOVE), and is a particular feature to the Arts & Crafts-style home.



IMAGES: NIGEL RIGDEN X 2; SIMON MAXWELL; JEREMY PHILLIPS; DAVE BURTON; URBAN FRONT



The Oversized Front Door

A staple of the contemporary home, the oversized front door lends grandeur without being grandiose. “Door trends are shifting dramatically at the moment,” says Elizabeth Assaf of contemporary door design and manufacturer Urban Front, who provide external hardwood doors of up to 1.5x3m in size (urbanfront.co.uk). “More and more of our customers want to maximise their entrance and include as large a door as possible with simpler lines and smarter technology. At the moment, very wide doors are popular with glass and finger print entry.

“Illusions of larger doors are popular too, so the actual door isn’t too large but the entrance itself gives that impression,” adds Elizabeth. One such example crafted by Urban Front for this Paul Humphries Architects’ project (BELOW), gives the appearance of height, and is complemented by sleek, oversized door furniture. “There is also a definite move away from too many fancy details and a real belief in using natural products and achieving high U values.”

Flush threshold and pivoting doors are other on-trend solutions which bring wow-factor. ■

Continuing the Outside In

One trend which sees no sign of losing traction is the introduction of a continuous palette of materials, running from inside to out. It’s a concept that’s all about making the surroundings feel integral to the interiors. It’s a look that is often paired with lots of glazing too — allowing the materials on display to be fully appreciated on both sides of the front door.

One such example is this self-build (RIGHT), designed by PAD Studio (padstudio.co.uk). “The cast in-situ concrete wall that forms the north retaining wall runs from outside to inside to give a clear, visible connection of internal and external space,” explains architect Darren Bray of PAD Studio. “The wall also acts as a signal to the front entrance of the main house and guides visitors to both the entrance and the heart of the house. It was our intention to both guide visitors into the house but to also blur the physical boundaries between inside and out.”

A key consideration is choosing materials which are suitable for both indoor and outdoor use.



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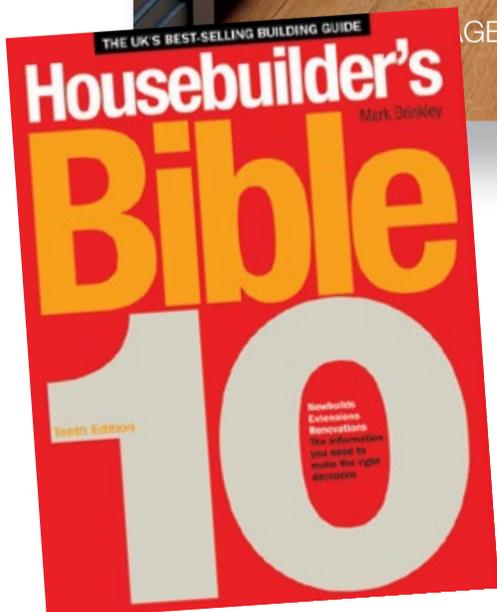
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modern madeover

**Deborah Wilks has built on the best aspects of her 1930s
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REMODEL | HAMPSHIRE | JUL 12 - FEB 13 | SIZE: 191m²
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WORDS: JASON ORME | PHOTOGRAPHY: SIMON MAXWELL







Situated in an interesting settlement of a couple of dozen Bauhaus-style bungalows, built by the River Hamble in Hampshire in the 1930s by the tea impresario Sir Thomas Lipton, the home of Deborah Wilks is a classic example of how homes that are past their best can not only be restored but improved beyond all imagination. A gleaming white rendered example of sleek design born at the height of Modernism, when Deborah and her partner took it on it was all faded glory and not much else.

“We knew all about the potential with these very interesting homes,” explains Deborah, who had previously remodelled another home on the same estate. “This one came with a brilliant site, with lawns down to the river front and views over the marina. It was well past its best and the layout was very cluttered, but the basics were there to be worked with, rather than totally ripped out. We wanted to emphasise the original design and bring it into the 21st century.”

“The house was dark... the priority was to introduce space, light and airiness”



Opened Up

The internal layout has been opened up, reducing the number of rooms significantly but allowing them all much more light, as well as the ability to flow into each other without the need for corridors. The extra-wide engineered floor planks are from Blueridge Flooring





Over the years, the five bedroom bungalow had been stretched and pulled in various directions with the best of intentions, but perhaps not the best of design guidance. Deborah knew the value of expertise in this situation and called in Lesley Hally, from LA Hally Architects, to come up with a scheme that would be part restoration, part remodel, part opening up. “The 191m² house was actually quite dark, so the priority was to introduce space, light and airiness,” explains Deborah.

The scheme that Lesley came up with was to remove many of the existing internal walls, including the main ones separating out the hallway, to create a largely open plan rear to the house including a kitchen, living and dining space. A home office is partially separated with a half-wall and the number of bedrooms has been reduced from five poky spaces to three larger rooms of a size more accommodating of things like en suites and large wardrobes. There are new windows throughout, and ▶

Design Touches

The ground floor is warmed with trench heating, consisting of radiators placed in trenches around the perimeter. Large sliding doors (from Smart Systems) open out to the garden. A charming circular window seat in the home office allows a framed view, as well as greater connection with the outdoors



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Deborah's Suppliers

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- Sanitaryware, floor and wall tiles** Porcelanosaporcelanosa.com
- Kitchen** Knightwood Kitchens(no longer trading)
- External doors and windows** Smarts Systemssmartsystems.co.uk
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to the rear a suite of new openings, including bi-fold aluminium doors (from Smart Systems) and a feature circular window in the home office that is used, imaginatively, to provide a curved window seat. Most glamorously of all, the large roof terrace (the bungalow has a flat roof) has been restored to its original majesty and now provides a huge party area complete with built-in speakers and a groovy, Saturday-afternoons-sipping cocktails-waving-at-passers-by vibe.

“The project itself was fairly stress-free,” says Deborah, who co-owns a health club. “The architects had their own in-house project management service, so they dealt with the main contractors. We effectively rebuilt much of the front elevation and the whole of the roof structure has been rebuilt with added insulation. We were involved in most of the product choices, and obviously took on the interiors. The new heating system uses trench radiators — we considered underfloor heating but it didn’t ▶



Bedrooms & Bathrooms

The number of bedrooms has been reduced from five to three, enabling them to have much more space and generous en suites. The rust-effect tiles are from Porcelanosa

Homes



Roof Deck

Deborah used Eco Dek composite wood polymer recycled boards for the large flat roof deck. With a built-in sound system and fabulous views, it is effectively another living space.

work from a budget point of view. Unfortunately the bespoke grid covering, designed to tie in with the rest of the flooring (as opposed to the usual off-the-shelf brass models) ended up costing almost as much as an underfloor heating system anyway.”

Walking round on a sunny late summer’s day, it’s difficult not to see the appeal here. The house is superbly open and crisp in its approach, and as a model of Modernism it’s hard to beat, with a series of very-well-chosen pieces of art and furniture to blast out of all that white. The exterior, with a new through-coloured K Rend render gleaming in the brightness, looks brilliantly individual, with the roof terrace being a real highlight. “We’re delighted with how it turned out,” says Deborah. “We’ve massively improved the original, got what we wanted but also been true to the style of the house. Some 80 years on, this project bookends the Modern era — we still love the exteriors, and with internal improvements, it is a very appealing combination.”

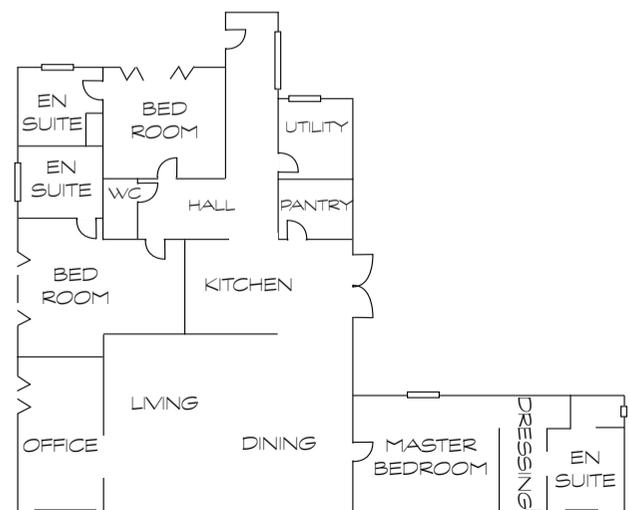
BAUHAUS

The Bauhaus movement in the 1920s and 1930s is in many ways where Modernism really started. Established by architect Walter Gropius in Germany, it attempted to combine a single vision for the visual arts of painting, sculpture and, of course, architecture. The architectural style (Bauhaus means ‘House for Building’, which is the name of the school that gave the movement its name) rejected ornament and tried to capture the essence of Classicism in its most simple form. Essentials include the use of strong colours (white and grey being key) along with bold, often geometric lines. ■



Floorplans

In order to maximise on living space, the formerly five bedroom bungalow has been reconfigured and opened up in order to provide luxurious light-filled open plan accommodation, and three large bedrooms all benefiting from en suites — the master also features a walk-in dressing area. External stairs lead to the roof terrace, which provides the perfect spot for entertaining.



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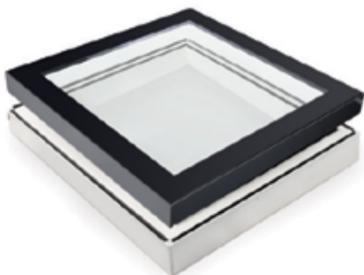
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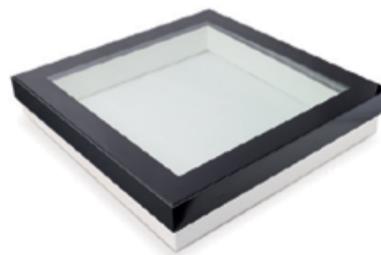
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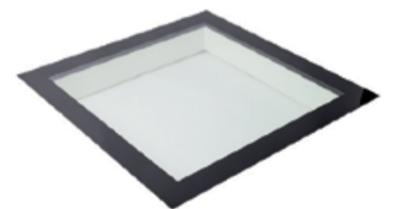
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Five Things You Need to Know About

CHIMNEYS

How are they built, what are they comprised of and just how can you make sure your chimney works to its full potential? **Natasha Brinsmead** explains

1. The History

Although holes in the roof and walls of ancient homes is evidence that our ancestors knew it was important to get smoke out of their homes, chimneys were not really widely adopted until the Tudor times, and even then, only by the upper classes, with more common folk having to put up with smoke-filled rooms. Even when chimneys were used, they were highly inefficient and often dangerous too, being made of wattle and daub and susceptible to fire. By 1710, all clay-built chimneys in England were ordered to be rebuilt in brick. However, a poor understanding of heat and smoke meant that chimneys were still not drawing in the way they should, and it was not really until the mid-18th century when the likes of Benjamin Franklin (once called The Universal Smoke Doctor), Charles Willson Peale and Benjamin Thompson – later known as Count Rumford – got involved that things improved. Count Rumford invented a fireplace and chimney designed to reduce the smoke pollution in London. The new Rumford fireplace reflected heat back into the roof, with the chimney being incorporated into the wall.

Back in Vogue

LEFT: The 15th-century tall chimneys at Vicars Close in Wells; RIGHT: Today, powerful chimney stacks are back in vogue, as on this new Hall + Bednarczyk Architects barn-style home

2. The Flue

The terms 'flue' and 'chimney' are often confused. The flue is the working section of the chimney which takes the products of combustion up and out into the atmosphere, while the chimney is a structure built around a core of clay or concrete flue liners, terminating with a pot.

Chimneys are categorised into 'classes'. A Class 1 chimney is common in houses built up until the 1960s. They consist of a brick-built stack, situated on either an internal or external wall and containing multiple flues for multiple fires (although the fires cannot share a flue). This type of chimney can be used with all types of solid fuel fires and stoves, and gas fires too. They will need lining only if they fail a smoke test.

Class 2 (5" diameter) gas flue systems are often found in houses built from the 1960s onwards. They consist of an interlocking metal pipe running through the house, but can be used with certain types of gas fire only. Class 2 (pre-cast) systems consist of a rectangular hollow cavity made from concrete or clay blocks, travelling up the wall cavity to a ridge vent or metal flue terminal on the roof. They can be used with slimline gas fires. ▶

3. The Materials

Both chimneys and flues are available in a variety of materials, including stainless steel, concrete, pumice, clay or ceramic, and plastic. Concrete, pumice and clay or ceramic are collectively known as 'masonry chimneys'. Plastic flues can only be used with low-temperature condensing appliances, and some stainless steel chimney systems and liners are designed only for use with gas-fired appliances. Clay and pumice chimney systems however are suitable for use with wood, multi-fuel, oil and gas appliances.

Factory-produced pumice, clay and ceramic chimney systems can be retrofitted, but they tend to be reserved for new builds as they require foundations and their construction is really best left to a skilled bricklayer.

Construction

Most chimneys are built from blockwork and can be clad in a variety of materials — usually stone or brickwork



4. The Build

Chimneys require foundations while steel or ceramic flues don't. If you want a traditional pot then you need a chimney, as flues have terminals. While flues work with any construction type, chimneys work best with blockwork.

CHIMNEY TERMS EXPLAINED

- **Flue:** The void through which the products of combustion are removed into the atmosphere
- **Flue liner:** The material used to form the flue within the chimney
- **Flue pipe:** A metal pipe used to connect an appliance to the flue
- **Chimney:** The structure surrounding one or more flues
- **Chimney terminal:** Another word for pot, cowl or other method of finishing off the top of the chimney

5. The Regulations

The construction and use of chimneys and flues is covered by Building Regulations — and Building Control approval is necessary for building new chimneys and, in some cases, relining existing chimneys, particularly if you are planning on changing the heat appliance.

For a chimney to work well, it requires a good flow of air and for the flue to maintain as high a temperature as possible. It is important (although not something you have to do) for chimneys to be insulated, as this keeps the smoke warm and lessens the chances of it condensing as tar deposits — this is particularly important with woodburning appliances, as they burn wood at a cooler temperature than coal.

It is also essential to have a flue diameter to match the output from whichever type of fire you have along with an adequate air supply. ■



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Ask the Expert

Nic Seal

JAPANESE KNOTWEED

Your Questions Answered

It's a plant that can bring your build or renovation plans to a grinding halt. Environet UK's **Nic Seal** explains the damage Japanese knotweed can do and how to get rid of it

What is Japanese knotweed?

Japanese knotweed was introduced to the UK from Japan in the 1840s as an ornamental plant, and it is now number one on the list of the UK's most invasive plant species. The Environment Agency has described it as: 'Indisputably the UK's most aggressive, destructive and invasive plant.' It is particularly rampant along waterways, railways and on many brownfield sites, and its rapid growth – it can grow up to 3m in three months – means that it overshadows native plant species, has a significant impact on wildlife and causes damage to property.

With official records stating that Japanese knotweed is now so prevalent in the UK that there is not a single six-mile-square patch where it is not present – the Orkney islands excepted – it is likely that a good proportion of homeowners, renovators or self-builders will come up against it when they come to build. Whether the plant originates on your land or encroaches from a neighbour, your project cannot proceed properly until it is dealt with effectively.

There are hybrid varieties of Japanese knotweed, too – notably Giant knotweed, which has larger leaves and generally taller plants. It is not as invasive as Japanese knotweed, but has the same legal status and treatment methods.

Why does it have such a bad reputation? What damage can it do?

There are all sorts of myths about Japanese knotweed. It's not entirely true to say that it will grow through a hard surface, but in its insatiable quest for light and water, it will exploit any weaknesses in the formation and break through cracks in mortar, expansion joints in concrete, splits in drains and joins in paving. The most common form of property damage is, however, caused by laying a hard surface, such as asphalt, concrete, patio slabs, driveway block paving and the like, over Japanese knotweed-infested ground. Covering over the plant might hide it temporarily, but it won't solve the problem in the long term.

Underground sewers and drains, and land drains are particularly susceptible to Japanese knotweed. The knotweed rhizome (the root system) will find its way into the smallest hole on a pipe joint to find water. The rhizome will then continue to grow, gradually blocking the drain and finally breaking it apart.

Japanese knotweed can also grow within cavity walls. We have experienced stems and healthy leaves growing out of vents and airbricks positioned 2m above ground level. When knotweed grows in cavity walls, it has the capacity to force the two skins of the wall apart. We even have a recorded incident of



About the Expert

Nic Seal is Managing Director of Japanese knotweed eradication specialist Environet UK, which offers a free identification service. Its eradication work is fully guaranteed (environetuk.com; 01932 868700)

knotweed growing within a cavity wall of a single storey building and forcing its way through the flat roof.

In practical terms, what happens is that driveways and pavements become uneven, potentially dangerous, as well as unsightly; pathways lift, walls collapse, drains need replacing, fences are pushed out of line or fall over – all of which are headaches for homeowners to deal with. But unless the underlying cause is dealt with – i.e. the Japanese knotweed is eradicated or correctly controlled – any repair work or rebuilding will all be wasted and the plant will return.

What about buying a plot or renovation opportunity where Japanese knotweed is present?

It is virtually impossible to obtain mortgage finance on properties with Japanese knotweed present, and under the recent legal updates to the TA6 conveyancing form, any owner looking to sell is obligated to declare the presence of it together with evidence of previous treatment plans and guarantees. Any attempt at concealment is likely to prove an expensive mistake.



How can I spot it?

Japanese knotweed looks different throughout the year, and it's sometimes confused with Russian vine, ivy and bindweed. In the early spring, red/purple shoots appear from the ground and grow rapidly forming canes. As the canes grow, the heart-shaped leaves gradually unfurl and turn green. The plants are fully grown by early summer and mature canes are hollow with a distinctive purple speckle and form dense stands up to 3m high.

The plant flowers in late summer and these consist of clusters of spiky stems covered in tiny creamy-white flowers. In most areas of the UK, the plant is still in leaf in October, with pretty white flowers faded, but in a few short weeks the leaves will fall and the stems, although still standing, will appear dark brown and look dead. Don't be fooled. The rhizome system beneath the ground is alive and well, just waiting for new shoots to reemerge next year — bigger and stronger.

The rhizome can be identified as knotty with a leathery dark brown bark, and when fresh snaps like a carrot (and is orange beneath the bark).

Invasive Plants

Japanese knotweed is an invasive plant with the potential to impact on building projects. Its appearance changes throughout the seasons. In spring/summer, the leaves unfurl and turn green (ABOVE). In late summer, tiny white flowers grow. While the stems may appear to be dead in winter, the rhizome system beneath the ground is alive, waiting to emerge in the new year

How does it spread?

All Japanese knotweed plants in the UK are female, so the seeds in the flower are not pollinated. The plant spreads by vegetative means, with canes arising from the rhizome that grows underground. The rhizome may grow from either an existing crown, where previous growth has taken place, or from a cut stem.

All new outbreaks of knotweed result from fragments of viable rhizomes that may be spread within soils being moved from site to site by careless gardening and DIY projects, by fly-tipping, or by natural processes such as river bank erosion, or by animal movement. This is why it's imperative to dispose of any fragments of the plant at a licensed waste disposal site if it's to be taken off site, and why soil surrounding existing plants shouldn't be spread to other areas of the garden.

So how can you get rid of it?

Beware of DIY solutions or trying to eradicate the weed yourself. Cutting it down repeatedly, pouring diesel on it, covering it in salt, burning it, burying it and saturating it in over-the-counter weed killers are the most common methods I come across, but they categorically don't work. Japanese knotweed can lie dormant for up to 20 years only to strike again when you least expect it.

There are a few different methods for eradicating the plant, and getting a reputable professional in is advisable. For years now, Japanese knotweed treatments in residential situations have largely been carried out between April and October, simply because the industry has relied upon herbicide treatments, which require the plant to be in leaf.

However, if the ground is to be disturbed (i.e. you're extending or building upon the land), the knotweed-infested soils have to be removed. Herbicide treatment is only suitable when the knotweed is left in situ, undisturbed. If you build over knotweed, herbicide treated or

“When Japanese knotweed grows in cavity walls, it has the capacity to force the two skins of the wall apart”

not, do not be surprised when it finds its way growing through your new structures, or new surfaces.

If you intend to build on the land or don't wish to be restricted to treating it during the spring and summer, you can opt for one of the available soil removal methods. One option we offer is the Resi Dig-Out™ solution, whereby you're guaranteed to be Japanese knotweed free in a matter of days, at any time of the year. It works by removing all viable rhizome from infected soil, allowing the soil to be reused on site. It causes far less disruption than 'dig and dump', and uses no chemicals. (Dig and dump involves the physical excavation under expert supervision of all soils containing viable Japanese knotweed rhizome. These are then loaded into a lorry and transported to a licensed landfill site, for disposal. It's a very expensive method that attracts Landfill Tax.)

It is advisable that any treatment or removal work on Japanese knotweed is guaranteed. Make sure that whoever carries out the work is able to provide full evidence of their treatment plan together with an insurance-backed guarantee. These are required by most lending institutions when you decide to sell the property or seek additional mortgage finance. ■

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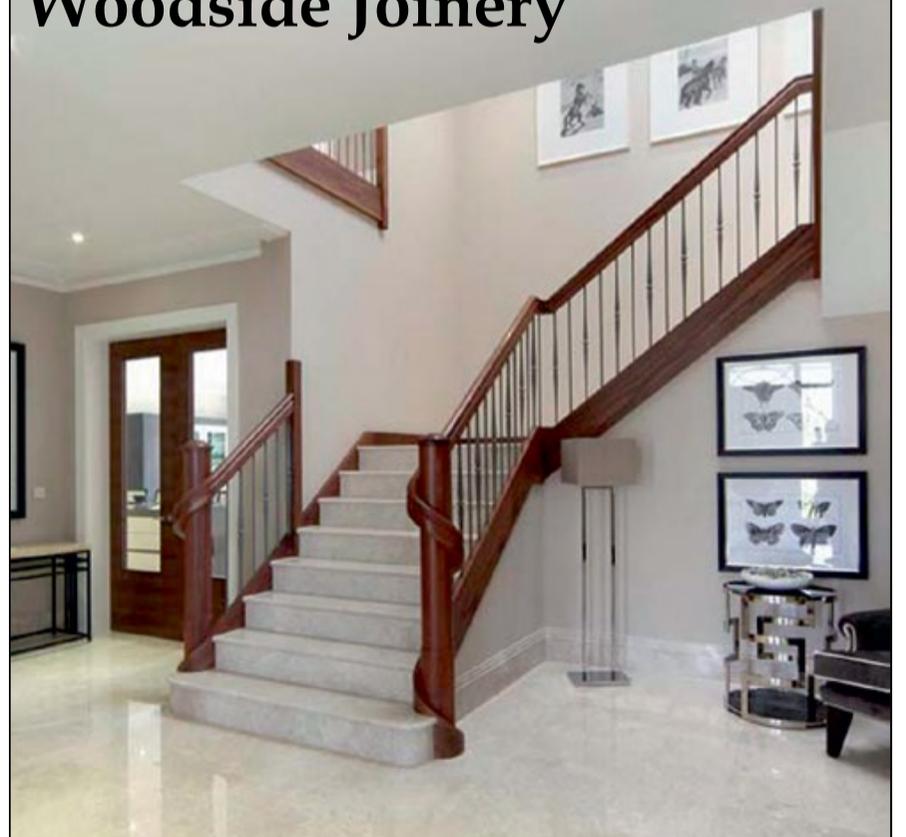
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Achieving an **AIRTIGHT HOME**

It's a key ingredient in creating an energy-efficient home with low heat demand, but what exactly does 'airtightness' mean in practice? Step in eco expert **Tim Pullen** to explain, and to provide his tips for achieving an airtight home

Airtightness is a word oft banded about when it comes to building a new home. But what does 'airtightness' actually mean and how do you go about creating an airtight home?

Air 'leakage' is defined as the flow (or more aptly, escape) of air through the gaps and cracks in the building fabric: to the walls, floors and roof. When we meet Building Regulations standards (Part L1A) on airtightness, this leakage can be no more than $10\text{m}^3/\text{h}/\text{m}^2@50\text{pa}$ — or $10\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$. What this means is that no more than 10 cubic metres of air can escape per hour for every square metre of the envelope surface area, with an internal air pressure of 50 Pascals. To put that in perspective, the PassivHaus standards require a figure equivalent to less than $1\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$. While BRE, the people who write the Building Regulations, suggest that a house achieving airtightness of $5\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$ will use 40 per cent less energy on space heating than a house built to 2005 standards of $10\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$.

The purpose of the chimney is to draw air out of a house — they're the anathema to the airtight home

The big housebuilders have long held that improving on $10\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$ is too onerous, which may be why the Regulation has not changed since 2006. But $5\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$ is now fairly standard for SIPs (structural insulated panels) and ICF (insulated concrete formwork) builds, and even some timber frame systems.

KEY AREAS TO CONSIDER

There are very broadly three key areas to address when creating an airtight home:

1. The fabric envelope: the walls, floor and roof. The ease of achieving a desired airtightness in the walls will vary with the construction system. With SIPs or ICF it's very easy, timber frame not so easy, and with masonry it is quite difficult. It is the junction between the floor and wall, and the wall and the roof where the problems particularly lie.

2. Windows and doors: we focus on U values, but what we really need to be asking for is the airtightness we want as well. Where the frame meets the wall is outside the remit of the window manufacturer, but how the window or door closes within its



The Airtight Masonry Home

This self-build was one of the first UK homes to be awarded PassivHaus certification. What's more, it was built utilising cavity walls. Stringent airtightness measures such as carrying the floor slab across the top of the blockwork and meticulous attention to detail saw an airtightness result of 0.38 air changes/hr @ 50pa (less than $1\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$). Visit greenbuildingstore.co.uk for more

frame is very much their responsibility. It must be airtight on the day it is installed and the seal needs to last at least as long as the window or door itself.

3. Other penetrations to the fabric such as pipes and cables: they're not difficult to deal with and it is largely a matter of attention to detail and especially to ensuring they are all found and dealt with.

Another area which needs serious attention is open fires and their chimneys — they're the anathema to the airtight house. The purpose of a chimney is to draw air out of the house in enormous quantities — exactly what we are trying to prevent. If the target is an airtightness of less than $3\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$, it will be necessary to consider designing out items like keyholes, cat flaps and letter boxes. Getting down to near-PassivHaus



AIRTIGHTNESS IN PRACTICE

Bucking the trend (and going above and beyond Building Regulations standard) for creating energy-efficient, airtight homes, self-build package company Potton are currently in the process of constructing a PassivHaus show home (BELOW) at their self-build centre in Cambridgeshire. The show home will showcase how the company can create an airtight home for budding self-builders. Paul Newman, Self-build Director for Potton, explains: “After the success of building our highly energy-efficient Barn show home (built to Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes) the natural progression for us was to build a PassivHaus show home.

“The Barn used our Kingspan Logic+ timber frame wall system, with an

internal low-emissivity vapour control layer to deliver an airtightness of less than 2m³/hr. On the PassivHaus show home, Kingspan TEK Building System – a high-performance SIP (structural insulated panel) system – with an externally fixed, self-adhesive, vapour-permeable air barrier and breathable membrane will be used to deliver the required airtightness of less than 1m³/hr.”

● potton.co.uk



levels is a serious business and needs serious consideration.

Your architect should be specifying what needs to be done but there are handy, free websites, such as the Planning Portal, which provide construction diagrams and photos of ‘common problems’ to help homeowners understand what’s at play.

CONSTRUCTION SYSTEMS

The most cost-effective way of achieving airtightness is to choose the right construction system. As previously stated, 5m³/hr is now standard with SIPs and ICF builds. SIPs may have an edge because SIPs panels can also be used to form the roof, leaving only the airtightness of the ground floor to deal with. A SIPs supplier, for instance, will guarantee the airtightness of the walls and may even extend that to the windows and doors if they are supplying and installing them, but they will not guarantee the roof (if they’re not supplying it) or floor. For airtightness to be achieved, every aspect must be properly addressed.

With timber frame, it’s a matter of taping all the joints and attention to detail, while masonry construction will mean applying a parge coat (sand, lime and cement) to the internal surface before plastering.

LOFT HATCHES AND OTHER ‘FORGOTTEN’ AREAS

The loft hatch is just as important as any other part of the build and there are proprietary products available, like the Manthorpe hatch from Sustainable Building Solutions. The Green Building Store offers a number of airtightness products including loft hatches, services boxes and downlighter housings, too.

SEALING UP GAPS: TAPES, ADHESIVES AND GROMMETS

The longevity of the materials ▶

used to achieve airtightness is vital. Materials like standard mastic, for instance, will not do as a joint sealer: in time they will dry out, crack and allow air leakage. Instead, a long-lasting, flexible mastic should be used. Again, a trip to the Green Building Store website will give a good idea of the specialist tapes, mastics, grommets and membranes available (see RIGHT).

QUALITY CONTROL

More than anything else, quality control is imperative to the success of creating an airtight home, which presupposes that the person in charge of quality control knows what they are looking for. With SIPs and some timber frame systems, an element of quality control is done in the factory by people who do know. All the on site work needs the same level of attention and skill. The first step is to ensure the main contractor or project manager has built at least one airtight house previously and acquired the knowledge.

AIRTIGHT VS. BREATHABLE

Breathability and airtightness are not mutually exclusive, as breathability is not primarily to do with air. It is, broadly, a material's ability to absorb moisture and then release it so that water vapour is not retained by the fabric of the building, also known as hygroscopic. Natural materials, especially natural insulation, are more hygroscopic than synthetic ones. The term 'vapour permeable' also gets used in this context as it means the rate at which water vapour passes through a material.

INTRODUCING VENTILATION

With airtightness levels of $7\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$ or better, a ventilation system is needed to maintain a healthy atmosphere. However, if you specify a mechanical heat recovery ventilation system, then unless an airtightness of less than $5\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$ is achieved, the heat recovery element will not work. It will instead draw in more cold external air than the heat recovered and

have a negative impact on the energy efficiency of the house.

AIRTIGHTNESS TESTING

Airtightness testing is cheap (around £250), easy and essential, and there is almost an inexhaustible list of companies who will undertake the testing. But a smoke pen or pencil can be useful in indicating exactly where the leaks are; try smokepencil.com.

Expect to do the test more than twice. The first test should always be done when the build is wind and watertight, before any internal finishes are installed, in order to ensure that the fabric reaches the desired standard and that any resulting remedial work does not involve removing expensive finishes.

POSSIBLE COST

The extra cost of achieving airtightness will vary with the construction system and with the level of airtightness being sought. To achieve $5\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$, budget an extra five per cent of the envelope cost for a SIPs build and 15 per cent for a masonry build. Timber frame and ICF will be somewhere between the two.

It's worth noting that airtightness can and has been achieved in renovation projects too, but tends to be very difficult and expensive.

POSSIBLE SAVINGS

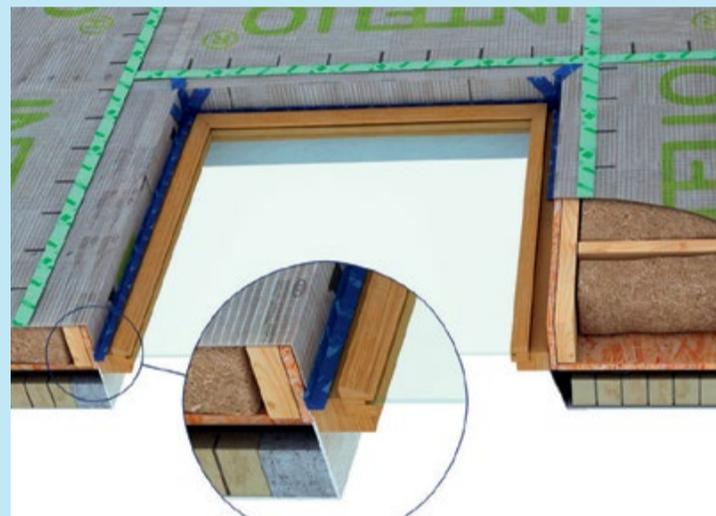
It is inarguable that airtightness improves thermal efficiency and reduces space heating costs. Improving airtightness from $10\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$ to $5\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$ will reduce energy demand (and consequently cost) by around 22 per cent, if everything else remains the same. Improve the airtightness to PassivHaus standard and the cost reduction is over 52 per cent. That's not an inconsiderable cost.

That said, improving airtightness is not typically done in isolation; it is often accompanied by better build quality and better insulation. Airtightness is the biggest single factor affecting heat loss, but good thermal efficiency needs a broader view and a holistic approach. ■

AIRTIGHT ARMOUR



Bonding airtight vapour control layers to other building materials for an airtight finish requires an adhesive which boasts high adhesion but is also flexible and elastic. One such product is the Pro Clima Orcon F.



Pro Clima TESCON No 1 and TESCON VANA are **flexible multipurpose adhesive tapes for airtight bonds**, which can be used to create a secure, permanent and continuous seal between membrane overlaps to adjoining building components.



If pipes or cables penetrate an airtight layer they must be securely sealed. One solution is to use **airtightness grommets**, such as the Pro Clima ROLFLEX and KAFLEX, which provide a tight, flexible fit.

● Pro Clima products are available at the Green Building Store: greenbuildingstore.co.uk

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Ian Rock



The Problem with INTERIOR WALLS

From cracks in the plaster to soundproofing (or lack of it), internal walls can throw up all sorts of problems in old homes. Step in chartered surveyor **Ian Rock** with the solutions

When buying a home to renovate, first thoughts often turn to the 'four walls'; the exterior defences that protect the house from the elements. But the interior walls deserve just as close an inspection — on occasion, they can even give clue to major underlying problems. That said, not every crack is a sign of serious structural movement: hairline cracks at the joints between plasterboard could simply be indicative of the shrinkage of the boards, for example. Meanwhile, issues such as 'thin' party walls and mould may be easier to remedy than first thought.

REDUCING SOUND TRANSMISSION

IDENTIFICATION

In attached homes, sound intrusion and noise pollution from the neighbours are obvious signs that soundproofing needs some consideration.

IMPLICATIONS

The transmission of sound can be exacerbated by thin or defective separating walls between adjoining dwellings. The poor noise-resistance of a separating wall can be due to it being built of only single-width brickwork (115mm) with gaps and holes. Also, in many older terraced houses, firebreak party walls in the roof spaces were completely omitted.



Wall Cracks

A telltale sign of major structural movement, cracks can strike fear in the hearts of buyers, but are usually down to other issues. The size and shape of the crack is typically indicative of the problem, and a chartered building surveyor will help get to the bottom of it

REMEDIAL WORK

Missing party walls in the roof need to be built up in new blockwork, or studwork lined with fireboard, while gaps in party walls can be filled with expanding foam to block air paths, and the wall then rendered or insulated for sound.

There are a number of different materials and methods that can be applied to walls to deaden sound transmission. One solution is to construct an independent wall of timber studwork and plasterboard next to the old wall, but not connected to it. This requires a minimum 50mm gap in between, with the frame-

work secured at its edges – i.e. to the floor and ceiling – but not to the wall itself. Pack the studwork with mineral wool insulation and board over with two layers of acoustic plasterboard (such as British Gypsum's SoundBloc) with staggered joints, sealing the joints with scrim and sealant. In addition, to reduce sound via the roof void, fix a new layer of plasterboard over the bedroom ceiling, or board and insulate the loft floor above and line the firebreak wall with insulated plasterboard. Studwork partition walls between rooms can similarly be upgraded by packing them with mineral wool. ▶

SURFACE CRACKS IN PLASTER

IDENTIFICATION AND IMPLICATIONS

In older buildings the timber laths can come loose, or the plaster can lose its key with the laths due to poor adhesion of plaster or vibration. Small, irregular-shaped cracks and unevenness in lath and plaster are indicative of this problem.

In more modern homes, plasterboard-lined stud walls can suffer from thermal movement or shrinkage at joints, which is often due to poor-quality workmanship when first built. Hairline cracks to plasterboard joints are telltale signs.

REMEDIAL WORK

For timber laths, carefully check the cracked area for lumps of loose

plaster. If the problem area is fairly small, cut out the loose plaster and then screw the laths back to the joists and patch plaster to a flush finish. In severe cases, one solution is to replace or line the wall with new sheets of plasterboard (although do take care if the wall was designed to breathe).

Defects in plasterboard are usually fairly straightforward to remedy. Hairline cracks along joints are very common and not normally a cause for concern. But do bear in mind that the joints may not have been properly prepared when the boards were installed and may need to be raked out, scrim taped and filled. In severe cases, rejoining and skim plastering may be required, or at worst, damaged boards replaced completely.



DAMP INTERIOR WALLS

IDENTIFICATION

Damp patches, mould and peeling wallpaper, often found at low level, are obvious signs of damp.

IMPLICATIONS

Damp is not a particularly common problem in internal walls, and the cause may be down to leaking pipes such as mains water supplies, including those serving any adjoining houses. Plumbing leaks are a common cause, too (as ABOVE), and can sometimes emanate from next door if the house is attached. Central heating pipes running through concrete can be at risk of corroding, and any central heating or waste pipes channelled under floors may have been merrily leaking unseen for years. Where outdoor ground levels are high, storm water may run

under floors and collect. Sustained damp can potentially lead to decay in suspended timber floors.

Damp may also soak down from above, from leaking roofs or defective water tanks and pipes in lofts, or from upstairs bathrooms.

REMEDIAL WORK

The source of damp should first be identified. Lift any adjacent floorboards and check the condition of ground floor joists, and improve ventilation under timber floors to help disperse any dampness. Leaking pipes need to be repaired or replaced. High external ground levels should be lowered, possibly installing a drainage channel to disperse surface water away from the house. Finally, if damp is the result of high-level leaks to roofs, etc., then get this fixed.



STRUCTURAL MOVEMENT

IDENTIFICATION

Lengthy cracks need investigating. Distorted internal door frames that cause doors to jam, evident gaps to skirting boards, and floors that slope where walls have settled, are also potential signs of structural movement. Hairline cracking is sometimes evident where internal walls abut main walls.

IMPLICATIONS

Where cracks are tapered and more than about 3mm wide, or where the plaster on each side of the crack is not level, it's more likely to be indicative of structural movement — often due to a problem elsewhere in the property (i.e. where bay windows or external walls have bowed out). Where an internal wall has been 'knocked through' but the loading above has not been properly supported, the floors and walls upstairs may have had distorted and adjacent ceilings may have cracked as a consequence.

However, seasonal hairline cracking that is often indicative of 'differential movement' is not usually a serious concern. Where adjoining walls are made from different materials — where internal timber stud walls meet main walls of masonry — they may expand or contract at different rates, too. Similarly, period properties with shallow foundations tend to move slightly over the course of the year and it's not unusual for small cracks to develop at joints.

REMEDIAL WORK

Differential movement can often be tackled by raking out cracks and applying flexible mastic or filler. Where walls have been removed without adequate support to the loadings above, or there is movement to bays or the main walls, a structural engineer will need to advise on remedial works. Load-bearing internal walls that do not have insufficient foundation depths could require strengthening or the construction of new supporting brick piers or buttresses. ■



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Spotting Potential

Tony Holt

RADICAL REBUILD

A 1950s chalet bungalow on green belt land suffers from dark, cramped accommodation. Designer **Tony Holt** recognises the potential for a replacement dwelling to create a modern home



Tony Holt is an architectural designer and registered chartered architectural technologist, specialising in bespoke property design for a range of clients across the country, with his work focusing on both new builds and the remodelling of existing properties

● www.tonyholt-design.co.uk

THE EXISTING PROPERTY

The existing chalet bungalow is situated on a private road in Essex surrounded by green belt land, and occupies a large plot with open views to the rear. The property was built in the late 1950s and since its construction has undergone small extensions to the roof with the addition of box dormers to create bedroom space.

The ground floor consists of a 126m² footprint which occupies the majority of the width of the plot, with almost half of this space being used by a large single storey double garage. Due to the limited space downstairs the rooms are very small, with limited fenestration over the adjacent views to the rear, resulting in small dark spaces. Upstairs there are three bedrooms and a family bathroom which all have sloping ceilings squeezed into just 70m². The rooms currently feel too small to make this a family home.

The homeowner wishes to create a modern family home with open plan

spaces and bedrooms that are not squeezed into tight areas. Given the scale of work involved – a remodel and extension would, at the very least, require the existing roof to be removed to accommodate a substantial new first floor – a demolition and rebuild is the most financially viable option. But with the neighbouring properties positioned reasonably close to the plot, with only a small gap between each property, any proposal for a new home will need to be carefully designed so as not to have any overbearing impact on these properties.

THE SOLUTION

The first challenge will be to ensure the first floor of the new property does not impose on the neighbouring properties, and so the solution here will be to offset it from the ground floor — allowing the garage to sit closer to the boundary while the first floor roof slopes away to minimise impact.

On the ground floor there will be a double-height glazed circulation space with views directly ahead through glass doors leading to an open plan kitchen/family/dining area. The views will then continue out to the rear thanks to glazed doors leading out to a terraced area to the rear. Off the main entrance hall there

The proposal offers a suitable replacement to a home in need of significant improvement

will be a cupboard for coats and WC, and a home office will look out over the front entrance. A separate living area with fireplace will also allow the homeowners to choose between a range of different spaces available for different styles of entertaining.

The new staircase will wrap around a feature wall to the galleried





landing, with double-height glazing flooding the home with natural light. The first floor landing will lead to five double bedrooms each with primary fenestration over the front amenity space or to the rear. The bedrooms will all benefit from vaulted ceilings, with the master bedroom enjoying a grand walk-in wardrobe leading to a generous en suite, as well as a glazed gable to enhance and frame the views beyond. Two guest bedrooms will have access to their own en suites and built-in wardrobes, with the other two bedrooms sharing a Jack-and-Jill-style bathroom.

The external façade will be a driving factor to ensure the new home fits in and enhances the local area, while having minimum impact on the green belt. The use of natural stone and timber cladding will create a soft blend of contemporary materials, while large glazed areas with powder-coated aluminium frames will create a visually impressive entrance. The mixed palette of mate-

A Home Transformed
 By replacing the existing 1950s chalet bungalow with a new home, the existing dark, small rooms will no longer be an issue. The new proposal welcomes plenty of natural light through large expanses of glazing, and sees the introduction of a larger first floor for increased bedroom accommodation

rials will all contribute to a visually striking home of architectural merit.

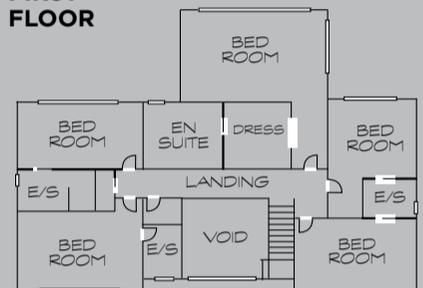
THE VERDICT

This replacement dwelling now provides an impressive 355m², with a range of internal spaces to suit the needs of a typical family. The large open plan kitchen/family/dining area, for example, will allow the occupants to socialise together with a variety of spaces for activities such as cooking, eating and relaxing. The final proposal offers a suitable replacement to a home in need of significant improvement, and provides the street scene with a home boasting kerb appeal. ■

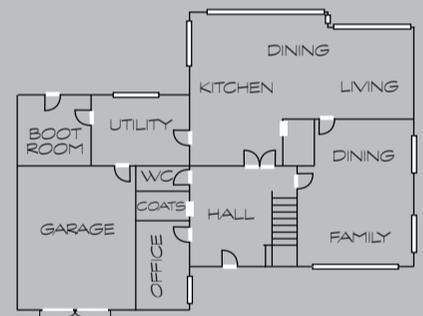
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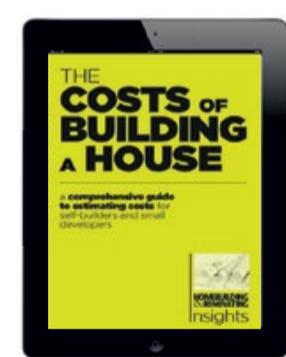
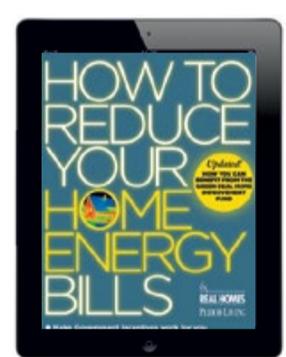
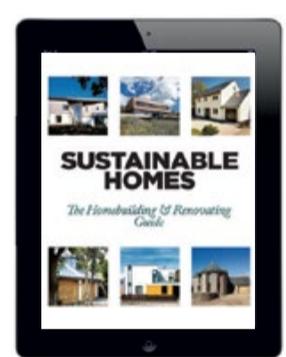
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David Snell

The Carpenter

The multitaskers of the building trade, carpenters fulfil many an important role on site. **David Snell** spends the day with Mark Mathews – who also works as a joiner – as he takes on one such task, roofing



Mark Mathews

Mark has built his reputation over 20 years on acute attention to detail. He is a site carpenter, carrying out all aspects of first and second fix and roof carpentry for new homes, renovations and extensions. But on top of all that, he has his own joinery works where he manufactures windows, doors, garage doors and a whole host of other items in timber. He has even ventured into furniture making and, in turn, the making and fitting of bespoke handmade kitchen and bedroom units and furniture.

The role of the site carpenter is a fairly fluid one. It is not unknown for them to take on the placement of insulation, especially when they are making up internal studwork partitioning or creating new roofs. On the site that Mark was working on the day HB&R visited, he had constructed a complete new roof for a 1930s semi-detached house that a friend is renovating, and was in the process of slating the new roof on the lean-to section at the rear. "I built it, so I'll cover it," he insists. "Carpenters can multitask." ● Mark Mathews: 01594 564318; 07796 957147



8.30am - Mark begins work on slating the roof of a lean-to extension

8.30am

Mark arrives on site, having already nipped into the local builders' merchants for copper nails and crampion rivets for the task he's undertaking today. He takes a sip of tea and looks up at the lean-to roof he's going to be slating. He rough battened the day before but he's taken care to place the battens in their correct position in order to avoid excess holes in the underfelt.

He loads his tools and kit up on to the scaffold and fills his chalk line marker. He won't be using a 'T gauge' of batten, as most tilers do, as he believes that the varying thicknesses and curvature of the battens can lead to 'creep'. (Also, working to a marked string line is easier if you're on your own.)

9.00am

Mark measures up each end of the roof and marks a chalk line across. Then he cuts roughly 50mm excess off the next pre-cut tiling batten and fixes it to each rafter using a nail gun. (With 50mm rafters there's little chance of missing.) He repeats the process, working up to the apex of the lean-to roof, and sets the last batten as tight as possible, while leaving space to fix old lead flashing up against it, which he's dressed up. There's nothing wrong with the existing lead apart from a couple of splits, beneath which he'll feed new sections before dressing it down over the new slates.

Mark's using 600x300mm fibre cement slates. He lays the first undercloak course of slates along the width of the roof, nailing them with copper nails so that the batten is left exposed for the next course of slates. This means that he won't be fixing through more than one slate at the batten which, in turn, makes it easier if, one day, it's necessary to replace a slate. He leaves an 8mm gap between each undercloak slate. ►



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10.00am

Time for a tea break, which Mark takes in his van. He uses the time to ring a local timber merchant for prices on oak, which he's going to use as face framing for some kitchen units on another job. He'll be using standard carcasses but making up the Shaker-style doors and drawer fronts in American white oak.

10.30am

Mark heads back up to the roof and loads out the scaffold with packs of 15 slates and puts enough double slates up for every other course. He's slightly concerned that he'll not have enough to finish the job. He also readies three purpose-made roof vents, which will provide high-level ventilation beneath the underfelt in combination with the lower-level fascia vents.

He checks whether the roof is square using the 3-4-5 measurement rule and he finds that, on this old building with uneven walls, the new roof is 40mm out of square. He calculates what he has to gain as he works up the roof and then marks the square with a chalk line. He will then split the difference between top and bottom by 20mm.



10.00am - A tea break doubles up as time to enquire about the price of oak with a local timber merchant



9.00am - Mark begins to lay the first course of slates on the lean-to extension roof

Mark cuts 40mm off from the first row of slates. This gives him the correct lap and ensures that the batten is exposed for the next full course. There's some tension on these slates caused by the slight kick up to the eaves and the top of the fascia, but that will help trap the undercloak. As these are manmade slates, they can take that pressure, whereas natural slates would require fillet packers to each rafter.

11.30am

Each slate is double nailed using copper nails and set 3mm apart from its neighbour, which allows Mark to insert a copper crampion rivet. This resembles an

upside-down large-headed nail with a cup trapped between the two adjoining slates and the pin sticking up and through the small hole close to the bottom edge of each slate. Once in position, this pin is bent over to hold the slate firmly in place, thus preventing movement due to wind suction.

Mark is right-handed, which makes it easier for him to work from right to left. He works mechanically, always putting his hammer back into its sling so that he can pick up a slate in one hand and the nails from his pouch with the other, while also holding the slate with pressure from his wrist as he reaches again for his hammer. He doesn't hammer the nails too tight as the slates need to be able to move slightly.

11.50am

Mark is now halfway up the right-hand side of the roof. He has to cut each right-hand verge slate up its length to maintain the square. Every other course starts with

a double slate to provide the bond; he cuts the latter using a slate guillotine. Working from the right-hand side towards the top left-hand corner



11.30am - Introducing copper crampion rivets

A Day in the Life

means that Mark can avoid having to stand on the slates themselves – although these manmade tiles could take his weight without damage.

12.15pm

He cuts out a section at the top of the seventh course to take the first vent slate. A 'V' section in the underfelt is created and he folds the top back and tacks it over the batten above.

12.40pm

Mark fixes the top two courses on the right-hand side using a slate cut to 450mm, finished with one of 300mm tucked up and fixed to the very top batten beneath the raised lead flashing.

1.00pm

Time for lunch. Multitasking again, Mark takes the opportunity to ring for prices on the carcasses he's going to need for that forthcoming kitchen job.

1.40pm

Work resumes, with Mark stacking the cut slates. He has to create new nail holes using a tool that resembles a device used to punch holes in leather. He also cuts holes for two further vent slates. These fix in the same way as the other slates, even to the point of having the crampion rivets close to their lower edge.

2.00pm

Mark is ready to start laying the slates again, which he does methodically, working hand over hand in a rhythm that rarely varies. The only time he stops is when the client rings to ask how things are going. He tells him that he'll be weathertight by evening.

The left-hand verge of single and double slates also have to be cut to maintain the square, once again evening out the difference between top and bottom.

3.00pm

He's reached the left-hand side, where his space to work is restricted and he has to work off the roof from the scaffolding at the side. He's worried about whether he's got enough slates, but a quick count reveals that he'll have around half a dozen left over.

He fixes the last 300mm cut slate. He won't dress the lead flashing down until he's made up the replacement parts to go beneath the splits.

3.40pm

Mark takes down the ladder and stands back to admire his work. The job's done and finished for the day. He starts clearing the waste into bags of rubbish to be taken off site and then collects together his tools and takes them back to the van.

It's time to go home, but Mark has more to do when he gets there: using the prices he's obtained during the day to put together quotes for the next job. ■



12.15pm - Two slates are cut ready for the installation of a vent slate



1.40pm - Stacking slates ready to continue roofing



3.00pm - Nearly finished, Mark works on the left-hand side of the roof

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ESSENTIALS

EXPERT ADVICE

How Do I Get Started?

Find and Assess Your Opportunity

Plots in the right area and at the right price are not easy to come by. Equally, houses in need of renovation need assessment to ensure they can be turned into the home you envisage. Use specialist plotfinding agencies (such as plotfinder.net) to get an idea of the building plots currently available in your area. You will then need to assess the plot or house from a planning, legal, design and structural point of view to see if it's right for you. A survey is also a wise investment when buying a plot, or house to renovate.

MORE: plotfinder.net

Decide on a Build Route

Self-build is not, as the name suggests, something that relies on good DIY skills. In fact, less than 1 in 10 projects are managed this way; the majority are either handled by a 'package' supplier, a main contractor/builder, or carried out by subcontractors directly managed by the homeowner. The chief skills required are organisation, management and vision — plus lots of determination. **MORE:**

homebuilding.co.uk/buildroute

Find a Designer

Good design not only ensures the house best meets your needs, but also maximises value. Design fees vary — designers can charge fixed fees for small, packageable design work, charge on a time basis, or charge a proportion of the contract cost. Interview a handful of recommended local designers, who may or may not be architects. **MORE:** homebuilding.co.uk/designers

Get Planning and Building Regulations Approval

Once you have design drawings, you can submit your project for planning approval. Most new houses and large renovation projects will be decided by the local planning committee, while smaller schemes will be decided by powers delegated to the case planning officer. Once you have gained approval, you should then get detailed building drawings from your designer ready to submit for Building Regulations approval. **MORE:** planningportal.gov.uk

Find a Builder

Ideally you will have lined up a handful of local builders

during the early stages of the planning process. For each of them, you should meet former clients and/or see examples of previous work for peace of mind. The tender process involves putting together a document containing all of the project information (as detailed with your designer) and perhaps meeting them on site to discuss your plans further. They will then go away and estimate how much your project will cost, and get back to you with a quote.

MORE: homebuilding.co.uk/builders

Get Insured

As soon as you exchange contracts, arrange your insurance. Empty houses that need renovation, and building plots require specialist insurance to ensure that you are protected for public liability issues, as well as the usual issues of fire and so on.

All new houses and major renovations should also be guaranteed against structural defects in the form of a warranty, which lasts 10 years from the initial date of taking out the policy. **MORE:**

homebuilding.co.uk/insurance

OUR PICK OF THE PLOTS



PADSTOW, CORNWALL

A unique opportunity to acquire a frontline building plot with planning permission. **£400,000**



CHESHIRE

This level garden plot with planning permission comprises 816m² with fields to the rear. **£135,000**



FALKIRK, SCOTLAND

An opportunity to acquire a plot with planning within an exclusive development of six properties. **£85,000**



CEREDIGION, WALES

This plot in the popular, sought-after location of Ceredigion comes with full planning consent. **£85,000**



INSIDER TIP:

“I would advise you make a list of must-haves, nice-to-haves and luxuries for your scheme depending on your requirements”

BOB BRANSCOMBE, PROJECT CONSULTANT

BUILD COSTS

How Much Will it All Cost?

Top Build Project Tips

Do your homework: when hiring trades, speak to previous clients and see examples of their work.

Never pay for work in advance — if the builder has a good credit rating, materials can be paid for at the end of the month.

Establish the terms of the contract so everyone is on the same page.

One of the most important aspects when planning your self-build or home renovation/extension project is working out how much it is going to cost.

This figure will depend on the size and shape of the house, the level of your own involvement and how much work you delegate to the professionals, where in the country you intend to build and the materials you're going to use. If you can make even rough decisions about these factors, then you can begin to work out how much it is going to cost.

As a very general rule of thumb, expect a building plot to cost between a third and a half of the end value of the finished house. The costs of building a house will then depend on the variables listed above. All building work is usually quoted on a cost/m² basis. For example, a typical

new four bedroom self-built home is around 200m² (with 100m² on two storeys) and usually varies between £900-£1,500/m² (although self-builders achieve costs between £300-£3,000/m²).

Renovation costs are more difficult to establish as they involve many variables, but allow at least £1,000-£1,300/m² for work. This, added to the cost of the plot/house and with a 10-30% contingency, should result in less than the final end value of the house.

The table below, based on information from the Build Cost Information Service (part of RICS), has been helping self-build beginners get an idea of their potential costs for many years. It is updated monthly to help you work out a more accurate estimate (note, however, that these figures are for build costs only and do not account for VAT, which is not charged for self-build projects).

Interactive Calculator Online

Visit homebuilding.co.uk/calculator for a fully interactive calculator to get your full build costs in an instant. It's easy to use and you can use it over and over again

HOW TO USE THE TABLE

1. Identify your build route from the four options.
2. Identify your expected level of specification: 'standard', 'good' or 'excellent'.
3. Identify the estimated size of your finished house (either single or two/more storeys).
4. Choose your location.
5. Multiply the figure by your house size (the internal floor area).

The Homebuilding & Renovating Build Cost Table

		BUILD ROUTE A (DIY + Subbies)			BUILD ROUTE B (Subbies)			BUILD ROUTE C (Builder/Subbies)			BUILD ROUTE D (Main Contractor)		
		Standard	Good	Excellent	Standard	Good	Excellent	Standard	Good	Excellent	Standard	Good	Excellent
SINGLE STOREY													
>90m ²	Greater London	1175	1359	1634	1244	1439	1730	1313	1519	1827	1382	1599	1923
	South-East	1030	1192	1433	1091	1262	1518	1151	1332	1602	1212	1403	1687
	NW, SW, East & Scotland Mids, Yorks, NE & Wales	937	1085	1304	992	1149	1381	1047	1213	1458	1102	1276	1534
91-160m ²	Greater London	1076	1305	1696	1139	1382	1796	1202	1459	1896	1265	1536	1995
	South-East	944	1144	1487	999	1212	1575	1055	1279	1662	1110	1346	1750
	NW, SW, East & Scotland Mids, Yorks, NE & Wales	859	1042	1354	909	1103	1434	960	1164	1514	1010	1226	1593
161m ² +	Greater London	958	1256	1576	1014	1330	1669	1070	1404	1761	1127	1478	1854
	South-East	840	1101	1382	889	1166	1464	939	1231	1545	988	1296	1626
	NW, SW, East & Scotland Mids, Yorks, NE & Wales	764	1002	1259	809	1061	1333	854	1120	1407	899	1179	1481
TWO STOREY													
90-130m ²	Greater London	1130	1308	1606	1197	1385	1701	1263	1462	1795	1330	1538	1890
	South-East	992	1147	1409	1050	1214	1492	1108	1282	1575	1167	1349	1658
	NW, SW, East & Scotland Mids, Yorks, NE & Wales	902	1044	1283	955	1105	1359	1008	1167	1434	1061	1228	1510
131-220m ²	Greater London	952	1153	1462	1008	1220	1548	1064	1288	1634	1120	1356	1720
	South-East	835	1011	1282	884	1071	1357	934	1130	1433	983	1190	1508
	NW, SW, East & Scotland Mids, Yorks, NE & Wales	759	920	1167	804	975	1235	849	1029	1304	893	1083	1372
221m ² +	Greater London	878	1125	1412	930	1191	1495	982	1257	1578	1033	1323	1661
	South-East	771	986	1239	816	1044	1312	862	1102	1385	907	1160	1457
	NW, SW, East & Scotland Mids, Yorks, NE & Wales	701	897	1127	742	950	1193	784	1003	1259	825	1055	1326
		671	857	1078	710	908	1141	750	958	1205	789	1009	1268

FIGURES UPDATED 27/10/14; DO NOT INCLUDE VAT

SPOTLIGHT ON...



Success with Sealed Bids

They're a good method used by vendors to target committed buyers, but how do you win if your chosen house goes to sealed bids?

What are they?

Sealed bids are often used as a way for vendors to eliminate time wasters, or if high levels of interest in the property are anticipated — focusing on those who have no chain and are able to exchange quickly. As sealed bids are kept confidential, this also means that properties can sell for a greater price than the vendor may have originally expected.

In most cases, potential buyers will view the property and be invited to submit their 'best and final' offer in writing by a certain date. All offers will then be considered by the vendor and estate agent.

What do I need to include?

When you submit your bid to hand over to the estate agent, you will need to include a letter with your name, contact details and your 'best and final' offer for the property. You will also be expected to provide details of how you intend to purchase it. If you will be taking out a mortgage then provide a copy of the offer in principle. However, if you have a property to sell then provide the state of the sale, along with the contact details of the agent you are using. If you are a cash buyer, proof of the cleared funds will boost your attractiveness further, and if you are in a rented property then it is worth including details of the period of notice you are required to give.

Sometimes it helps to also include a personal letter in

the envelope, written directly to the vendor, where you can include details about the future use of the house, such as to bring up a family, continue to preserve its character, etc. Lower bids have been accepted in the past because of a particularly nice letter, or a photo of a family that has captured the vendor's heart.

Will I be guaranteed to win if I make a very high bid?

High bids won't always be the main attraction to vendors — they will take other factors into consideration. They will be keen to know what position you're in and how this relates to how quickly they need to move. Factors they will also consider include your financial position and reliability, and, if emotional ties to the property exist, they will want to know what kind of person will be living in their old home.

Should I sell my property first?

The vendor will want to know that you are capable of completing on the property without hold ups or problems, and being part of a chain can be viewed as problematic. If you are renting, or not depending on the sale of a property, your bid will rise to the top of the pile.

Are there any other ways that I can increase my chances of success?

By bidding an unusual figure and avoiding making the same

bid as someone else, this will help you to stand out and avoid a tie, i.e. £250,102 as opposed to £250,000. Also get a sense of who the vendor is, what they want from the sale, and whether they are in their own purchase. Scope out the competition, too: estate agents may not be able to discuss the other bids or bidders, but they can tell you how many others you are up against.

Most importantly, do not miss the deadline for bids. Make sure you submit your bid just before the deadline and deliver it in person to ensure that it has been safely received. Do not worry about looking desperate — think of it more as looking keen.

What if I don't win?

Remember that no does not always mean no. If you get the call to say that you were unsuccessful, remember that there may still be a glimmer of hope as things could fall through and you might be second on the list. ■

SELF-BUILD BY NUMBERS

10,000

UK self-builds were built between July 2013-14

£255,543

is the average cost of a self-build (including land)

56%

of the total costs spent on materials (44% on labour)

13,000

plots currently for sale on the plotfinder.net database

97m²

is the average UK new-build house size

1 in 7

people in the UK want to build their own home

FROM THE ARCHIVE

At Home in an Orchard

Jenny and Colin Creese's beautiful Arts & Crafts-inspired oak frame self-build sits perfectly within their orchard plot.

Designed by Border Oak, the traditional home features a steep pitch roof complete with catslide elements, and uses a mix of lime render and oak cladding on a brick plinth for the exterior façade.

The interiors are equally traditional with the oak frame selectively exposed in places, but thanks to being packed with insulation and its passive solar design, the home's energy bills remain low.



BUILD COSTS

Where Do I Get Finance?

Access to funds can be difficult to come by, and so you should contact your regular lender first to see if they will entertain the idea of supporting your project. In the event that they don't lend on the type of project you're taking on, contact a mortgage broker who will have up-to-date information on lenders currently making funds available based on your circumstances. **You will be able to borrow up to 85% (in some cases 90%) of the land/house cost and up to the same levels for the building works.**

You will need to work out how much money you can afford to spend on your project in total (the cost of the build plot plus the cost of the build and contingency fund) before contacting a lender. In most cases, this budget will be a mix of private savings, any equity in your existing house, and additional borrowings from a mortgage lender.

If you have yet to sell your existing house, note that most self-build lenders will not entertain lending money to buy a plot if you're relying on the subsequent sale of your primary home to release funds. That means

you'll need to sell up first in order to get a self-build mortgage. However, lenders will be more flexible if you have a significant disposable income and/or savings that can cover the majority or all of a plot purchase.

HOW SELF-BUILD MORTGAGES WORK

A self-build mortgage is designed for the needs of a self-build project, with money drawn out in stages. Typically, the first stage is on completion of the purchase

Site Insurances

- **Self-Build Zone**
selfbuildzone.com
- **BuildStore**
buildstore.co.uk
- **ProAktive Selfbuild**
selfbuildonline.co.uk
- **NHBC**
nhbc.co.uk
- **Titan Insurance**
titan-insurance.com

Self-build Mortgage Lender Table

LENDER	LTV LAND	LTV CONSTRUCTION	FINAL LTV
BM Solutions (bmsolutions.co.uk)	75%	75%	75%
Chorley & District (0845 223 4888)	85%	85%	80%
Cumberland BS (0800 032 3030)	75%	75%	85%
Darlington BS (01325 366366)	70%	70%	70%
Earl Shilton BS (01455 844422)	50%	75%	75%
Ecology (0845 674 5566; eco homes only)	90%	90%	90%
Halifax (0845 727 3747)	Not on land	80%	80%
Hanley Economic BS (0845 223 4888)	75%	75%	75%
Hinckley & Rugby BS (0800 774 499)	Not on land	80%	80%
Holmesdale BS (01737 245716)	Not on land	60%	70%
Loughborough BS (01509 631950)	75%	75%	75%
Mansfield BS (01623 676345)	80%	80%	80%
Melton Mowbray BS (01664 414141)	Not on land	75%	75%
Monmouthshire BS* (0845 223 4888)	85%	85%	80%
Newbury BS (01635 555777)	66%	75%	75%
Newcastle BS (0845 606 4488)	80%	80%	80%
Penrith BS (01768 863675)	50%	75%	75%
Progressive BS (028 9024 4926)	Not on land	70%	75%
Saffron BS (0800 072 1100)	65%	75%	75%
Scottish BS (0131 313 7700)	80%	80%	80%
Ulster Bank (ulsterbank.com)	Not on land	80%	80%
Vernon BS (0161 429 6262)	75%	75%	75%

*For a full list of self-build mortgages, visit homebuilding.co.uk/self-build-mortgages

STEP BY STEP

Typical Build Schedule

MONTH ONE



1. Clear & Peg Site
Get surveys to work out levels and peg out site as per drawings



2. Foundations
Dig trenches and begin to build up the blockwork footings



3. Floor Structure
Finish footings and install ground floor slab or beam and block (as here)



4. Superstructure
Blocks or frame used to build external walls to first floor height

MONTH TWO



5. Second Lift
First floor structure installed, external walls continue to roof



6. Roof
Walls finished, roof structure installed and covered with slates or tiles

BEGINNER'S CLINIC

‘We’re facing an issue with a cold water pipe hidden inside our bathroom wall. The pipe is subject to heavy condensation that leads to damage to the decor. What is the likely cause of this, and how can we remedy it?’

of the building plot, and the subsequent stages are then released as the project progresses.

The amount you can borrow for a self-build mortgage will depend on the same factors that decide how much you can borrow for a regular house mortgage. In most cases, this amount will either be based on income multipliers (3-4 x single income; 1.5 x joint) or, more often, will be based on affordability factors (mortgage lenders will assess your regular monthly outgoings and your income, set against how much the monthly loan will cost to repay, and over how long).

This figure will then be assessed against loan-to-value (LTV) policies. These policies change weekly, however lenders will provide funding for up to 85% of the value of the plot and 85% of the value of the building project.

For specialist self-build mortgages, or if you want funds released in advance of the project's stages being completed, you will need to go through a specialist broker such as Build-Store. Regular arrears stage releases can also be found.

It's not uncommon for old lead pipes to develop small pinhole leaks, while modern copper or polypropylene pipes can split or leak at the joints. If you suspect a leak, ask a plumber to pressure test the pipe. Ruling out a leak, then the problem is due to condensation.

Hot, steamy air in the bathroom will condense on any cold surface that has a temperature below the dew point, including a rising main in the wall where the water in the pipe is cold, and this, in turn, can damage decor and lead to mould growth, which is a potential health hazard, especially for young children, the elderly or asthmatics.

The general remedy for condensation is to ensure the

correct balance of background heating and ventilation. Every bathroom should have an extractor vent, which operates from the light switch to ensure the necessary change of air, as well as windows.

If all else fails then - short of actually rerunning the pipe elsewhere - the remedy is to lag the pipe well and box it in with a simple framework of battens and plasterboard packed with insulation, and then decorate or tile over it. If tiling, ensure that access traps with mirror screws are incorporated so that the plumbing can be reached later if needed without smashing through the tiles. This task is potentially a DIY job, or well within the capabilities of a good local builder. ■

Know the Acronyms

- CAD**
Computer-aided design
- CIAT**
Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists
- COP**
Coefficient of Performance
- DECC**
Department of Energy and Climate Change
- DPM**
Damp-proof membrane
- EPS**
Expanded polystyrene
- FiTs**
Feed-in Tariffs
- FMB**
Federation of Master Builders
- MVHR**
Mechanical ventilation heat recovery
- OSB**
Orientated strand board
- PD**
Permitted Development
- RHI**
Renewable Heat Incentive
- RICS**
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
- SAP**
Standard Assessment Procedure
- SIPS**
Structural insulated panels

MONTH FOUR



7. Weathertight
Windows, doors and soffits fitted to make house weathertight

MONTH FIVE



8. First Fix
Electrical and plumbing runs put in place — the stuff you won't see

MONTH SIX-EIGHT



9. Plastering
Usually a skim coat on top of plasterboard, after first fix complete



10. Second Fix
Connecting up the electrics and heating systems to include sockets

MONTH NINE



11. Fixtures
Kitchens and bathrooms in, flooring down, joinery complete

MONTH TEN



12. Snagging
Builders back to deal with any issues, final exterior finishes



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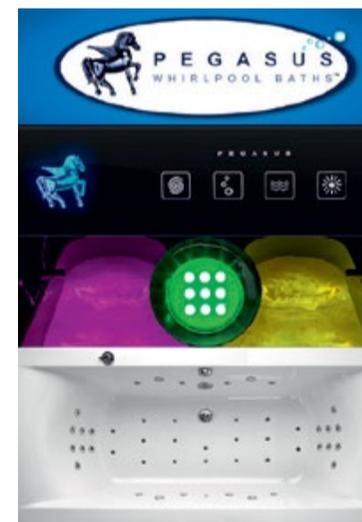
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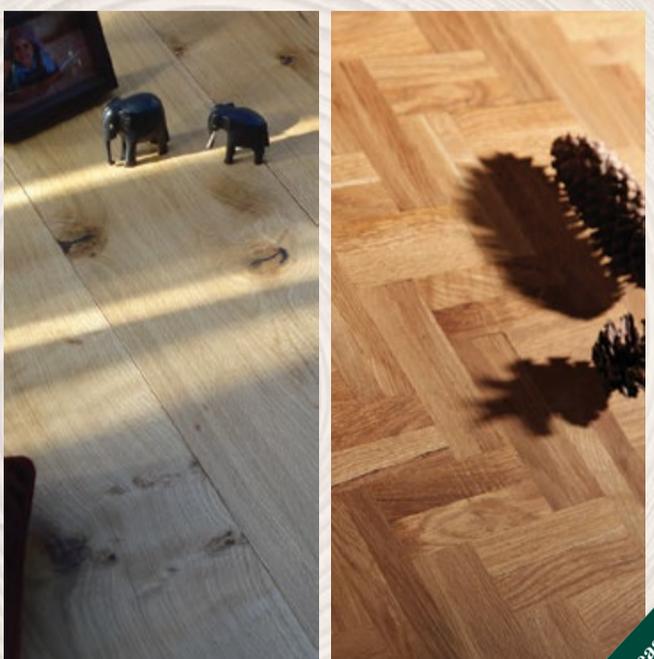
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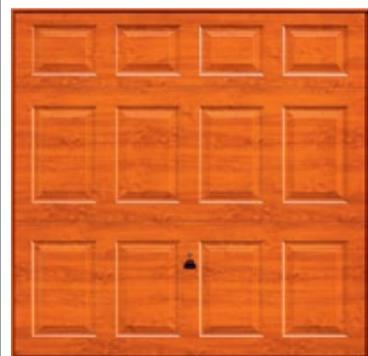
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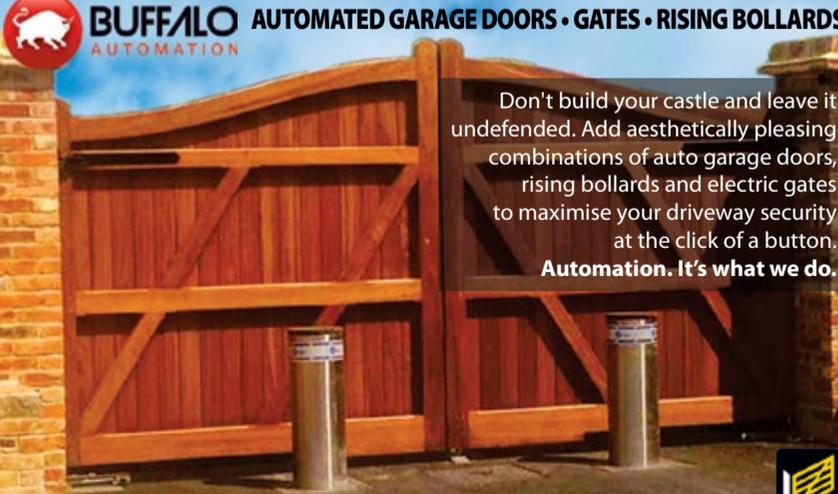
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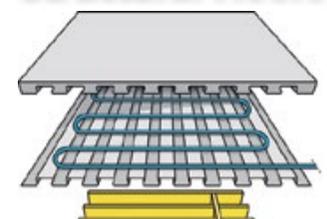
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A Striking Home Designed Around the Views



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Mark and Julia Swannell have transformed a boxy Georgian brick build into a Tudor-inspired manor house in Shropshire. Here, the couple explain how they went about their 10-year remodel and extension



“It’s the Small Details Which Really Make a House”

DID YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW THE FINISHED HOME WOULD LOOK WHEN YOU STARTED THE PROJECT?

We have always liked Tudor buildings and, as we are in an area where this style is quite widely seen, we thought it would fit in well. The manor style also gave us the ideal floorplan we needed. We knew if we kept everything to scale, as we had drawn it, then it should turn out as we wanted — too many builders take a ‘that’s close enough’ approach and too many ‘close enoughs’ make a miss!

We knew we wanted to live in the house too while undertaking the work, and so had the idea of building an extension to one side which would allow us to do so. We were looking for a solution which would lower the height of the house visually and that’s where the idea for a jettied landing with steep roof pitch — typical to Tudor buildings — came from. A second extension (connected via this landing) then made sense, and the idea evolved from there.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ROOM IN THE HOUSE?

Mark: My favourite room is the home bar. Although one of the smaller rooms in the house, at night it feels like a little country pub and we have had a lot of laughs in there!

Julia: I love the dining room — the original quarry tile floor being well worn and cracked in places, the exposed brick fireplace, and our addition of the recessed

log store give the room a rustic simplicity. We’ve enjoyed so many great times with family and friends in this room.

WERE THERE ANY CHALLENGES FACED ALONG THE WAY?

The biggest challenge was planning — we were very disappointed with the negative opinions of the planning officers to what most people now regard as a beautiful house. The other challenge was to create this home with a fairly modest budget.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT?

The greatest achievement was fitting this Tudor-style house around what we already had, as most of the old house is still here.

DO YOU HAVE ANY WORDS OF WISDOM TO PASS ON?

Attention to detail is so important; it’s the small details which really make a house. People often underestimate the impact window proportions make on the exterior too.

WOULD YOU TAKE ON ANOTHER PROJECT IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

Probably not on this scale unless we had the finance to subcontract out a lot of the work, but small projects can be just as rewarding and beautiful. ■





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