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WELCOME MAY 2016

New Beginnings

Claire Lloyd is the Editor of *Homebuilding & Renovating*

What's not to like about spring? The clocks go forward, there's promise of summer in the air, and the weather looks decidedly better (well, most days anyway). For those of us with building projects, the season can herald a new start — whether that's breaking (now thawed-out) ground on a self-build, making pre and post-work visits to site in the daylight (rather than by festoon lighting), or simply bringing a renewed sense of enthusiasm for a project. (Spending weekends and evenings renovating a 200-year-old cottage without central heating has become more appealing for my partner and I, now the temperature is picking up.)

On the subject of new beginnings, we launch the first of two new series this issue — or more accurately, site diaries.



The first documents the adventures of experienced self-builder (and all-round homebuilding expert) David Snell, as he builds his fourteenth house (p.25). The second sees our Content Director Jason Orme (more on whom later), fly the flag for those tackling existing houses, sharing his words of wisdom on remodelling and extending a 1960s home (p.35).

On another note, the subject of our special report this month is one that often ignites and divides opinion — builders, and how to get the best out of them. The builder/client relationship is one of the most important to a project, and critical to the success of the finished home (and getting that house built in the first instance). It's worth remembering that this relationship is a two-way street, and for every 'bad' builder, there is a 'nightmare' client (the one who constantly changes

their mind without realising the cost implications, and fails to pay on time). Our 14-page guide is designed to help you prepare for the tender process and to choose the best builder for your project. Our legal expert, Chris Reeves, also explains what to do if you do fall out (p.99).

Finally, and please indulge me here a little, this is a rather special issue for me: it marks my first as the new Editor, and also my eighth year with *Homebuilding & Renovating*. During this time I've had the privilege of working as Deputy to the former Editor, Jason Orme. It's worth mentioning that '*Homebuilding*' was never simply a magazine (or website, for that matter) for Jason, but a way of life that he campaigned for more people to enjoy — lobbying on the self-build cause in Parliament on numerous occasions; a task he continues as member of the board for NaCSBA (the National Custom & Self Build Association). I hope to build on his good work. 

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JASON ORME

The former Editor of *Homebuilding & Renovating* magazine, Jason is an experienced self-builder and is currently renovating a 1960s home. He starts his new diary on page 35



PETER EADE

Peter Eade has spent a lifetime running his own building business, specialising in project management and design. Read his beginner's guide to going out to tender on page 87



NEIL TURNER

Neil is a director of Durham and London-based architectural practice Howarth Litchfield Partnership and specialises in residential design. He provides his top tips for a smooth design process on page 48



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MODULEO'S *MOODS COLLECTION*

The new Moods collection from LVT (luxury vinyl tile) manufacturer Moduleo gives homeowners the freedom to combine 10 new flooring formats to create their own bespoke design. Up to 110 unique wood and stone-effect patterns can be created using the wide range of tile shapes available – including hexagons,

chevrons, triangles and diamonds, as well as traditional squares and rectangles – for a truly individual floor tailored to suit your interior scheme. What's more, the tiles also boast excellent eco-credentials, being BRE certified and having an A+ sustainability rating. Price on application. (moduleo.co.uk)



MATERIALS



SAFE CHOICES' *MERIDIAN DOOR*

Safe Choices' new Meridian 70mm rebated composite door comes with triple weather seals and 50mm-thick triple glazing as standard. The door is available in a range of colours and is manufactured to 'Secured by Design' standards of security. Prices start from £1,500, including installation. (safechoice.co.uk)



ALEC BUCHAN'S *COLOUR SOCKETS*

Available from Too Jazzy, Alec Buchan's made-to-order 2-gang sockets are available painted in 15 vibrant colours, perfect for adding a pop of colour to contrast or pair with your interior scheme. The socket comes with a 25-year guarantee on electromechanical components and costs £49.95. (too-jazzy.com)

CAPLE'S 3-IN-1 *VAPOS TAP*

Caple's Vapos 3-in-1 tap provides 2.4 litres (that's 100 cups an hour!) of steaming water, which is instantly ready to use. It also supplies fresh cold water and regular hot water from the solid, stainless steel swan neck-style spout. The tap's compact boiler has a temperature range of 50-98°C and also includes a full-scale prevention filter to prolong the life of the boiler. What's more it uses less electricity than a 40W light bulb. The Vapos tap costs from £919. (caple.co.uk)



REED HARRIS' *IMPRESSIONS WALL TILES*

The new Impressions range of ceramic wall tiles from Reed Harris measure 560x140mm and come in six neutral glazed colours: White, Almond, Rock, Fog, Cappuccino and Coffee. Available in a plain or décor textured finish (Bloom or Bamboo embossed patterns), the tiles can also sit side by side to striking effect as shown with the Rock plain and Bloom Rock décor tiles below. Décor tiles cost £79.95/m², while the plain tiles cost £74.95/m². (reedharris.co.uk)





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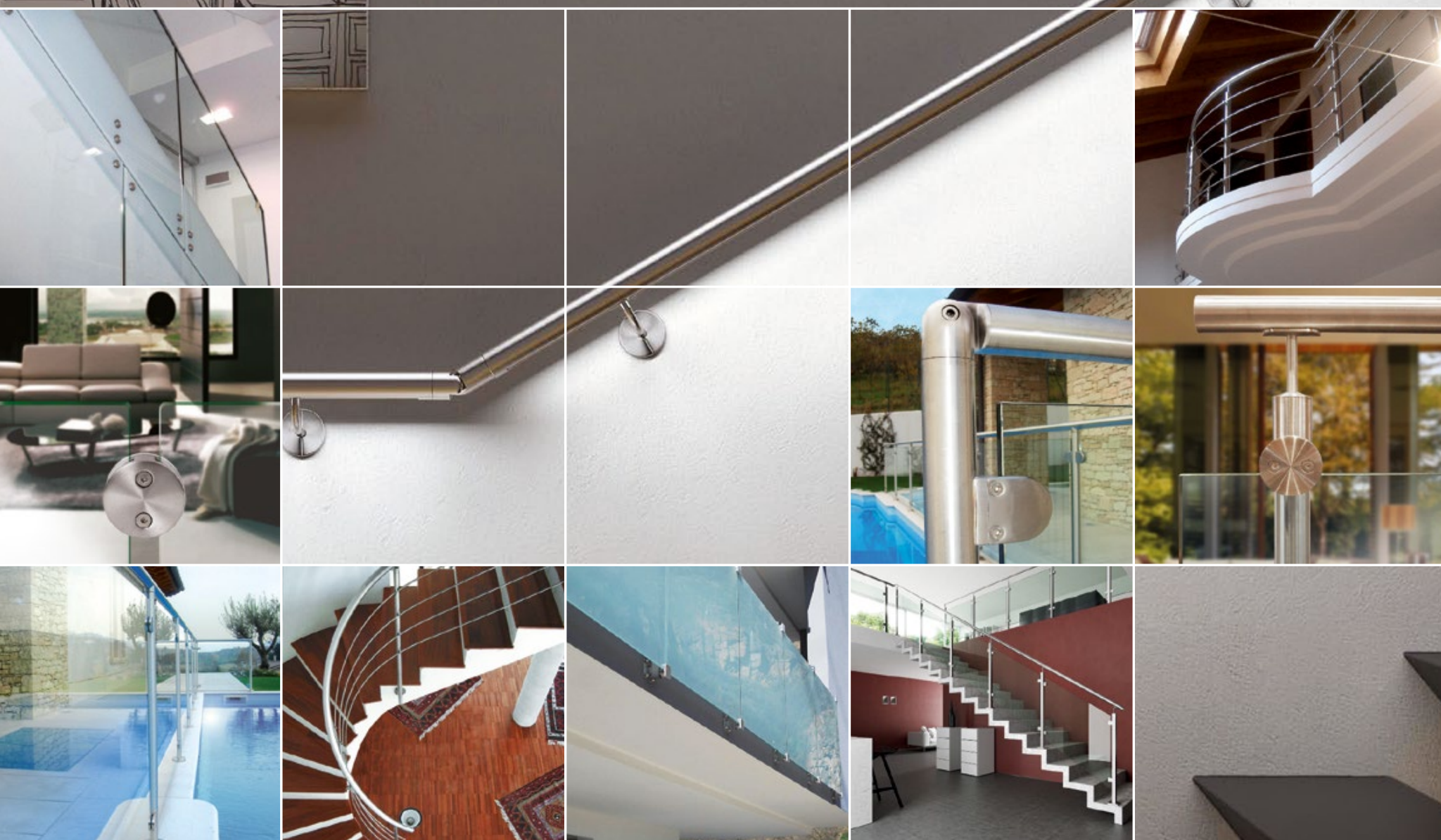
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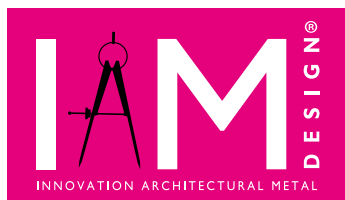
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MATERIALS

BRILLIANT *BALUSTRADES*

BISCA'S *ORNATE BALUSTRADE*

This staircase, in a 1960s home, has been subject to a dramatic restoration. Replacing a traditional, outdated, dark-stained wood, which formed the balustrade and landing gallery, a hand-forged, blackened, ornate balustrade from Bisca, with treads relaid in pale oak, has been introduced. The striking balustrade has been capped with a hand-carved oak handrail with scroll end — a real focal point for the entrance hall. Bespoke Bisca staircases start from £22,000. (bisca.co.uk)



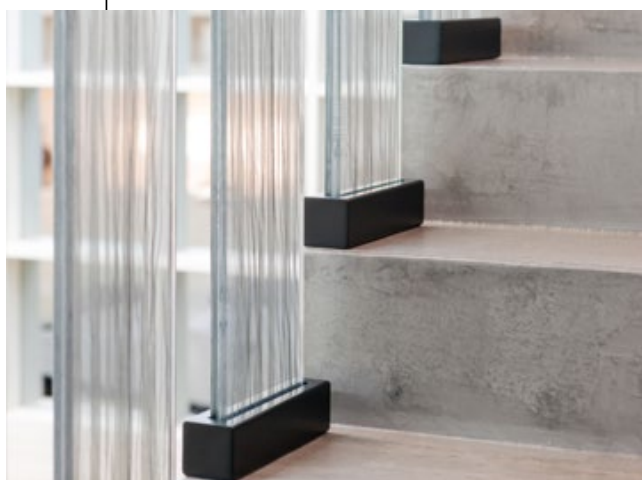
TG STUDIO'S *GLASS BALUSTRADE*

Constructed entirely out of oak and sturdy in appearance, Thomas Griem of TG Studio designed this contemporary staircase that bridges to the upper level. A library complete with reading niche on its lower level supports the minimal white staircase with clear glass balustrade — appearing almost invisible thanks to its frameless design with no handrail. The use of glass also allows light to enter from above. POA. (tg-studio.co.uk)



KIER TOWNSEND'S *LAMINATED GLASS BALUSTRADE*

This unique bespoke balustrade from Keir Townsend utilises strands of chiffon between sheets of laminated glass to create a contemporary divider-style balustrade which allows light to flood through. The metal fixtures that join the polished concrete stairs allow for the glass panels to be changed quickly and easily if desired, and the fabric can be altered too, making the possibilities for custom-designed laminated panels almost limitless. The laminated glass panels cost £600/m². (keirtownsend.com)



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TOM BARNES

Tom Barnes is the managing director of Vastern Timber and an industry expert on timber cladding

What should homeowners consider before specifying timber cladding?

Homeowners don't always think about how the timber is going to behave. When specifying timber cladding it's important to select the right product for the right job. If you want a more traditional rustic look and don't mind movement, then larch is a favourable option as it provides this effect and is considerably cheaper than other timbers. Cedar or thermally modified timber is going to move less and also allows you to use a more delicate joint. If you like knotty timber, then Thermowood is a good product, and is more stable than untreated timber. Once you've chosen the species, consider the orientation of the boards. Consider the metal work, too, as ferrous metal such as galvanised steel reacts with wood and will leave a blue rust stain on the timber around the nail. My advice would be to use stainless steel nails to avoid this, especially on wood that is reactive and has a high tannin content. I'd also recommend hand nailing the cladding instead of using a nail gun, as this can damage the timber.

What are the benefits of thermally modified timber cladding?

What sets thermally modified wood apart from natural wood is its stability and durability — you don't have to treat it or put chemicals on it, so it is low maintenance. Wood is made up of three things — cellulose, hemicellulose and lignin. When timber is heated at 210°C it reconfigures the structure of the wood and creates a mesh that prevents water entering. The hemicellulose is the part of the wood that bonds with water, and this decreases during the heating process so that the timber can't bond with water. The timber becomes hydrophobic — it resists water and doesn't take on any more — so there's no shrinkage or expansion (unlike some species such as oak), making the timber perfect for those who want sharp, contemporary lines.



What about the weathering — is there any way of preventing timber from silvering?

All wood will weather and go silver over time unless it is treated, and when you start treating the timber it stops being low maintenance and will need retreating every two or three years — not a problem in easily accessible areas, but inconvenient in hard-to-reach spots.

Some woods will go a more bleached silver, while some will go darker depending on which elevation the cladding is on, how much exposure to the elements there is, and the environment (urban area or countryside). Osmo provides a UV protection oil which will slow down the weathering process; however the clear version is the least resistant to UV. The company's pigmented versions perform better but the problem you then have is that you've painted the timber a pinky colour and thus changed the look of the original wood. On the other hand, Sioo offers a product which accelerates the weathering process and turns the timber to a pale silver, so if you have, say, a north-facing elevation which is not weathering at the same rate as on the south side, you could apply this to help the house match. My advice, however, would be to leave it and let the timber silver over time. If you don't like the look of silver timber then you should consider whether timber cladding is right for you.

Useful Contacts:

Vastern Timber.....vastern.co.uk
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James Hardie.....jameshardie.co.uk

DREAM HOME

CITY HEIGHTS

Sitting above Sunset Strip with panoramic views of downtown and west Los Angeles, all the way to Santa Monica and the Pacific ocean, this striking home – designed by west-coast practice McClean Design – measures almost 650m² and is divided in half by a water feature and pool. Water has been used as a central design element for this project, beginning at the driveway with a water wall and ascending to the main level of the house before dropping into the spa below, after which it becomes a 7m-long lap pool.

The entry to the house is via a glass bridge. The master bedroom and study are located on one side of the pool and the living areas on the other. Below are several guest rooms, a media room and a garage. Externally, the palette of materials has been kept soft and contemporary with extensive use of concrete, wood and stone combined with generous amounts of glazing to the rear.

NICK SPRINGETT



5 FRONT



Modern Masterpiece
Sitting above the city lights, with views out towards the Pacific, this contemporary dwelling is divided in two, thanks to a 7m-long lap pool separating the private quarters from the social spaces



NEW PROJECT

“THERE’S A SENSE OF SATISFACTION WORKING ON YOUR OWN PROJECT”

James Young and Claire Telfer are busy working on their renovation and extension project...

“There’s a massive sense of satisfaction in doing a project. It’s exhausting but you feel so satisfied after a long day working on the house, especially when you’re doing it all yourselves,” says Claire, who along with partner James is hard at work on the renovation and extension of their 1960s home in Warwick. Indeed, the practical prowess of this couple is almost enviable — the only experts they’ve had in to help have included a structural engineer and the company fitting the large bi-fold doors, together with friends in the trade.

“We moved in September 2015 and the same day we were busy knocking down the old lean-to extension; the week after the diggers were on site for the foundations,” says James.

Keen to undertake the majority of the work themselves, James downloaded Google SketchUp and began working up models for the house, with a view to reconfiguring the internal layout and undertaking an external makeover, which will see the typical 1960s façade updated with white render and western red cedar cladding to the front gable and garage.

Having lived in the area previously, the couple have taken “the best bits” from local houses they like and worked them into their design, with extension work

carried out under Permitted Development.

Fortunately, Claire’s dad’s friend is a builder and has been on hand throughout the process offering advice on what they can and can’t do. “He’s really been a sounding board for us,” says James. “He’s been so helpful with everything.”

The new rear extension is one of the most impressive parts of the project. The couple ripped out the back of the house, with three steel beams (all reclaimed, for a bargain price of £900 for the three) inserted to support the new addition — the largest being the 8m-wide, 300mm-deep rolled steel joist which was lifted into place by James and two others using Genie lifts.

So what now? “So far we’ve rewired and re-plumbed the house and added the rear extension that will be our kitchen/dining/living space with a utility leading off. Next, we’ll be redoing the driveway, re-cladding the exterior, moving the staircase to make more of the entrance space and adjusting the landing to create a wrap-around with two guest rooms, a family bathroom and then the master suite leading off,” says Claire.

The couple are also planning to convert the third guest bedroom into a walk-in wardrobe to serve the master bedroom, introduc-

ing a stud wall to section off this side of the upstairs. This will allow for a generous master suite, complete with light-filled bedroom, and a private corridor leading to a luxury en suite bathroom with dual sinks and double shower, and then the dressing room. The idea is that if they ever come to sell, the stud wall could be removed and the house changed back into a four-bed home.

The pair have been very hands on, digging the foundations for the extension with the help of some friends and knocking down walls. Once they’re further into the works they will be installing the kitchen (which has just arrived — as shown in the photograph on the right), cladding the front gable, and fitting new doors, new windows, bathrooms and much more.

“We have a set budget, and doing the work ourselves has saved us thousands — pushing everyone on price and negotiating everything. We’ve also managed to get a lot of items which are reclaimed or unwanted — all of the radiators in the house are new and were £10 each,” says Claire.

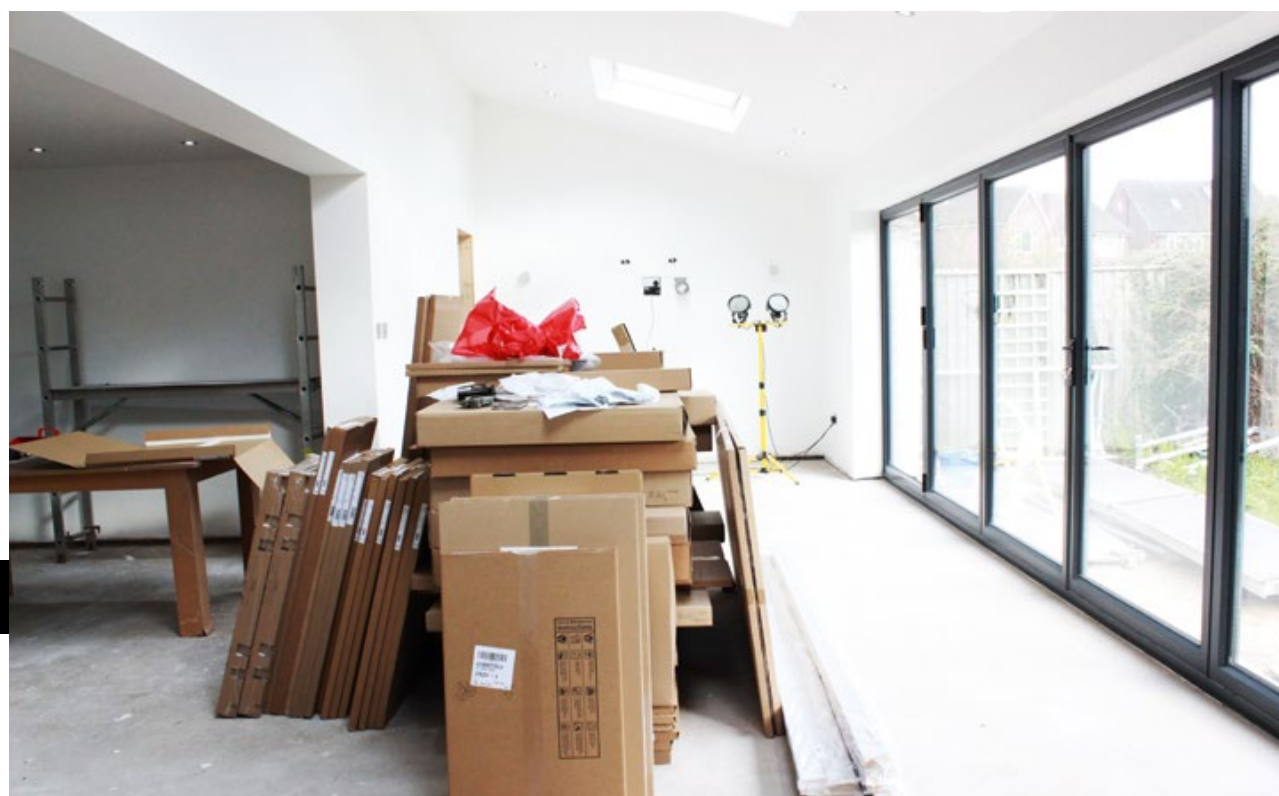
“We’ve been living here for five months now and we’re powering through. It’s James’ 30th birthday in August so we want the bulk of the work done by then — that’s our goal,” says Claire. ➤➤

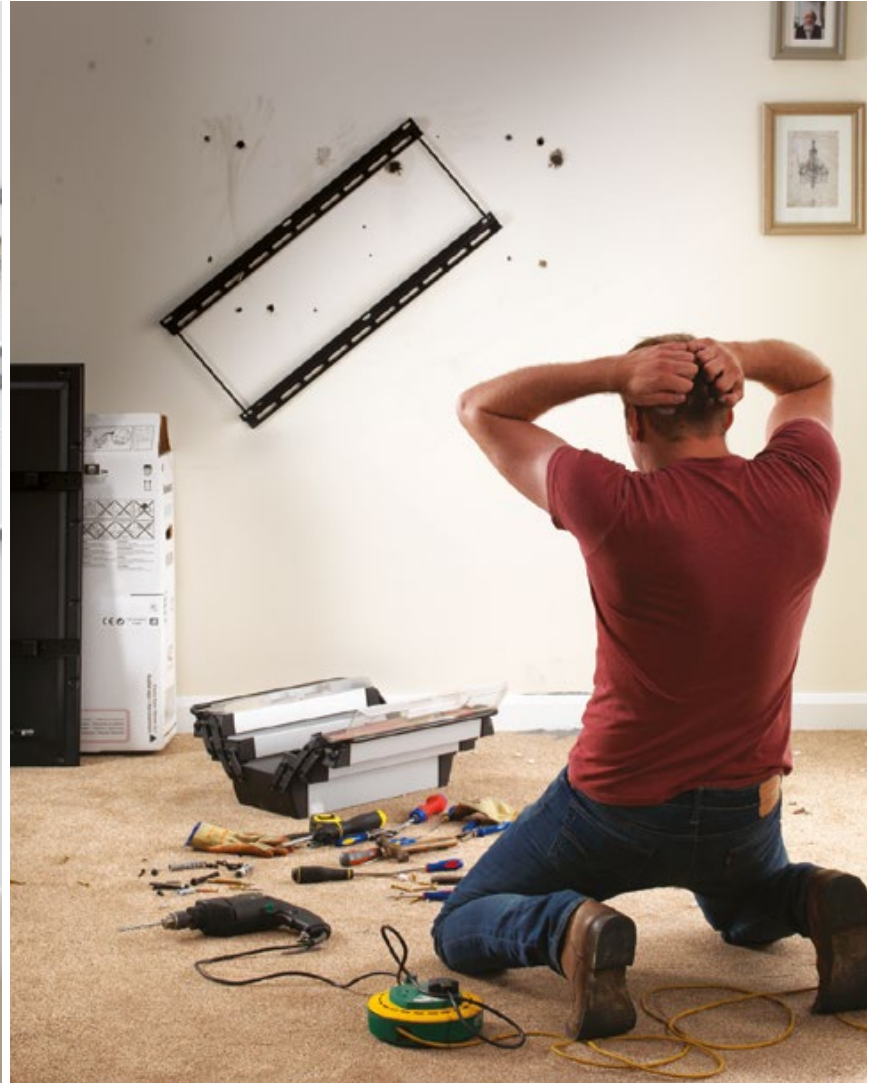




Are You Undertaking a Project?

If you're currently on site working on an extension, renovation or self-build project and would like to see your home appear here, we'd love to hear from you. If your project is featured you'll even receive a free 12-month subscription to the magazine. To take part, email homebuilding@centaurmedia.com





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On the Hunt for a Plot

WE FOLLOW SERIAL SELF-BUILDER **DAVID SNELL** AS HE EMBARKS ON HIS FOURTEENTH PROJECT — SHARING HIS TIPS ALONG THE WAY

Building your own home is infectious — I'm living proof, having self-built 13 times. So when my wife Linda and I decided to do it all again in late 2013, we also decided to relocate. We bought a lovely plot in Kent; it was close to the sea in a secluded position, yet within walking distance of the town's facilities. We had moved from Gloucestershire — where we had lived for 18 years and built four of our previous self-builds — and I began to chronicle our new project in this magazine in 2013/14.

THE PLOT THAT WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE

We ran into all sorts of trouble. The plot had planning permission for a large four bedroom house with double garage, and what we wanted was a three bedroom bungalow. Right from the off, the planners were opposed to this, stating that our designs didn't fall within 'the local vernacular', but we persuaded them with the help of the surrounding neighbours (who obviously welcomed something less obtrusive), and eventually we got planning permission. Sadly, the plain fact was that all the changes that they had forced upon us — the design compromises and the ludicrous insistence on external materials and finishes which we hated — took the shine off the whole project.

In hindsight, we can say that the planners did us a favour because, in the 18 months which had passed, we realised that Kent wasn't right for us and that our home was back in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire. So we put the plot on the market.

The trouble was that, by then, the planning consent for the large four bedroom house had expired and all we really had to offer was a plot with planning for a small bungalow that would

**"When I want a plot,
I'll find one within a
couple of weeks"**



Above: Plot Hunting

Wishing to move back to the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire, David and wife Linda began their search by visiting potential plots in the area — this one was in the small market town of Coleford

never achieve the full economic potential of the plot, and which had a value considerably less than we'd paid for it. We had to reinstate the original planning consent and, because that had itself been an extension of an original, we had to make a completely fresh application, which took another six months.

In the meantime, we kept an eye open for plots in the Forest and informed estate agents and local builders that we were coming back. I studied Plotfinder.net and the internet every day, building up a portfolio of plots. However, we couldn't do anything about them until we'd found a buyer for our own plot. It's no use at all looking for plots until you're in a position to proceed, and proceed quickly. To do otherwise risks your own disappointment and, more importantly, risks a loss of credit with those (the estate agents, the builders) who you are relying on to point you towards the good plots.

After a couple of false starts, we sold the plot at the asking price of £180,000 and we were ready to go out and seriously look for a new plot. Those who've heard me speaking at the Homebuilding & Renovating Shows may have heard me boast that when I want a plot, I'll find one within a couple of weeks.



FINDING A NEW PLOT

Linda and I packed up our motorhome and decamped to the Forest, arriving on a Wednesday night. We had details of eight plots — six of which, unless there was something special, were in areas we'd rather avoid. On Thursday morning we started our tour of the local estate agents, asking each for details of plots up to and around £100,000. As a back up, we enquired about bungalows or cottages of up to £200,000, which we could refurbish, extend or even knock down. I've never been that keen on the idea of renovation and have made no bones about my preference for new build, but it was an option.

One estate agent offered me a project that seemed to present the chance of refurbishing a bungalow and possibly developing the land at the side. I was quite excited until I realised just where it was located — on a main road opposite a busy garage and car lot, and close to one of the few sets of traffic lights in the Forest. Another offered me a bungalow set in secluded gardens in a good area, close to Coleford. We arranged to have a look inside it the following day.

In the meantime, we went to see the other two potential plots. The first one was also in Coleford and it was offered at £98,000. This plot was just beyond an old railway viaduct. The plot was apparently half an acre, although the frontage to the road was only around 15 metres. Most of the plot was at the back where the land seemed to go on endlessly up the hill. And when I say 'hill', I mean you'd have to be a mountain goat to want to live there. We didn't stop long.

The second plot was in Bream (a village that we had lived in previously) and on offer for £89,950. We knew where this plot was, having regularly driven past when we lived there. Someone had bought the cottage on the main road, split the property into two and was in the process of renovating both. They'd also achieved planning permission for a new build on the land to the rear.

It was not a bad plot. It was away from the main road and the only real drawback was the ugly, windowless back wall of the two cottages. Nevertheless, it was elevated, with potential views across open countryside. What's more, the adjacent track to the right-hand boundary led to the road where we built our first bungalow in this village back in 2004.

On the Friday afternoon, we dutifully turned up at the bungalow in Coleford and met the agent. I trooped around it with a heavy heart. Could I do this? It would have to have new bathrooms and a new kitchen. The living accommodation wasn't big enough and I wondered whether it could be extended. The agent suggested a conservatory but we could not decide just how and where one would fit. I opened



Above: A New Opportunity

Building a rapport with estate agents can prove beneficial, as David and Linda discovered when they were pointed in the direction of their ideal plot

a wardrobe and saw the mould, despite the attempt by the previous occupiers to prevent it with Sempatap. "No, I can't do it," I said to the agent. "I can't live in somebody else's home. We need to build our own."

I told the agent about our history of self-building and remarked that we had, in fact, bought the last three plots from the agency and that my son had also bought his plot through them. "Have you got time to follow me?" he asked. "I might have something to show you."

We followed him — experiencing that familiar sequence of hope then disappointment, followed by a rising sense of excitement. After turning down several lanes, we passed a gateway to the left and glimpsed endless countryside rolling on down the valley, lifting towards the hills in the distance. The agent stopped and pointed back along the lane to the right. "That's it," he said. "Two plots for sale for £210,000, although I think the owner would entertain selling them off separately... in fact, I think I know somebody who'll be interested in the spare one."

The agent informed us that he had the plans back at his office; they'd been drawn by a local designer. "Kevin Cooper?" I asked. "Yes, that's him. Do you know him?" he replied. Not only did I know him but he'd drawn the last three of our projects! "Leave it with me," he said. "I'll contact the owner and fix an appointment for you to come back."

He drove off, leaving the two of us looking at each other. We couldn't get on to or even see into the plot because there was a thick hedge and the land appeared to be elevated from the lane by about a metre. But we'd seen enough. "I want this," Linda said. "So do I," I said. "Let's go and see Kevin and see if he can let us have a copy of the plans and any other information."

● **Next month: David seals the deal on his new plot in the Forest of Dean**

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CHOOSING GLAZING

We catch up with Joe Shimbart, who's building an energy-efficient oak frame house in Hampshire using natural materials.

"Glazing can be particularly complicated in an oak-framed house and mine is no exception. I ended up using no less than four types of glazing system. This included casement

windows and doors from Rational, bi-fold doors from Sunfold, fixed oak glazing by Carpenter Oak and roof windows from Fakro.

"The decision on casement windows had to be made early on in the build, as some parts of the house have a fixed oak glazed system. I considered appearance, performance,

price, functionality, fitting, customer service, longevity and maintenance. Choosing a suitable bi-fold door required careful consideration, too, with the wide variety of options. I am pleased with my choices — they look fantastic!" **For more updates on Joe's project, visit homebuilding.co.uk/blogs**



LETTERS

DEAR EDITOR,

We are currently halfway through the process of renovating our 1950s home but have hit an untimely snag.

Having been warned to order items such as windows in advance, we placed the order with a local firm only to discover that the company has gone bust — at the time we were about to take the originals out.

We've phoned the company to see whether we will still be receiving our items but they won't speak to us, and we don't want this to hold up our project.

Mr Coates, Ipswich

Win a Dremel 3000 Multi-Tool Kit When You Write In!

Dremel is offering *HB&R* readers a chance to win its best-selling Dremel 3000 Multi-Tool when their letter is published in the magazine. Worth £49.99, the kit is easy to use, and comes with a range of accessories for a host of applications including cutting, polishing, sanding and grinding. It even has variable speed, a powerful 130W motor and a hanger bail for neatness (dremel.co.uk).



FACEBOOK UPDATE



The past month has seen a flurry of likes and shares on the *HB&R* Facebook page; however, what caught our followers' attention more than anything was the posting of this amazing before and after transformation in Scotland — it was once a boring brick-clad 1970s bungalow.

Shauna M O'Handley called the radical remodel "Incredible!" while Ingrid Androt said: "I bought similar windows from klassen24.co.uk. It looks gorgeous!"

To view this project in further detail visit homebuilding.co.uk/remodelled-1970s-home



TOP TWEETS



"Romsey Road features in *Homebuilding & Renovating* magazine's 50 Best Remodels!"
@ARDesign_Studio



"A record-breaking month for online planning applications — a whopping 46,874 in total in February"
@ClaireLloydHome



"Great to see some quality schemes nominated for #RIBAAwards in my home region @ RIBASouthWest this year"
@benmunro1988



I BUILT MY OWN HOME AT 70 — PLUS IT COST UNDER £100K!



If you let things get you down it won't help — you have to be flexible and practical”

Forget horror-story building tales — this is one of the most inspiring, feel-good build journeys we've seen

Bubbly, enthusiastic and possibly more practical than some of those half – if not a quarter – of her age, Mollie Gregory certainly wasn't going to let anything stop her from building a new home on her own garden plot adjacent to her former semi-detached cottage in Downham Market.

“I moved into the four bedroom cottage in 1998 which overlooked playing fields; however, once the children had left home I didn't need all of the space,” explains Mollie. “To the side there was a double garage, wood shed and conservatory with 33ft of space, and I had often thought of getting planning permission for the land. After inheriting some money I decided to go for it.

“The pastor at my church recommended a local architect and he drew up plans to submit to the local council, but they turned my application down. Luckily we won planning on appeal. The council didn't like the design but they had to go along with it, especially as the house is on an unmade road and the lane features a real mish-mash of house styles.”

Fortunately Mollie had acquired a number of building contacts from her time running a B&B business and was introduced to contractors through recommendation. “My



CHRIS BIELE



A Triumphant Budget Build

With a view to building a home for the future while keeping costs down, most materials were bought at discounted prices — including the kitchen cabinets, appliances, worktop, sink and taps (left). The kitchen cost just £2,750

carpenter suggested a bricklayer and I went to see work he'd done before hiring him — the bricklayer then recommended the chap who did the groundworks. All of the contractors were wonderful," she says.

"I had a clear idea in my mind of what I wanted to build — a home for myself, but room for when my family came to visit. It was important to have flexibility, for both now and the future, and so there's a bedroom and bathroom on the ground floor, and a bedroom and en suite upstairs. On the first floor there's also a large walk-in store, which already has power connected and leads through to another walk-in store, making the house very easy to convert into a three bedroom home if any future homeowners wanted more space. All it would need is a rooflight," she continues.

On site every day to oversee the work, Mollie lived in the cottage next door until the roof of the new house was on, and then sold up and moved into a caravan on site for five months for the remainder of the project, which ran from April 2013 to July 2014.

"The budget was tight, but luckily I owned the plot so I'd already saved myself an expense there. Project managing the build myself, I did a lot of the sourcing and the contractors knew where to get good quality materials at a cheap price. Everything was sourced locally, too. I looked for items that were discounted. The composite worktops, sink and taps were on offer at Homebase for £2,000, while the kitchen cabinets and appliances were second hand and cost just £750." Keeping a close eye on the budget and being thrifty with her purchases paid off, bringing the total build cost in at just £90,000 — an achievement as impressive as the venture itself.

The end result is a home that is not only great value for money, but manages to achieve excellent levels of energy efficiency too, thanks to Mollie specifying a host of renewables. "The rainwater harvesting has been fantastic," she explains. "I also have solar panels on the roof, an air-source heat pump and underfloor heating on the ground floor with a woodburner just in case. My electricity bills are just £35 per month, plus I get money back from the solar panels — it's brilliant. The house absolutely works for me; I'm delighted with it."

So, does she have any advice for others looking to build on a budget? "If you want to do it cheaply then find out about your local tradespeople," she says. "Check them out and see their previous work — they will know where to get good materials for budget prices. Don't rush, get as much sorted before you start as you can and, importantly, if you let things get you down it won't help — you have to be flexible and practical." Wise words indeed.

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Could You be the New Owner of this Exceptional Site?

WE CATCH UP WITH ARCHITECT **DARREN BRAY**, DIRECTOR OF PAD STUDIO (PADSTUDIO.CO.UK), WHO IS DEVELOPING A SPECIAL SITE IN DERBYSHIRE



HB&R: What a plot! Tell us more

Darren: The extraordinary 4.6-acre site is a former quarry in Ashover, Derbyshire; it has a rich history dating back to before the Industrial Revolution. Together with the owner, we looked into ideas of how to develop it and as the site sits outside of any settlement boundary I thought it would fall under Paragraph 55. [Paragraph 55 is a special clause in planning policy that allows homes of exceptional design to be built in open countryside. The clause states that planning consent may be granted if the proposals represent 'exceptional quality or innovative nature of the design'.] I put the owner in contact with Rob Hughes – who said it had a good chance of achieving Paragraph 55 – to draft up a development appraisal. [Rob has been hailed

as the king of this niche section of planning policy, with a clean sheet of approved planning applications using Paragraph 55 thus far.]

What inspired the design?

I spent time coming up with a concept for a truly innovative, low-energy house which both responds to and respects the dramatic site, with large glazed elements allowing in vistas of the landscape. The site is now for sale with Caudwell & Co (01629 810018) and currently listed on Plotfinder.net. If someone is interested in investing in the site, then PAD Studio can provide the design team to take the project forward and deliver the house.

This is a tricky area of planning legislation. Why would the new owner take the risk, given the site does not have planning permission?

It is obviously a massive undertaking. I think anyone looking to purchase a Paragraph 55 site has to realise that unless they're in it for the challenge, it's not for them. It's a huge risk, and you quite often find it's for clients who are close to retirement, with a nest egg saved away. It is hugely rewarding for those who've been through it, with the opportunity to create a fantastic dwelling. The site needs investment but there's the substantial benefit that whoever can get Paragraph 55 approval could end up doubling or even tripling their money.

● The quarry site in Derbyshire is currently for sale at plotfinder.net/plot/plot-abeighton



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A New Project

IN HIS NEW COLUMN, FORMER *HB&R* EDITOR **JASON ORME** SHARES HIS WORDS OF WISDOM AS HE EMBARKS ON THE RENOVATION AND MAJOR REMODEL OF HIS 1960S HOME

Let me be clear. After 12 years of editing Britain's best-selling magazine and biggest website for people doing this kind of thing; having self-built already; having personal access to the country's leading experts on all aspects of home construction from project management to planning permission; being able to tap into the whole building materials industry for expertise; being on first-name terms with many of the country's top home design brains; hell, I've even written a book that other people read on the subject — if I can't show you how to carry out a really slick, well-organised, cost-effective, nerveless building project in this column over the next few months, then we're all stuffed.

What I'm saying is that if anyone can avoid making the mistakes that we all worry about, it should be me. As I'll no doubt go on to prove, of course, knowing what the mistakes are and actually avoiding them are two very different things — but let's see. I hope that in sharing my build experiences with you and hopefully giving an honest, open account of the project, you'll understand the process

"It was the archetypal worst house in the best village"

better, feel that if an idiot like me can do it, anyone can, and do it properly yourself, too.

So the situation was that we had left our self-built home in the Midlands (which we featured back in the July 2007 issue of *Homebuilding & Renovating*) and, with two children under five, we quite understandably wanted a home that would give us all a bit more space, with a nice garden and close to the usual requirements for good schools and so on. After a few months of searching for a plot, we ended up not so much falling in love but struggling to ignore a rather sad-looking 1960s home in a beautiful village in Staffordshire. It had everything we wanted



The Latest Project

Following Jason and wife Sarah's first self-build project, the couple are now about to start on the renovation, extension and remodel of this 1960s house in the Staffordshire countryside

on paper — it was big, it had a nice large garden (on a half-acre plot), we could live in it immediately even if it would be like living in an early 1990s Travel Tavern, and it had plenty of potential to improve and make our own. It was the archetypal worst house in the best village — but it had a nice feel and we could imagine our family here for years to come.

After a few months of coming to terms with the house, we commissioned a full measured survey of the property. Looking back, it was one of our better decisions — in order to successfully improve a property you need to know exactly what you've got, and the only way to do that properly is with a survey that works directly into CAD packages. Our surveyors, Grantham Coates, spent a full day using all sorts of exciting-looking equipment and we ended up with something that has formed the basis of all our design work since.

Good design has to start somewhere, and an audit of what you have is key.

To be clear, we didn't bother with structural surveys or the like. We rather took the view that it was a bit pointless, as we planned to do such an invasive project anyway — and in my experience 'full' structural surveys have been anything but.

● **Next month: Starting the design process**



Why Roofing Isn't all About Tiles

BUILDING INSIGHT FROM INDUSTRY INSIDER **ANNETTE FORSTER**

British weather can be unpredictable, as we all know. The amount of water that pours out of our skies is the reason behind the pitched apex roof, which allows rainwater to run off effortlessly, keeping the occupants and contents of the building dry. Since then, apex or duo-pitched roofs have become a prominent feature in the UK.

Using materials such as clay, slate or concrete gives a roof a longer life expectancy and will also ensure the roof is fireproof and able to handle any temperature the weather throws at it. If you ask yourself the basics of what we all expect from a roof, it would be to keep the weather out and the heat in.

But the truth is that modern roofs have to do so much more. They need to be able to breathe to prevent condensation build up. They must handle weather extremes, expand in the heat, and contract in the cold — all without letting in water or breaking.

Flashing: How to Keep the Interiors Dry

A traditional gable-to-gable roof has no inner details, but the minute you put on an extension or have an L-shaped roof then you need to consider waterproofing the angles, the hip or the valley. In the UK we use lead or GRP (glass-reinforced plastic).

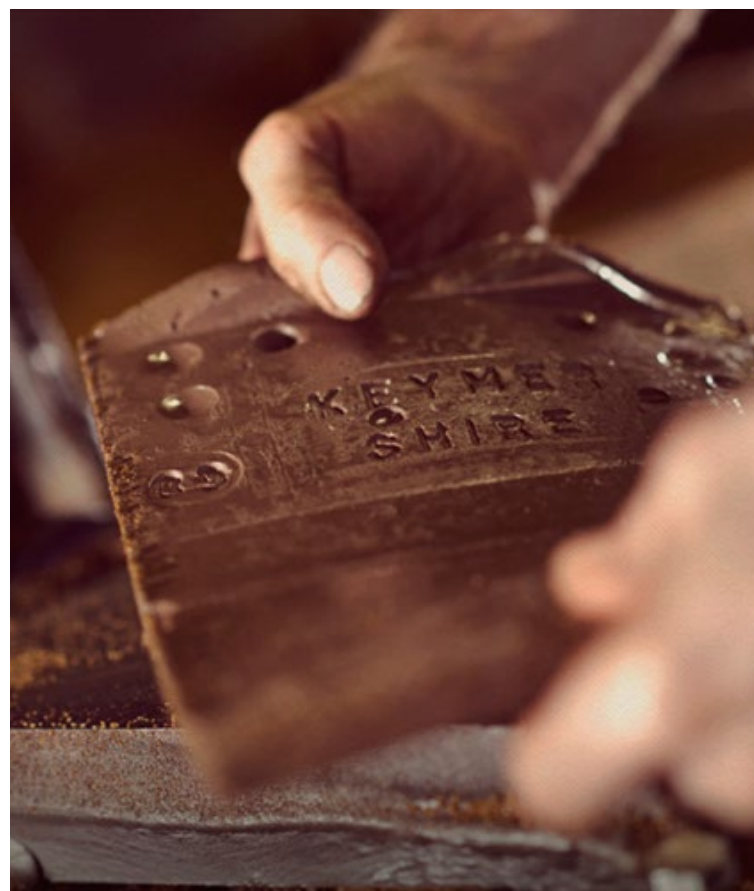
Lead is the traditional flashing and waterproofing option and remains an ideal solution, but it has a high value and is often targeted by thieves, so consider your options depending on ease of access to the roof.

Modern alternatives such as Wienerberger's Koraflex Plus offer the same look and handling experience as lead — but at a fraction of the cost and without the high risk of theft.

Leaky chimneys are one of the most common call-outs for roofers, so you should definitely consider flashing the intersection between the chimney and the roof to make sure it stays watertight. Usually, flashing around a chimney has two layers: an initial round of flashing, where metal sheets are interwoven into the shingle courses and built up around the chimney, and then a second layer which is fixed to the roof to cover and protect the initial round of flashing.

Tiles: Material Choice

Today, roof tiles can be very creative and versatile. Through a wide selection of profiles and colours, across a portfolio of materials from clay, slate and concrete, roofing brands such as Sandtoft offers tiles in a variety of shapes, sizes, colours and finishes, adding character to virtually any home.



Right: Keymer's Goxhill Range

Offering a premium roofing option, particularly suited to classic traditional homes, the Goxhill clay roof tiles from Keymer provide longevity and a long-lasting colour

The most recent addition to the Wienerberger portfolio is Keymer, a brand that has been synonymous with quality, handmade, clay roof tiles for over 400 years — the same approach, materials and methods are still used to this day.

Concrete has become the main product driving the UK pitched roofing market, with designs coming in all shapes and sizes. Clay roof tiles are, however, more of a premium roofing option, offering greater longevity and a colour that lasts, and actually improves with age. As a homeowner it comes down to what you want, but for a truly stand-out roof that remains as striking as the day it was fitted, choose clay.

The Finishing Touches

It's important to remember that roofing is about so much more than just tiles, and we're not talking about how durable or waterproof a roof should be, either.



“It comes down to what you want, but for a truly stand-out roof, choose clay”

From an aesthetic perspective, today there’s so much choice when it comes to extra detail. Feature tiles or finials can create a distinctive quality finish for both modern and contemporary roofs alike.

At Wienerberger, we’re able to create a wide range of handcrafted, bespoke clay roofing features. For period listed buildings this heritage service is essential, but we often see it used on contemporary projects, too. A great aesthetic finish to your roof is all but guaranteed to increase the value of your home.

Tips for Looking After Your Roof

The following will help to ensure you make the most of your roof, and ensure longevity:

1 Ensure your roof is insulated and allows for ventilation: proper insulation and ventilation will add years to the lifespan of your home’s roof and

save money by delaying replacement costs and preventing condensation issues.

2 Never power-wash your roof: it destroys the core fabric and forces water into the roof space. It can even wash out the colour if it’s concrete.

3 Fix your underlay correctly: a common issue is that many underlays are either fixed too tightly or left to drape like curtains — follow the manufacturer’s instructions.

4 Fix your tiles correctly: mortar is not an effective fixing system — make sure your ridge tiles and verge tiles are clipped or mechanically fixed.

5 Consider solar panels: your roof can do more than just keep you dry, and installing solar panels could significantly reduce your energy bills too.

● **Annette is the director of marketing at Wienerberger and a lead on the Brick Development Association and Construction Products Association. Wienerberger, the world’s largest producer of bricks and Europe’s biggest producer of clay roof tiles, has four showrooms and 14 factories in the UK. Its range includes brands such as Terca, Porothersm, Sandtoft, Keymer and Penter.**

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BEFORE & AFTER

A glazed extension to a 1930s home creates a dramatic new space



MARTIN GARDNER

Before



JAMES CHAPMAN

James Chapman is an architect at OB Architecture in Winchester. He was lead architect on this project (obarchitecture.co.uk)

The clients approached us with a brief to extend and remodel their 1930s house in Winchester at both ground and first floor levels — providing them with a light-filled kitchen and dining space, connected to a vibrant family room that opens out to maximise the potential of their large garden.

The aim was to reconcile the individual elements of the house by creating a single open plan arrangement on the ground floor and introducing a new bedroom with an en suite on the first floor, to form a modern family home.

A simple palette of materials was specified, including oak, limestone and off-white painted

steelwork to give warmth and intimacy to the internal spaces. The use of stone and timber was then continued externally to mediate between inside and outside.

The new glazed extension uses structural glazing from IQ Glass supported from L-shaped steel box sections, and incorporates large rooflights to bring light deep into the internal spaces.

The use of oak was also continued with the insertion of oak timber trusses and an oak sliding wall, which links the kitchen/dining space with a day room. The project, which took nine months to complete, is complemented by a landscaped garden comprising swimming pool, pergola, timber decking and feature planting.

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Government Reveals Latest Reforms to Renewable Heat Incentive

In the latest document released on 3 March 2016, the government has unveiled its latest plans for the reformed and re-focused Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme.

Key changes in the announcement include the introduction of heat demand limits to the domestic RHI to prevent larger homes claiming too much of the budget. This is to ensure the scheme's ongoing affordability and value for money, as well as widening access to the scheme to attract a broader range of homeowners.

Meanwhile, changes to the non-domestic RHI include introducing tariff guarantees for heat pumps, moving non-domestic biomass boilers to a single tariff, and limiting the support for biogas that uses crop-based feedstock.

Of the changes, one of the most important is that from 2017, when the RHI regulations are revised, the government is proposing to remove the support for solar thermal technologies under both the domestic and non-domestic schemes, deeming the technology not value for money. It is proposed that these changes will take place in two stages, the first of which will be from 1 April 2016.

For more information on the changes to the RHI visit gov.uk/government.

Stamp Duty Surcharge Could Impact both Self-builders and Renovators

We sit down with HB&R's Michael Holmes, Chair of NaCSBA (National Custom & Self Build Association), to find out more about the new surcharge

HB&R: Tell us about this new surcharge...

From 1 April, a three per cent surcharge (which will be charged in addition to current stamp duty rates) will impact anyone who already owns a home and purchases a second property, whether that's a holiday home, a house to help a child on the property ladder, or a buy-to-let.

Why has this surcharge been introduced?

One reason is to try and cool down the London and south-east property market. The government sees buy-to-let as a key problem here and so this additional charge is set to discourage that, and ease supply of housing for first-time buyers.

What does this mean for self-builders or those looking to purchase a new home to renovate/extend?

Self-builders often create their main homes but retain their existing property to live in during the works. If the plot they are purchasing is classed as 'residential land' – ie a replacement dwelling or a garden plot – then the additional surcharge will apply. They then have 18 months from the time of purchase to sell their previous house, and then they will receive a refund of three per cent.

This, however, is not long, given the time required to

gain planning approval and then build the house. That's not to mention the cash-flow barrier self-builders typically face – this would make them three per cent worse off.

NaCSBA has already pitched for self-builders to be exempt from these charges, asking for building plots to be treated as non-residential land (in which case, just the normal stamp duty would apply). If they keep their old house after the build, they should not be entitled to the refund.

The same applies for renovation projects – you have an 18-month window. There's potential for some leeway on this, but there are no further details as yet.

When will this take effect?

The charges will take effect from 1 April in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Scotland will run a parallel scheme.

Are there any exemptions?

There are no loopholes, but there are certain exemptions, such as if the home is worth less than £40,000. Corporate investors who own 15 or more units will also be exempt, as these are likely to be companies whose interest lies in the private rental sector. If you have exchanged on a house off-plan already but do not complete until after 1 April, then you will also be exempt.

For those thinking of getting round it by putting the property in their partner's name, those living as a household unit will be classed as one, whether they are married or not.

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AWARDS

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Have you recently completed a self-build, renovation or conversion project? If so, we'd love to hear from you — as we launch *The Daily Telegraph* Homebuilding & Renovating Awards scheme for 2016.

The premier search for the best new homes in the UK, this is the perfect opportunity to showcase your project, as well as show others starting out on self-build and renovation projects what they can achieve (gaining recognition for your designers, builders and favourite suppliers into the bargain).

We're looking for a broad range of projects — from simple, well-designed extensions to barn conversions, eco homes and large self-builds of any style. This year we are even launching a Best International Home category. The shortlisted homes will be visited this summer and will feature in full in the magazine — the best will also gain coverage in *The Daily Telegraph*.

Entering your project takes just 10 minutes and best of all, it's free. You can enter online (at homebuilding.co.uk/awards) or by sending back the entry form on page 44 to The DT HB&R Awards, 2 Sugar Brook Court, Aston Road, Bromsgrove B60 3EX, along with photos and floorplans — **the closing date for entries is 28 April 2016**. We can't wait to see your homes!



JOHN NEED (RIGHT); JACK HOBHOUSE C/O EDGLEY ARCHITECTS (TOP)



origin
DOORS AND WINDOWS

THE CATEGORIES

➤ **BEST SELF-BUILD PROJECT**

The judges are looking for examples of the best self-builds in the UK.

➤ **GREENEST HOME IN BRITAIN**

A category aimed at projects that are a cut above when it comes to energy efficiency and sustainability.

➤ **BEST INTERNATIONAL HOME**

The judges are looking for the best house projects from around the world.

➤ **BEST CONVERSION**

A category for homes that have been created from barns and other buildings (including churches, schools and industrial buildings).

➤ **UK'S MOST INNOVATIVE HOME**

This is a category designed for projects that have gone above and beyond the standard specification — be it technology or materials.

➤ **BEST EXTENSION**

A category for homes that have been extended (including rear, front, side, basement and loft extensions).

➤ **BEST RENOVATION**

Entries are invited in this category for homes that have undergone a renovation or significant improvement.

➤ **BEST SELF-BUILD UNDER £150K**

Self-build projects built for less than £150,000 that represent exceptional value for money.

➤ **BEST DIY HOME**

The judges are looking for projects where the homeowner has undertaken a significant amount of the work themselves.

➤ **MOST INSPIRING HOME**

A category for projects (and their owners) that have overcome the odds. **H**



ENTRY FORM

Please complete and return **WITH A SET OF FLOORPLANS AND INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR PHOTOS** to: The DT HB&R Awards, Homebuilding & Renovating, 2 Sugar Brook Court, Aston Road, Bromsgrove B60 3EX; Tel: 01527 834470; homebuilding@centaurmedia.com. **THE DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS 28 APRIL 2016.** You may use a photocopy of this form. Your project must be complete by the time judging takes place in May/June 2016, and should have been completed within the past three years. By entering you agree to potential publicity in *The Daily Telegraph*, *Homebuilding & Renovating*, *Real Homes* and/or *Period Living*.

Name of entrant:..... Address:.....

.....

Email: Daytime tel. no.:

Number in family and ages:

Size of property (internal area) in m². Please provide the area of any garages separately. Please also state the number of bedrooms and the number of storeys:.....

.....

Which best describes your project? (please tick):

- ☐ New build
- ☐ Extension of an existing house
- ☐ Remodel and/or renovation of an existing house
- ☐ Conversion (e.g. barn)

Which category/ies are you entering? (please tick):

- ☐ Best Self-build
- ☐ Greenest Home in Britain
- ☐ Best Extension
- ☐ Best Renovation
- ☐ Best Conversion
- ☐ UK's Most Innovative Home
- ☐ Best DIY Home
- ☐ Best International Home
- ☐ Best Self-build Under £150K
- ☐ Most Inspiring Home

Name of the owner and address of property:
(if different from above):

.....

.....

.....

Date when work commenced:.....

Date occupied/completed:.....

What was the cost of the building plot/house?
(please provide an estimate if already owned):

.....

What was the cost of the project?

.....

What is the current/estimated value of the property?

.....

Please provide the name of the designer or architect (if applicable):

.....

What makes your project special?
(You may provide additional information to support your entry):

.....

.....

.....

.....

If your project is shortlisted we will contact you and may request further information. The initial round of judging is based entirely on the details on this form and, more importantly, the images of the outside and inside of your house that you provide with your entry. These do not need to be of professional quality but in order to portray your home in the best way these should be comprehensive and, if possible, taken on a bright day with a well-lit interior.

Rules of entry: 1. The competition is open to all residents aged over 18 and architectural practices, except for employees of The Telegraph plc and Centaur Media and their families; 2. The closing date for entries is 28 April 2016; 3. Responsibility cannot be accepted for entries lost, damaged or delayed in transit; 4. Photocopied entry forms will be accepted; 5. No cash alternatives will be offered in lieu of prizes that may be offered; 6. We cannot guarantee the return of entries, including drawings and photographs; 7. Details of entrants and their projects (not including specific location details) may be published in *The Daily Telegraph*, *Homebuilding & Renovating*, *Real Homes* and *Period Living* in print and online, at the discretion of the editors and may be used in publicity material (including publicity material used by the sponsors); 8. The judges' decision will be final and unchallengeable. No correspondence will be entered into; 9. The judges reserve the right not to award prizes in any category if entries do not reach the required standard; 10. Unsuccessful entrants may not necessarily be contacted or be able to return entries; 11. In addition to these rules, standard Telegraph rules apply and are available on request from: *The Daily Telegraph*, 111 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 0DT; 12. You are advised to keep a photocopy of this form for your own information.

☐ Please tick if appropriate. I do not wish to receive any offers from The Telegraph plc, Centaur Media or companies approved by The Telegraph plc or Centaur Media

I agree to be bound by the rules of entry. Signed..... Date.....



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14 Steps to a Smooth Design Process

Understanding how to work with your chosen architect allows your dreams to take shape — as well as saving you endless time, money and frustration. Architect Neil Turner explains how to ensure your project goes well from day one



NEIL TURNER

Neil is a director of architectural practice Howarth Litchfield Partnership and specialises in residential design (howarthlitchfield.com)



ISTOCK

1 Appoint the Right Architect
As well as ensuring he or she can design, check whether your chosen architect can also detail up the design and project manage the construction stage. Some people split the process, so that one firm designs and a different company takes over for the site works. I don't like this, as there are split liability issues and the second person doesn't have the initial design in their soul.

Also, think twice before accepting the cheapest quote: if a cheap price comes in, you invariably get a cheap service.

2 Go for Maturity
It takes years of experience (and mistakes) to know what you are doing, so avoid giving someone fresh out of college the job of designing and running your house project.

3 Create a Sensible Budget
Be honest with yourself and don't push your budget to the point where you can't afford a pint at the pub. There is little point in sitting in a grand house if you can't afford to heat it or live life a little. I remember seeing one couple in sleeping bags in an unfinished house that went way over budget because they kept adding extra elements. So create a budget, then adjust and alter it if you need to, but always refer to it.

4 Write a Strong Brief
Project creep is the demon of all designs and clients. Without a brief, how can you comment or compare design developments? Before you know it, your three-bed bungalow has become a five bedroom townhouse — ask yourself why the changes are needed.

5 Make Time for the Project
Building a house and getting the different stages right takes time, and to succeed clients must build time into their busy lives. Even when you have employed the best designer and builder, there will need to be meetings, conversations, emails and agreements. Don't expect to simply be handed back a perfect design after one meeting and then have it built. The best house projects are those with clients who commit time and energy to meeting up, answering questions and thinking about the options that are put in front of them.

6 Agree How to Communicate
It's vital that you agree this at the outset. Can you be approached nine to five, or are you only available out of office hours? Make sure that all meetings are recorded and written in minutes, so there is no confusion or ambiguity. I use minutes to record what is and is not agreed, and what the next steps are.

7 Be Honest from the Start
Don't be influenced by the latest fad. If you like certain styles, then stick to them. We can't all live in modern glass boxes. When working with clients I have seen many start with a description, only to find that they like something else entirely different. This can often occur with couples who haven't talked through their own brief with each other, or discussed style, fittings or budget. So before you get together with your architect, sit down with each other and talk through your choices.



BRETT CHARLES

8 Programme the Works
This sounds so obvious, but work out how long each stage will take. This adds reality to the project and avoids the pressure of unrealistic timescales. From the programme you can look ahead and create key milestones for design, planning, Building Regulations, tender and construction. Each of these can then be broken down later, into a more detailed programme. If you can't draw up a programme, ask your architect and they will be happy to assist. The programme helps you develop cash flow forecasts for payments and is a vital tool when you approach your bank to organise finances for loans to pay fees, contractors and suppliers.



JEREMY PHILLIPS



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9 Go for the Full Service
We often see clients who want a partial service and then choose to run the site works. As soon as this starts, the calls start to come in when they hit problems on contracts and inspections, technical questions and disputes between parties.

10 Don't Keep Changing Things
 Part of the fascination of design is the development and evolution of the brief into sketches, then layouts and finally a completed design. There will be alterations and different versions. My job is to guide this process along, so there is consensus and agreement on the completed work. I always accept that it is healthy to double check, so I don't mind change. However, if changes occur all the time, it becomes chaotic and hard to move on, and demoralising for the designer.

11 Keep on Track on Site
Making changes on site is the biggest sin of clients. As you pass each work stage, you should see each as a major passing point and not a point to go back and revisit. Sign off the drawings — it's all too easy to pick up another magazine, or talk to a friend, or see another product. When I built my house, we made the conscious decision not to vary anything on site, even the fixtures and fittings.

12 Make Decisions Before Work Begins
 If the drawings are complete before site works commence, then you will have thought through all the decisions. Where is the shaver point? How high is the TV in the living room, for instance? Every time you add this on to the site works, the potential for delay and cost increases.

13 Pay on Time
 A common mistake is when clients say they haven't got the money or it's due shortly, and ask if those involved in the project can wait. If you make people wait for fees, it doesn't foster a relationship of trust or respect. Your borrowing problems are not the team's problems.

14 Look at the Bigger Picture
 When I first meet clients, I am always excited by the possible commission and the challenge they want to give us. It's quite a responsibility to have their future home in our hands. So pay for good advice and your project should run along well. Enjoy the experience — if you are going to do this just once, then you had better make it work. Most architect-designed houses are one-off prototypes. If you haven't built before, the chances of you getting it right first time are greatly improved if you pick the right help. 



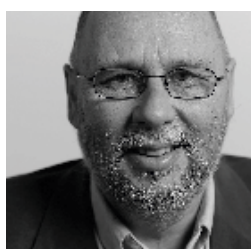
ANDREW LEE



ADVICE

Could Your Garden Provide a Free Plot?

There are many advantages to building a new home in the garden of your existing house — a free plot for one. But there are also a few key points to consider, and pitfalls to avoid. Plotfinding expert David Snell explains all



DAVID SNELL

A 13-time self-builder, David has been building homes for 50 years and is the author of *Building Your Own Home*

Without doubt, the greatest number of single plots, and by definition, those that are of the most interest to potential self-builders, are carved from existing properties. These are the garden plots, created by fencing off land at the side or by allowing a driveway to grant access to 'spare' land at the rear, or perhaps the front.

Many would-be self-builders spend months, and sometimes years, looking for a plot. And yet, for some, a plot is already within their ownership in the form of the garden that has become too large for their requirements. Building a new home in the garden is, therefore, a terrific way to obtain a plot. But there are considerations and potential pitfalls that do need to be taken into account.

What about Planning Permission?

The last Labour Government designated garden land as brown-field, with a presumption in favour of development. It was thought to be a godsend for self-builders, but it fell out of favour because so many gardens were being developed as multiple occupation



A New Home for Retirement

Pete and Lot Clark bought their five-bed Victorian house in a Derbyshire village some 35 years ago, with a view to downsizing to a new home when their children grew up.

Their existing two-acre garden provided space to build a new energy-efficient home that would provide them with low running costs during their retirement

JEREMY PHILLIPS

buildings, fundamentally changing the nature of many neighbourhoods. It also fell foul of a completely separate government aspiration for higher-density development, which meant that many potential self-builders and developers wishing to build a single home were, instead, required to build more than one dwelling.

Subsequent governments removed the brownfield status from garden land, heralding the end of 'garden grabbing'. But nothing has really changed, except that it became necessary for applicants to demonstrate the advisability and desirability of development, which often means that single dwellings will find more favour.

Large gardens, where it can be demonstrated that thoughtful development can take place without detriment to the nature of the area and the streetscene, are still acceptable in many situations and, once again, form the bulk of single plots.

Beware Covenants

It's important to remember that while planning permission means that you may develop land, it does not say that you can — if there is a legal impediment in the form of a covenant against further development, it might render the consent inoperable. Covenants or burdens (as they're known in Scotland) attach to the title of a house and garden or land; details will be contained within the information held by the Land Registry or the Registers of Scotland. They are usually put in place by a previous owner and they are binding on any owner and/or any future owners.



THE ADVANTAGES OF BUILDING IN YOUR GARDEN

If the right procedures and precautions are taken, there are countless advantages to building a new home on your own garden land:

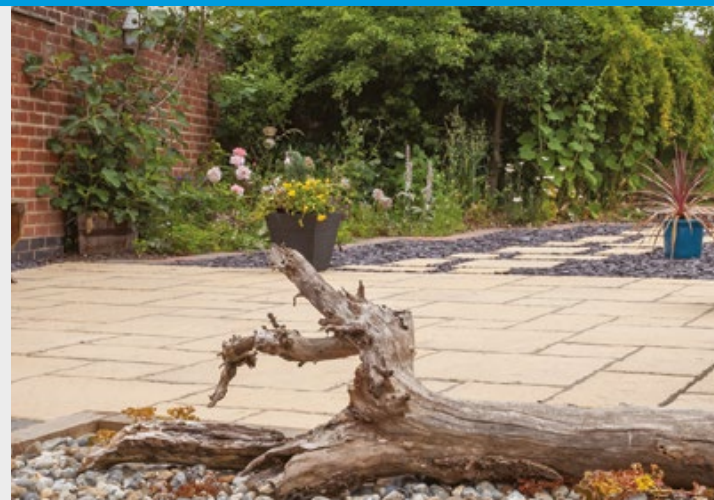
- You typically have somewhere to live while building.
- As such, you can keep an eye on progress and security.
- You may have existing space to safely store building materials, allowing you to shop in bulk as well as take advantage of bargains in advance of the build as they crop up.
- You can ensure that the design doesn't detrimentally affect your existing home and that the new home is, similarly, protected from any adverse effects from the old house.
- You don't have to pay for the plot and can therefore concentrate all of your resources into the new dwelling.
- You can often utilise the existing services, particularly connections to mains sewers, removing the expense of opening up roads to connect to services.
- You retain the environment and the neighbourhood you have become familiar with.

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ADVICE BUILDING A HOME ON YOUR GARDEN



JEREMY PHILLIPS

Spotting Potential in Urban Homes

This self-build in Sheffield (designed by Halliday Clark Architects) was built on a large driveway to an existing terrace home, after the homeowners, Tom and Emily Hunt, spotted the potential for a plot. "The end-terrace property we chose to buy had a large driveway to one side, which had once contained two other terraced houses. These were condemned and demolished in the 1970s, but we hoped to get planning consent to build something else on the land," explains Tom. The couple remained living in the terrace during the build

The covenant that is most likely to alarm a prospective self-builder is a blanket restrictive covenant prohibiting any form of development of the garden or specifically excluding the building of a dwelling. If the covenant is 'live' and the beneficiaries are known then this really can be a problem — and the only way to remove it would be to either agree to some form of payment or to apply to the Lands Tribunal on the basis that the original purpose of the covenant had faded away over time. Such an application would, however, only have a slim chance of success.

A breach of covenant without consent may well result in an injunction. So, if you do hope to build on a garden with such a covenant attached, an agreement must be reached with the beneficiaries, which usually involves payment of up to one third of the uplift in value from 'useless' garden land to a developable plot.

On the other hand, if the covenant does not appear to have any traceable beneficiary, then the self-builder is in a much better position. The simple way around this is not to seek to have the covenant removed but to purchase a single premium indemnity policy. This can be arranged through a solicitor and the premium will be established based on the likelihood of a beneficiary coming forward.

Potential Access Issues

Access may potentially be another issue to consider. Many homes share their drives or access with one or more other dwellings and the arrangements for this access can take

many forms. If private access is/has been granted to a particular parcel of land, then the addition of a further dwelling will usually not run counter to the agreement. But if the access is granted on the basis of access to a named or numbered dwelling or specifically refers to a 'single' dwelling, then that access, and all its rights, may not automatically transfer to a subsequent dwelling. Once again, agreement might have to be made and a 'ransom' paid.

The same criteria could apply to services which run under or over land in the ownership of others or beneath a shared private drive.

The utilisation of land or access without consent may well result in an injunction. On the other hand, an injunction is an expensive procedure and many aggrieved beneficiaries will fail to take matters that far. If you take advantage of this situation, do be aware that if you ever want to sell the new dwelling, you might then run into problems.

Will a New Home Impact on the Value of the Existing?

In most cases, the carving of a plot from a larger-than-average garden will have little or no detrimental effect on the original value of the existing home. In many cases, as long as the original dwelling is left with an overall plot size of at least three times the building's footprint, no diminution in value will occur.

In most cases, any reduction in the value of the house will be vastly outweighed by the increase in value of the resultant plot. ➡

"When it comes to self-build mortgages, owning the land is a distinct advantage"

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The Tax Rules Explained

If you obtain planning permission to build a new home in the garden of your existing home, your Principal Private Residence (PPR), and then decide not to build but sell off the plot instead, then, as long as the plot does not exceed 0.6 hectare (approximately 1.25 acres) in size, the gains from any sale are exempt from Capital Gains Tax (CGT). If you do build the new home and move into it, then the sale of the old home is, similarly, exempt from CGT. Once you have moved into the new home it becomes your PPR and is exempt from CGT in any subsequent sale, too.

If you build the new property and then let it out, then CGT will be payable on any subsequent sale. Additionally, as the first supply was as a letting, you will not be able to reclaim the VAT paid out during the construction of the dwelling.

However, if you make a habit of building again and again on a garden or any other plot, skimming a little off the top to live on, with little or no demonstrable other form of income, then you will attract the attention of the tax authorities and it won't be CGT that you'll be liable for, but Income Tax.

If you build the new home in the garden and sell it off without ever living in it, then you will also be deemed to be trading, and Income Tax will become payable on the 'developer's profit' that you make, as well as the gain caused by the uplift in value of the plot when planning permission was obtained.

If the 'garden' land that you build the new house on is divorced from your PPR, for example, a paddock or allotment on the other side of the village, then once the new home is finished, the sale of your old PPR will be tax exempt and the new dwelling will become your PPR from the date that you move into it. However, a CGT liability will have occurred on the new dwelling, calculated on the basis of its uplift in value in terms of the planning and development of the plot during the time of your ownership up to the date of your occupation. This liability only occurs when the

Traditional Home in the Garden

A generous garden allowed one couple to build an eco home, using an internal oak frame and structural insulated panels by Border Oak. A garden room takes advantage of south-facing views too. Lime render and a brick plinth are in keeping with the vernacular

gain is realised in any future sale and will, therefore, lie dormant until or unless that situation occurs.

Funding the Build

In an ideal world we'd all have paid off our existing mortgages and have adequate savings available to fund the entirety of a self-build. There are, however, several different options available where this is not the case. You may be able to raise money on the existing house in order to finance the build, paying it all off when the old home is sold, for instance. Alternatively, the increased value of the plot may mean that you can raise finance, sufficient to build the new home and/or pay off any existing mortgage on the old home.

When it comes to self-build mortgages, owning the land is a distinct advantage because an accelerator mortgage (such as that offered by BuildStore) will normally give you a percentage of the land value, plus a percentage of the build costs in staged payments. As you own the land already, your first tranche of money for the land will usually go a long way towards your build costs.

If, however, you have a very large mortgage on the existing home and your income won't allow you to secure additional lending, then you may be forced to sell the old home before commencing work. But the timing of that sale will be in your hands, allowing you to minimise the gap between homes.

In any event, it's essential to talk to a dedicated self-build mortgage provider who understands the self-build market, rather than a standard high street lender. 

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DESIGN

15 Bathroom Design Ideas

It's the little details that make a new house a home. Claire Lloyd shares some of the latest design solutions for creating a new bathroom



BUILT-IN STORAGE

Built-in shelves and alcoves are obviously useful additions for displaying expensive-looking bottles and storing bathroom wares, but they serve another purpose — they add interest to the room. Above, the timber-lined alcove lends warmth to this monochrome bathroom, and complements the vanity unit. (Note the radiator, from Funkyheat, which doubles as a full-length mirror in this bathroom. What's more, this clever product provides infrared heating and can be controlled by touchscreen technology or by wireless remote.)

SOLUTIONS FOR SLOPING CEILINGS

Space beneath sloping ceilings can often lend itself to bathrooms, and indeed help create interesting bathroom schemes. Below, this bathroom has been created within a loft conversion; the homeowners have made the most of the space with a luxurious shower enclosure, and chosen dark tiles to help define the sloping ceilings. In addition, 'unusable' space beneath sloping eaves can provide the perfect place to tuck away plumbing, and create built-in alcoves or storage.



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DESIGN 15 GREAT BATHROOM IDEAS



SOLID SURFACES

Solid surfaces have been popular in the kitchen in recent years, offering a seamless worktop solution, often with integral sink. As with many trends which begin in the kitchen, this one is making its way into the bathroom, providing a hygienic, waterproof surface in this room too.

Left: Roper Rhodes' City basin and integrated worktop features a deep, spacious washbasin, which flows seamlessly from the solid surface. The 1,600mm worktop can be cut to size to suit any bathroom

Below: Duravit's P3 Comforts furniture washbasin provides a generous surface area to store bathroom wares



MAKE A STATEMENT WITH BOLD TILES

A bold tile choice or colour scheme can lift a bathroom from ordinary to extraordinary, injecting flair and personality — as this bathroom goes to show. Pairing encaustic-style cement tiles (from American-based Rustico Tile & Stone) with white metro wall tiles, mirrored antiqued mirror wall panels (from Rupert Bevan) and a mirrored bath (the Tay bath from Drummonds) ensures the room does not feel claustrophobic.



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THE FOLD-AWAY ENCLOSURE

Duravit's OpenSpace B is an enviable piece of design; the innovative shower enclosure can simply be folded back against the wall after use, providing extra space in the bathroom. It's a particularly good idea for en suites that are open to the bedroom.

One door can be specified with a mirrored finish — to hide away the shower fittings behind, and provide a full-length mirror in the process. The enclosure can be combined with a tray, as here, or introduced above a tiled floor.



DEEP, SUNKEN TUBS

Deep baths provide an indulgent place for a dip. (Indeed, deep soaking baths have been a core part of the Japanese home for centuries — a soak promoting a sense of wellbeing at the end of the working day.) They're a good solution for those looking beyond the standard 1,700mm straight bath in search of something a little different, and a solution for compact bathrooms, too.

If you're opting for a deep, sunken bath (as above) forward planning is a must (self-builders are at a distinct advantage here over those remodelling existing homes, too). This model is cast entirely in HI-MACS (an acrylic stone composite) by LG Hausys.



DISCREET LAUNDRY

Laundry baskets can be an untidy addition to a bathroom scheme. Step in this neat solution (from Hammonds Furniture) which puts the space beneath the basin to good use.



A STYLISH STEAM ROOM

Aqata's Exclusive Solutions ES300 Sliding Door Recess Option is suitable for power showers, body jets and steam, meaning you can transform an alcove within the bathroom into a multi-purpose showering and steam enclosure — it's an altogether more stylish addition than the traditional steam 'cabin'. A tiled seating area is a good optional extra.



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MIRRORED WALLS

Mirrors are not simply a practical addition — well placed, they can be used to create an illusion of space in a small bathroom, and bounce light around the room. What's more, large mirrors could represent a cost-saving solution compared with tiling the area.

Above: Two strategically placed mirrors add to the illusion of space in this small bathroom and provide relief against the grey wall and floor tiles
Below: A large mirror stretches the length of the wall — making this room feel larger. (For similar results, try a local glazing company, who will be able to cut the mirrored glass to size)



ROOM DIVIDES

When it comes to designing a new bathroom, bear in mind that the sanitaryware does not always need to be placed against walls. Partial room divides can be a good means of breaking up a large bathroom and hiding plumbing. That said, this is a look which requires planning from the outset to ensure the hot and cold feeds, and waste, are in the right place prior to boarding and tiling. It can also be an inexpensive way of creating a feature: often stud walling can be utilised.

Above: This partial wall divide provides a generous shower enclosure to one side, doubling as a spot to mount the wall-mounted taps for the bath on the other (Drummonds' Usk bath with a black painted exterior, shown)
Below: A half wall breaks up this spacious en suite and is a characterful addition (thanks to the reclaimed timber cladding) in this barn conversion



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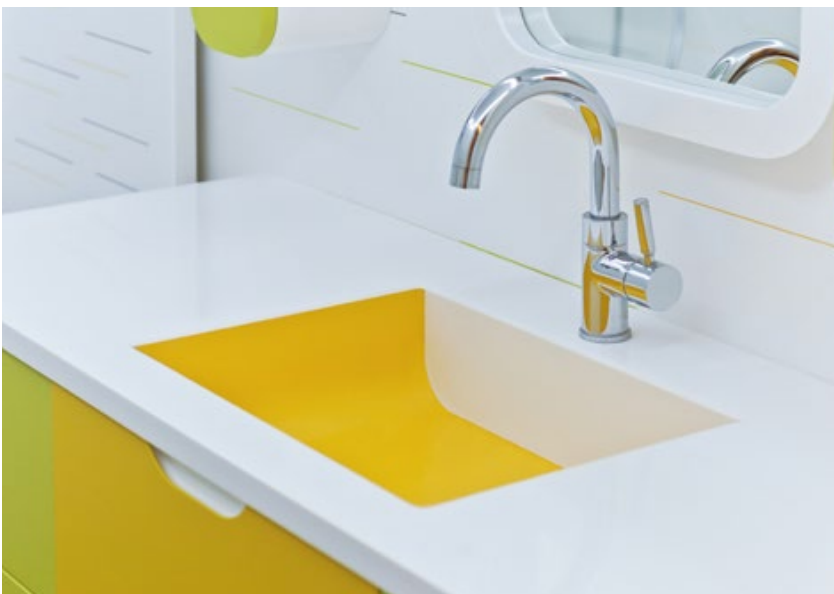
DECORATIVE SCREENS

Shower screens need not be boring — as this eye-catching design proves. Art Glass screens, from Alternative Bathrooms, are available for shower enclosures, and as bath and shower panels, in two designs. The Oslo walk-in shower panel here in the 'Japan' design measures H2,000xW1,200mm and is priced from £3,500.



MOOD LIGHTING

The bathroom is both a practical space and a room in which to relax — a dedicated lighting scheme can go a long way to ensuring it meets both demands. Here, for instance, strip lighting washes this bathroom with a warm glow. Do bear in mind that lighting needs to meet the appropriate IP rating when planning your scheme. (The bathroom mirror, the L'Artique Chalet in Courchevell, was crafted by Lmh Projects.)



BASIN IDEAS FOR KIDS

Family bathrooms — particularly in those households with young children — should be fun as well as functional, as these examples show.

Above: This colourful basin with vanity unit has been created in HI-MACS, an acrylic stone composite that boasts a hygienic finish and waterproof qualities, ideal for children

Below: Forget his and hers basins — these twin basins are a great idea for adults and little ones. Kaldewei's built-in Puro washbasins shown





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DESIGN 15 GREAT BATHROOM IDEAS

INTRODUCING LIGHT

Building a new home, or extending an existing one, provides an unrivalled opportunity to design in windows as and where you need them — rather than working around what's already there.

Here: Two semi-opaque window 'slots' provide a diffused natural light to this cocoon-like bathroom, but do not compromise privacy. (This self-build home was designed by Hall + Bednarczyk Architects)

Below: A glazed wall, lined with bookshelves, can be a good way of introducing light into an interior bathroom without windows. (Note, this is a design feature best planned for interior walls that do not face the toilet!)

SIMON MAXWELL



TIMBER CLADDING

Timber cladding has been big news in interiors in recent years, but it's a look that requires thought within the bathroom. "In humid bathrooms with a shower or bath, timber should only be used sparingly in areas that will have no contact with water. The cloakroom, however, is a special bathroom without excessive production of vapours, and timber can be used throughout. Generally it is best to use a hardwood," explains Thomas Griem, director of TG Studio, which was behind this room. "Always ensure very good air extraction." 



ADVICE

Foundations for Difficult Sites

Unstable ground? Clay soil? Trees? Sloping land? 'Difficult' sites can quickly become expensive headaches. Surveyor Ian Rock provides solutions for even the most problematic of plots



IAN ROCK

Chartered surveyor Ian Rock MRICS is the author of eight popular Haynes House Manuals, including *Build Your Own House Manual*, and is a director of Rightsurvey.co.uk

There are good reasons why developers generally steer clear of 'tricky' sites. Potentially exorbitant groundwork costs, coupled with prolonged periods of uncertainty, can rapidly transform a viable project into a daring gamble. However, what might appear to be a 'problem plot' can sometimes turn out to be a blessing in disguise for self-builders willing to take on technical challenges.

The primary role of foundations is to anchor the building to good bearing ground (in other words, ground capable of supporting the building). Even relatively lightweight structures, such as timber frame houses, need to be securely 'fixed in place' to resist ground movement. The trouble is, conventional trench foundations start to become uneconomic below about 2m deep. So on sites where stable ground is in short supply, you're likely to need something a bit more sophisticated to protect your home from the ravages of nature. This normally means consulting a structural engineer at the design stage. The need for 'special' foundations can also extend the time taken for groundworks from three or four days for a conventional build, to perhaps two or three weeks — more than doubling your total costs for this stage of the project.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A TRICKY PLOT?

The three main causes of escalating groundworks are sloping sites, the close proximity and/or presence of trees, and 'bad ground'.

Sloping Sites

Even quite shallow slopes can pose complications. Designing the drainage and access will need careful attention, and surface

water coming down the hill will need to be channelled around the building. As a rule, the steeper the site the greater the cost, with expensive retaining walls often required on gradients of more than 1:25, to hold back the ground.

The biggest decision, however, is where to position the building. One option is to build into the hill, excavating to create a level base. Alternatively you might decide to extend the building outwards with supporting walls constructed under the raised area. Both options are likely to add upwards of £5,000 to your groundwork costs. The compromise method is to fit the house to the slope with a series of steps creating a split-level layout. This will reduce the amount of excavation, although it can still add as much as 10 per cent to your overall build cost. However, sloping sites can provide an opportunity for adding extra space by incorporating a basement as a cost-effective way to fill the void when building out above ground level.

Presence of Trees

Retaining mature trees can add a lot to the 'amenity value' of a property, while helping to mollify planners and disgruntled neighbours. The problem is, notoriously thirsty species such as





Building on a Sloping Site

Extensive excavation was required in order to build the ground floor level of this new home, designed by architect Annie Martin, into the sloping site. The result is a home which appears to be single storey from approach — a key requirement for this replacement dwelling within Dartmoor National Park. The retaining walls have been clad in granite

willows and poplars can cause ground instability in subsoils such as shrinkable clay. As a rough guide, it is recommended that buildings on conventional foundations should not be closer to single trees than the height of the tree at maturity, or one-and-a-half times for groups of trees; the National House Building Council (NHBC) publishes tables showing 'safe distances'. To determine foundation depths, you also need to consider the shrinkability of the subsoil and the water demand of the species, as well as noting the distance of trees from foundations.

Cutting down trees can also cause problems. For several years following the clearing of a site, clay soils can gradually expand, absorbing the moisture no longer taken by the trees. The foundation design needs to allow for this.

Root barriers can be a useful method of protecting foundations. This involves excavating a narrow trench between the tree and the building about a metre deeper than the lowest roots (trenches are typically about 4m deep) into which large rigid plastic sheets about 4mm thick are inserted.

'Bad Ground'

There are several reasons why ground can be prone to movement:

- **Volume change.** Shrinkable clays suffer seasonal volume changes, although this rarely extends more than a metre below the surface. Problems are exacerbated by trees and shrubs in close proximity, combined with periods of drought and heavy rainfall.
- **Frost heave.** Springy or boggy ground is indicative of a high water table where soil can expand when frozen. However, surface groundwater rarely freezes at depths of more than half a metre.
- **Made up ground.** Previously developed 'brownfield' land can contain all manner of horrors, such as old footings, drains and wells, with consequent uncertainty about the bearing capacity of the ground. Former industrial uses or dumps may also harbour potential risks with toxic chemicals or methane gas, so it's advisable to consult local authority registers of contaminated land. In some cases, however, the solution can be relatively simple such as specifying sulphur-resistant cement.
- **Unstable ground.** Worst of all, past excavation or mining activity may have made the ground highly unstable, with new foundations potentially subject to periodic, unpredictable subsidence. ➔



DARREN CHUNG

FOUNDATION SOLUTIONS

Building on difficult terrain normally involves one of these following solutions:

Digging Down Deeper

On ground with poor bearing capacity, such as soft sandy clays, the simplest solution is to dig down a little further. If a standard trench foundation is deep enough, its base should be supported on firm ground unaffected by seasonal changes, while beam and block floors can happily bridge across the surface.

In clay areas, however, the ground around the sides of the foundations will still be prone to periodic expansion and contraction as the ground becomes saturated and then dries. So to resist lateral pressure, the sides of the trenches can be lined with a flexible slip membrane which allows the clay alongside to independently shrink or swell. Also, building wider foundations can help spread the load over a larger area, but this may require steel reinforcement to prevent shearing. And, as we have seen, with deeper trench foundations it soon becomes cheaper, easier and safer to switch to one of the following 'engineered' solutions.

Pile and Ring Beam Foundations

Piles are concrete columns drilled deep into hard bedrock to

securely anchor the building, aided by frictional resistance from the surrounding ground. This method has become much more common in housebuilding since the advent of cheaper short-bored systems installed using hired mini-piling rigs. It's now the most widely used foundation type after conventional trenches, thanks in no small measure to planning requirements encouraging retention of trees and the development of brownfield land.

Piles are placed about every 2.5m under the main walls, and at corners and intersections. Once firm stratum is reached they can be topped with mushroom-like 'pile caps' on to which horizontal reinforced concrete ring beams (aka 'ground beams') are installed to support the main walls. There are four main types of mini-piling ('micro pile') systems:

- **Augered piling** is widely used in clay subsoil and involves drilling holes (200mm to 600mm in diameter) as deep as 24m with an 'auger' (a rotating shaft with cutting blades). Once drilled, the auger is withdrawn and the hole filled with steel-reinforced concrete. This is the least expensive and most common method, and is virtually vibration free. On sites with very restricted access, lightweight hand auger tripods can drill with a diameter of up to 300mm and to a depth of 13m.



ADVICE FOUNDATIONS FOR DIFFICULT SITES

Building Near Trees

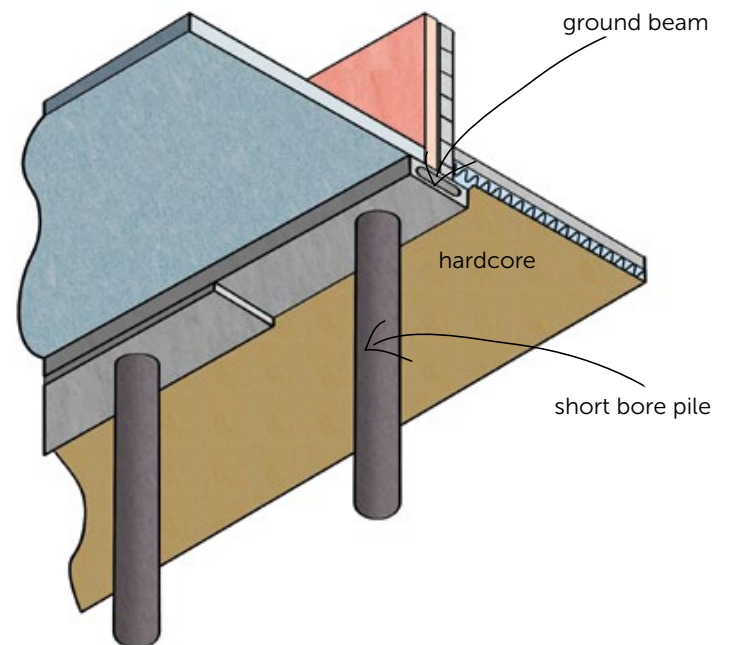
This new home was built using piled foundations, due to the close proximity of a large willow tree that the owners wanted to retain. Another recent innovation used for building near trees, at a similar cost to pile and beam foundations, is the prefabricated 'Housedeck' — an insulated raft of reinforced concrete supported on piles

● **Continuous flight auger (CFA) piles** are used in unstable or water-bearing ground. The main difference from augered piling is that the drilling pieces are hollow so concrete can be pumped directly to the bottom of the hole as the auger is withdrawn.

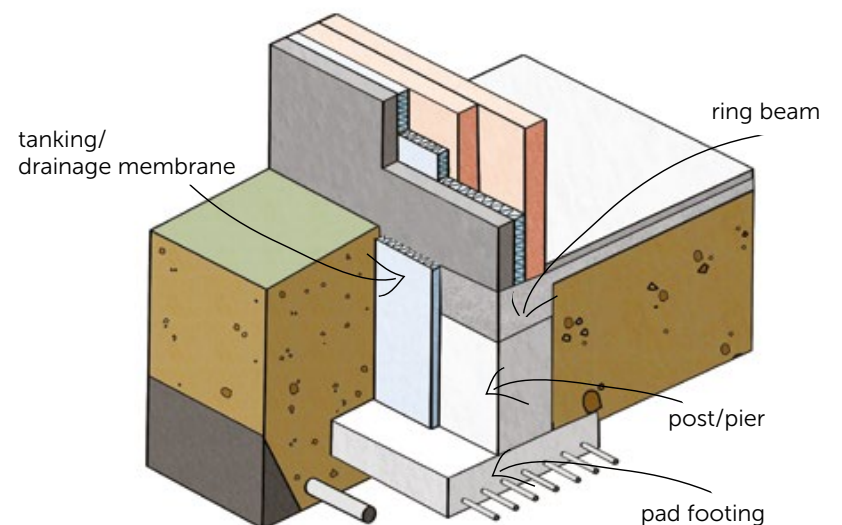
● **Driven piles** use a steel casing and are suitable for wet, unstable or contaminated ground. More economical than the CFA method, these piles come in sizes varying from 150mm to 320mm. The casing is first placed in a small pilot hole and then pushed into the ground using a suitable weight on a hydraulic pile driver. One benefit of this method is that it creates little or no spoil, saving on transport and disposal, thus also reducing the carbon footprint.

● **Screw piles** (also known as helical piles) are akin to giant wood screws — these hollow tubular steel piles are wound into the ground by machine with no prior excavation. The main benefit is fast installation and minimal soil displacement and disposal. ➡

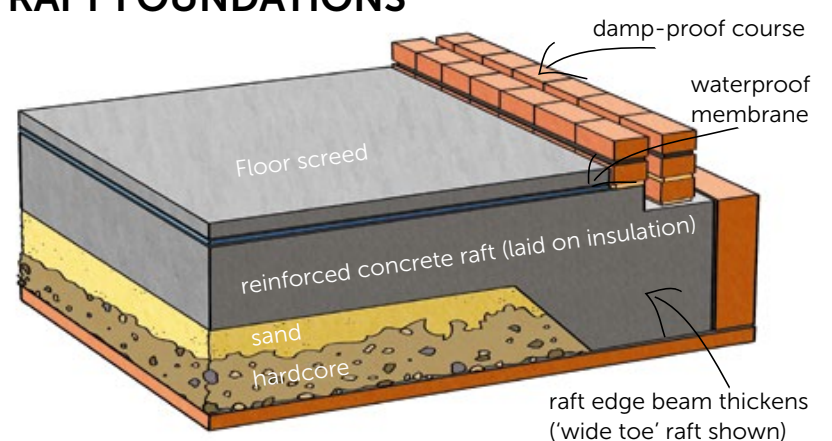
PILED FOUNDATIONS



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Laying a Raft Foundation

Concrete is compacted down (to remove air) once poured over steel reinforcing mesh and insulation, in order to create the raft foundation for this Passivhaus build by Potton (see more on page 153)

Raft Foundations

A raft is a large continuous reinforced concrete slab that extends under the whole building. By distributing the load over the entire footprint, the load per unit area is reduced, making a raft suitable where there's ground instability, such as sites with a history of mining. Rather than trying to anchor the building, in the event of subsidence the raft is designed to absorb the movement, protecting the structure of the building sitting on top. Because rafts can bridge across weak areas, they're also often used on compressible backfill land, sites with groundwater or clay prone to excessive shrinkage, and areas with unpredictable geological conditions such as streams flowing deep below the surface.

Conventional 'flat rafts' comprise a slab of uniform thickness with a mass of steel reinforcement top and bottom to provide resistance against both upward and downward bending. The alternative 'wide toe' design is used on ground with poor compressibility. Here the edges of the raft supporting the main walls are constructed thicker and deeper, and reinforced with metal 'cages'. Construction is similar to a very thick solid concrete floor slab, but can either be cast directly into the ground or 'floating' on a bed of fine granular material.

Rafts also need to accommodate possible ground movement without fracturing service pipes and drains which can be run through collars cast in the concrete. The main drawback of raft foundations is the high cost, largely due to the enormous amount of high-strength concrete and steel consumed.

Pad Foundations

Pad foundations are designed to carry individual 'point loads'. This type of foundation suits buildings with skeletal structures, such as steel frame or traditional post and beam, where the frame can be supported on a series of small concrete pads instead of the external wall sitting on continuous strips in the ground. However, as with piled foundations, it's possible to modify pads by constructing reinforced concrete ground beams that span between the concrete pads, making them suitable for supporting lightweight panel timber frame buildings.

Construction is relatively straightforward. First a number of large holes are dug, about a metre deep. Typically these will be spaced quite close together at 600mm centres, and located at corners and under the more heavily loaded parts of the wall (for

example, either side of window and door openings). Holes are normally dug by machine; a simple mechanical post hole borer can drill down to a depth of around 1.4m. Square or circular pads are cast individually in the bottom of each of the pits. Steel posts can then be bolted on top, or piers of brick or reinforced concrete built on to each pad foundation.

One advantage of this system is that the construction process is within the capabilities of a competent self-builder. Plus, it's a reasonably eco-friendly foundation system as relatively small amounts of concrete are used.

Pads can suit poor soils and can also be used to avoid problems where bored piling is sometimes obstructed by impenetrable pockets of rubble or hard gravel, snapping bits and jamming augurs. The downside is that the process is very labour-intensive.

The Impact of your Construction System

Piled foundations are normally the most economical solution for sites where loadbearing support is several metres below the surface, such as made up ground or shrinkable clay with deep-rooted vegetation. But where ground is unstable, a reinforced concrete raft that effectively 'floats' on the surface is a safer bet.

The appropriate type of foundation will also be influenced by your chosen method of house construction. Conventional masonry walls are normally built on standard trench or raft foundations, since these readily provide a consistently level base. However, pile foundation systems with ring beams can also be suitable for both timber frame and traditional masonry walls. Pad foundations are suited to point loads from steel stanchions or post and beam walls, although to prevent problems with damp and rot, traditional timber frame structures are probably best supported on short base walls built off ring beams.

Modern panel timber frame structures are much lighter than those of masonry construction, so in theory should require less in the way of foundations. But as we have seen, what matters most isn't so much the weight of house, but the fact that the load is bearing on firm ground that won't move. As long as that box can be ticked, foundations shouldn't be over-engineered for the loads they carry. Another factor with timber frame walls – or indeed anything that arrives on site prefabricated – is the need for foundations to have a greater degree of accuracy (plus or minus 5mm) since there's less scope to make up for errors on site. 

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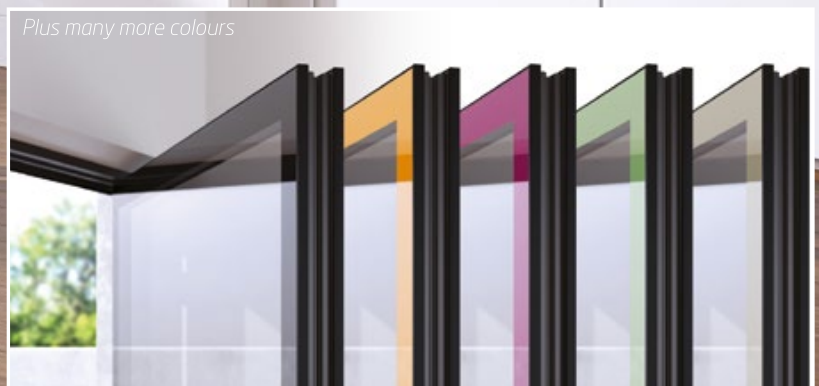
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ADVICE

Aluminium Windows: 5 Factors to Consider

Windows are a massive part of your overall project — both in terms of budget and look. Jason Orme explains what to look for when choosing modern aluminium

THE LOOK

Windows play a major role in defining the overall look of the elevations — in this era of big glass, increasingly so — and therefore it's worth prioritising the look. Firstly, concentrate on achieving slim sightlines. Secondly, look at the way the opening and fixed glass elements look side by side. 'Flush' is the key word here.

"Many architects and homeowners want a system in which all units are identical, whether the window is fixed, opening, or motorised (an increasingly popular option for high-level windows or when windows are used to provide automatic ventilation)," says Andy Trewick from Velfac. "Uniform sightlines result in stylish, seamless exterior façades." Origin's flush exterior and interior casement achieves pleasing results, too.

Strength and Quality

Aluminium windows are renowned for their strength and durability, allowing large glazing panels to be used — as in this example from Velfac (top). There is a surprising variety in quality of aluminium used — manufacturers such as Origin (right) use prime billets in manufacture rather than scrap aluminium



PRICE

Make sure that you are comparing like for like when it comes to quotes from different suppliers — assessing things like locks, handles, any required pressings and so on. There is likely to be a huge range in quotes, but don't forget that this is more than a pricing game: look for lead-in times (Origin offers a lead time of one week on its main colours.)

Don't forget that, as most systems require specialist fitting, you'll need to coordinate with a local approved installation firm if the window company doesn't offer a fitting service.

LOOK AT THE QUALITY OF THE FINISH

There can be a huge variety in the quality of the aluminium itself. "Good quality aluminium should have a perfectly smooth and consistent finish, while poor quality may have pitting from when the profile has been heated during powder coating," says Neil Ginger, Origin Global's CEO. (Origin uses prime billets in manufacture, rather than scrap aluminium that has been remelted.) "A smooth finish is achieved by polishing the die after each extrusion run, to reduce corrosion and avoid contamination on the surface, giving a high-quality finish ready for the powder coating process," he continues.

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SECURITY

Most windows and doors manufacturers aim to talk up their products' security but now, thanks to changes to Part Q of the Building Regulations and the Secured By Design standards, there are measurable ways of ensuring your choice ticks the boxes. The new Part Q came into effect on 1 October 2015 and requires accessible windows (basement, ground floor and other easily accessible windows) in new builds to be made to a design that has been shown through testing to meet the security requirements of British Standards Publication PAS 24:2012. Part Q does not apply for projects where initial notice was submitted before 1 October 2015, provided the work is started on site before 1 October 2016.

A Combined Approach

The better companies offer bespoke designs and a co-ordinated look for fixed and opening units, and of course windows and doors. These (top) are from Origin; Left: ecoHaus Internorm's HS330 timber/aluminium lift-sliding door. The company offers triple glazing as standard on its doors and windows

BUILD QUALITY

The way the window is put together can vary a lot from one supplier to the next. For example, when it comes to composite systems – which combine two materials, usually timber on the inside and aluminium externally – ensure that the external and internal frame elements are distinct (rather than, for instance, comprising a wooden frame clad on to an aluminium skin). Also ask where the key elements originated and where they were actually manufactured.

Below: Bronze Windows

High-quality slim profile metal doesn't have to be aluminium. Bronze is a fine alternative, as in these windows from Architectural Bronze Casements

...AND SOMETHING MORE TRADITIONAL

Steel and bronze windows, such as those from Crittal, have long enjoyed popularity among self-builders and renovators looking for period styles. The look and feel is distinct and perfect for recreating a traditional look, and thanks to thermal breaks, efficiency is high and profiles are slim. **H**



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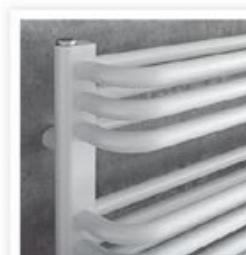
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“A Good Client/Builder Team is Key to Success”

In the second of a new series, builders share the things they wish you knew

The most common type of project we undertake is full turn-key self-builds. We work with private clients throughout the UK to help build their ideal homes on time and on budget.

Central to the success of a build project is a good working relationship between the client and the builder. Try to choose a builder you feel comfortable with and can envisage working well with. Ask them for a detailed schedule of works so that you have a point of reference as to what should be happening on your project at any given time. Also, schedule regular site meetings with your builder to discuss any concerns or desired changes that may arise during the course of the build so that these can be addressed.

It would be helpful for us as builders if clients were more familiar with the cost implications of different specifications. We see a lot of homeowners who have paid a considerable amount of money at the design stage, only to be disappointed to discover that the plans are completely unrealistic and unachievable given their budget.

Clients also need to be aware that changing the specification once the build is underway is possible, but may incur delays and further costs. So our advice would be to try to consider everything thoroughly before building commences, and discuss your thoughts and ideas – no matter how small – with your builder.

My top tip for choosing a builder is do your research. Find out how long the builder has been operating, and if they are a member of a trade organisation. Also, ask for the details of several previous clients so that you can chat to them about their experiences and inspect the standard and quality of the builder's work. Insist on a full schedule of works as well as a building contract – any decent builder worth their salt will be more than happy to provide this. 🛠️

● Christian Ratcliffe is director of Nottinghamshire-based C Ratcliffe Builders (ratcliffeworksop.co.uk)

● The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) operates the Find a Builder service to help you source quality contractors near you at fmb.org.uk



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Going out to Tender: a Guide for Beginners

Are you wondering how to get the best builder for your project, at the right price? Peter Eade explains how to get the most from the tender process



PETER EADE

Peter Eade has spent a lifetime running his own building business, specialising in project management and design

Going out to tender is undoubtedly the best way of getting a building job done at the most competitive price. However, the procedure needs to be properly organised in order to ensure you pick the right builder, and that the build runs as smoothly as possible when work goes on site.

The starting point is your plans. It is unwise to seek prices from builders based only on the planning drawings, as any estimates received are unlikely to give a true indication of costs. The plans required for pricing have to be those approved by Building Control; builders want properly detailed plans, elevations and section drawings that are fully compliant with the Building Regulations. In addition, Building Control may well have requested structural calculations for some aspects of the project; this information will also be needed by the builder pricing the work. The approved drawings generally only show the structural aspect of the project and often do not include items such as wiring schedules or mechanical services (heating and plumbing), so a decision needs to be made about whether these are to be included or addressed later.



ADVICE GOING OUT TO TENDER

“Before finally agreeing on your chosen builder, make sure they understand and agree with the clauses within the contract”

Sometimes as part of the planning conditions, the planners may want to approve the choice of face bricks and roof tiles, which again has to be dealt with prior to tendering. If it is not known which brick or tile is going to be selected, then they need to be covered by a PC sum (prime cost sum – a term used to describe items that have not yet been finalised). Any other unknowns can either be omitted at this stage or perhaps covered by further PC sums or provisional sums (a term used to indicate an estimate for an item which can not be given a fixed price).

Most projects can benefit from having a specification describing in detail each aspect of the job and should include all PC and provisional sums and perhaps a contingency sum too. Ideally, the specification should be prepared by a professional. If it is written by someone new to the job, it may give incorrect or unclear information that could prove expensive later. In addition to describing what work is required, the specification should also state which contract will be used. (Read more on page 91.)

Retention and Penalty Clauses

If there is a contract, it will show how and when interim payments will be made to the builder and indicate if there is going to be a retention withheld. Retention usually means 5 per cent is kept back from each interim payment with 2.5 per cent of the retention being released at the final account stage; the other 2.5 per cent is then held for a further six months until the snagging jobs are dealt with. The contract may well show if there is going to be a penalty clause if the job takes longer than the agreed time. A properly prepared tender form is also useful as it ensure all quotations received are set down in the same format and it will state that the client is not obliged to accept any of the tenders received.

Going Out to Tender

Once all the documents are in place, the next move is to decide which builders are going to be invited to tender. To a large degree, the choice of builder depends on the size of the project to be carried out. If it is a smallish extension, it's probably best to look at small builders who are more likely to be interested than larger companies. Once there is a shortlist of at least four builders, contact each one by phone or email and ask if they are interested in tendering. It is important they know what the proposed work consists of and your timescale — there is not much point in receiving an interesting price only to find that your builder can't start for a year or more.

Receiving the Tenders Back

When you receive the tenders, it is likely there will be some diversity in prices. There are, after all, three types of builders: the ones who will submit a properly priced tender based on current costs; the ones who are not too busy and will put in a low price to get the job; and finally, the ones who are very busy and come back with

a high price knowing that if they get the work there will be good profit in it. As a result, the lowest price is not necessarily the best one to accept, but after carrying out some research may still be worth considering. If the feedback you receive is not that good, think about talking to one of the other builders who tendered, assuming their price is competitive. The other option is to go back out to tender with different builders.

Before finally engaging your chosen builder, make sure they understand and agree with the clauses within the contract, particularly regarding completion dates and payment clauses. It's important to also thoroughly check the builder's credentials and ask for contact details of clients and architects they have worked for during the past year. In addition, in no circumstances should upfront payments ever be agreed, and all interim valuations must be based on the value of work carried out plus the cost of any materials on site.

Employing and Project Managing Trades Directly

There is no doubt employing a reliable builder to undertake the whole of the job has great advantages, but not everyone wants to go down this route. If the plan is to use individual trades, getting in quotes for each stage of the job is likely to be more problematic and you will be faced with having to organise both the labour force and the materials. To avoid holdups, it is essential that each trade is available when they are required and the materials are there on site waiting. If there are delays due to kit not being delivered, the operatives will either leave the site or make an additional charge for the time wasted. Each trade should be asked to provide labour-only quotes, although it's best to ask electricians, plumbers and heating engineers for quotes that include both labour and materials, due to the complexity of the materials.

Before getting in any prices, it's a good idea to prepare a list of the trades as they will be required, starting off with the ground workers through to the finishing trades. It's still important to have a payment schedule in place and also agree how long each part of the work will take to complete.

Final Checks

Once all of the quotes are received, further checks need to be made before engaging any of the operatives to make sure they are reliable and skilled. Although there may be financial benefits to undertaking the job using individual trades, the management of the site can be quite intense. Site organisation is paramount to ensure the work proceeds without delays and careful planning is required to achieve this. It's important to make sure that operatives are there when required and that scaffolding and periphery plant is available when it's needed. The decision on whether to employ a builder or do the project management yourself is something that needs careful thought, as the smooth running of the job is completely down to the expertise of the person in charge. **H**



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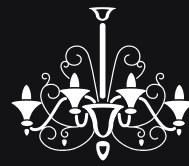
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ADVICE

PREPARING TENDER DOCUMENTS

Comprehensive tender documents are key to achieving competitive prices for a build — and ultimately to the smooth running of a project. But what should a tender pack contain? Is 'going out to tender' a task the self-builder can undertake, or a job best left to the professionals? Bob Branscombe explains



BOB BRANSCOMBE

Bob is a chartered surveyor with almost 30 years' experience running a mix of residential and commercial projects. He has particular expertise in cost estimation and project scheduling

The aim of going out to tender for works is to obtain a fair and competitive price from the market to achieve the project you are proposing. Sounds simple enough, doesn't it? The problem with this is that it is similar to phoning three different car manufacturers and asking for a price for a four-door family hatchback: the variables are limitless, and the basis of your enquiry is fundamentally flawed, being open to interpretation, tactics and assumptions. Without ever trying to be fraudulent or sneaky, the three car dealers will come back with different products and prices which all seemingly satisfy your brief. Construction falls into this scenario — that said, the price/cost is generally a lot higher and the variables and potential for mistakes much greater.

The need for comprehensive, well thought-out tender documents is essential, both in terms of receiving realistic prices for your project, and in ensuring your project remains in line with the projected budget when it goes on site. Overleaf, we explain what a tender pack should include. ➡

ADVICE PREPARING TENDER DOCUMENTS

FIXED-PRICE QUOTES ARE ONLY AS GOOD AS THEIR INPUTS

Fixed-price contracts are found in every walk of life: it's the principle of offer and acceptance. For instance, this may be the stated cost in the supermarket (the 'offer'), which you 'accept' by taking it to the till and paying for the item. It is no different when appointing a contractor for your project, except that this tends to involve larger sums of money than the typical supermarket trip.

Among its advantages, fixed-price certainty will (hopefully) offer: cost certainty; budget forecasting; cash flow; comfort for funders/lenders (credibility); predictable income and profit stream for the contractor; and simple valuation of works carried out. Why then do fixed-price contracts sometimes seem to result in different (usually higher) costs than we hope for or signed up to?

The contract price is only based on the information available to the parties who enter into that contract — the 'inputs'. If you have any room in those tender documents for assumption or interpretation, this has the potential to impact on the pricing and ultimately the robustness of that contract. For example, your documentation shows doors on the drawings, but the specification does not capture these. The contractor could price the scheme using hardboard-faced flush doors, when you are expecting hardwood. There is no right or wrong in this case, simply interpretation and assumption.

The fixed-price reliability of your contract is only as good as the inputs provided in the tendering information and subsequent contract documentation.

SHOULD YOU USE A PROFESSIONAL TO GO OUT TO TENDER?

Whether you opt to use a professional adviser to prepare and carry out your tender process, or 'go out to tender' yourself is a key decision. Certainly, the preparation of a comprehensive and suitable suite of documents is key to the robustness and effectiveness of the process, and as such, it virtually always pays to have these drawn

up by your architect or a quantity surveyor — both of whom are well versed in the tendering process.

The quality of the documentation is paramount to the reliability of the tender returns, and it is essential that the documents are properly prepared and thought out. Remember, planning drawings are not construction or pricing documents, merely pictures showing what the local authority will let you build. The full range of specification and Building Control documentation is quite a technical challenge, and unless you are an experienced builder, the documents would greatly benefit from professional assistance.

However, the inputs into these documents can be prepared by you. For example, consider preparing 'room data sheets' — a series of sheets reflecting exactly what you are expecting to see in each room, on each wall, floor and ceiling. This can then be taken by your architect or surveyor and used as the basis for confirming that the specification exactly reflects your expectations.

Remember that the responsibility for understanding the project and imparting this understanding on to others lies with you — you must either be able to communicate this to your team (via perhaps the room data sheet approach) or the contractor via the tender documents.

WHAT TO INCLUDE

In simple terms, you need to write down what you want. This is more complex than at first glance, as you need to incorporate the various influences on a project, which may include the specification, the drawings, the performance requirements, the legislative framework and permissions (planning, Building Control, etc), timescales and method of procuring this. Thinking about the factors above, just sending planning drawings to a builder can be filed away as a foolhardy approach.

To plan the project properly, the contractors will need:

- A framework to cost the job;
- A timescale to price the work, mobilise for the work, and physically carry out the work;
- A copy of the legislative framework;

● A commercial incentive to carry out the works — contractors are in the business of making a profit, after all. Recognise this and be mindful of the attractiveness or not of your scheme.

Whichever way you procure the work, the fixed nature and reliability of that tender depends on the quality of the documentation that supports and grounds it. I keep stressing it, but I would reiterate that planning drawings do not achieve cost certainty.

The pack will need to contain these key documents:

- Building Control suitable drawings;
- Specification;
- Programme of works;
- Cost framework/contract sum analysis (see opposite);
- Any site or time-specific issues (working hour restrictions, for example);
- Agreed process for payment and valuation of works completed;
- Planning permission compliance locked into the works;
- Any other legislative requirements locked in to the proposed contract;
- Invitation letter setting out the tendering process (see our template on page 97 for details), and timeline.

The point of the documentation is to avoid assumption and 'want of knowledge'. Make sure the documents are consistent with each other, too, again to avoid the opportunity for interpretation.

Your goal is to get a price that is comprehensive, realistic and comparable with the rest of the market to understand if you are getting best value. You can always tweak and alter the works before going into contract, but the tender process should be controlled and consistent across the tendering companies.

INVITING BUILDERS TO TENDER

Finding contractors is always challenging. It is advisable to initially approach at least four (ideally six) informally, to brief them about your scheme and to gauge interest. You should ideally seek these six out by recommendation, personal knowledge and reputation, but it never hurts to throw an unknown 'wild card' into the mix as it may well assist in flushing out the most

competitive price, as newer companies are keen to break into markets. You don't necessarily need to award the contract to this company, but this does give you an idea of what the market may come down to via successful negotiation.

Having whittled the list down via conversations and gauging interest, you will probably have three to four companies who have agreed to tender. These will form your list, and will all be sent a pack of documentation.

WHAT TO REQUEST

As well as a costed and detailed return relating to your work, there are additional supporting documents that you should request as part of the tender return from your contractors. These include:

- Evidence of public and employers' insurance;
- Contractors' all risks insurance;
- Professional reference from previous clients or consultants;
- Details of similar previous projects;
- Key personnel who are likely to be involved in your scheme;
- Key subcontractors used;
- Any exclusions from the tender, ie items which are not included in the bid.

When you start the tendering process it is not unusual to have a couple of companies drop out and decline to tender after you have sent out the paperwork.

Don't be offended or take it personally. It is very common and simply a consequence of a very busy forward workload and the cost of tendering if the contractor decides they don't want a job — just a cursory glance at the time taken to prepare a tender should mean there is no surprise when I state that tendering costs are significant, and run into thousands of pounds a year for competent and successful contractors.

Once the documents have been sent, give each contractor a follow-up call to check if they have everything they need. It's an interesting phenomenon that human contact gets results — having a person you speak to by name will ensure they are more personally committed to your project. Email is impersonal and easy to ignore or decline.

CONTRACT SUM ANALYSIS: A SAMPLE

Item Description	Contract Value	Comments
1.00 DEMOLITION & STRIP OUT		
1.01 Remove timber stud partitions, ceilings and dryling		
1.02 Strip out electrics		
1.03 Remove existing landscaping		
DEMOLITION & SITE SET UP TOTAL		
2.00 CONSTRUCTION WORKS		
2.01 Below ground drainage		
2.02 Structural steelwork		
2.03 Raised timber floor		
2.04 Internal walls		
2.05 Stairs and balustrades		
2.06 Windows and doors		
2.07 Internal doors and joinery		
2.08 Ceiling finishes		
2.09 Plastering and screeding		
2.10 Wall finishes		
2.11 Floor finishes		
2.12 Decorations		
2.13 Fixtures and fittings		
2.14 External works		
CONSTRUCTION TOTAL		
3.00 PLUMBING WORKS		
3.01 Pipework		
Basement		
Ground floor		
First floor		
Second floor		
3.02 Installation of sanitaryware		
Basement		
Ground floor		
First floor		
Second floor		
PLUMBING WORKS TOTAL		

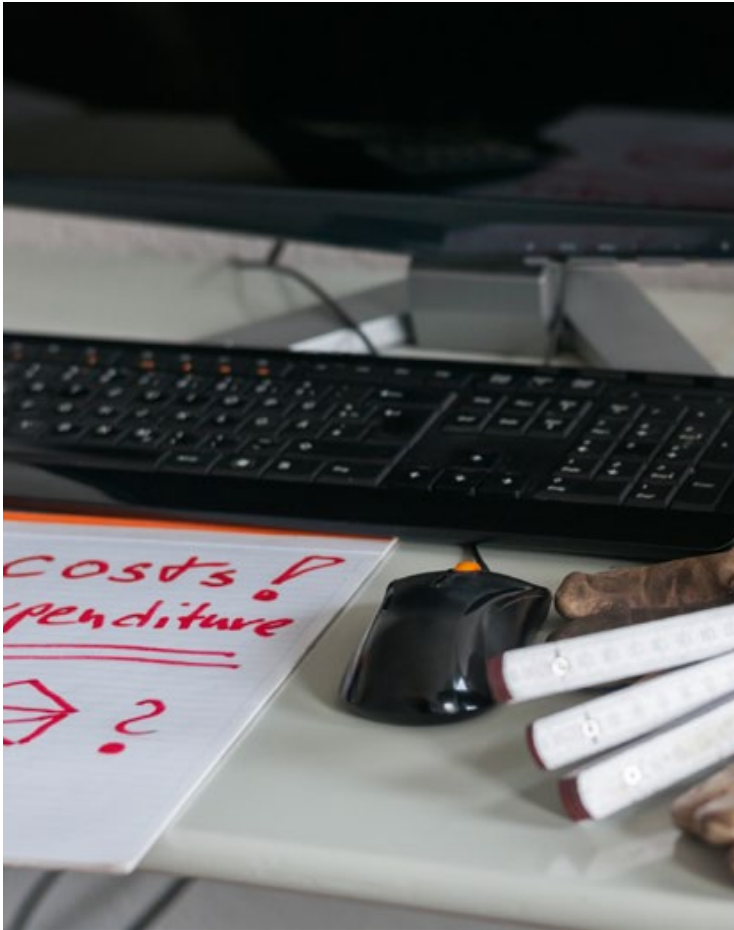
continued overleaf...



CONTRACT SUM ANALYSIS: CONTINUED

Item Description	Contract Value	Comments
4.00 ELECTRICAL WORKS		
4.01 Containment		
4.02 New mains and distribution		
4.04 Power supplies		
4.05 Mechanical supplies		
4.06 Underfloor heating		
4.07 Kitchen supplies		
4.08 Wire all light fittings		
4.09 Shaver points		
4.10 Wire external lighting		
4.11 Wire BT and data		
4.12 Garage wiring		
4.13 Commissioning		
4.14 Earthing and bonding		
4.15 Electrical spares		
4.16 Testing and certification		
4.17 Operating and maintenance manuals		
ELECTRICAL WORKS TOTAL		
5.00 PRELIMS & MANAGEMENT		
5.01 Site manager		
5.02 Setting out engineer		
5.03 Health & safety inspections		
5.04 Site set up		
5.05 Demobilise		
5.06 Office set up		
5.07 First aid provisions		
5.08 Fire extinguishers/points		
5.09 Skips/waste removal		
5.10 Scaffolding		
5.11 Alterations to scaffold		
5.12 Hoisting		
5.13 Misc plant		
5.14 Crane		
5.15 Temporary services		
5.16 Temporary water and electric		
5.17 Insurances		
5.18 General labour		
5.19 Final clean		
PRELIMS & MANAGEMENT TOTAL		

CONTRACT SUM EXCLUDING VAT



ISTOCK

SETTING A TIMEFRAME FOR THE RETURN OF TENDERS

The timeframe for tendering is affected by several factors:

- Your desire for a quick response;
- Your programme requirements;
- The tendering contractors’ appetite for the work;
- The tendering contractors’ time commitments;
- The tenderers’ supply chain.

In other words, looking at the list above you can see that your desire for a speedy response may well be thwarted by the contractors being too busy, too pressured or simply not interested if you place an unrealistic timescale on the pricing process.

It helps when putting a timescale on the tendering stage to think about the process the contractor is undertaking.

They will take receipt of the documentation, and appraise the nature and scope of the documents — are they easy to understand, are any areas open to excessive interpretation or assumption, etc? The documents are then ‘marked up’, or put into packages (materials enquiries,



ADVICE PREPARING TENDER DOCUMENTS



mechanical and electrical works, windows, roofing, for instance) to be sent to their specialist subcontractors. When these are sent out, the clock starts ticking — not only is the contractor working within your time-frame, but their supply chain also needs time to do its specialist pricing. While we all assume that our job is the only thing in contractors' minds, this does not take into account the five other tenders and the actual projects each are working on at the same time.

Once these prices are back and the contractor has measured and understood all their direct works, they will collate the price. In reality, therefore, it would seem almost impossible to do all this in under a month, yet we all persist in thinking that we can get tenders back in a week.

In reality, I would caution against setting too short a timescale — the main response you will get is a polite letter declining the opportunity to price your work. Be realistic and speak to your contractors prior to sending out enquiries, find out their time concerns, and set a tender return period accordingly. Anything less than three weeks is, in my view, inviting a sloppy heavily caveated tender return that will then require four more weeks of negotiation and interrogation to get right. It's better to have a realistic tender period and serious credible estimates back as a consequence.

Another useful piece of advice — don't send out for tender at the beginning of August. You will probably get all your enquiries returned unpriced while everyone is on holiday.

Halfway through the tender period, speak to each of the contractors to see how they are getting on and if they need anything else. Remember, personal buy-in gets results!

ANALYSING TENDER RETURNS

Hopefully you will receive back the tenders requested from your contractors. The first instinct is to look at the bottom-line number and base your reaction and understanding of the job entirely on this. However, this can give rise to unfair comparisons and unrealistic expectations of the price you will end up paying, and can be a false indicator of the true cost.

When looking properly at your tender returns, it makes sense to create a spreadsheet to compare each price. You can take the contract sum analysis that your contractors will have completed, and use this as a basis for accurate comparison. Essentially, you enter into the sheet the list of work headings on the left-hand column, and then create a column for each tenderer, entering in the broken-down prices. Immediately you will be able to understand exactly how different contractors have apportioned costs, see any omitted items and any areas of immediate concern. Typical things to look for include:

- **Front-loaded prices:** The overall cost of the works may be as expected, but when carrying out this analysis you notice that one contractor has a much higher cost for foundations than the others, and decorations are a lot cheaper. Why? Well, this can be a tactic whereby the contractor is hedging their bets against the typical problems found on site — when issues arise during the excavations, any extra costs will generally be proportional to the amounts allowed in the tender, which if artificially inflated, may bring in additional profits. Equally, when you have had a lot of additional costs early on, as a client

you will be keen to save money, and the decorations are a simple DIY task in the main. Omitting these from your contractor to save money takes away some of their anticipated profits. Therefore, if they have deflated these costs they may well be looking to hedge against this. Call me cynical, but I have certainly seen this on many occasions.

- **Omissions to the prices:** Once scheduled out and compared, you can look at the items that may not be included. To get a full comparison between your tenderers, you will need to 'plug' those missing items back in with an allowance commensurate with the other contractors to get a comparable price.

- **Provisional allowances:** PC (prime cost — denoting items that have yet to be finalised) and provisional sums need to be identified and considered. If the contractors have made certain items provisional, you need to check that they have allowed the same amount of money for a true comparison between them at this stage. Therefore, if necessary 'plug' the same provisional sum into all the tenders.

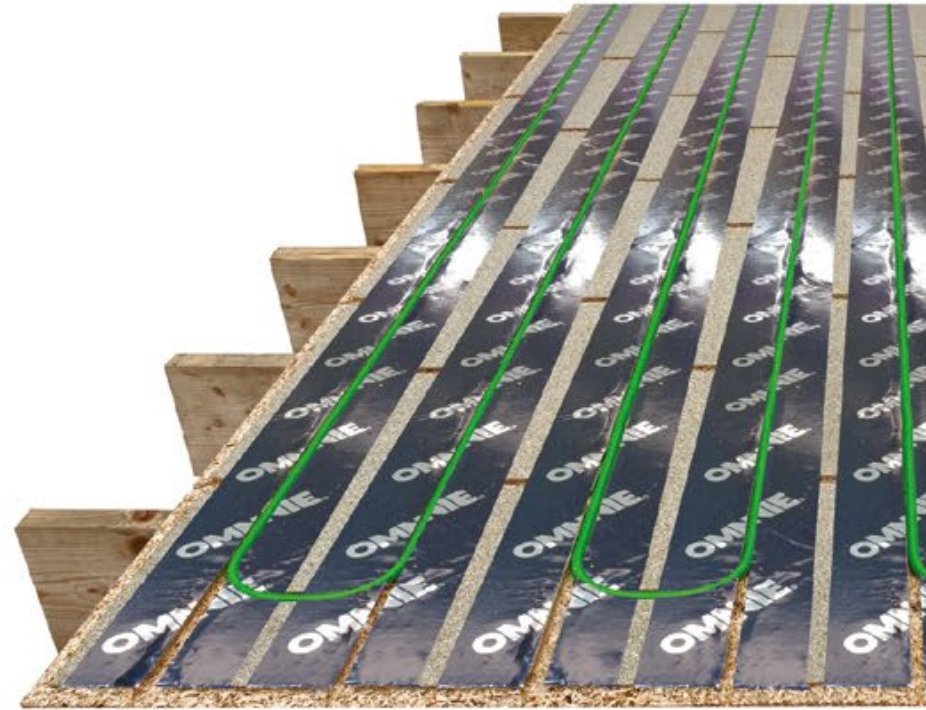
The aim is to get a level playing field where each bid has been understood and balanced with the others to get a true picture of the costs. At this point, you can now better appreciate the likely costs of the work, and select those contractors who you wish to engage with further — normally the lowest two. You will then be able to 'interview' them further about their bids — flush out the items you think are limited, and try to get them to firm up the provisional sums by agreeing to fixed prices for these items so that you are ensuring that all the 'known unknowns' are established, interrogated and processed. You are now ready to start... ➔

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By Post and Email

XYZ Builders Limited
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AB1 2YZ

For the attention of: _____
My Ref: _____
DD MM YY

Dear Sirs

RE: Project name, address and postcode

Further to our telephone call and subsequent emails, I invite you to tender for the above.

I enclose the following tender documents to enable you to submit a bona-fide tender:

- Employer's requirements
- Preliminaries
- Drawings, specifications and other tender information noted
- Form of tender
- Template for contract sum analysis
- Planning permission and subsequent conditions

Please note:

The building contract _____ will be used.

The employer shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any tender which he may receive.
Neither will the employer be responsible for any cost incurred in the preparation of any tender nor for any costs or expenses incurred in submitting a tender.

Please note that your tender is to be returned to the above address as agreed
no later than 5pm on DD MM YY.

Please note that the following documents are to be submitted with the tender:

- Completed form of tender
- Completed contract sum analysis
- Any qualifications and clarifications
- Provisional programme indicating anticipated start on site date as well as contract period
- Details of employers' and public liability insurance, and contractors' all risks insurance
- Reference(s) from previous clients or consultants
- Details of similar previous projects
- Key personnel who will likely be involved in the scheme
- Key subcontractors used

If you have any queries or would like to arrange your site visit, please contact
_____ (tel: _____) in the first instance.

Yours faithfully,

MY NAME HERE
Myname.mysurname@abcd.co.uk

Enc: Tender documents



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How to Avoid Disputes with Your Builder

It's many a self-builder and renovator's worst fear when embarking on a project — falling out with the builder. So how do you minimise the risk of a dispute, and what can be done if a dispute does arise? Construction solicitor Chris Reeves explains all



CHRIS REEVES

A construction solicitor and chartered building consultant, Chris also acts as a specialist mediator in construction disputes

THE QUICK READ

➡ A contract, setting out the terms of the project, together with a robust set of plans and specification documents, is essential to minimise the risk of disputes arising in any project

➡ Mediation (where a settlement is reached with the aid of a mediator) and adjudication (where a decision is made by an appointed adjudicator) are forms of alternative dispute resolution — representing cost-effective routes to resolving a dispute

“My builder pulled off site around six weeks ago.” These were the opening words of one homeowner who visited me at the Advice Centre during the National Homebuilding & Renovating Show last year. “He has not finished the plastering or even started the kitchen or bathroom. He says I owe him a lot of money and just provided me with a list of extras that he says must be paid for before he comes back. The work has taken ages and I am not happy with some of the work done. I am really worried that we will not be able to move back into our house on time. I rented somewhere just as a temporary measure but the tenancy comes to an end in three weeks’ time. The whole thing is a nightmare. Can you help, Chris?”

My curiosity got the better of me and as I heard the story unfold I couldn't help but wonder about the homeowner's experience, which is all too familiar: was the homeowner the victim of a 'cowboy' builder or was the builder the victim of a 'difficult' customer? Was the homeowner heading for the ➡

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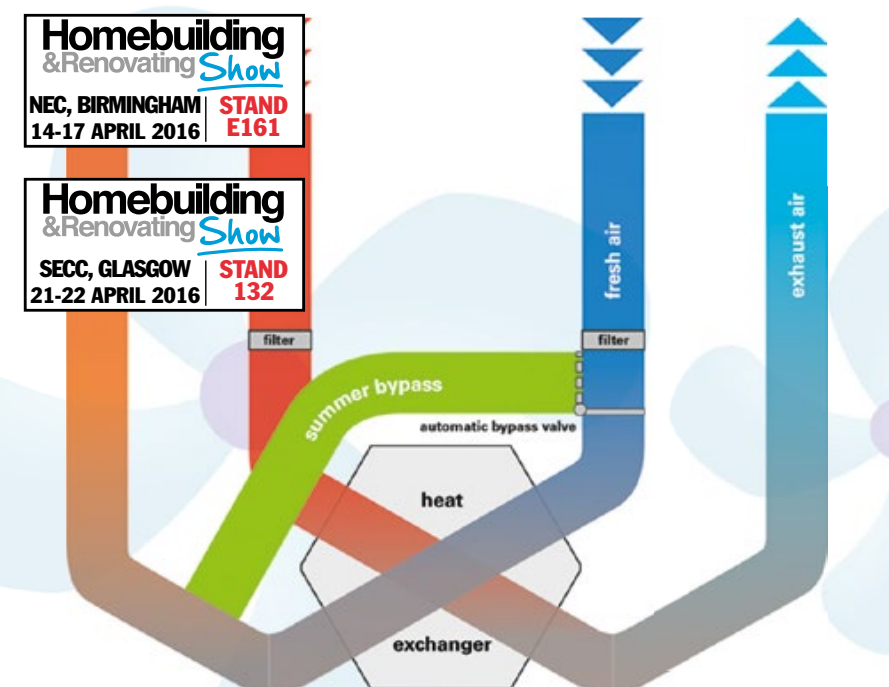
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DOSSIER AVOIDING DISPUTES WITH BUILDERS

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same fate that befell Mr and Mrs Bullard — the homeowners from Bournemouth who fell out with their builder, Mr Burchell, over his bill for £13,540.99? The squabbling parties managed to spend £135,000 on their lawyers and at the end of the case the builder 'won' £5,000. No wonder the judge referred to the case as "horrific".

Building disputes have a habit of getting bad tempered in no time at all. After all, the necessary ingredients are often there: a homeowner who, in all likelihood, invested a small fortune in work to their home and expects the work to be completed to a top-notch standard, on time and costing as little as possible. Meanwhile, the builder has more often than not paid his subbies and suppliers as well as committing himself to other projects once this one is out the way. Add to the mix the inescapable feeling that the other party should not 'get away with it' and you can begin to see why a dispute can escalate.

But back to the Burchell v Bullard case. A horror indeed, but then neither party made any offers to settle along the way. Was it because the builder was convinced he was owed his money, and were the homeowners convinced that there were very good reasons not to pay it? There were better ways they could have tried to resolve the situation, but more on this later, as we return to the Advice Centre stand.

"Why has this happened, Chris?"

"What did I do wrong?"

"If I could go back to the start then how could I have done things differently to avoid this nightmare?"

These are all very good questions, so let's look at some of the key factors in this particular homeowner's case and then I'll offer some tips on minimising the risk of a dispute arising prior to work starting on site.

The Importance of Contracts

The homeowner in question didn't have a contract. They had outline plans — the plans that are used for planning permission and are not much good for anything else, certainly not the building work. They also had some emails but nothing that was particularly useful. One email from the builder informed the homeowner what he wanted paying for the job, but gave no indication as to how the price was arrived at. There was no mention of how long the job was to take either. No one had thought to describe the work properly.

It is rare to find a single document that sets out what the parties have signed up to. I like contracts, but then I am a solicitor. I like them as it speeds things up from my point of view; I do not have to go hunting through emails and scribbled notes, or spend ages with the client taking down a detailed account of what was agreed verbally. In other words, a contract can help to keep a client's legal costs down if a dispute arises.

A contract should also make my advice more robust. Solicitors often say 'but on the other hand', a reflection of the uncertainties of the contract as the picture is not always as clear as we would like it to be.

Let me give you an example: let's say there is an argument over whether an item of work was an 'extra' or was to be included in the price. The advice will depend on the detail. The price for the concrete foundations obviously includes the excavation of the ground, but does it include carting the excavated material off site? You may be convinced that excavated material should be removed by the builder, 'but on the other hand' the builder may have informed you that this would be an extra and he would leave the spoil on site for landscaping to save you money.



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How about that list of extras? The homeowner agrees with some, but not all. For instance, the builder wants to charge for the lintels over the doorways he knocked through, but you cannot understand how the work would be done safely unless the builder was going to support the structure above it. But the builder says he assumed the wall was studwork and it did not need supporting; had you wanted lintels then he says you should have put them on the plan.

And what about the time for completion of the work? Sometimes time is not important, but sometimes it's crucial. The homeowner at the Advice Centre informed me that one of the main problems with the builder leaving the site was that they needed to get back into their home as the fixed-term tenancy on the property they had rented was up for renewal. What if the tenancy comes to an end and the landlord has others moving in? It is not much fun camping out in the middle of a building site so the answer may have to be that you find temporary accommodation, possibly a bed and breakfast or hotel. But who pays for that?

How about the quality of the door linings the builder fitted? There is hardwood joinery in the rest of the house. However, the builder fitted softwood linings in the extension and states that it is unreasonable to expect him to pay for more expensive joinery if not stated in the plans.

The homeowner is left with a project that is incomplete, riddled with defects (and as it turns out in the case of our homeowner at the Advice Centre, they have overpaid the builder). There is no prospect of completion in sight and the cost to

complete is way in excess of the amount left to pay the builder. A contract is invaluable in minimising the risk of this happening. So how do you choose the right one for your project?

I am afraid that there is no short answer to this question, but it is important to avoid blindly filling in the gaps to contracts that are said to fit all. Every building project is unique in its own way. That said, there are a number of building contracts that come as a standard form, such as the JCT suite of contracts and the RIBA Domestic Building Contract. These standard forms will cover the basics – cost, time and quality – but need to be used in conjunction with a good set of plans, a detailed specification and ideally a document that breaks the price down into the component parts.

With one of the standard forms in place, however, you are in a good position to tackle the following issues raised by our Advice Centre homeowner:

● COST

The standard forms work on the basis of a fixed price for a fixed amount of work. The contract means that the plans, specification and price breakdown become contract documents that define that work.

Any work that the builder says is extra will need to be considered in the light of the information referred to in the contract documents. Sometimes extra work is obvious (for example, you agreed that the excavated material would stay on site but then changed your mind and the material needs to be carted away). The contract will also contain a mechanism by which the price for genuine extra work is valued.



Mediation

Mediation is an alternative dispute resolution, whereby a mediator helps two parties reach a settlement



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DOSSIER AVOIDING DISPUTES WITH BUILDERS

“Standard contract forms will cover the basics – cost, time and quality – but need to be used in conjunction with a good set of plans, a detailed specification and ideally a document that breaks the price down into the component parts”

● TIME

Most standard forms will record the date the work can commence and the date by which it needs to be completed. In the event the builder runs over, there is usually a pre-agreed rate of ‘liquidated damages’, which is an estimate of the loss the homeowner is likely to suffer if the work is late. You remember the risk of having to find a hotel? The rate of liquidated damages could reflect this and once the rate is agreed in the contract then the parties will usually be stuck with it. If there is extra work then the completion date will be put back to reflect this, or at least the date from which liquidated damages apply. The contract should also set out a mechanism for how the extra time is calculated.

● QUALITY

A robust contract will state that the work has to be carried out in a good and workmanlike manner in accordance with the contract documents (the specification is the likely place for a description of the standard and the type of work required). Remember the problem with the softwood door linings? A robust specification will make it clear that the door linings needed to be in hardwood and may include a requirement to match the existing if that’s what is needed. Many of the standard forms also contain a mechanism for notifying the builder of defects and giving the builder an opportunity to put things right at his own cost.

Using Mediation and Adjudication to Avoid Costly Court Battles

But what if there are disputes about the amount of the extras and delays to the project despite a standard form of contract being in place. Perhaps Mr and Mrs Bullard had a contract? How can you avoid the time and expense of court proceedings? Can the contract help with this? Many of the standard forms are helpful when it comes to dispute resolution. The JCT contract (and most other standard forms for that matter) requires the parties to consider whether the dispute is suitable for mediation. If that fails, then the contract contains a method of speedy alternative dispute resolution called adjudication. Let’s have a quick look at both those alternatives:

● MEDIATION

In simple terms mediation involves two rooms, an independent mediator and confidentiality. Each party has a room and the mediator shuttles back and forth with the task of helping the parties come to a voluntary and binding settlement. The process is confidential so you can say what you like without fear that someone will take a note and then tell the

judge. In Burchell’s case, the judge said that a small building dispute is ‘par excellence’ the kind of dispute which lends itself to mediation. I have acted as mediator on all kinds of building disputes and the overall impression I have formed is that the parties are more often than not relieved that they have the opportunity to try and settle. The earlier the mediation takes place the better, to avoid the mediator having to mediate over costs as well as the real issues. A skilled mediator and two parties willing to compromise will lead to a successful outcome.

● ADJUDICATION

This is a formal process of determination which takes 28 days from start to finish, including a meeting with the adjudicator if necessary. Adjudication is not a court proceeding, but the decision will be enforceable through the courts if necessary. Adjudicators are drawn from industry and include quantity surveyors, architects, engineers and lawyers. Many of the adjudications I have acted in have come about as one of the parties wanted a speedy decision. However, a referral to adjudication can leave the other party feeling that the relationship has broken down, whereas the process of mediation lends itself to keeping the relationship going.

In Conclusion

Clearly, a contract will help you. Remember also that in this day of emails and social media there is no end of communication that you may find ends up as a page in the trial bundle. So you will want to ensure that all your communications are capable of being read at a later date by someone who is trying to get to the bottom of a dispute. There are other key documents that are equally important, such as a site diary that should record the people on site, a rough outline of what they were doing and any particular matters of interest.

Opt for a standard form of contract but do consider how you need to amend it to suit your own particular project and unique set of circumstances. It is a good idea to get advice on the form most suited to your project and the advice will often come from your architect or other professional overseeing the project. You may also feel that you would benefit from the advice of a solicitor who specialises in construction law to give you that extra piece of mind.

If you do find yourself in a situation similar to the homeowner visiting the Advice Centre, I recommend you turn to a specialist construction solicitor as soon as possible. Early advice can pay dividends rather than letting matters get completely out of hand and turning to a solicitor only when the claim form lands through your letterbox. 

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Rupert and Linz

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PROJECT NOTES

Project: Self-build

Location: Suffolk

Build time: Sep
2014 – Jun 2015

Size: 275m²

Plot cost:
Already owned

Build cost:
£610,000
(£2,218/m²)

Value:
£1.2million

HOMES OAK FRAME SELF-BUILD

Forever Home

After negotiating with planners for seven years, Rupert and Lindsay Osborne have finally realised their dream of building a stunning oak-framed home in Suffolk

Words: Natasha Brinsmead Photography: Oakwrights/Mark Welsh



Rear Elevation

The combination of large, south-facing glazed areas and a full-width veranda mean Rupert and Lindsay are able to enjoy their new home all year round



THE QUICK READ

- Rupert and Lindsay Osborne undertook a lengthy and stressful planning battle in order to gain permission to build within the garden of their existing 17th-century home
- They chose an oak-framed design from Oakwrights and have combined the traditional design with contemporary features
- Open plan spaces and large areas of glazing – not to mention a breathtaking staircase design – are the main features of this ‘forever home’

While prepared for some level of compromise and patience when submitting plans for their new home, not even Lindsay and Rupert Osborne could have imagined that this was a process that would take a gruelling seven years to resolve. The plot they had set out to gain planning permission on formed part of the garden of their existing home, a beautiful — yet expensive to run — country merchants home built in 1650.

“We had decided that we wanted to downsize, we both have a real interest in design and we also wanted the chance to use more modern technology in our home — plus this was our way of leaving a legacy,” explains Rupert.

Overcoming a Planning Battle

Their existing home sat on two acres of land and plans were submitted to build a new property some 100 yards from their old house. Despite the plot forming part of their existing garden, it was considered by the planners to be outside the village boundary — and so the battle began.

Having come across Oakwrights at a Homebuilding & Renovating Show in 2007, they visited the company’s showhome in Herefordshire, and were subsequently introduced to architectural designer Pete Tonks. Plans were drawn up for an oak-framed home on the garden plot, but were turned down flat. In 2008 Rupert and Lindsay submitted a planning appeal but were once again turned down. “We decided to leave it,” explains Lindsay. “Then after five years, planning rules changed under the new government and we put forward a sustainable proposal for the new house — which would effectively be a ‘nil-bill’ home.”

“The planners couldn’t really turn it down,” continues Rupert. “Permission was finally granted in January 2014.” ➤➤

HOMES OAK FRAME SELF-BUILD

Central Staircase

The striking staircase, designed by Lindsay, is made from steel, glass and granite and dominates the central area of the house. It leads up to a mezzanine-style landing which overlooks the double-height dining space with its stunning garden views





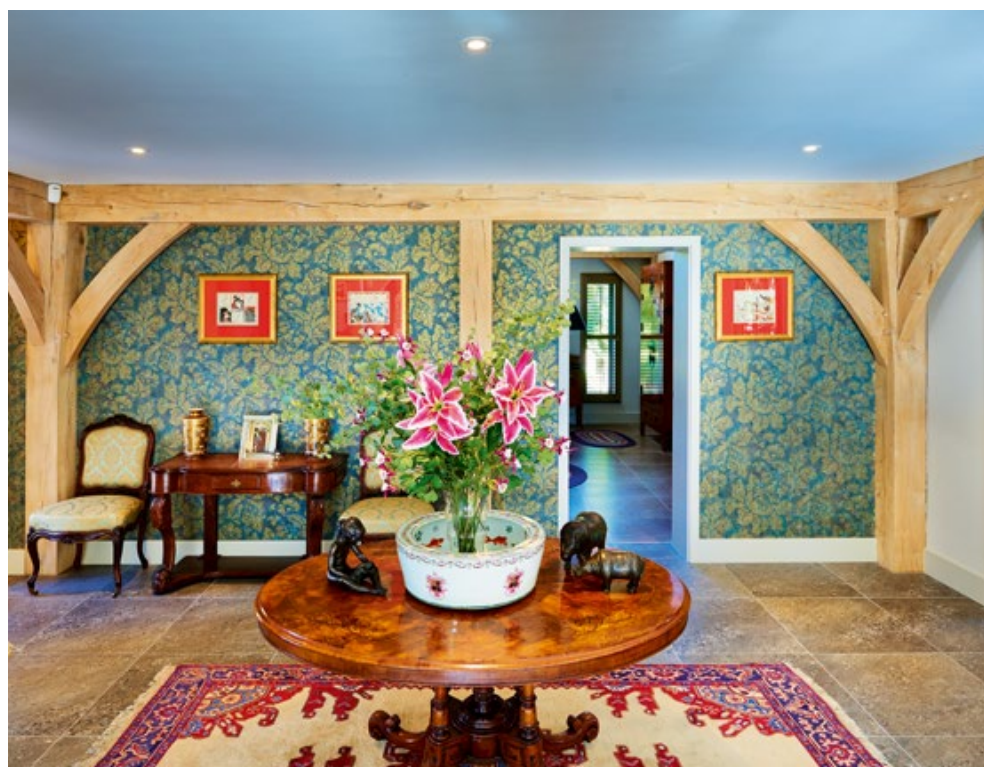
**Above and Opposite:
Family Spaces**

The dining space is filled with light, thanks to the impressive double-height glazed gable end. A galleried landing to the bedrooms on the first floor offers far-reaching views over the two-acre plot

Opposite, Below: Veranda

A generous veranda allows the couple, both landscape gardeners, to enjoy the outdoors all year round





“Although we loved our old house, we were keen that our new house was easier to run and look after,” explains Lindsay. “Oakwrights seemed to be able to offer this, as well as a traditional look.”

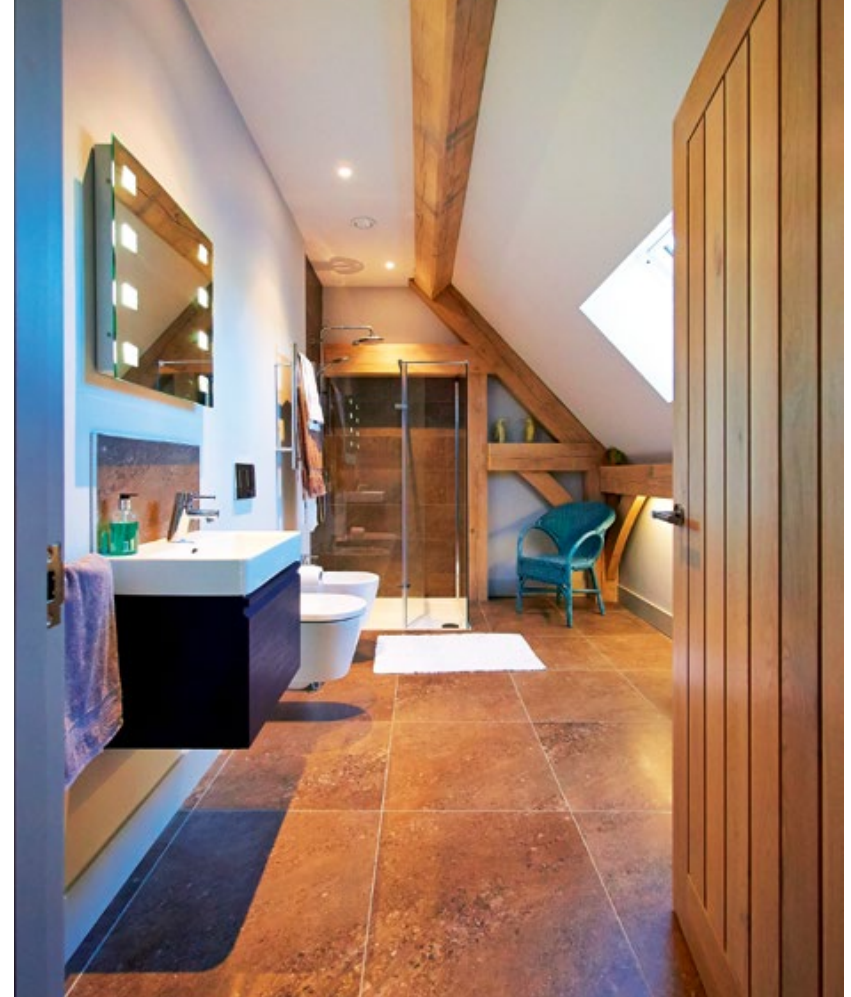
Lindsay and Rupert sold their house to release funds and rented a bungalow opposite the plot, meaning they were able to visit the site every day. Work began on site in September 2014, with Oakwrights acting as main contractors and using local trades where possible.

A design was developed, involving Pete Tonks and Oakwrights — although Rupert and Lindsay already had a very clear idea of the house they wanted. “We had so long to plan everything and had researched every single thing really thoroughly,” explains Lindsay. “We knew exactly what we wanted and just had to fit it in with the oak frame.”

A Link to Outside

One of the priorities for the couple, who are both landscape gardeners, was that they could enjoy the garden all year round. With this in mind, the veranda, created by large overhanging eaves that run the width of the house at the rear, plays a big role in the design of the house, plus the layout internally was designed to maximise solar gain — huge areas of glazing, all largely south-facing, flood





HOMES OAK FRAME SELF-BUILD



Above Left to Right: First Floor Spaces

On the first floor are three bedrooms and bathrooms — two en suite. Oak beams and vaulted ceilings add character and interest, while the couple's antique furniture and contemporary flooring, fuss-free shutters at the windows and expanses of glazing work harmoniously together

Left: Sociable Kitchen

Pale flush units with stainless steel handles — to echo the steel staircase — sit alongside a Total Control AGA. A minimalist island, complete with boiling water tap and waste disposal, is flanked by a timber breakfast bar section and antique chairs



the interiors with a clear, natural light. “We wanted the house to be really easy to live in and open — for it to feel really light,” explains Lindsay.

A Traditional Home with Modern-Day Features

Oakwrights began work on the new oak frame, which was constructed off-site in around six weeks, while groundworks were put in place on site. Two boreholes were dug, which now pump water up from the ground at 11°C before passing through a heat exchanger in order to heat the wet underfloor heating system that operates on both the ground and first floor of the new house. The hot water is also heated by an open loop ground-source heat pump.

“In the summer, the heat pump can be turned off,” explains Rupert. “We have 16 solar panels tucked discreetly away in a sunny corner of the garden and these heat the water.” The couple receive financial rewards, in the form of the Renewable Heat Incentive, from the government for running the heat pump.

A separate borehole was dug to provide filtered and softened domestic water, so Rupert and Lindsay have no water rates to worry about. In addition, a Klargest BioDisc is used to treat waste water and only has to be emptied every four to five years.

Building in Oak Frame Home

When the frame arrived on site, it took just five days to erect, with only four men and the designer. “More than 1,000 wooden pegs were used to secure the oak frame,” enthuses Rupert. “No steel — all oak. It was so important to get everything just right. We realised just how important 10mm can be with oak frame. The house is 18m wide by 14m and the oak frame had to sit within 10mm of the foundations.”

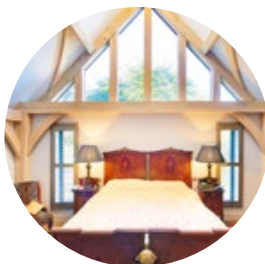
Living opposite the site while the building work took place was hugely important to the couple. “I have no idea how you couldn't be on site every day,” says Rupert.

While the oak frame building has been clad in oak weatherboarding and finished with traditional handmade clay tiles, finer details such as copper rainwater goods and grey aluminium windows and doors ensure the whole design has a contemporary edge.

Internally, a similar blending of traditional and modern design elements has been employed. A stunning central staircase made from steel, granite and glass and weighing around 1.6 tonnes takes centre stage, with the glass keeping the whole thing from dominating the space and allowing light to flow through. “It is more like a work of art,” says Lindsay. “It was made by a young guy with his own forge and was his first staircase.”

The kitchen was designed to be a sociable, open space. “We wanted a very linear kitchen that was unfussy,” says Lindsay. “The kitchen is fantastic and sociable — my daughter says it is like cooking on *Masterchef*.”

To meet the couple's future needs, the master bedroom has been located on the ground floor should the need arise for Rupert and Lindsay to live on one level. “This is our forever home,” says Rupert. “Yes, we went over budget, but for us this is a one-off experience.” 



HOMES OAK FRAME SELF-BUILD

The Project



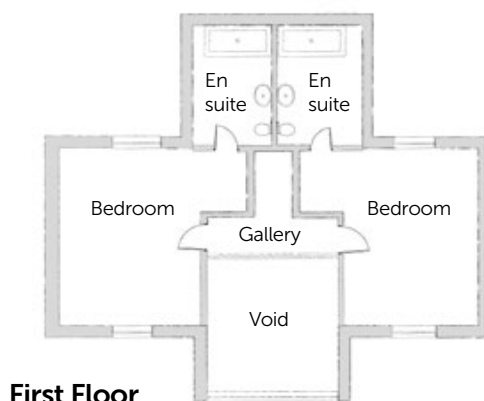
Pete Tonks
Architectural
Designer

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNER'S VIEW

This project was always going to be a challenge in terms of planning permission, as the land sat outside the village development boundary and was also in close proximity to listed buildings. Our perseverance paid off in the end, though, as we were able to shape and mould the scheme in line with changes to local planning policy and also relevant guidance as set out in the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework). My design vision remained as it did from day one, which was to create a contemporary interpretation of a simple barn form that blended into the landscape. Add to this Rupert and Lindsay's eco-vision and the Oakwrights' structural oak frame and natural encapsulation system, and we have a stunning overall end build that everyone is extremely proud of.



Ground Floor



First Floor

SELECTED COSTS

Preliminaries.....	£18,000
Foundations.....	£47,818
Superstructure.....	£58,935
Structural work.....	£20,000
Windows and rooflights.....	£14,400
Roof.....	£26,400
Drainage.....	£6,500
Internal walls and ceilings.....	£41,096
Trades.....	£32,500
Heating.....	£16,286
Doors.....	£9,600
Flooring.....	£22,360
Decoration.....	£12,600

SUPPLIERS

Architectural designer PJT Design
.....pjtdesign.co.uk
Main contractor Oakwrights
.....01432 353353
**Groundworks, drainage and hard
landscaping** Almond Construction
.....01638 717136
Boreholes and domestic water filtration
Pumps & Filtration0800 084 2731
General building materials Ridgeons
.....ridgeons.co.uk
Bricklayers Sebastian Brickwork
.....01638 668941
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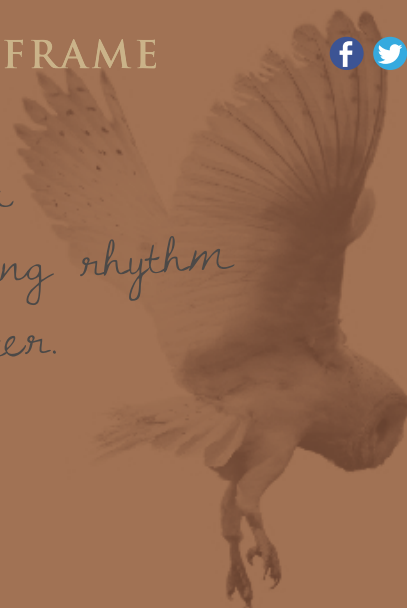
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THE INTELLIGENT OAK FRAME

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What I really enjoy when designing is to create a blend of influences and styles which will give a building rhythm and movement and ultimately its own character.





HOMES CONTEMPORARY SELF-BUILD

Keeping it Simple

Louisa and Simon Cohn have replaced a derelict property with an award-winning contemporary home that blends in beautifully with its rural setting

Words: **Natasha Brinsmead**
Photography: **c/o Adrian James Architects**

PROJECT NOTES

Project: Self-build

Location:
Oxfordshire

Build time:
Oct 2011
– Mar 2014

Size: 230m²

Plot cost:
£310,000

Build cost:
£500,000
(£2,174/m²)

Value:
£1.1million

HOMES CONTEMPORARY-STYLE SELF-BUILD



Making an Entrance

The front elevation of the house is cantilevered out over the wall. Internally (left), the huge amounts of glazing flood the spaces with light

THE QUICK READ

- Louisa and Simon Cohn have built a striking, contemporary home on an awkward site in the green belt
- A basement level and flat roof have been included to get the very most out of the footprint, which was restricted to the size of a derelict bungalow that stood on the site
- The house is equipped with an impressive number of eco-friendly features, which results in low energy bills for the young family

With its startlingly simple form, pleasing sense of symmetry and obvious references to the agricultural buildings that lie close by, it is not hard to see why Louisa and Simon Cohn's new home has received numerous architectural and design awards since its completion in 2014.

"We were living in my house – a new three bedroom terrace with little character – in Oxford when we saw the plot," says Louisa. "We were both keen on the idea of building from scratch, and Simon had built before. When we heard that the sale on this plot had fallen through, we just jumped in there."

The plot came with planning permission for a three-bed chalet bungalow — but Louisa and Simon were keen to make some changes to increase the amount of liveable space and introduce their own design ideas.

A New Contemporary Design

"We had been keeping a file of what we liked which we just handed over to the architect and then we worked together to achieve a design we were happy with," says Louisa. The architect in question was Adrian James, who is local to the Oxfordshire area, and whose designs had previously caught Louisa and Simon's attention.

Restrictions on the site, which falls within the green belt, meant that the roof height of the new house could be no higher than the neighbouring house, plus the new footprint could be no larger than the run-down bungalow that the new house was to replace. Despite the restrictions, planning approval for their revised plans ➤



HOMES CONTEMPORARY-STYLE SELF-BUILD



HOMES CONTEMPORARY-STYLE SELF-BUILD



HOMES CONTEMPORARY-STYLE SELF-BUILD



were approved first time with no amendments — something that was no doubt helped by the number of renewables that have been included in the new house.

The design that Adrian James came up with was for a very stripped down, simple house. “The design was for an easily buildable form focused on creating an extremely efficient envelope,” he explains. “The simple cuboid form meant the house could go right up to the allowable height with occupied space. None of the height was wasted on a pitched roof.” The front elevation of the house was designed to cantilever just a short distance over a concrete wall, to provide a sense of movement and drama, and a basement was included to offer more liveable space. The design also features a flat roof, both as a way of maximising internal space and avoiding dormer windows, which Simon dislikes.

The Build

The plot is heavily sloping and this, along with the requirement for a basement, meant that some hefty ground excavation had to take place before the build could begin. “Excavation vehicles were unable to access the area to be dug out because of an awkwardly positioned overhead power line and the fact that the new house sits higher than the driveway,” says Louisa. “The power line had to be submerged into the ground, which meant that the power in the village had to be off for a whole day.”

And just to throw a little more challenge into the project, Louisa and Simon’s son, Miles, now three-and-a-half, was born mid-way through the build. Still, the couple visited the site when they could. “We couldn’t visit the site every day, but we aimed to be on site much more during the second fix stage,” she says.

Once the basement had been dug out and tanked, a flat-packed SIP (structural insulated panel) system was used to construct the basic form of the house, with the couple opting for an airtight membrane within the SIP envelope to increase the energy efficiency of the finished building. The house has some other impressive eco credentials, including a mechanical ventilation heat recovery system, an air-source heat pump and an Ecocent hot water system. “We love the way the house works,” says Louisa. “We don’t have gas here, so everything is electric, but our bills are still no higher than when we lived in the three bedroom terraced house — and grants really helped with the painful upfront costs of some of the eco-friendly features.” ➡

Open Plan Spaces

The ground floor space is open plan, with the exception of a home office, WC and larder. In the kitchen, a palette of grey and white enhances the feeling of light even further in this area, while an engineered oak flooring has been used throughout



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HOMES CONTEMPORARY-STYLE SELF-BUILD

Rear Elevation

The cedar cladding from Vincent Timber is weathering beautifully, while the first floor sliding doors mirror the openings below

Delicate Details

The folded plate staircase leads up to the first floor and down to the basement which houses a guest suite/home cinema, utility and plant room

Investing in the Finish

Materials were chosen for their simplicity as well as their ability to merge with the surrounding countryside. “We looked at various claddings for the exterior,” says Louisa. “In the end we chose cedar, although we did really like the idea of a material called Plato. It is oven baked and particularly hard wearing, but it is also phenomenally expensive.”

Composite timber and aluminium windows were chosen and have been painted dark green — a refreshing change from the ubiquitous dark grey we have all become accustomed to. On the first floor, the full-height sliding doors in each of the four bedrooms have been designed to mirror those on the ground floor, while glass balustrades act as a barrier.

Internally, the largely open plan layout is brimming with natural light, thanks to the huge glazed openings which form such a definitive part of the design — the largest of which opens out from the kitchen/dining/living space into the garden and required a substantial steel beam to be placed within the frame of the building.

This open plan area is presided over by a super sleek kitchen consisting of a bank of white gloss units and a grey island featuring a Corian worktop with a built-in hob. “I have always wanted a larder,” says Louisa, “and this has been hidden away behind a flush door at one end of the kitchen.”

The elegant folded plate staircase behind a glass balustrade leads off to the basement, which provides valuable utility and plant space, as well as a guest bedroom/home cinema room. “We went around 20 per cent over our budget, but we didn’t compromise on quality,” says Louisa. “I’d advise others to never compromise on the structure and finishes — it really does pay to get the best quality you can. Oh, and don’t have a baby halfway through!” 

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HOMES CONTEMPORARY-STYLE SELF-BUILD

The Project



Adrian James
Architect

ARCHITECT'S VIEW

This is a house which is all about the virtues of simplicity: how limitations on size, appearance and budget can be turned to an advantage. It's the KISS (Keep It Simple, Stupid) principle epitomised.

The simple cuboid form was kept plain and pure — no popping out bays, changes of material or costly whimsical features. This simplicity is all to the good. In addressing the planning requirements and the need for an efficient, ecological construction, the exterior form of the house is refreshingly simple and sweet.

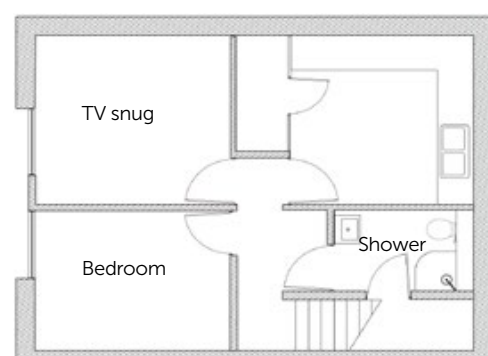
The design was focused on three key exterior elements. Cladding the building in timber gave it warmth and tactility so it felt at ease in its setting, while having one huge opening to the garden transformed the interior into a light-filled indoor/outdoor space. Cantilevering the house over the entrance, just a short distance, enhanced the simple shape of the house and gave it a dynamic quality.

Inside, the focus was again on cutting any clutter or complication. There are as few walls as possible — just one big living space for the young family. The focus is on the ultra-slim folded plate staircase as the functional highlight. **H**

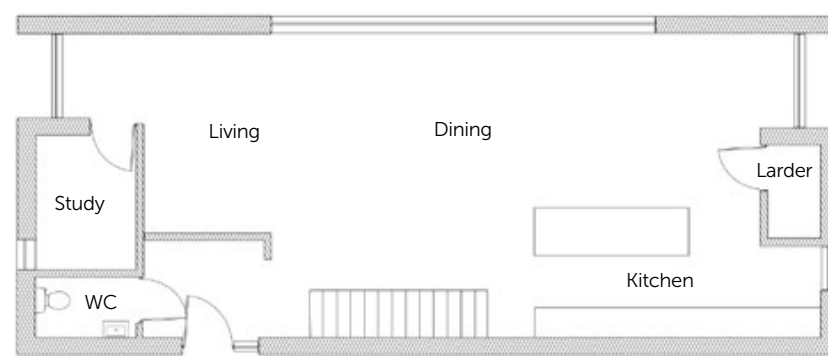
SUPPLIERS

Architect Adrian James Architects
.....adrianjames.com; 01865 203267
Main contractor Laumburn Geekie
.....lamburngeekie.co.uk
SIPs (structural insulated panels)
SIPs UK.....01933 353501
Windows Allan Brothers
.....allanbrothers.co.uk
IDSystems.....idsystems.co.uk
Kitchen Leicht from InHouse Design
.....inhouseoxford.co.uk
Bathrooms UK Bathroom Warehouse
.....ukbathroomwarehouse.com
Brassware Grohe.....grohe.co.uk
Cedar cladding Vincent Timber
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Basement



Ground Floor



First Floor



HOMES CONTEMPORARY-STYLE EXTENSION

Double Vision

Andrew and Lucy Thompson have transformed a run-down old cottage with a smart, modern extension that blends right in

Words: **Jason Orme** Photography: **Simon Maxwell**





PROJECT NOTES

Project:
Extension/
remodel

Location:
Wiltshire

Build time:
Sep 2011
– Apr 2014

Size: 225m²
House cost:
£350,000

Build cost:
£375,000
(£1,666/m²)

Value:
£850,000



Above: Original Façade

The front elevation maintains the look of the original building – all the work is to the rear – but it has been repointed, and new windows and roof covering have been installed

Left, Above Top and Above Centre: Rear Extension

While the shape of the extension nods to the cottage, it is distinctively contemporary, with vertical cedar cladding and a zinc roof from Rheinzink. The covered outdoor space was a key requirement of the couple's brief



THE QUICK READ

➤ Andrew and Lucy Thompson have doubled the size of their run-down cottage with a contemporary-style extension designed by CaSA Architects

➤ The extension complements the original, both in terms of shape and use of materials

➤ In addition to providing plenty of extra space, the new extension includes flexible accommodation, such as the glazed hallway/link that connects the home with the outside

“**T**he cottage was run-down but we knew it had plenty of potential,” says Lucy Thompson, as she describes the condition of the property she bought with husband Andrew. Situated in a dramatic location in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty near to Longleat in Wiltshire, it had character and charm but also, unfortunately, the less attractive traits associated with older homes — namely, rather tight space allowances and poor energy performance levels.

“It was crying out for an extension,” says Lucy, “but we knew that we needed to achieve it while respecting the original cottage. That said, we also recognised that a modern extension, sensitively finished, could work well — and, of course, would probably better help us achieve the space we wanted.”

Working with CaSA Architects, a Bath-based architectural practice, the couple gained consent for a substantial gable-ended, contemporary-style extension that went well beyond the normal planning allowance. The simple form of the existing gable structure to the front was replicated at the rear to provide two additional ➤



HOMES CONTEMPORARY-STYLE EXTENSION

Glazed Hallway

The small old cottage struggled for light, so the new extension introduces it wherever possible – including through this glazed rooflight, and large windows from Rationel





“It is a real luxury to live in a bespoke house with such attention to detail, and which mixes old and new in a way that responds to our very individual lifestyle”

bedrooms at first floor level, with an open plan kitchen and dining room below. A new entrance, stair and hall is contained within a narrow ‘spine’ located between the two gable structures — clearly defining the different zones within the property. “One of the best things about the new house is its flexibility,” says Lucy. “It’s brilliant as a party house, which incorporates the new build elements, but we can also close it down to bring out the cosy bits of the original house, huddled around a woodburning stove.”

Connecting Old with New

Quality natural materials are used externally, including blue lias stone to match the cottage, as well as cedar, zinc and oak. All are weathering to a subtle palette of different greys and sit comfortably against the original cottage and within the wider landscape. Internally, the spaces are carefully arranged to allow flexible family living, with double doors allowing spaces to work together or in isolation. Double-height spaces within the entrance hall provide a dramatic sense of volume and let light flood into the adjacent spaces.

Polished concrete floors throughout the ground floor connect these spaces, with oak joinery and flush frameless doors and cupboards creating a streamlined and spacious feel to the interior. Super insulated walls and underfloor heating provide an extremely comfortable and efficient living environment in this exposed site — on the day of *Homebuilding & Renovating*’s visit to the house, the gale force winds outside allowed us to feel pleasingly cosy and snug inside. “We’ve managed to truly get the best of both worlds,” says Lucy. “The home feels full of character and warmth, but we’ve also got the space we wanted and feel better connected to outside. It has become a brilliant family home.” ➡





HOMES CONTEMPORARY-STYLE EXTENSION

Far Left: Flexible Space

A spot at the far end of the hall is a great example of the new trend for unassigned space — here it's used for sitting and enjoying the garden, but it's also used for parties

Left and Below: Living Room

The original cottage has been restored and provides the ultimate cosy retreat. The stove is from Clearview

Bottom Left: Old Meets New

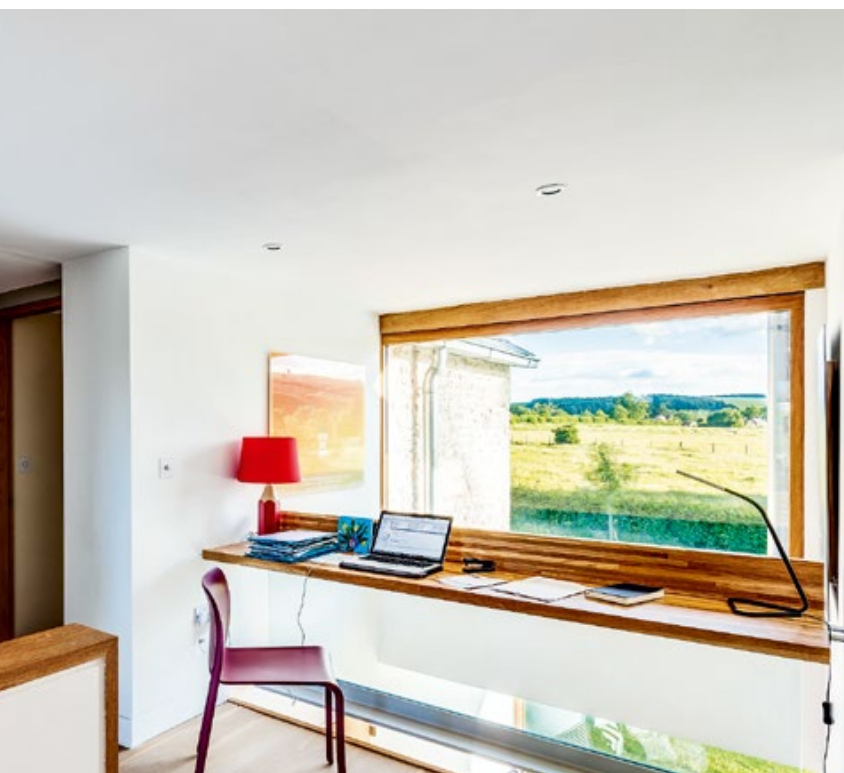
A new hallway element provides the link between the old cottage (left) and the extension (right)



New Space

The new extension is mainly given over to an open kitchen and dining space on the ground floor; the kitchen is from Wilton Kitchens. A polished concrete floor from Lazenby provides consistency through the spaces. The glazed link between old and new also provides space for an informal first floor office (below centre) with stunning views, which can also be enjoyed from the bathroom (opposite page, below)







HOMES CONTEMPORARY-STYLE EXTENSION

The Project



Lucy and Andrew Thompson
Homeowners

HOMEOWNERS' VIEW

We're delighted with the mix of the original traditional cottage, with a modern interpretation of the simple gable cottage sitting behind it, separated by a glazed 'spine' containing entrance, circulation space and staircase.

The original part is cosy and soft, while the new crisp and contemporary part, with large windows framing the wonderful views, allows light to flood in and provides relaxed open plan spaces that flow out into the garden. A range of quality natural materials have been used, which have weathered to a subtle range of grey shades that sit beautifully against the cottage and blend into the landscape.

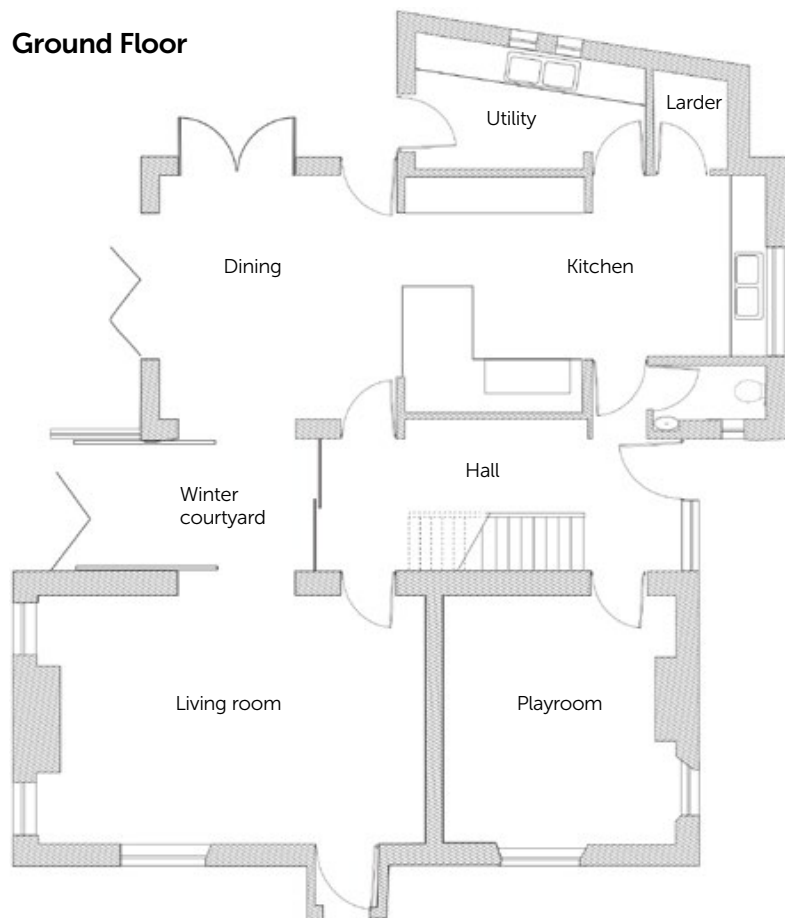
The very clever design allows us to always find just the right place to enjoy the wonderful views and sunlight, whatever the weather — from the internal glazed winter courtyard, covered terrace or cosy snug. The layout has proved extremely flexible, with interconnecting spaces which can be easily closed off, and this allows us to adapt how we use the house from day to day as well as evolve and change as our family grows up.

It is a real luxury to live in a bespoke house with such attention to detail, and which mixes old and new in a way that responds to our very individual lifestyle.

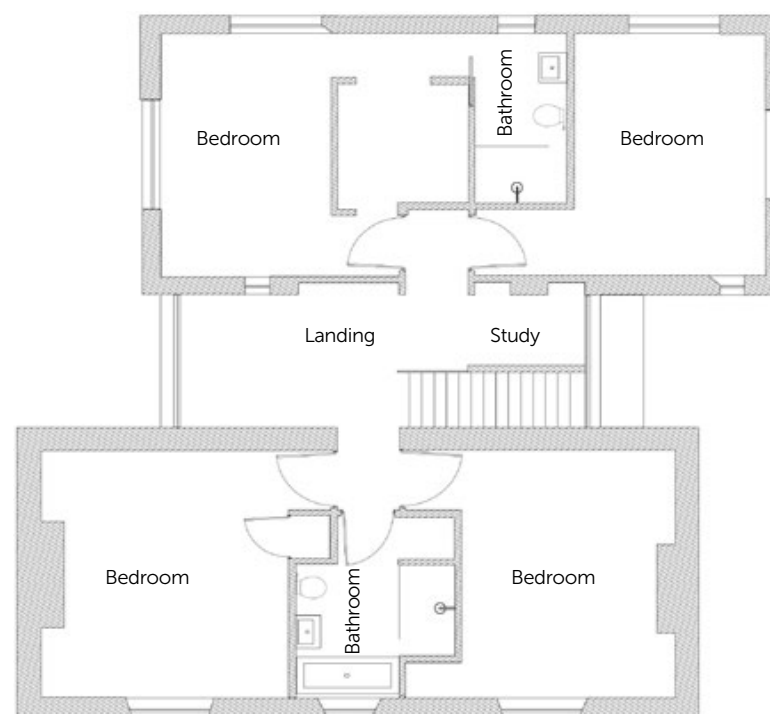
SUPPLIERS

Architects CaSA Architects..... 01225 851871
Zinc roof Rheinzink ... 01276 686725
Cedar cladding Timbersource 01373 469905
Proprietary doors and windows Rationel 01869 248181
Bespoke doors and windows Oakwrights, Bath 01225 430630
Wood Perfect, Salisbury..... 01722 717964
Kitchen Wilton Kitchens & Design 01722 743332
Polished concrete floors Lazenby 01935 700306
Rooflights Glazing Vision 01379 658300
Velux velux.co.uk
Stove Clearview..... 01588 650401

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HOMES TRADITIONAL-STYLE SELF-BUILD

The Perfect Plot

Ron and Anne Skinner's traditional-style self-build, set in a pretty rural spot, offers low maintenance and energy efficiency for the couple's retirement years

Words: Debbie Jeffery
Photography: Jody Stewart

Rear Elevation

Maintenance-free self-coloured render, powder-coated black aluminium guttering and oak-effect PVCu window frames were chosen for the L-shaped dormer bungalow, which stands on a third-of-an-acre-plot overlooking a field and bordered by woodland. Steps, retaining walls, pathways and a cascading stream bring interest to the landscaped garden





PROJECT NOTES

Project: Dormer bungalow self-build

Location:
West Sussex

Build time: Sep 2010 – Mar 2012

Size: 175m²

Plot cost:
£307,000 (2009)

Build cost:
£418,000
(£2,389/m²)

Value: £950,000

HOMES TRADITIONAL-STYLE SELF-BUILD

THE QUICK READ

➤ Ron and Anne Skinner wanted to downsize for their retirement, and bought a ramshackle asbestos bungalow on a beautiful garden site, which they planned to replace with a new home

➤ The low-maintenance chalet bungalow they went on to build has a ground floor bedroom, a first floor master bedroom and a mezzanine level designed for conversion to a third bedroom if needed

➤ Solar thermal panels, an air-source heat pump, a mechanical ventilation heat recovery system, and high levels of insulation ensure that the sealed building is extremely energy efficient, with low running costs

Living Space

An underfloor heating system extends throughout the entire ground floor, beneath the cream Italian ceramic tiles. The system is serviced by an air-source heat pump with a dual cylinder tank, which also provides hot water for the property



“We were living in a five-bed Edwardian property which we loved, but knew there were going to be many years ahead of repairs and maintenance to the 100-year-old house,” says Ron Skinner, describing the starting point for his and wife Anne’s self-build journey. “When Anne and I decided to downsize, we began looking for a plot to build a brand new maintenance-free home for our retirement.”

The couple found a prime plot just a short walk from the west Sussex village of Lindfield, which was occupied by a 72m² pre-war bungalow, constructed entirely out of asbestos sheeting and ripe for demolition. “It was the perfect spot for us, overlooking a field to the south-west and with an adjoining wood,” says Anne. “We loved the seclusion and unrestricted views.”

Ron and Anne had renovated several previous homes, but had never built a house from scratch. They researched local building companies online and spotted an interesting new property with a glazed gable end that had been designed by James Minett of Belmont Designs — a Sussex-based practice specialising in bespoke residential projects. “We asked James if the design could be adapted for our needs, and used it as a rough template,” says Ron.

Planning a New Home

“The elevated plot lends itself to something a little unusual, and because it’s so secluded and not overlooked we didn’t anticipate any objections from neighbours,” says Anne.



Outdoor Space

The vaulted A-framed living and dining area leads directly on to a spacious outdoor seating area

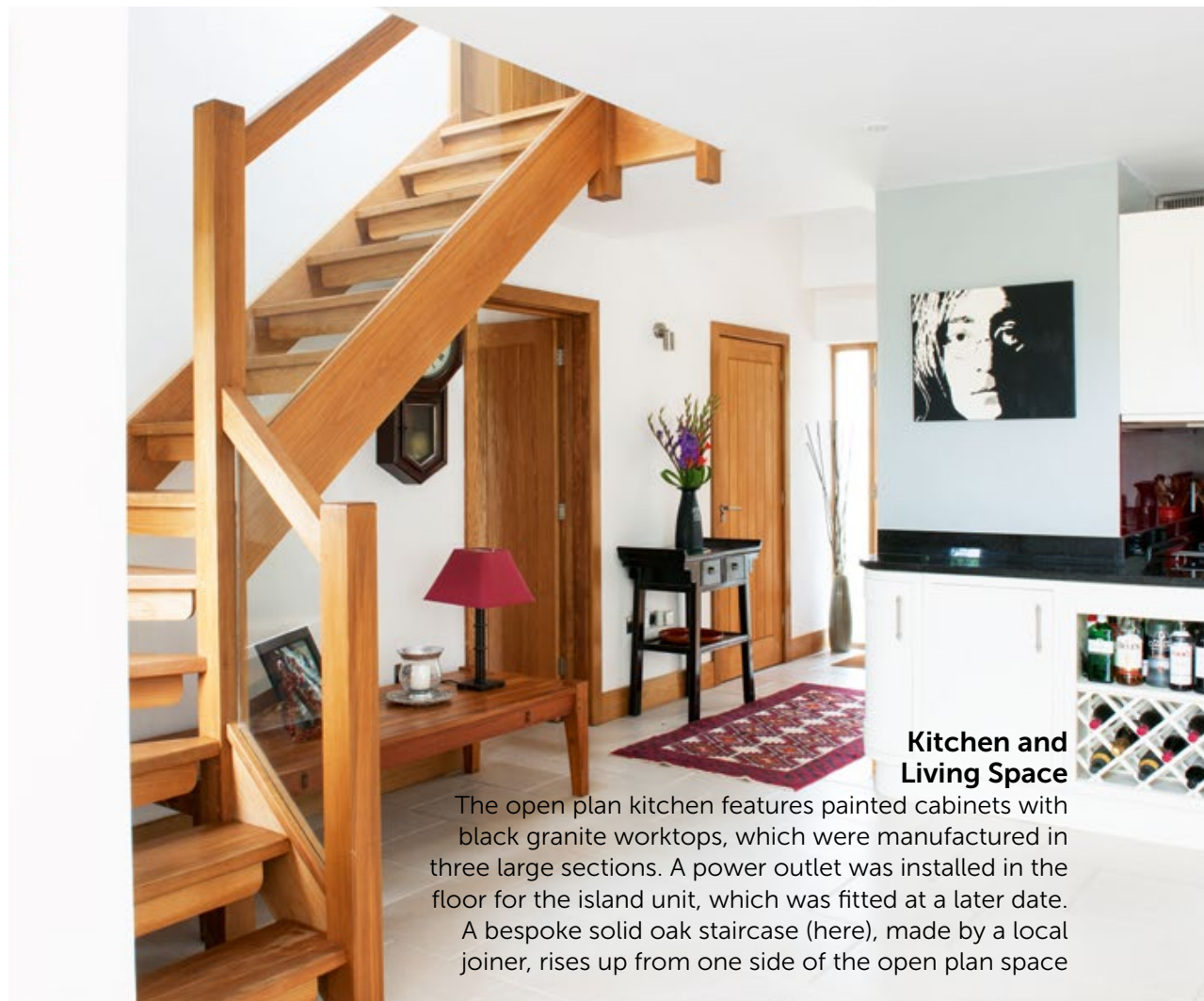


HOMES TRADITIONAL-STYLE SELF-BUILD



Balcony

A timber balcony leads out from one of the home's two en suite bedrooms



Kitchen and Living Space

The open plan kitchen features painted cabinets with black granite worktops, which were manufactured in three large sections. A power outlet was installed in the floor for the island unit, which was fitted at a later date. A bespoke solid oak staircase (here), made by a local joiner, rises up from one side of the open plan space

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**Below:
Master En Suite**
Green glass was
chosen as an
unusual splashback
behind the bath in
the master en suite



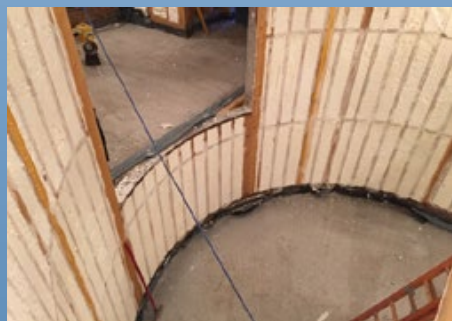
Right: Mezzanine Level
Artwork is displayed in the mezzanine
seating area, which provides views
through a glass balustrade and
the full-height window beyond



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HOMES TRADITIONAL-STYLE SELF-BUILD

The planning process proved to be the most difficult part of the project. The initial application more than doubled the size of the asbestos bungalow, and was rejected on the grounds that the site stands in 'a countryside area of development constraint'.

A size restriction of 100m² was imposed, which would have made the project unfeasible for the Skinners, who engaged a planning consultant at this stage. The consultant's statement and a cardboard scale model built by Ron were presented to the planning committee, which overturned the recommendation for refusal and approved plans for the 175m² house. "We got everything we wanted in the end, but it was a real battle and involved additional costs," says Anne.

Project Managing the Build

The couple lived in their previous home during the build, which was completed by a local builder, with Ron taking on the role of project manager. "There was so much rain that winter that the trenches collapsed in places and the concreting was delayed, so it wasn't a very good start," recalls Ron, who spent almost every day on site. "Substantial land drainage needed to be installed, as well as a waste treatment plant. Just to remove all the soil cost over £10,000."

A specialist local company was employed to construct the bespoke oak-framed element of the house, which supports 4m-wide oak

doors on the ground floor, while the remainder of the structure consists of rendered blockwork walls constructed on a brick plinth. The hand-cut timber roof structure has been clad in locally made clay tiles, which add a rich colour to the finished house.

In order to achieve their goal of a maintenance-free home, the Skinners originally specified replica oak PVCu window frames, which were rejected by the planning officer, who preferred timber frames. Once again the couple engaged the services of a specialist consultant, and ultimately won their appeal when the planning inspector overturned the decision.

The result is a pretty chalet bungalow, with a vaulted A-framed kitchen/dining/living room enjoying views across open fields through a full-height wall of glass, and overlooked by a mezzanine seating area. One of the en suite bedrooms has been positioned on the ground floor and the other opens on to a timber balcony.

"There have been a number of challenges with building this house — including the year-long planning process, demolishing the asbestos bungalow and drastically excavating the clay site, but we're glad we didn't give up," says Ron.

"We now have a home that requires virtually no maintenance, which means we're able to relax and enjoy our retirement in comfort, and that was always the aim." **H**



Master Bedroom

The first floor master bedroom was built into the sloping roof space and opens through glass doors on to a bespoke timber balcony overlooking the neighbouring field. There are no radiators upstairs, as the open plan design allows warm air from the ground floor underfloor heating to rise to the upper level

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HOMES TRADITIONAL-STYLE SELF-BUILD

The Project

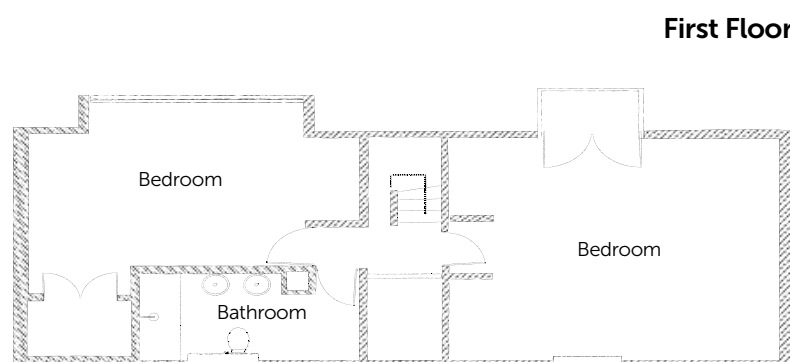
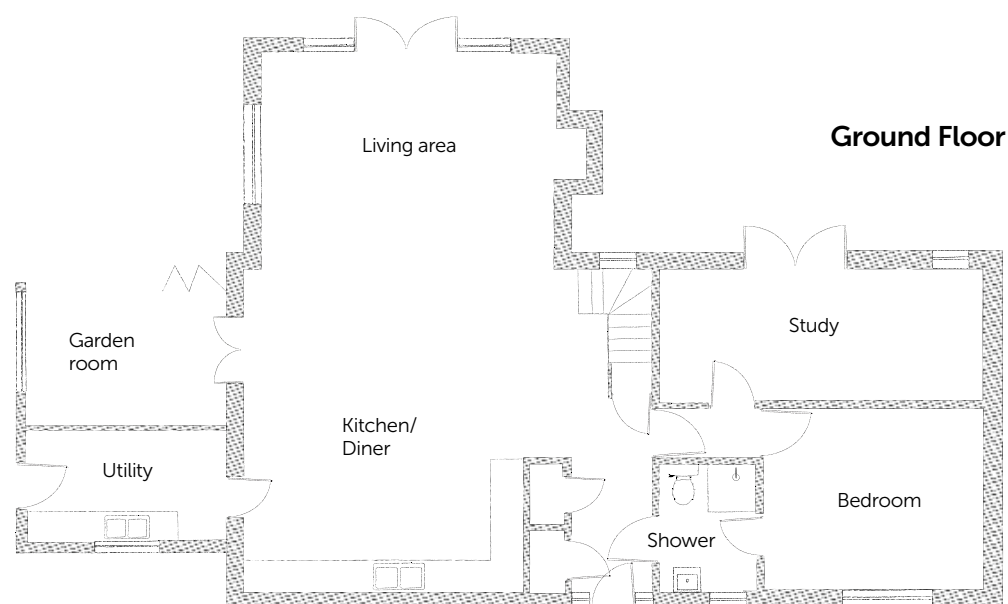


James Minett
Belmont Designs

DESIGNER'S VIEW

There were several issues when it came to designing a house for the Skinner's sloping plot, including the height and overall size of the new building. I advised Ron and Anne to apply for planning permission to build the main house, and then to make a separate application to build an attached single storey utility area and garden room, in addition to a detached weather-boarded garage. The timber-clad side extension was always part of the original plan, but was built at a later date because of tight planning restrictions, and was added under Permitted Development rights.

Everything has been designed for Ron and Anne's retirement, with a ground floor bedroom which has access to a shower room that's also accessible from the hallway. Built above the kitchen, the mezzanine space is a flexible reading/study/seating area, which was constructed in such a way that it could easily be converted into a third bedroom if required.



SUPPLIERS

Designer	Belmont Designs	01444 455161
Main contractor	J Baillieux	01825 722577
Steelwork	Southern Steel Services	01444 871435
A-frame joinery and windows		
Roof tiles	Brian Gow Roofing	bgowroofing.co.uk
Rendering	Sussex Plastering	sussex-plastering.co.uk
Solar thermal panels and air-source heat pump	E A Services	01732 882535
Heat recovery system	Allergy Plus	allergyplus.co.uk
Kitchen units	Benchmarx	01293 565159
Floor tiles	Zeus	zeuslimestoneflooring.com
Woodburning stove	Bolney Stoves	01444 871815
Sanitaryware	Bathstore	01444 454844
Staircase	Ace Joinery	01273 439651
Polished granite worktops	Affordable Granite	affordablegranite.co.uk
Guttering and downpipes	Classic Finish UK	07973 792727
Toughened coloured glass	Colourglaze	01444 390663

SELECTED COSTS

Demolition/site preparation	£46,000
Fees/legal costs	£30,000
Labour	£145,000
Materials/equipment	£197,000

PROJECT TIMELINE

Jul 09	Plot purchase completed
Nov 09	Planning application submitted
Apr 10	Planning permission approved
Sep 10	Work started on site
Oct 10	Foundations completed
Mar 12	Build completed/house occupied
Nov 13	Garden and garage completed
Jul 15	Side extension completed



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SELF BUILD LIVE

PART 3



Forming a complete step-by-step guide to building a home, we follow leading package company Potton as it starts work on a brand new Passivhaus home. This month we explore the importance of airtightness

In a UK industry first, self-build specialist Potton is giving aspiring self-builders an opportunity to watch, stage-by-stage, the construction of its fifth and most contemporary showhome.

Self Build Live is a series of events – held at Potton's Self Build Show Centre in St Neots, Cambridgeshire – designed to offer potential self-builders an 'access all areas' insight into the construction of a fully certified Passivhaus and learn first-hand how to build their own home – the highlights of which are showcased over the following pages.

Potton, together with its build partners, will host 16 Self Build Live events at key stages of the build – from laying the slab, installing insulation and skimming the walls to fitting the bathrooms, interior design and decoration. Each event will provide essential self-build information and an unprecedented insight into building a Potton home.

For course dates, videos of the build and more information, visit selfbuildlive.com



PASSIVHAUS: HOW TO BUILD AN AIRTIGHT STRUCTURE

An airtight building is essential when creating a Passivhaus home. Paul Newman explains why attention to detail and careful planning are required to achieve this



DR PAUL NEWMAN
Potton's self-build director Paul Newman has worked in timber-based construction industries for over 18 years

If you've been following this series, you'll know by now that the key features of a Passivhaus are:

- Very high levels of insulation;
- Extremely high-performance windows with insulated frames;
- Thermal bridge-free construction;
- An airtight building fabric;
- A mechanical ventilation system with highly efficient heat recovery;
- Accurate design using the Passive House Planning Package (PHPP).

We are now well on with the construction of our new showhome: the foundations, ground floor and building superstructure are all complete, and we have installed the windows and doors (more on which later). All of our construction details have been prepared and considered in depth and we are about to demonstrate in public – at one of our Self Build Live events – the level of airtightness we have managed to achieve.

Build Tight...

The Passivhaus standard requires very low air leakage rates which must be demonstrated by means of an airtightness test,

carried out using a 'blower door'. The air change rate must be less than or equal to 0.60ac/h (air changes per hour), under test conditions, to meet Passivhaus levels.

It is worth noting that in practice an airtightness level of 0.60ac/h is roughly equivalent to having a hole in the envelope area of the building less than the size of a five-pence piece for every 5m² of building envelope. In comparison, a building that merely achieves the limiting figure for airtightness to comply with the current version of Part L of the Building Regulations will have an equivalent hole the size of a 20-pence piece for every 1m² of envelope.

In typical fashion, the methodology for testing airtightness for Passivhaus buildings differs from that used in UK Building Regulations — although they do both use a 'blower door' to carry out the actual physical test. The Passivhaus standard measures the air changes per hour at a pressure of 50 pascals or @50Pa (the n50 measurement). In other words, this is the number of times the volume of air within the building is changed in an hour under test conditions; it's a volumetric measure. The standard is a measure of air infiltration, and hence the heating energy cost of the building. It considers the volume of air that needs to be heated and excludes internal walls and floors.

The UK standard measures air permeability in m³/hr/m²@50Pa (the q50 measurement) — the air leakage per m² of building envelope. The UK standard defines the building envelope as everything within the air barrier line. In practice, this could be anywhere within the building envelope and is a measure of building envelope airtightness.

The current backstop airtightness figure for UK Building Regulations is 10m³/hr/m²@50Pa and reportedly the average figure of all UK homes (in other words, our housing stock) is around 12m³/hr/m²@50Pa.

While clearly technically incorrect, it is often convenient to consider the air change rate and air permeability for dwellings as roughly similar and, in this case, it will help me with the next explanation.

Our showhome is the first Passivhaus that we have constructed and we are learning all the time. However, we have constructed a very large number of homes that can reasonably be considered as low energy and have needed to be particularly airtight. For a great number of these we have had the responsibility of delivering the airtight envelope of the home at an early stage of the construction. We know from our experience that whenever the airtightness target is less than 3m³/hr/m²@50Pa for an early stage test (ie as soon as the airtight envelope is constructed) it's of great benefit. I would go one step further and argue that in any dwelling with a target of less than 1.5m³/hr/m²@50Pa, an early stage test is essential. Clearly then, when working to the Passivhaus standard, where the target is 0.6ac/h, an early stage test is an absolute must.

We know from our experience that, using the Kingspan TEK® Building System, and by carefully sealing and taping external wall junctions we can readily – I hesitate to use the word easily – achieve airtightness figures of between 1.5-3.0m³/hr/m²@50Pa. We know also that figures of 1.0-1.5m³/hr/m²@50Pa require considerable care and engagement from the whole construction

"Because the envelope is so wonderfully airtight, naturally ventilating the property is not an option; a mechanical system with heat recovery system is required"



A Home for the 21st Century

Defying perceptions of Passivhaus buildings being box-like in form, Potton's latest showhome (designed by HTA Design) will cut a dynamic shape when finished in summer 2016. The structure has been created using the Kingspan TEK® Building System, which was pre-fitted with a Wraptite System membrane in the factory prior to erection. The walls will be clad externally in brick, and the roof finished in Vieo standing seam by Euroclad

team. We have some experience of properties where the requirement is $1.0\text{m}^3/\text{hr}/\text{m}^2@50\text{Pa}$ and know that this is hard to achieve, but equally far from impossible.

So, what about our showhome? Our first test yielded a result of $0.76\text{ac}/\text{h}$ — irritatingly short of our Passivhaus requirement of $0.60\text{ac}/\text{h}$, but perhaps better than one might reasonably expect straight out of the box. We spent a short period of time with smoke sticks and 'the skin on the backs of our hands' test finding some of the more obvious leakage points, including some schoolboy errors, and addressing them. We then carried out a second test which gave us a result of precisely $0.60\text{ac}/\text{h}$.

Finally, we carried out a smoke test, which involved filling the entire house with 'smoke' from a machine — similar to the type of thing that one might expect to find in a nightclub — and then gently pressurising the house using the 'blower door'. This test, while not perfect, can help reveal leaks in the building envelope that had previously remained undetected as the smoke finds its way out of the structure. The smoke test was helpful and identified a number of leakage points, mostly higher up, where some attention was required. By the time you read this we will have conducted our first test in public and we will know how much we have managed to improve upon our target of $0.60\text{ac}/\text{h}$.

Ventilating and Heating a Passivhaus

There is always a temptation when designing and constructing a very high-performance property such as a Passivhaus, to fill it full of the latest high-tech, complex technologies and this is particularly so when looking at the systems that heat and service our homes. From day one we were determined to resist this temptation and to construct a home that is both energy efficient (concentrating efforts on the building envelope), but also very simple to live in.

I think there is a real danger that the population at large receive a message that Passivhaus buildings are complicated to live in — this should simply not be the case. ➡



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Airtightness Testing

When constructing a low-energy home, particularly one constructed to exacting standards such as Passivhaus, it's advisable to test the airtightness of the building envelope at an early stage (using the 'blower door' method shown). 'Leaks' in the envelope can then be identified and addressed at this early stage

**Specifying a Mechanical Ventilation System**

So, having constructed a particularly airtight building envelope one must next consider how to adequately ventilate the building and ensure that the air inside is of good quality. Because the envelope is so wonderfully airtight, naturally ventilating the property, as is currently the case in most UK properties, is not an option and a mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) system is required. Time and experience have shown that correctly designed, commissioned and installed systems will not only recover the required amount of heat energy from the air in the property, but will also provide air of good quality.

Heat recovery is an important part of the Passive House Planning Package (PHPP) model. In practice, this means that the MVHR system needs to be high performance and it makes real sense to use components certified by the Passivhaus Institute.

At early stages of the design process we did look at using more typical MVHR systems, but the performance penalties were simply not worth it. We have learnt heavily on the expertise of our partners at Total Home Environment for the ventilation, heating and hot water strategy, and have ultimately decided to install a Genvex MVHR unit with in-line electric heater elements to warm the incoming air.

The location of the ductwork routes were considered and designed at an early stage. We have also added small elements of electric underfloor heating to the bathroom areas and immediately in front of our large 8m-wide glazed opening. Hot water is provided using a micro air-source heat pump that is ducted to outside the property.

In writing this now our selected solution sounds simple but, in reality, we considered lots of alternative systems. I'm very happy with where we've ended up and believe

that we have a solution appropriate to the home we are constructing. We rejected combined ventilation heating and hot water units because we couldn't readily obtain one with a capacity suitable for the size of the property. While running short of hot water is never likely to be an issue in a showhome, it isn't sensible to construct something that wouldn't work in practice or would be difficult to procure.

Before settling on our solution we also looked at using a gas boiler with radiators and then with underfloor heating. We rejected radiators because, while the system would have been simple, it's a fact of life that most self-builders don't like them and won't have them in their own homes. A full wet underfloor heating system was rejected (although some may want it as a backup) as I just couldn't get my head around the idea of installing a whole system to meet what is in reality a very small demand for heat. ➡

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POTTON'S SELF-BUILD LIVE



Installing the Windows and Doors

Potton specified high-performance, triple-glazed timber frame windows and doors from Kloeber for its Passivhaus build. Set back from the main elevation and located beneath an overhang, the large area of glazing is protected from the high summer sun to prevent the interiors from overheating



Installing the Windows and Doors

As with the MVHR system, in my view it makes real sense to purchase certified windows and doors for incorporation into a building where Passivhaus certification is the ultimate aim. They are another critical, complicated and high performance part of the building envelope and errors in the design and specification are likely to be expensive to address. Specifying certified windows does not obviate the need for care, but it does provide some reassurance.

With our very large 8x3m opening, we knew we had to be especially careful with the specification of the window and door elements, and so worked very closely with our partners at Kloeber to ensure we had not only the most appropriate specification but also the correct information entered in the PHPP analysis. We decided upon a contemporary style of timber window with insulated frames and triple glazing. The specification of the glass within the windows was an element that received particularly close scrutiny, as it has a marked effect on the overall performance of the home.

MORE ADVICE ONLINE

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The windows have U values of between 0.71 and 0.79W/m²K depending upon their size; the smaller windows have a higher (worse) U value because of the increased impact of the frame which does not perform as well as the glazing. For comparison, the external walls have a U value of 0.10W/m²K and most of our projects have windows with a U value of 1.2-1.4W/m²K. So, while the doors and windows are clearly a weak link in the thermal envelope (compared to the walls), the Passivhaus-certified product we have installed is significantly better than the current norm.

Another point worth noting is overheating. The large south-facing set of glazed doors are set well back into the building and are protected from the impact of the high summer sun by the projection above, which not only offers shade but also provides a covered outdoor space.

We were confident we knew how to go about detailing and constructing an airtight junction between the windows and the rest of the building, and the smoke test revealed just how impressive the airtightness of the installed units was — particularly the large glazed opening doors.

The windows and doors were sealed to the structural frame using the Tremco Illbruck i3 system which we have used on numerous projects in the past. [H](#)

SELF BUILD LIVE
DIARY DATES

Potton is running a number of Self Build Live events at its HQ in Cambridgeshire — providing a unique opportunity to join the team on site during the build of its Passivhaus showhome, and gain in-depth advice from Potton's experts. Future events include:

● **EXTERNAL CLADDING (APRIL 2016)**

● **FIRST FIX PLUMBING AND ELECTRICS (APRIL 2016)**

● **PLASTERBOARDING (MAY 2016)**

● **KITCHEN AND BATHROOMS INSTALLATION (JUNE 2016)**

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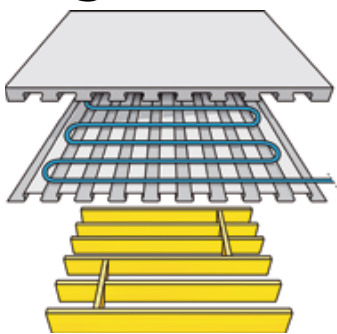
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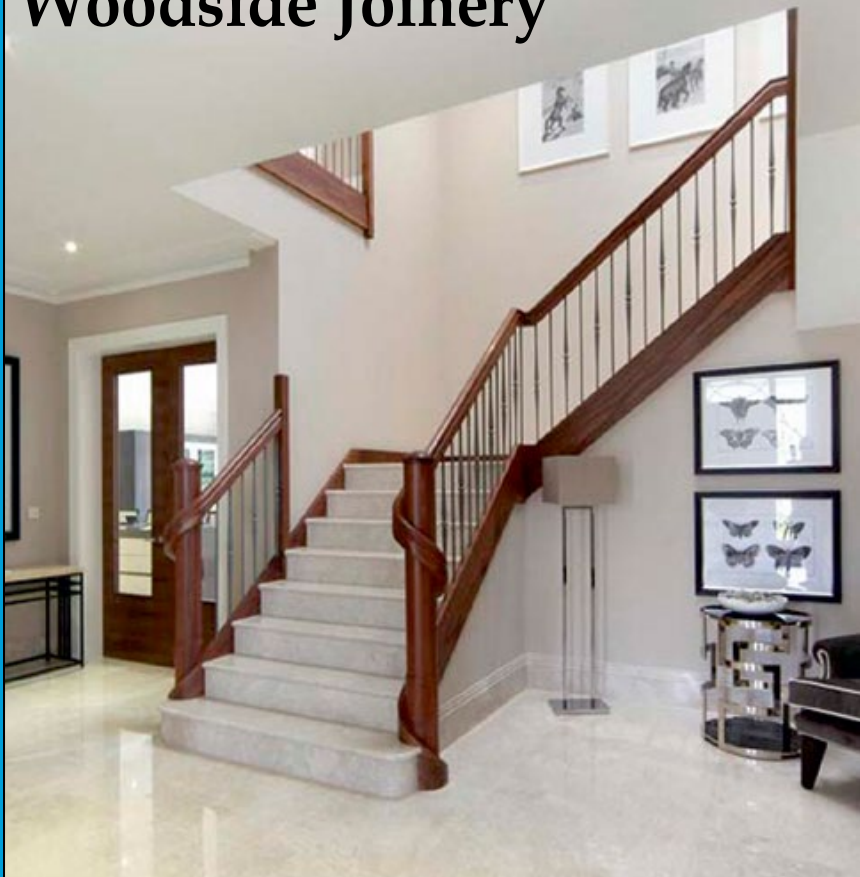


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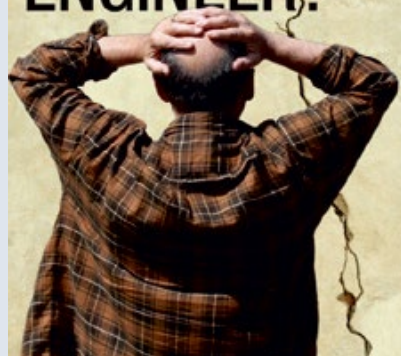
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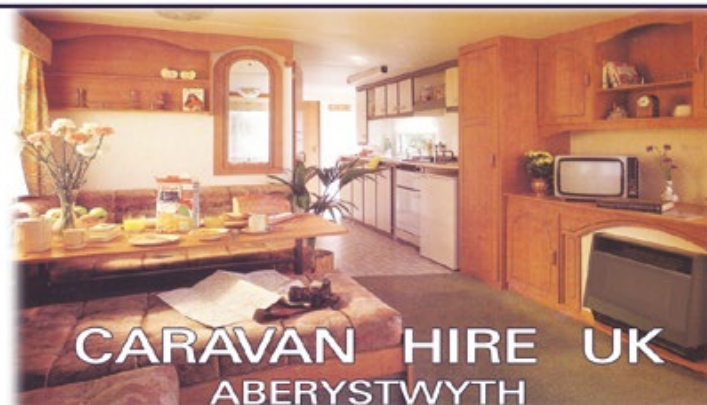
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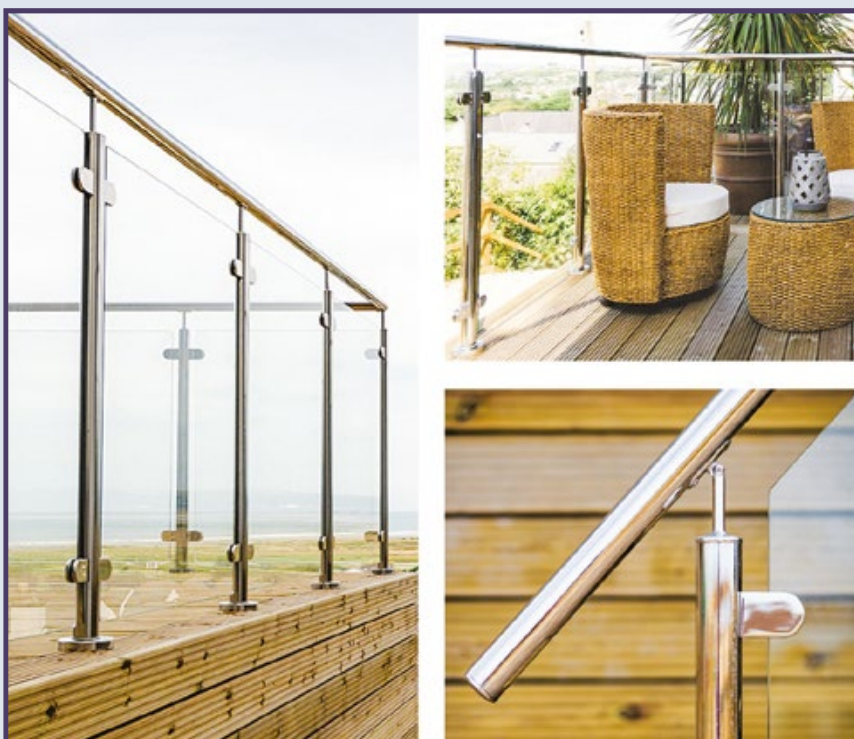


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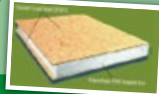


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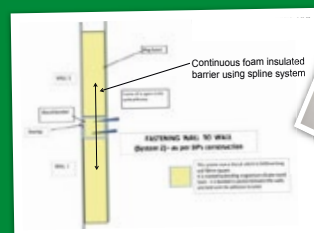
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4

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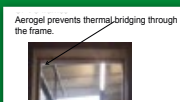
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7

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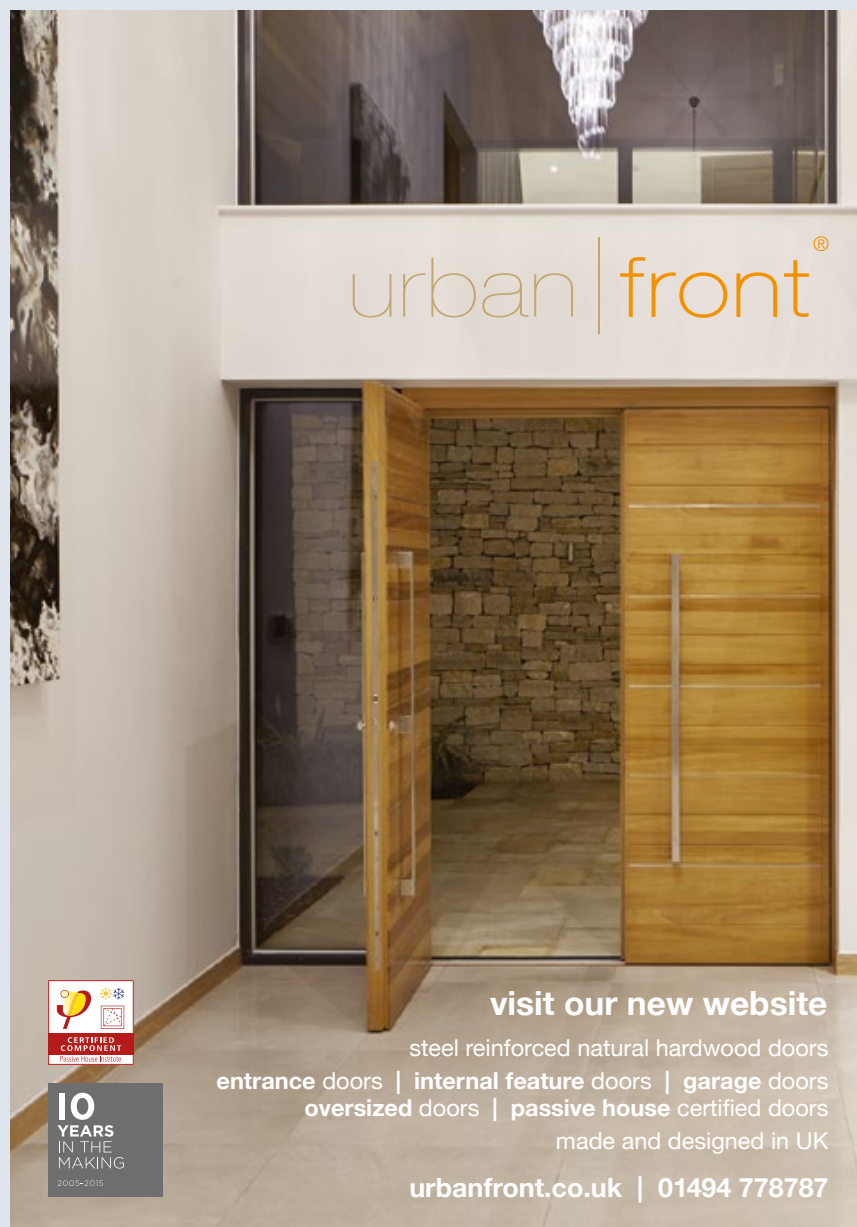
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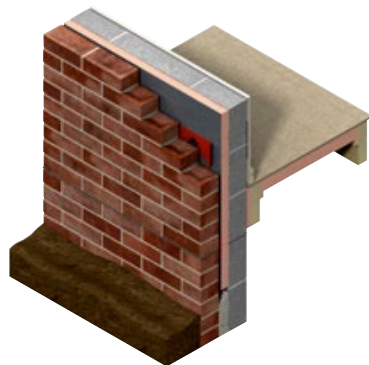
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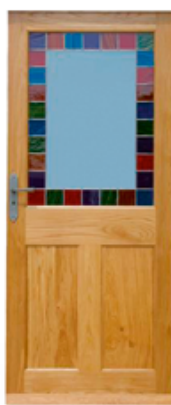
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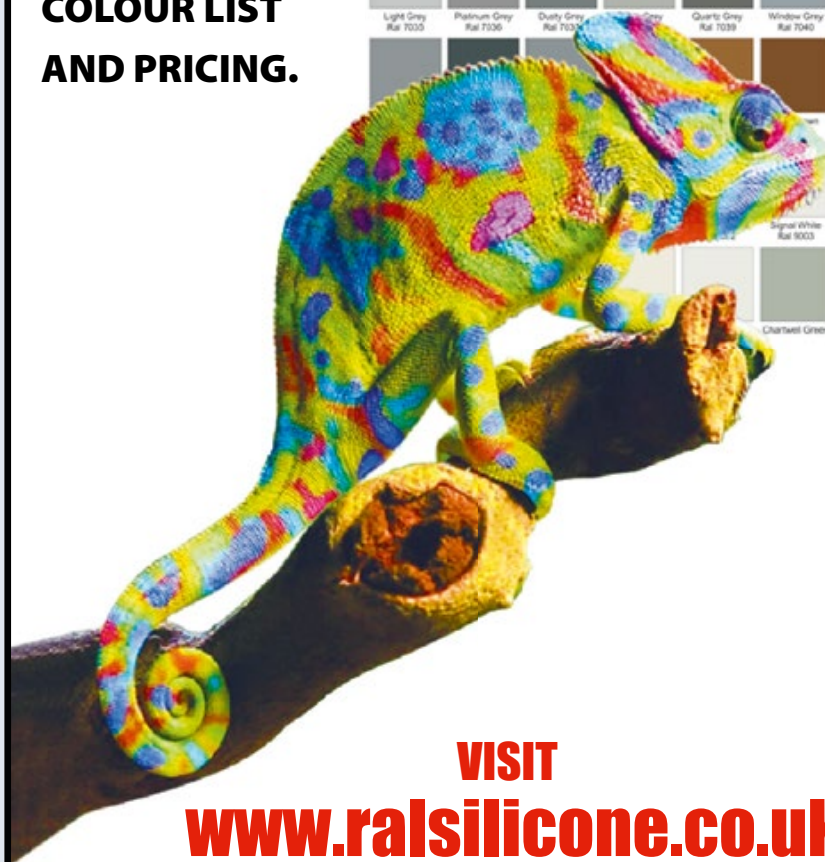
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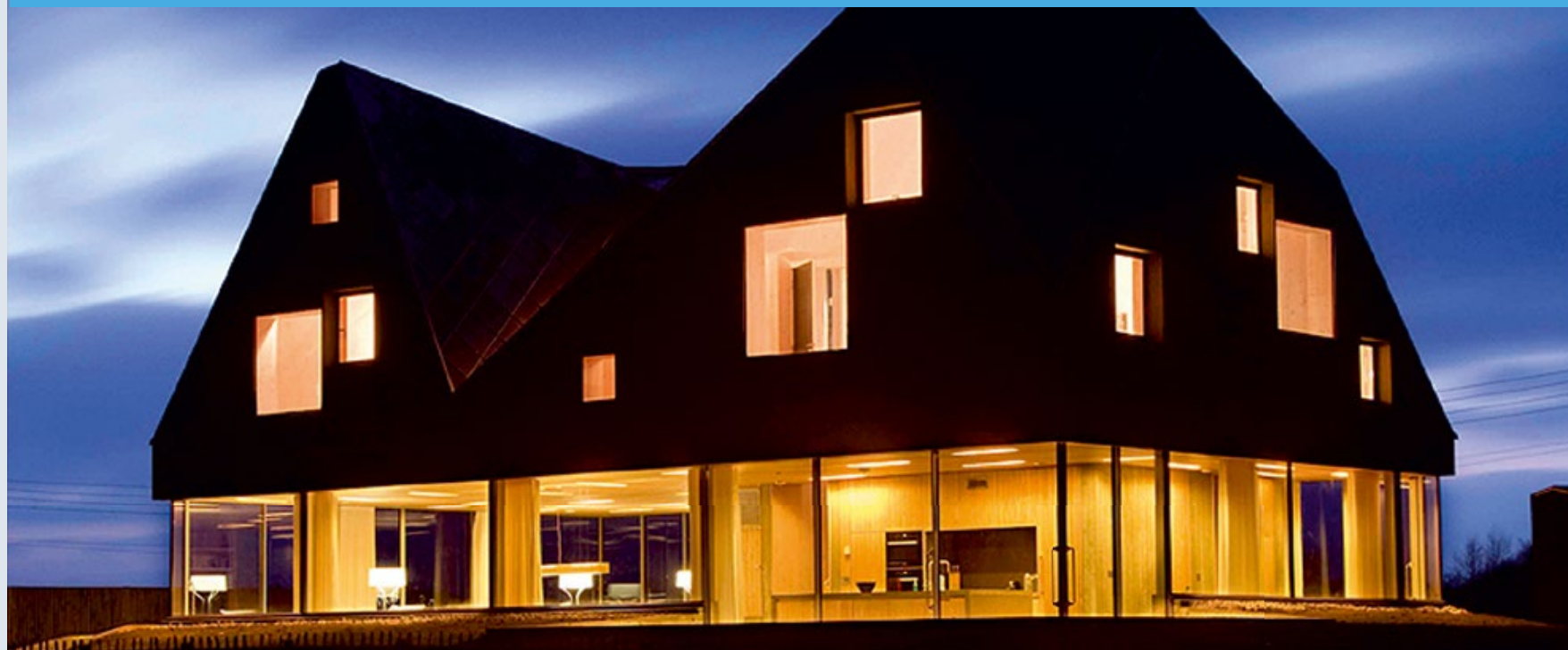
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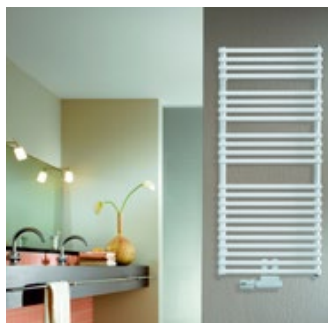
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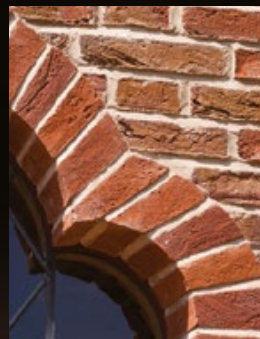
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The Stone Wall

Architect John Boardman shares one of his favourite design tricks

The client's brief for our Cefn Castell project (above) in Criccieth, Wales, called for a reference to the local vernacular to be incorporated into the design. As our modernist thinking from the outset was at opposite ends of the spectrum to traditional domestic building styles, this was quite a challenge. Our big idea here came with the reuse of the remains of the stonework from the existing 400-year-old cottage on site, which enabled us to build a monumental new boundary wall to give the new house the traditional Welsh element that our clients hoped for.

The design of the wall was constructed by a local stonemason in the same traditional construction techniques handed

down through time. Not only does the wall offer privacy to the house from the surrounding public coastal path which envelops the site, but it offers the design aesthetic that I particularly love as an architect — that tension and contrast between the old and the new, of contemporary glazed elements delicately touching the random textured richness of the stone wall.

We expanded on this further by mirror cladding two short steel beams connecting the main body of the house to the wall, so that the reflecting surfaces allow this connection to 'disappear'. The layered design of the house, with visual connection at all times to the stone wall through large expanses of glass, allowed us to harmonise the richness and complexity of the wall with the purity of the main house. 



John Boardman is associate of architectural practice Stephenson Studio (stephenson-studio.com)

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