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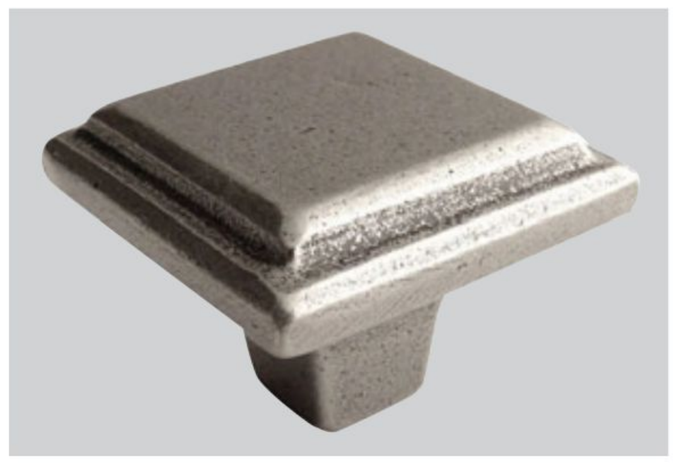

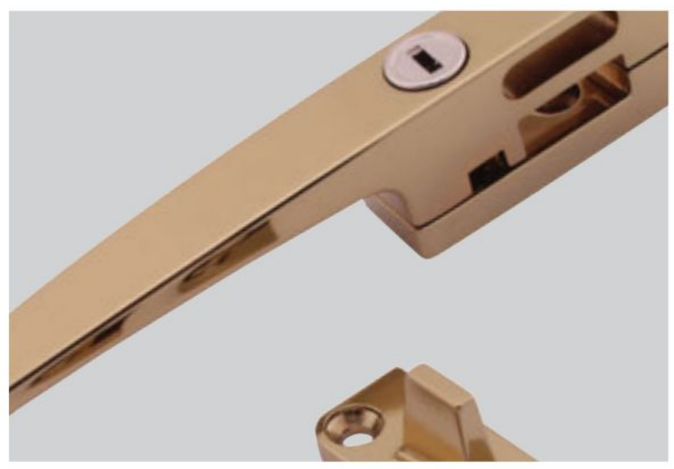

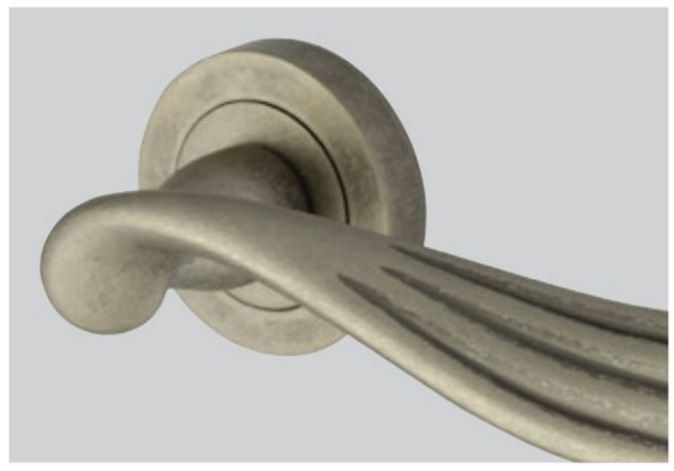

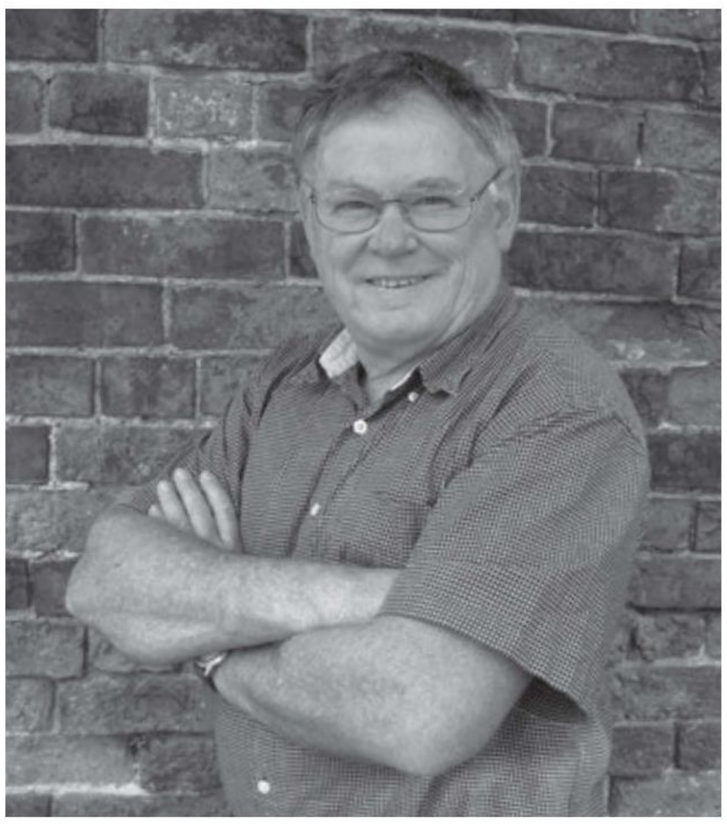

FROM THE EDITOR

There is something rather special about an oak frame – its ability to impress and delight at the same time. Unlike other construction methods, it needn't be hidden behind plaster or cladding. It rightly deserves to stand loud and proud. For centuries – in barns, cottages, and manor houses up and down the country – oak has been used to provide strong, durable structures that require very little maintenance. The timber doesn't even need treating – internally or externally – making it a truly sustainable material.

Hardly a day passes when I don't stop and admire the oak frame in our new sun room, which has quickly become our favourite space. Used in conjunction with glazed panels, an oak frame can look as contemporary as any other modern interior, yet still exude a timeless charm.

But before embarking with this construction option, you should consider all the factors carefully. Oak frame doesn't suit all designs, and has its limitations and special requirements. Our Beginner's Guide should help you to decide if it is for you.

Part of the appeal of a self build is that there are so many building options. Bricklayer Paul Marlow explored most of these before choosing conventional block and render for his new family home in Devon. As he was doing most of the work himself, he figured he could do it cheaper than buying a timber frame. Incidentally, Paul and his wife, Carol, were inspired to move to Devon to realise their dream after visiting our Exeter show on their way back from a holiday in Cornwall. It's a decision they haven't regretted, affording them a new home and a new lifestyle to boot!

It may be new beginnings for the Marlows, but Pat and Sarah Donlan designed their new home for a different stage of their lives – retirement. No boring bungalow, the Donlans have built an unashamedly contemporary, single-storey home which is highly energy-efficient and easy to maintain. It should serve them well into their dotage.

Sometimes, a self build doesn't all go according to plan, which was the case for Phil Evans and his wife, Joanne, who almost lost everything when they decided to convert a pretty Victorian church into a family home. Only after their purchase did they discover that the spire and roof needed expensive repairs, jeopardising the whole project. Fortunately, persistence and hard work paid off, and their story has a happy outcome – they've found their Holy Grail.

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On the cover

An internal oak frame from Carpenter Oak has transformed this derelict barn. Learn more in our beginner's guide to oak frames starting on page 56.

Deadline for Structural Timber Awards

Homeowners have until the end of May to submit their entries for the Structural Timber Awards, with two categories particularly relevant to selfbuilders: Best Custom or Self Build project, and Best Use Of SIPs project.
The completed building should comprise of timber in a fundamental structural way – timber frame, SIPS or solid wood – and should display high levels of technical skill, using timber effectively as an aesthetic, sustainable, energy-efficient and reliable way to build a 'dream home'.
The winners will be announced in October.
structuraltimberawards.co.uk

PICTURE: 40 Hill Road, Essex, which won the Best Use of SIPs category in the 2016 awards.

CUSTOM BUILD PART OF 10-POINT PLAN TO MEET HOUSING DEMAND

A pan-industry group of housing professionals is calling on the government to take bolder long-term steps to increase the housing supply.

The Housing Forum says politics should be taken out of housing and suggests that all planning applications with fewer than 250 homes, such as custom builds, should be determined by the officers, not the elected officials, and for a greater cross-party consensus.

Its report, Futureproofing Housing Supply, offers 10 'solutions' which it says would help ensure – in conjunction with proposals set out in the recent Government Housing White Paper – that over 250,000 homes per annum are built every year.

Housing Forum deputy chairman Stephen Teagle said: "The government's focus on supply through a broad range of measures is welcome and will contribute to lifting the supply of new homes we need.

Leadership

"This report takes that ambition a stage further, calling for renewed leadership at a local level, greater investment and a strengthened platform for collaboration to future-proof delivery over the next decade.

"We have to recognise as an industry that the government's renewed focus on housing supply presents an opportunity for the sector to push for the kind of change that can make a real difference.

"The fact that the scale of the problem has been recognised by Whitehall means we now have a unique chance to open up the debate and put forward novel and bold ideas."

Housing Forum chief executive Shelagh Grant added that more needed to be done to overcome the challenges that exist in the market and to create a benign and sustainable environment for housebuilding.

10 SOLUTIONS FOR BOOSTING HOUSING SUPPLY

1: Housing should be depoliticised. Take party politics out of housing strategy and delivery by creating cross-party housing groups and removing elected members from decision-making on some planning applications.
2: Government to appoint a Housing Minister to the Cabinet and directly commission new homes on public sector land.
3: All local authorities must become more pro-active leaders of housing supply.
4: Create a single voice for the housing industry, enabling clear, powerful and effective communication with government.
5: Government and industry to implement the Farmer Review's call for modernisation of housebuilding skills and technology to address the looming skills crisis.
6: Local authorities should be encouraged to sell land by judging potential buyers against 'best value' factors including the speed of delivery of new homes.
7: Government to revise the planning system so it favours increased supply including PRS/Build for Rent and encourages the allocation of sites of different sizes so as to attract interest from a range of builders.
8: Government to agree a long-term, large-scale capital investment plan for housing for the next 10 years.
9: Give local authorities the financial mechanisms to directly commission new housing and greater freedom for risk sharing with the private sector.
10: Create a centre of excellence for procurement expertise for use across the sector.

In brief

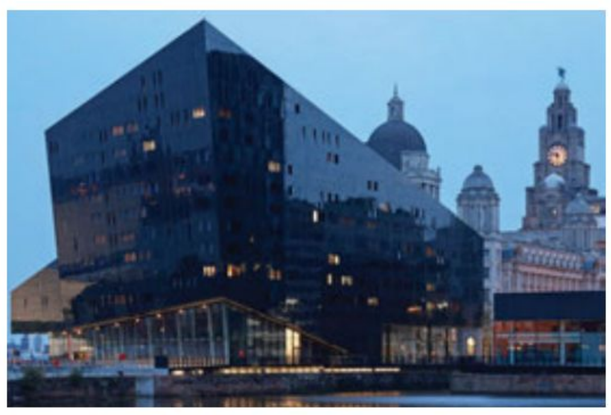
THREE PER CENT INCREASE IN PLANNING AUTHORITY DECISIONS

District planning authorities in England granted 382,600 decisions in 2016 – an increase of three per cent when compared with 2015, according to latest government statistics. In total, 435,600 planning applications were decided.
In the three months to December 2016, district level planning authorities received 112,100 applications for planning permission, up by one per cent on the same quarter in 2015.
Statistics from the Department for Communities and Local Government suggest that 93,600 decisions, up one per cent on 2015, were granted during October, November and December.
Eighty-six per cent of major applications were decided within 13 weeks or the agreed time – up from 82 per cent in the previous year.
Other statistics showed:
- 12,700 residential applications were decided, an increase of six per cent.
- 9,200 applications for prior approval for permitted development rights from October to December 2016 were received, a decrease of nine per cent on the same quarter in 2015.
- 7,500 of the 9,200 applications were approved without going through the full planning process, a decrease of 10 per cent.
- 1,600 of the 9,200 applications were for changes to residential use; 1,100 of the 1,600 were approved without going through the full planning process.

In 2016 as a whole, district planning authorities granted 49,100 decisions on residential developments. This breaks down to 6,400 major developments, and 42,700 minor developments.

PARTNER SOUGHT FOR GARDEN CITY PROJECT

Fareham Borough Council is looking for bids from developers and investors across Europe to partner Welborne Garden Village. Applicants will need to demonstrate a track record in delivering high-quality, large-scale developments with an "emphasis on design excellence". Experience of providing superior public open spaces and community facilities is a key requirement.
The council is aiming to appoint a delivery partner by the end of 2017.
Buckland Development Ltd has lodged a planning application for Welborne Garden Village, featuring proposals for 6,000 homes, with Fareham Borough Council.



RIBA will open a new national architecture centre on the Liverpool Waterfront this summer. RIBA North, designed by Broadway Malyan, will host exhibitions, talks and tours to do with architecture. At its heart will be a space for visitors to learn about Liverpool's architectural past, present and future.

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ON TREND

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Let there be light

Energy-efficient and designed to be on display, these polygon pear and diamond designer LED light bulbs have been launched by Dowsing & Reynolds. Sleek and sophisticated, the dramatic geometric shapes emit a warm light that is easy on the eye, creating an ideal ambience for any interior. The bulbs are available in clear and frosted glass which houses a G9 LED light bulb, meaning that if the light blows, only the bulb must be replaced. Price: £29.99. (dowsingandreynolds.com)

SMART TECH

Sense and Sense Guard from Grohe are intelligent solutions for the smart house, created to address the issue of water damage in the home. The Grohe Sense smart water sensor monitors humidity, detects leaks and alerts homeowners instantly in case of a problem, while the Sense Guard is professionally installed in the main water pipe and can switch off the water supply in case of a burst pipe. Both use smart technology, allowing them to be monitored and controlled using the Ondus app. Multiple devices in the home can be used to alert the user.

Available from May, the Grohe Sense is priced at £51.99 and the Sense Guard costs £439. (grohe.co.uk)

BLACK MAGIC

Made from high-quality solid stainless steel with an eye-catching chromite black finish, the Karns Chromite black tap has a clean professional look. It stands 265mm tall and has a single-lever ceramic valve requiring a minimum of 0.5 bar pressure. The stylish streamlined design suits a variety of kitchen styles. Price: from £220. (caple.co.uk)

Bohemian bathing

Featuring an oak interior and saltwater-resistant aluminium exterior, the Hikki bath tub is heated by a rear covered wood-burner. Fuelled by wood for a sustainable heat source, the fire boasts a Bohemian design, mixing the Swedish tradition of using fire for comfort with modern practices. When at full temperature, bathers can relax alone or with friends and family under the stars. The Hikki can be placed in a garden, apartment city deck, or open field for a private festival feel. Price: £3,850. (hollowaysofludlow.com)

EXPRESS YOURSELF

Stylish monochrome and an asymmetrical motif are defining features of the Expression radiator, so it can match any interior space or style. This contemporary piece from Aestus is made from high-quality mild steel and makes a bold statement with its clever use of opposing colours and stencil design. Shown here with exclusive Roscoe angled valves, it measures 1,790mm high x 570mm wide x 66-96mm deep. Suitable for closed heating systems, it produces a high heat output of 3,279 BTUs. Price: £613. (aestus.co.uk)

SLIMLINE COOKING

Air Uno has introduced the Chopin Evo and Bach Evo, two innovative countertop extraction hoods integrated with induction hobs. By concealing these elements, the kitchen is streamlined for added cooking space. The Chopin features a combined panoramic induction hob while the Bach (pictured) boasts a choice of either two domino hoods, one flexi-hob and one induction hob, or two flexi-hobs. This offers more flexibility to heat pans of any size positioned within the area, so the cook does not have to manoeuvre pots competing for space. The subtle design draws odours and vapours downwards and both ranges feature touch control and a black glass finish. Prices start from £2,170 for the Bach and £2,476 for the Chopin. (airuno.co.uk)

SHADES OF SUMMER

Believing that colour should not be limited to the walls, the Painted Furniture Company offers a range of bright and subtle shades to add a pop of colour to your decor. Some collections come in specific shades while others can be painted in a wide range of contemporary and traditional tones, including white, natural stone, ivory, various shades of grey, truffle, bold blues and yellows. The Cotswold, Island Breeze and Oxford collections also offer the option for the furniture to match any colour from the Farrow & Ball range. Each piece is designed, assembled, finished and painted in the UK. Price on application. (paintedfurnitureco.co.uk)

Garden glow

Besselink & Jones has introduced lantern lighting to create an inviting ambience to the garden or an elegant interior. Shown here is the Horatio lantern, made from distressed brass and measuring 65cm deep x 29cm wide. Each piece is handmade and finished in a choice of brass, bronze, chrome or nickel. Price: £1,249. (besselink.com)

Interiors

KITCHEN DESIGN

ADDING A MODERN TOUCH

Designer Oliver Pearce's plan was to create a large open-plan kitchen to act as the centrepiece of his client's home, and luckily they had plenty of space to accommodate it.

WORDS: **LUCY WILLIAMS**

Situated in Upper Basildon, Berkshire, the detached new build belonged to a retired couple who wanted a scheme with an inviting ambience, bringing family together while simultaneously exuding a sense of luxury. The room needed to be pleasing to the eye whilst operating as a practical and efficient working space.

Oliver Pearce set about creating a functional layout that had a good flow between key zones in the kitchen. The sink, fridge and cooking areas were connected with a generous amount of work surface positioned to ensure plenty of room for preparation. The hob was situated at the end of the island, working well from a social point of view, so whoever is cooking is able to face inwards and interact with guests. A downdraught extractor, which neatly slots into the island beside the hob and raises up when required, ensures a clean design without

SHOPPING LIST

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Sink Blanco: blanco-germany.com
Taps Blanco: blanco-germany.com
Worktops 1909 Kitchens: 1909kitchens.co.uk

MEET THE DESIGNER

Oliver Pearce has worked in the property industry for 15 years. After graduating in visual communication in 2001, he has been involved in the design of many bespoke homes and large city projects in London and neighbouring areas. Using his knowledge of materials, he has created kitchens for award-winning property developers and homeowners across the UK, believing that thoughtful and timeless colour choices are key to making the rooms exceptional. Oliver, a busy father of five, uses his expertise to ensure that each kitchen is designed and manufactured to suit a modern lifestyle. (ashwellcontracts.co.uk)

interrupting the space. Visually, the couple did not have to compromise to create a kitchen full of style and character.

One of Oliver's ideas was to create a blend of work surface materials. He combined Gris Sylvester granite on the island and a contrasting Silestone Quartz along the cabinet runs. Waterfall edging was chosen to add a distinctive and elegant finishing touch. The lower level seating on the island is clad in oak timber to add some warmth to the scheme, and more practically, because the client wanted a cosier material to sit on.

Although classic in design, the kitchen was created with modern living in mind. The colours for the cabinetry, charcoal and stone maintain a cohesive palette throughout the kitchen that remains timeless.

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New build
CASE STUDY

ON THE LEVEL

Pat and Sarah Donlan have built a contemporary single-storey home for their retirement which is highly energy efficient and easy to maintain.

STORY: **DEBBIE JEFFERY**
PICTURES: **FOTOHAUS/GREENHEART SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION**

IN BRIEF

PROJECT
New build in Wiltshire

FINANCE
COST Plot already owned, value approx £110,000
SPENT £283,000
WORTH £400,000+

OWNERS' TOP TIP
"We're very clear about this: use a project manager who speaks the same language as the architect and builder. It's always useful to have someone who is a perfectionist, because they pick up on all the things that you miss."

EXTERIOR
Greenheart Sustainable Construction built this contemporary home for retirement – a single-storey, low-energy building with level access and plenty of light.

An unexpected accident in 2014 prompted Pat Donlan and his wife, Sarah, to consider the idea of building their own home. The couple are in their late 70s, and when Sarah fell and broke her arm it convinced them to think ahead and plan for the future.

"We'd lived in our previous barn conversion for about 12 years," explains Pat. "It was first built in 1791, and we added an oak conservatory extension in 2006. When Sarah broke her arm, though, it started us thinking that the house wouldn't be appropriate for us in old age because of the stairs."

The couple realised that their large rear garden could offer a solution, and began investigating whether planning permission would be granted to build a new house there – applying for pre-application advice in March 2015. Initially they considered importing a prefabricated kit house from abroad, but decided instead that they preferred a home designed to their own precise specifications.

"Ken Warner of Warner Associates agreed to take on the role of project manager for the build, and we simply couldn't have managed without him," says Sarah. "He usually specialises in fast-paced commercial projects, and is used to working with builders and architects. It was Ken who recommended our architect Richard Biddulph, who was really imaginative and worked with Ken and ourselves on the design. Richard was also our crucial link and liaison with the planning department."

LIVING AREA

A Morso wood-burner was installed as a focal point in the open-plan living area, where underfloor heating has been laid beneath engineered oak flooring.

ANNEXE

The annexe is used as a second sitting room/TV lounge, and features bespoke display shelving for Pat's collection of model cars.

The couple, who have nine grown-up children from previous relationships, knew that they wanted all of the two-bedroom accommodation on one level, with an open-plan living/dining/kitchen space. An existing blockwork garage in the garden would be converted to create an integral annexe, with its own kitchen and shower room, making a useful independent wing for guests or a live-in carer should the need arise.

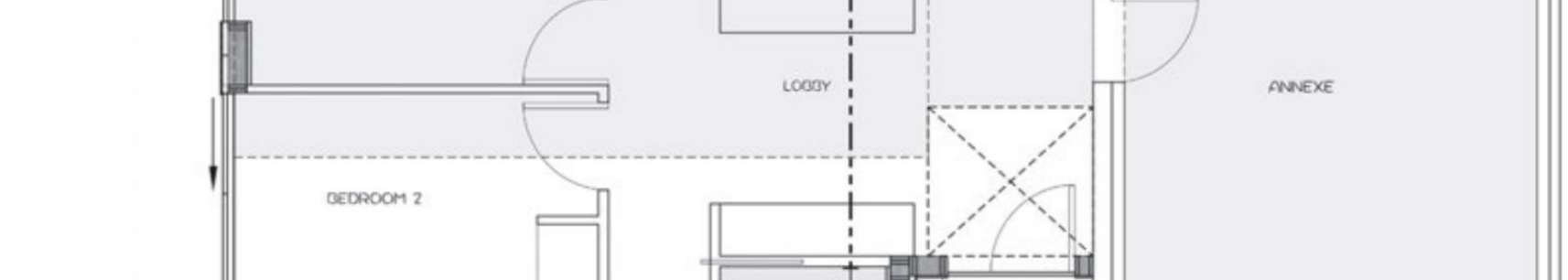
"The planners insisted that the annexe should share the same entrance as the main house, and there were some issues about the driveway, but other than that everything was agreed fairly easily and we only had one objection," says Pat, who spent time discussing the proposed design with neighbours. "They were happy that we wanted the outside of the house to be clad in zinc and larch – it isn't a traditional bungalow."

Level access to the drive and garden, a wet room, wide doors and a wheelchair-friendly design ensure that the house is future-proofed for whatever Sarah and Pat's needs are in older age.

"There are three normal side-opening doors, which denote privacy on the bedrooms and annexe, but the others are all sliding doors for ease of access," says Pat. "Nobody is served by going into an institution in their old age, where they're not known or loved, and by building this house we hope to be able to avoid that."

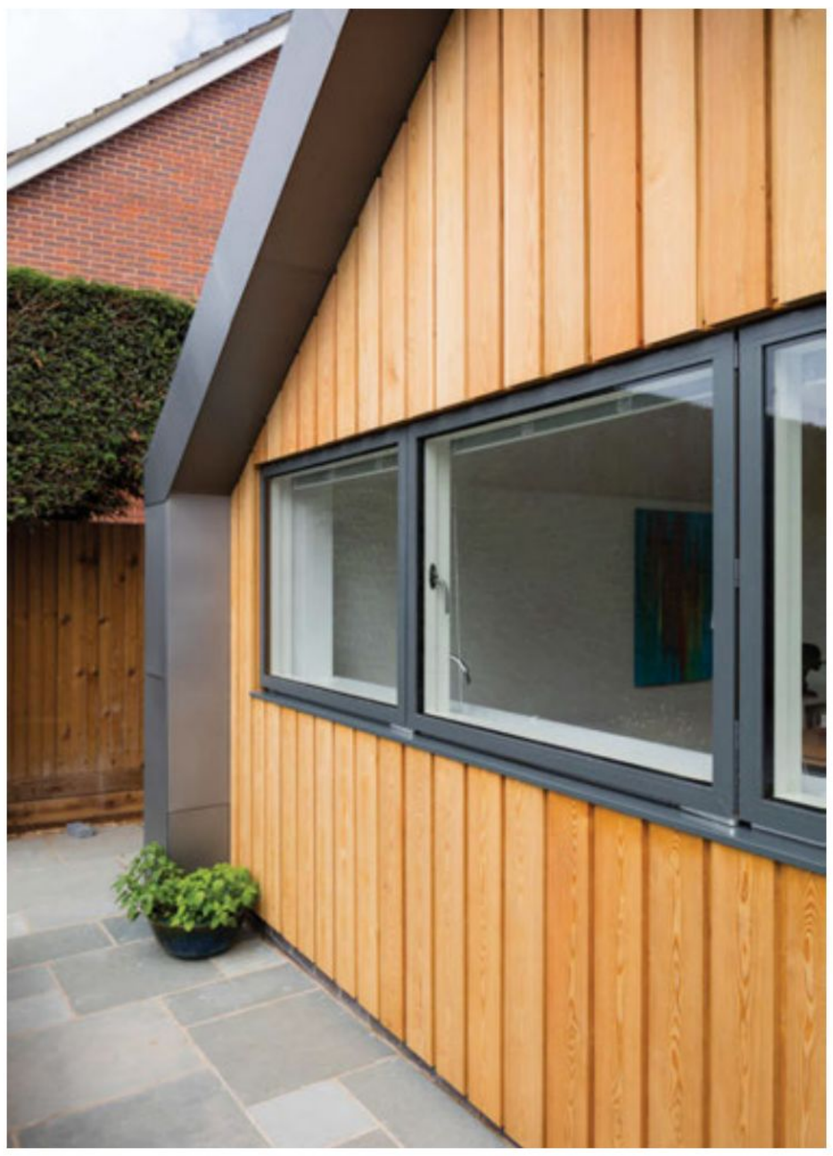
Local building company Greenheart Sustainable Construction had been recommended for the project, and proved to be true perfectionists. The company specialises

"Nobody is served by going into an institution in their old age... by building this house we hope to be able to avoid that."



FLOORPLAN

The two-bedroom single-storey house has an open-plan living/dining/kitchen, and a self-contained annexe which was created by converting an existing garage.



KITCHEN

Storage was an important aspect of the kitchen design, to enable this functional open-plan space to remain tidy. Roof lights ensure that all parts of the house receive natural daylight.

CONTACTS

PROJECT

Builder, detail and construction design based on the architect's planning/ concept drawings Greenheart Sustainable Construction: greenheartuk.com
Project manager Warner Associates: warnerassociates.co.uk
Architect (planning phase) Richard Biddulph Architects: biddulpharchitects.co.uk
Engineering Structural Solutions: structuralsolutions.co.uk
Energy consultant Piers Sadler Consulting: piers-sadler.co.uk
Air permeability testing Encraft Ltd: encraft.co.uk

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Plasterboard, plastering and floor screed AB Drylining Ltd: abdrylining.com
Building materials Travis Perkins: travisperkins.co.uk; Kellaway Building Supplies: kellaway.co.uk
Concrete and aggregate Hills: hills-group.co.uk
Warmcel insulation and airtightness tapes and membranes PYC: pycgroup.co.uk
Structural timber Woodstock Timber Company: woodstocktimber.co.uk
Aluminium pressings cills Finish Architectural: finisharchitectural.co.uk
Timber glulam beams Lamisell Ltd: 01409 220333
Soakaway Build Plumb Plastics Ltd: plasticdrainage.co.uk

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Sanitaryware Grohe: grohe.co.uk; Iflo: iflo.co.uk; Roper Rhodes: roperrhodes.co.uk; Mira: mirashowers.co.uk
Loft insulation Encon Insulation Ltd: encon.co.uk
Wood-burner slate hearth Berwyn Slate Quarry Ltd: berwynslate.com
Mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system Brink Renovent: brinkhrv.com
MVHR supply Passiv Haus Store: phstore.co.uk
MVHR commissioning Four Walls: fourwalls-uk.com
Underfloor heating supplier Underfloor Heating Systems Ltd: underfloorheatingsystems.co.uk
Oak veneer internal door blanks Latham Timber: lathams.co.uk
Wet room waterproofing Koster Aquatecnic: kpsteruk.com
Wood-burner Morso: morsoe.com
Door furniture, sliding door kits Ironmongery Direct: ironmongerydirect.com
Oak floor and trims BL Flooring Supplies: blflooring.co.uk
Woodburner and flue supply RW Knight & Son: knight-stoves.co.uk
Burford Stone kitchen units, laminated oak block worktop, Lamona sink, Garda tap Howdens Joinery Co: howdens.com
Linear Plaquetas wall tiles Tiles4all: tiles4all.co.uk
Ethel lampshades One Foot Taller: onefoottaller.com
Blinds Artistic Blinds: artisticblinds.co.uk
Custom-made model car display units Moduflex: moduflex.co.uk
Greendale Capital Twist carpet Cameron Lee Carpets: cameronlee.co.uk
Plumbing and boiler installation Steve Craddock: 07970 947151
Electrical work Tony Davey: 07970 219302
Built-in wardrobes Cubic Feet Design: 07947 362662
Heat recovery ducting Lindab Ltd: lindab.com
Door spraying Fine Finishing: 07818 202814
Floor and wall tiling Tile Trader Stroud Ltd: tiletraderstroud.co.uk
External paving Primethorpe Paving: primethorpepaving.co.uk
Plumbing products City Plumbing: cityplumbing.co.uk
Fence, turf etc Raycox Turf: raycoxturf.co.uk

in innovative, energy-efficient timber-frame buildings, offers a full design and build package, and is a member of the Association of Environment Conscious Building, the Green Register and the Timber Research and Development Association. It has constructed a number of ground-breaking, low-energy, sustainable homes in the south-west.

The Donlans' seven-month project was undertaken as a design and build project on a fixed price, which meant that the couple could continue to live in their home next door to the plot throughout the build.

"They arrived on time, and everybody immediately went about their business – there were no time-consuming daily site meetings, they just knew what to do," says Pat. "We were lucky to get them, and plied them with tea and cookies. They had a site office in our old house, and we were all on first name terms."

Work started on November 30, 2015 when five overgrown trees were taken down to increase natural light and reduce overshadowing on the plot. The council had insisted that a new soakaway should be installed, and this later addition added several thousand pounds to the couple's original budget. In order to try to recoup some of this money they did away with a hall cupboard which had previously been part of the design.

Extra deep reinforced foundations were required for the site, to overcome the presence of clay soil and nearby tree roots.

"It's warm, bright and easy to clean. We consider this house an investment for our future."

BATHROOM
A spacious tiled wet room has been designed to be accessible by wheelchair.

BEDROOM
Carpet was chosen for the bedroom flooring, with glazed doors overlooking the garden.

The main structure is timber frame, with elements of steelwork enabling large internal spaces. This was stick built by Greenheart on site, and meticulously detailed to create a shell which achieved an airtightness reading of two AC/h (two air changes per hour) when tested by an independent energy consultant.

"We didn't really consider brick, because Greenheart is so experienced at building with timber frame," says Pat, who was born in California, and grew up in houses from the 1940s with small, dark rooms.

Walls have been insulated with Warmcel recycled insulation, and high-specification Danish windows and doors were installed, which were ordered early on in the process to prevent any delays.

When it came to converting the brick and block two-car garage, reclaimed double Roman roof tiles were chosen for this part of the house. The existing concrete floor needed to be substantially raised, which meant that underfloor heating was not a practical option. "They would have had to dig up so much concrete that it just didn't make sense, so we have a radiator in the annexe," says Pat.

The exterior of the house has been clad in a combination of untreated Siberian larch and pre-patinated zinc, which was fitted by a specialist company. "It was a tricky installation, because in the living room zinc needed to be fitted around triple-glazed roof windows," says Pat. "One side of the house is also clad in zinc, and we were amazed when the company re-did an entire section to remove a tiny dent which was barely noticeable."

The unusual shape of the roof creates high ceilings internally, with discreet channels designed to accommodate and conceal pipework for the mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system. Underfloor heating has been laid in the majority of rooms, beneath oak, tiled and carpeted floor finishes.

The annexe space is currently used as a second sitting room, where Pat – who previously collected full-sized classic cars – is able to display his impressive collection of car models. Bespoke shelving was designed for this purpose, and low-level storage was also created in the main living/dining/kitchen space.

Sarah took charge of the gardening, decorating and interior design, and chose white walls and ceilings – against which the vibrant red furniture and vivid green bathroom tiles stand out. Kitchen appliances were positioned so that the couple can work while also looking out of the window.

"Ken, our project manager, advised us on everything – and suggested that we keep the same oak flooring all the way through the open-plan kitchen," says Sarah. "We had site visits with him every two weeks, and he was able to anticipate and plan ahead so that everything ran smoothly. He paid attention to every tiny detail."

The build was completed both on time and on budget, and Pat and Sarah were able to move into their new home in July 2016. "We built this house at just the right time – I wouldn't have liked to leave it much later," says Pat. "The running costs are much lower than our old home, it's warm, bright and easy to clean. We consider this house an investment for our future."

Final word

WHAT WAS THE HIGH POINT OF YOUR PROJECT?
We enjoyed meeting all the people involved in the build, and watching the house going up. We really had nothing to complain about.

...AND THE LOW POINT?
The only pain was our BT phone line, as it took about five months to change the internet from our old house to our new one right next door.

YOUR BEST BUY?
We love the oval light fittings, which are virtually invisible when they're turned off. We think furniture is important but

secondary, and bought a lot of ours in Ikea to keep costs down.

...AND THE BIGGEST EXTRAVAGANCE?
Having bespoke shelving made for the model cars was an extravagance, but it means that every inch of space is well used. We also had a painting commissioned for the house.

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ARCHITECT

Zac Monro

Zac Monro is an award-winning architect and TV presenter, who founded Zac Monro Architects (ZMA) in 2000. The practice is experienced in new-build housing, commercial projects and public works, as well as having gained a reputation for small-scale extensions and renovations. Zac, 46, presents Channel 4's Inside Out Homes, and co-presents Grand Designs: House of the Year, alongside Kevin McCloud. He has spent the last 20 years transforming uninspiring properties into inspirational homes, and is on a mission to breathe new life into the UK suburbs.

Describe your childhood home

Initially I lived in a big house in Kent, which I don't really remember, and then we moved to London following my parents' divorce. My first memory is of a tiny house in Wandsworth, but what really stuck in my mind were the houses of the French side of my family. My mother's parents always had interesting homes, which they built themselves in extraordinary places. My grandfather found an incredible plot just underneath a mountain in Provence where he built a really simple house, all on one level. They also had a tiny house on an island in Brittany, and a basic wooden hut in the French Alps which only had a wood-fired stove and was freezing cold. It didn't even have running water for the first 10 years, so being there felt like camping out. Those three houses had a very strong relationship to their surroundings, and were utterly key to my childhood because we spent every holiday together in France. To me there's a great link between families and houses, so I find it very hard to move.

What inspired you to become an architect?

Several members of my family would have loved to have been architects, and were very supportive when as a teenager I told them of my plan to train as one. I remember telling an uncle that I didn't want to work in an office, though, but would probably be based somewhere more interesting, like a tree-house. He always remembered that, and would remind me of it when I was

PICTURES: **GARETH GARDNER**

REINVENTED BARN CONVERSION
This 18th-century barn had been converted by previous owners, and was reinvented with a new glazed dining atrium and an oak and Corten steel studio, designed to brush up against the main house.

working in an office. Breaking away from tradition, bringing in light, and keeping things very plain are all traits which my relatives taught me from an early age, and which I've carried on in my work. When it comes to architecture the French tend to look forward rather than backwards, and wouldn't dream of building a new Victorian-style house. It gave me a different perspective to the outlook I would have had just growing up on the streets of Tooting. When we had careers advice at school I was told that studying to be an architect was too difficult, though, and I should work in a printing factory, which I did for a short while. It made me realise that it was exactly what I didn't want to do, and although studying architecture is a long haul I did my degree in Cambridge before working for a bit in Paris. I came back and took my diploma at the University of East London, where I learned hands-on skills such as metalwork and woodwork. Then I worked for two or three years before taking my final exam.

How has your practice evolved?
Anthony Hudson was the first person I worked for where I felt mentored. He has a very specific approach, but is also flexible and open-minded, so it was real joy to work with him. A lot of what I now know I first learned from Anthony, and although I still err on the side of making things as simple as possible I try to ensure that each characteristic of a building is strong and carefully detailed. Once everything has been made clear, and problems have been solved, I'll then look at accentuating different aspects of the design.

Gradually I began to take on small private projects, and then parted company from Anthony on friendly terms to set up on my own. I was quite young, and working alone really made me learn the ropes because there was nobody else to ask.

Working out of a bedroom in the family home wasn't ideal, but gradually I was able to employ others and we converted the

Victorian house to be half office and half living space. It was built to be recession-proof - to avoid paying rent on an office - but when our second child was born it became really awkward. I'd be holding a client meeting with a baby on my shoulder, which didn't make for a professional environment, so eventually we moved the practice into its own office in Brixton.

We ended up doing quite a lot of high-end residential projects, including a house for a couple in Brixton which featured on Grand Designs. Nothing really went wrong during the build, so the story showcased the practice quite extensively. We received a few commissions out of it, and at the same time the Brixton area began to boom.

Now we're being offered more public projects, and are part of the design team for 300 new homes in Brixton and 80 new flats in Tooting, as well as working on smaller development projects and one-off houses. It's exactly where we want to be, and getting more high-quality affordable housing into the mix is our plan for the future.

How did you get to become a TV presenter?

After the Brixton house appeared on Grand Designs a few production companies approached me with projects, including Channel 4 who were planning the series Inside Out Homes. It featured 12 quite small projects, chosen to demonstrate different aspects of the construction industry, and I was involved in the entire design and build process. I'd turn up on the day, without any priming, and had to produce a sketch design on the spot. It's how I tend to work anyway, but sometimes we were pushed for time and I'd be trying to come up with an idea over lunch. It's been really good for the practice because people now know who we are.

Sum up your style

We don't really do style – it's more how you approach things, and our approach is to listen. I am a Brutalist at heart, but contrary to what my mum thinks it's not all about harsh, ugly architecture. It's about honesty; so when a thing looks like a concrete wall it is a concrete wall, not just a cover up of render. What we specialise in is attention to detail.

Describe your own home

I'm lucky enough to be building my own home at the moment, and am paying for structural engineers and tree reports when all I really want to do is start digging. We live in a tiny ex-council house in Battersea, and behind us is a piece of land which we bought from the council. We're turning this old car park area into a long house which centres around a tree. There will be a large basement and a fairly open-plan ground floor, looking onto the garden through glass. It's going to be clad in either burnt timber or Corten steel, and I do want it to be properly Brutalist, where materials are on display – which isn't always compatible with modern construction techniques.

PICTURES: **GARETH GARDNER**

PARK HOUSE
A dark, damp 1950s house with tiny rooms was increased in size with interlocking extensions in wood, blue-grey brick, render and 13m wide triple-glazed doors.

What is your top tip for other selfbuilders?

Talk to people who know what they're doing, because detailed planning will save energy, money and time. You wouldn't fix your own broken leg from a YouTube video, so don't cut corners when it comes to employing professionals. Find an architect you trust, get on with, and who speaks your language.

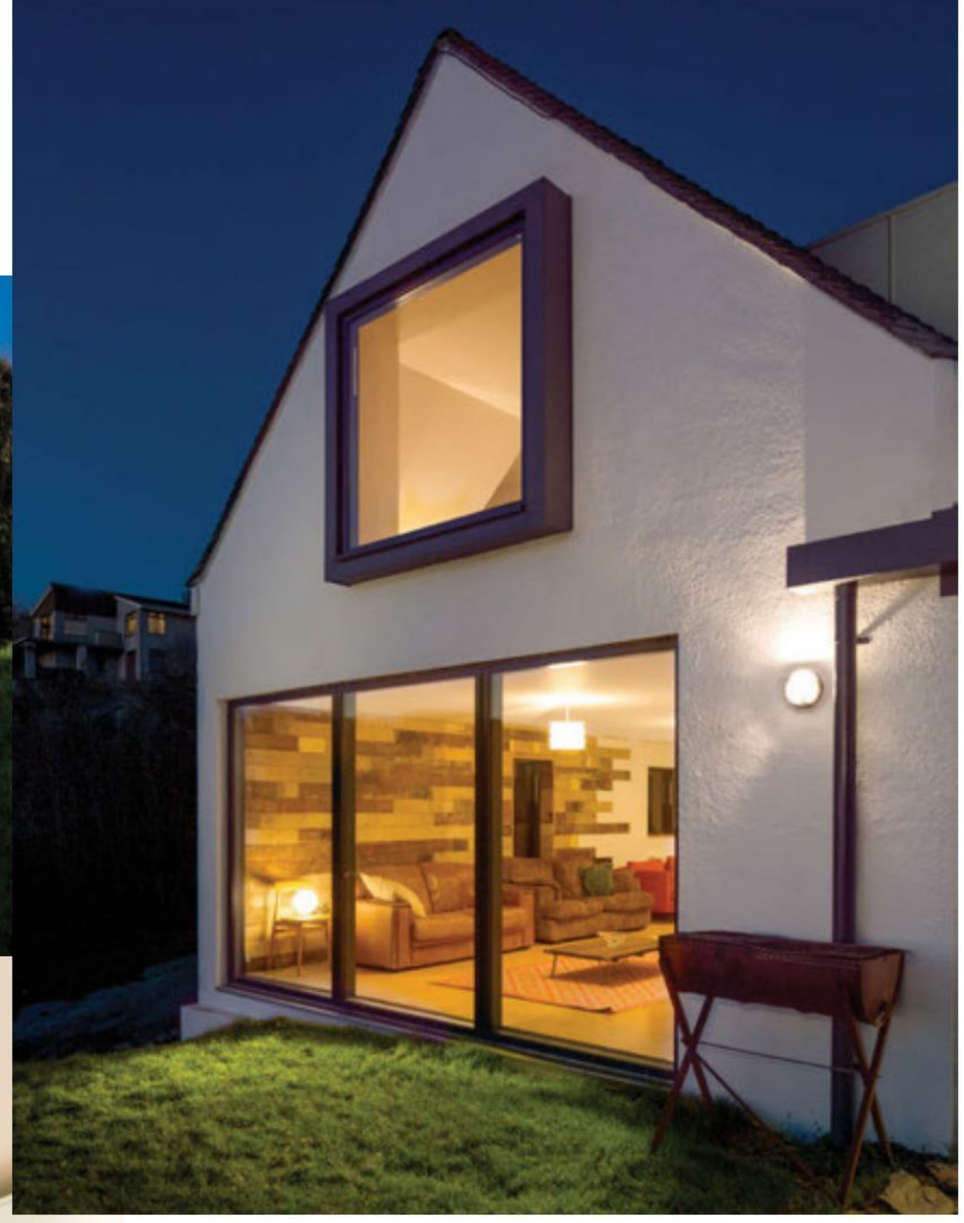
Finally, how do you like to spend your spare time?

I'm a father of three, an all-weather biker and am passionate about Brixton. I was one of the original directors of alternative local currency, the Brixton Pound, and am involved in creating a three-storey red-and-blue steel lightning bolt memorial to David Bowie in his birthplace. I was also air guitar world champion two years in a row, which is one of the things I'm most proud of.

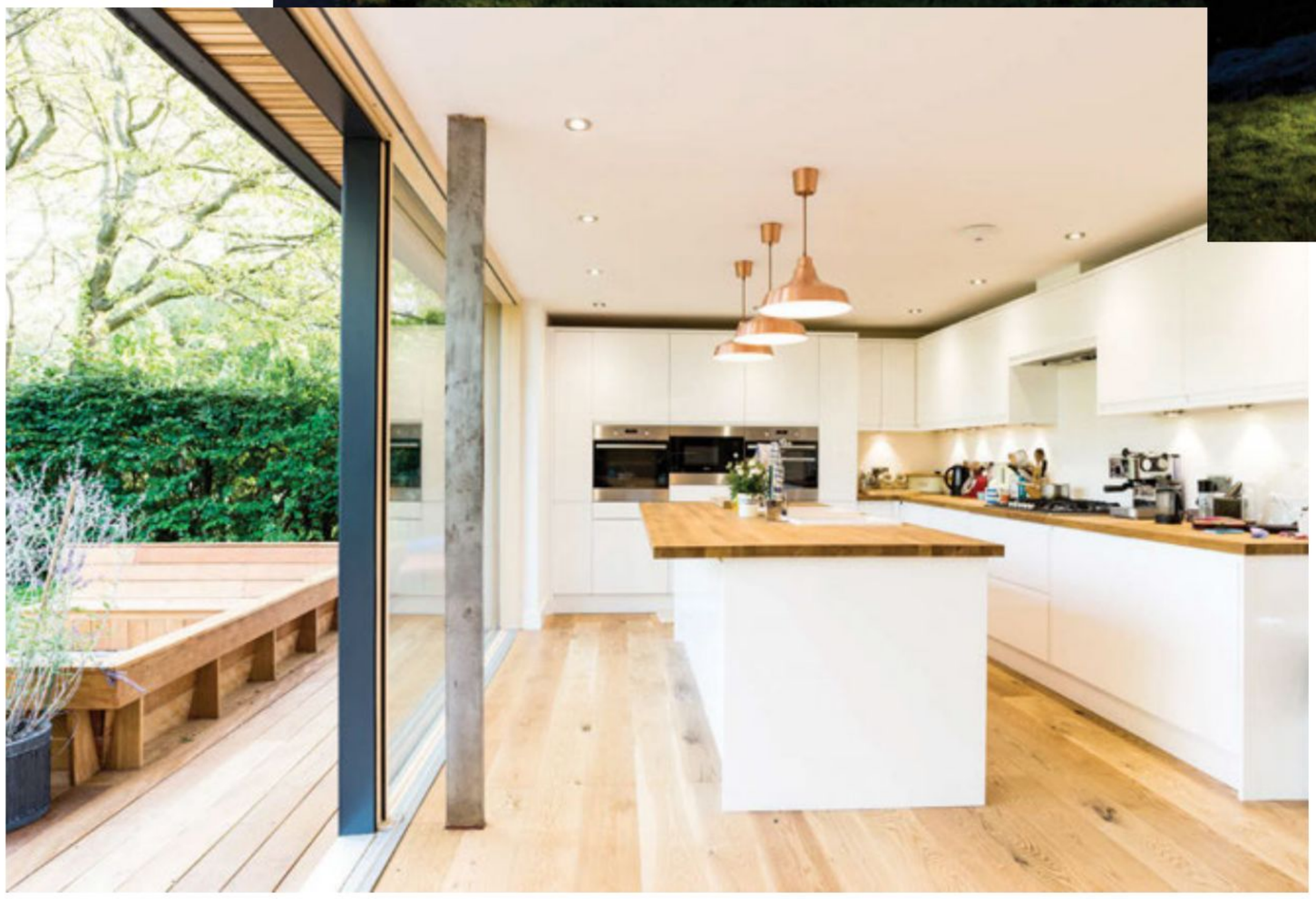
Zac Monro Architects: z-m-a.co.uk

PICTURES: **ANDY MATTHEWS**

EYE-CATCHING FEATURES
From larger developments to one-off houses, each of Zac Monro's projects boasts strong forms and eye-catching features.

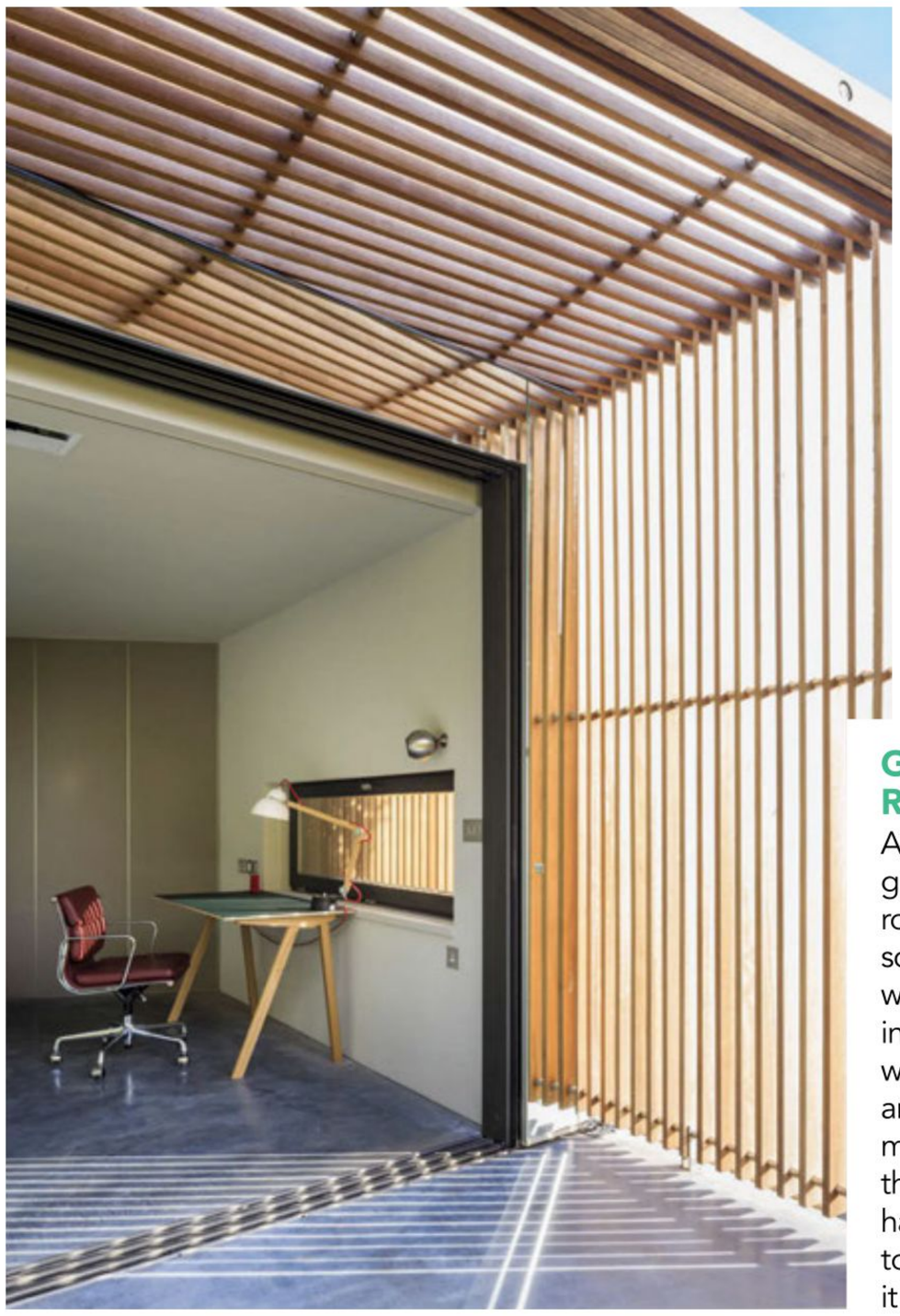


INSIDE OUT
Linking indoors and out is key to creating views, bringing in light and opening up spaces.



PICTURE: **GEORGE FIELDING**

SWISS SPA
A glazed spa complex for a Swiss house.



GARDEN ROOM
A flexible garden room for a screenwriter was built in timber, waterproofed and clad in mirror and then slats of hardwood to render it virtually transparent.

Extension & remodel

CASE STUDY

HOUSE OF FUN

Des Littlefield has extended and transformed a house in Hampshire, creating a fun family home.

STORY: **LOUISE PARKIN** PICTURES: **STEVE HUGHES**

Des Littlefield had already renovated and extended three properties when he and his wife Michelle bought their home in Warsash near Southampton, and it was this together with his 20-year career as owner of a flooring contract business that gave him the experience, knowledge and confidence to take on his most ambitious project.

He and Michelle, a government researcher, were looking for somewhere to settle, put down roots and start a family. The four-bedroom brick house on Hook Park Estate, with wisteria growing around the front door, had a charm of its own but that didn't stop Des from wanting to make his mark on it from the outset. "As soon as we moved in I started knocking it about inside and changing a few things, doing whatever I could myself, but it was about four years before the major work began," says Des.

The Littlefields originally discovered the house while driving around an area that Des had much admired since childhood. He spotted the property as it went to market and immediately called the estate agent.

"We couldn't afford the asking price, but the agent told me that the owners would be open to offers because a sale had just fallen through. They accepted our offer but then pulled out when their own purchase fell through. Against my wife's advice I went to see them, and requested they give us first refusal if they did decide to sell. Fortunately for us, they eventually did and our offer was accepted."

IN BRIEF

PROJECT

Renovation and extension in Warsash, Hampshire

FINANCE

COST £650,000
SPENT £400,000
WORTH £1.7m

EXTERIOR

The original 1960s brick house has been doubled in size and rendered, with comprehensive glazing to both front and rear elevations.

KITCHEN
Bulthaup kitchen units have been topped with a homemade smooth concrete worktop, with light-coloured ceramic tiles on the floor and Gaggenau and Miele appliances.

Des and Michelle moved in 2006 and started a family almost immediately. Oscar (nine) was born soon after, followed by Cooper (now seven) two years later.

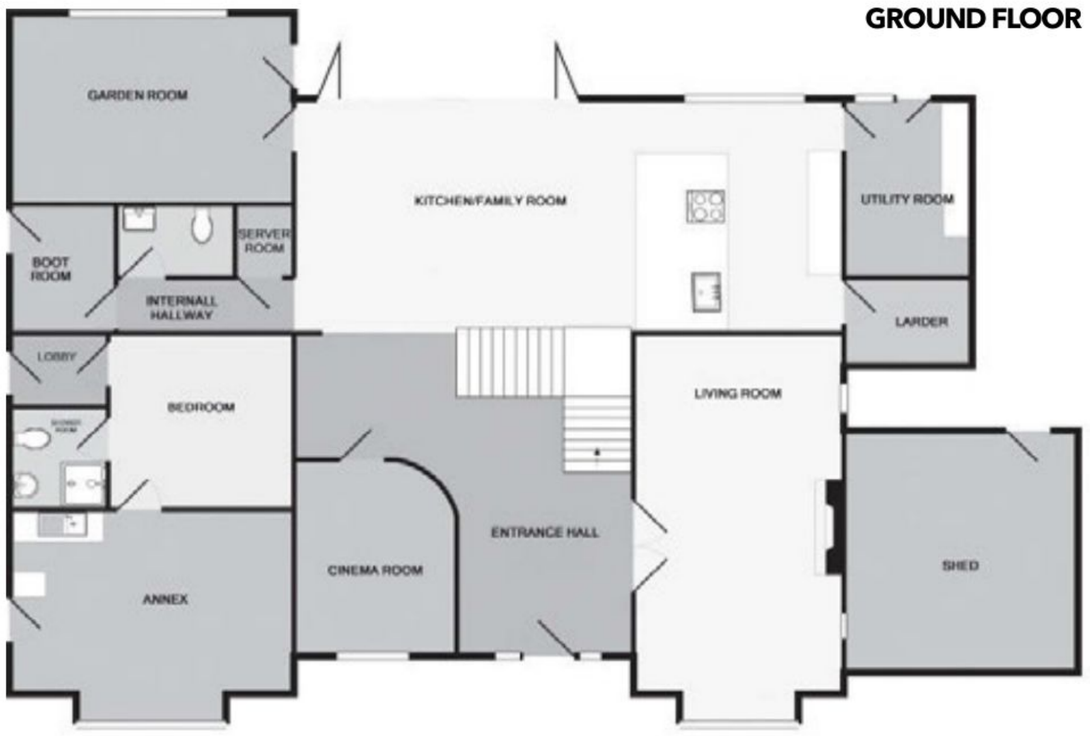
Des wanted to create a house in which they could stay forever, with enough space for the boys to play and lots of room for entertaining. He designed the house himself and passed it on to an architect to draw up for planning. "Fareham Council passed the plans straight away. The area needed modernisation and so I think they were pleased with what I designed," says Des.

The new elements to the house mean the original building is unrecognisable, almost double in size and with the addition of a host of new living accommodation, an additional bedroom, a playroom including an astroturf indoor football pitch, a home cinema, a separate one-bedroom annexe and a separate garage. "We wanted a house that would suit a young family," says Des. "We didn't want to compromise on anything."

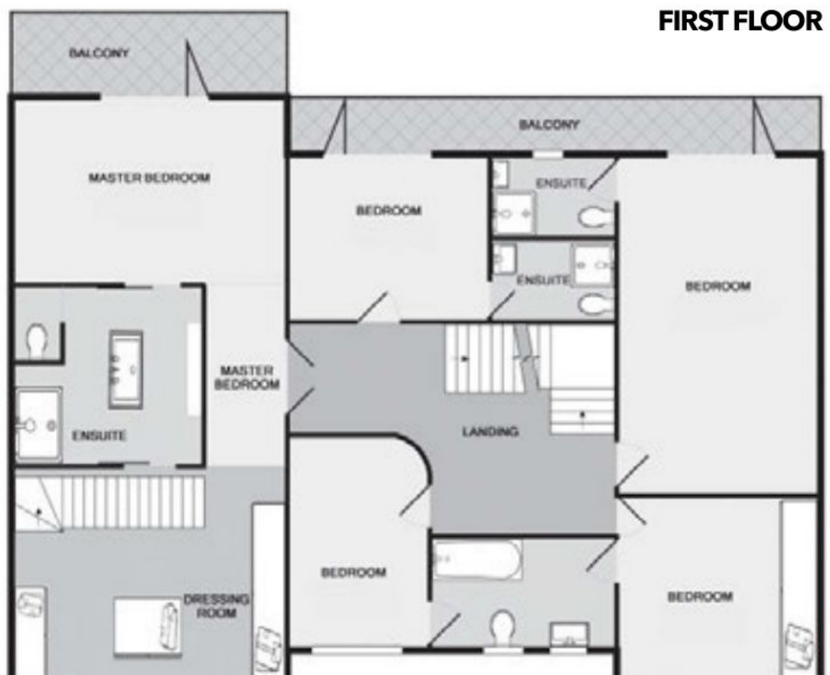
The flow and structure of the house was important so Des chose large bifold doors that open onto the garden with a continuous floor level to achieve an inside/outside feel. The project began in January 2011 and was completed in January 2017, with Des doing as much of the work himself, including the building and groundwork, and employing tradesmen to complete the more specialised jobs.

"It was a slow process because I hired in the trades one at a time. We weren't in a rush and by doing it like that I knew no job was going to hold up the next one," Des explains. "I'm used to employing

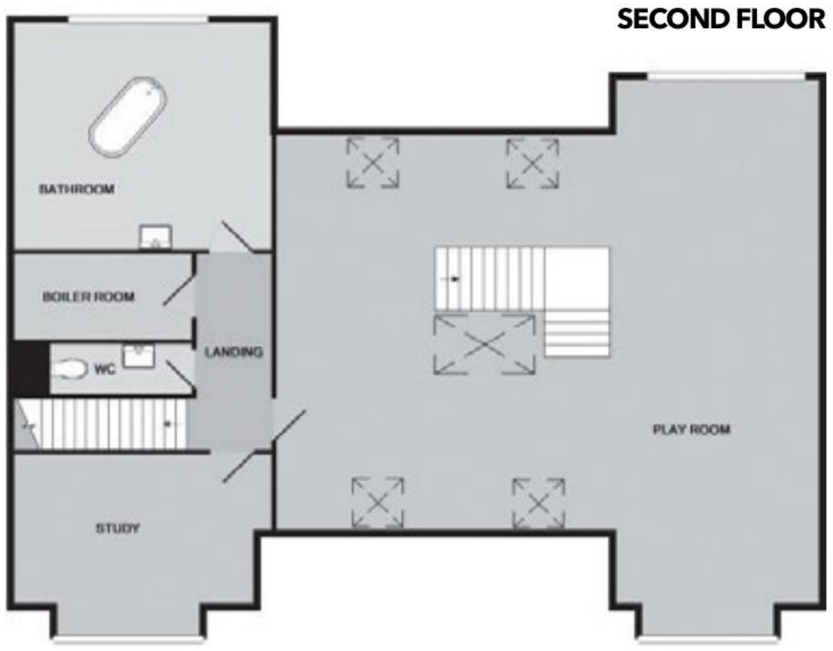
GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



FLOORPLAN

The house is arranged over three storeys, with living accommodation including kitchen/family room, formal lounge and cinema on the ground floor, plus utility and boot room, and a separate one-bedroom annexe. The middle floor comprises five bedrooms and four en suite bathrooms, while the top floor is reserved for fun, consisting of a playroom for the boys including an indoor football pitch, a small study and a luxury bathroom with views over the Solent.

staff and running projects, having done that a lot in my flooring business, so I was able to hire the right people at the right time."

There was also a short hiatus in the project when Des's flooring company went bust. Work slowed to a trickle as finances were squeezed, but resumed again when he set up another flooring firm. By building an extension, the family could continue to live in the house undisturbed. New structural blockwork elements were added before the existing walls and roof were removed, with render unifying the old and new sections.

The old roof was eventually dismantled from the inside of the attic piece by piece, which proved a very slow process but kept disruption to a minimum. Michelle moved out with the boys for two weeks while the house had no windows or doors, but for the rest of the time the family simply shifted around the house, setting up temporary living areas. They found this stressful to begin with but it soon became the norm. "The phrase 'you can't make an omelette without breaking an egg' was used a lot," laughs Des, who at one point set up a play area for the boys in the hallway. "Cooper was 18 months when we started work properly, and Oscar was only three so living in a building site was all they knew until earlier this year!"

LOUNGE

The formal lounge is used only occasionally, and has a cassette fire in a striking brick fireplace.

Des designed and made the staircase, and installed a new kitchen while the family lived in the existing section of the house, later moving into the newly completed extension while Des started remodelling the older part.

The new design provides double-height windows to each side of the front façade, with a render finish on all sides. Windows are dark grey aluminium and the roof is slate, both of which provide a striking contrast against the white through-coloured render.

The impressive front door was made by Urban Front using iroko, a tropical hardwood, and took five men to lift and install. Des designed the iroko electric gate as well as the internal doors to match the front door and provide continuity throughout.

A third storey was added that includes a further luxury bathroom complete with free-standing bath, speakers and stunning views over the Solent just 300 metres away. "I love that room, I spend lots of time in there and often fall asleep in the bath. It's very peaceful," says Des. The top floor also accommodates the spacious playroom, a study, boiler room and WC.

The middle floor has five bedrooms including the master suite with dressing room accessed through the en suite bathroom via pocket doors that slide back into a wall recess, while bifold

CONTACTS

PROJECT

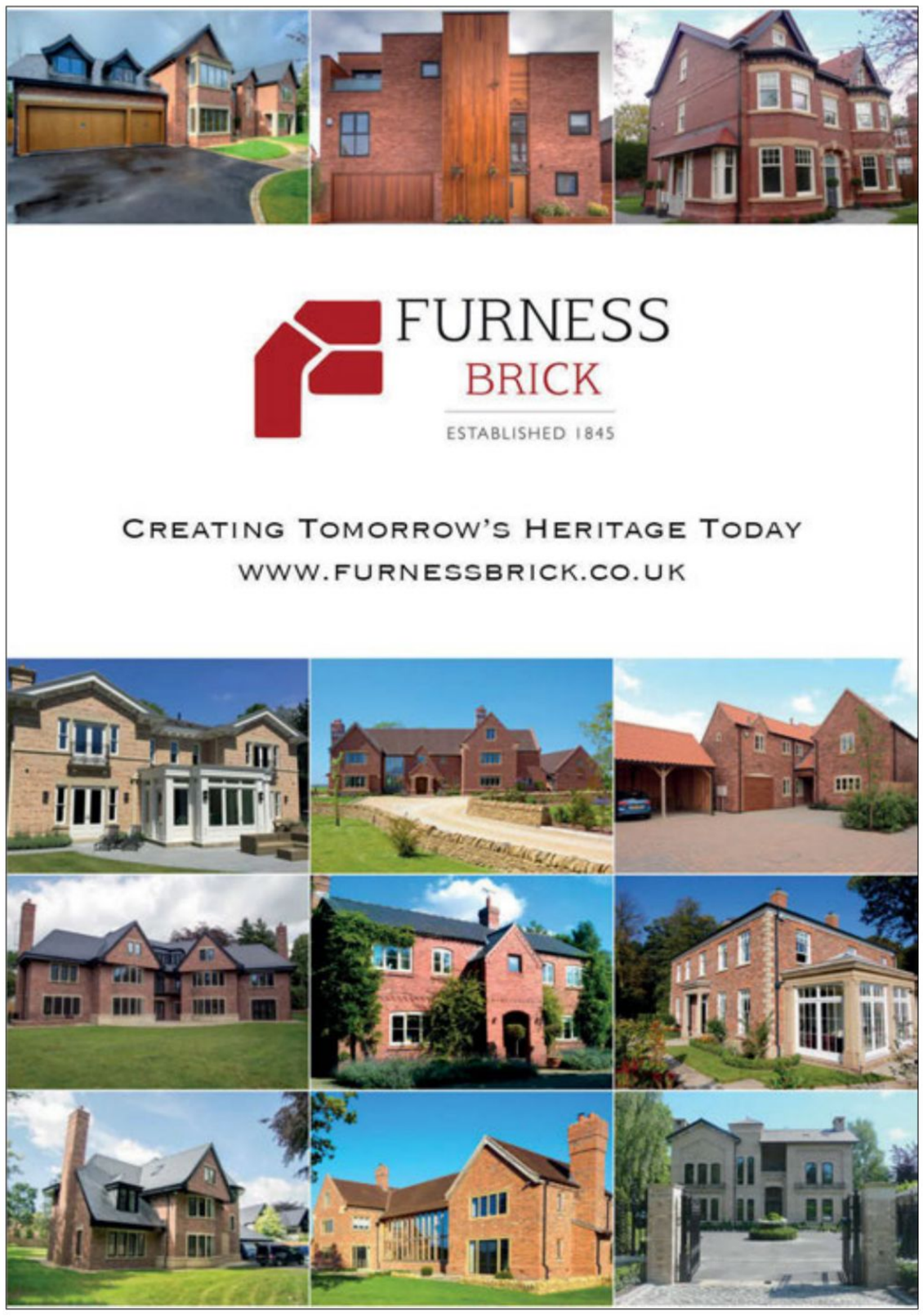
Design and build Des Littlefield
Architect Pario Design Ltd, Neil Stantiall: 01489 560885
Plumber Plumbtech, Tony Davies: 07989 965147
Electrician AC Powertech, Richard Max: 02380 695300

STRUCTURE

Windows Smart Aluminium: smartsystems.co.uk
Render K-Rend: k-rend.co.uk
Cupa roof slates Burton Roofing: burtonroofing.co.uk
Insulation, plasterboarding and building Dyson Contracting, Andy Dyson: 07860 524525

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Kitchen Bulthaup: bulthaup.com/en
Appliances Gaggenhau: gaggenau.com; Miele: miele.co.uk
Bathrooms CP Hart: cphart.co.uk
Corian sink SB-I Southampton: 07828 055469
Flooring Solus Ceramics: solusceramics.com
Internal doors Advanced Timber Systems: 01489 799508
External doors Urban Front: urbanfront.co.uk
External paving Mandarin Stone
Gate Advanced Timber Systems: 01489 799508
Gate Automation Advanced Gate Solutions: 02392 343450



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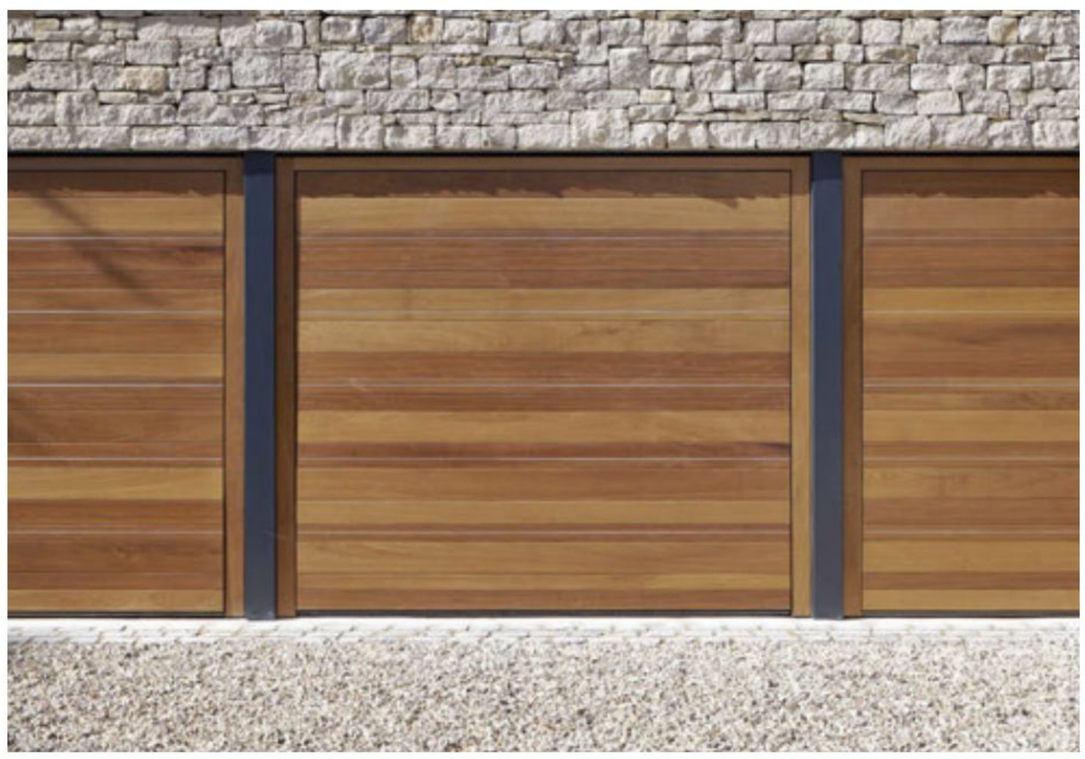
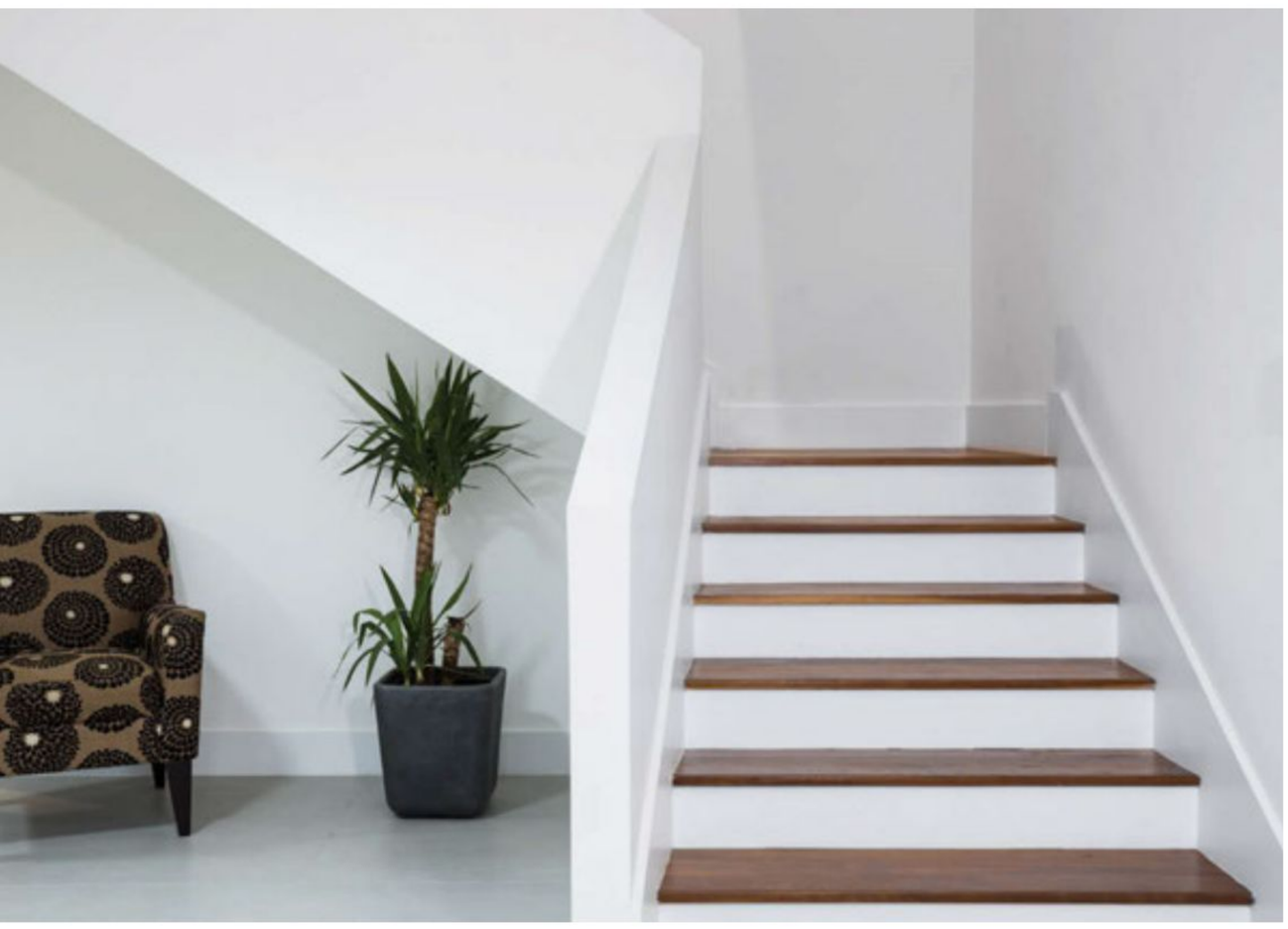


STAIRS
Des designed and installed the main staircase himself, with walnut on the treads and white risers.

ENTRANCE
Walnut is used on the floor in the hallway, and the front door is iroko.



"We wanted a house that would suit a young family. We didn't want to compromise on anything."

doors lead onto a private balcony. The boys' bedrooms each have their own wet room and bifold doors onto a shared balcony, while the two guest bedrooms share a Jack and Jill bathroom.

A central staircase connects the main hallways on the first and second floors and the playroom on the top floor, while separate flights of stairs lead up to the master suite, and the study on the third floor.

Downstairs the kitchen/diner/family room is the most used part of the house. The high-end kitchen from German manufacturer Bulthaup has satin finish white units and a large larder that cuts down on the need for kitchen units while allowing easy access to the food store. Des made the concrete worktop himself but when he didn't achieve the finish he wanted he applied a levelling compound used in his flooring business, which gave a smoother finish without having to polish it. He found the result so pleasing that he also made a bathroom basin using the same process, cast in timber, poured and then finished with the fine powder compound.

Des designed the sink in their en suite and had it coated with Corian, with a linear drain of just 4mm across the entire width of the basin. "I like to find solutions and make things a little different," he says.

There's also a formal lounge with a wood-burning stove, and a home cinema which Des partially painted black and applied carpet to the walls. "Michelle wasn't happy about the idea of painting it so dark, but I wanted to be able to achieve the effect of a cinema. The carpets on the walls absorb the sound, and I installed further sound insulation into the ceiling. It creates a really good effect and we spend lots of time in there watching TV. It's really cosy," says Des. Other useful spaces include a utility/drying room, boot room, and server room which contains all the boxes for the Sonos entertainment system, of which there is one per room.

Final word

WHAT WAS THE HIGH POINT OF YOUR PROJECT?
Sitting in the second-floor bathroom when it was finished with a beer in my hand.

AND THE LOW POINT?
Many but I just got on with it. I recall on one occasion I got home from work and the wall to our bedroom had been removed to make way for the full-height window. There was just a blue tarpaulin in its place. We just got on with it at the time but on reflection it was stressful.

WHAT WAS YOUR GREATEST EXTRAVAGANCE?
The Urban Front door was £4,000 and it took five people to lift it into place.

AND YOUR BEST BUY?
The one thing that saved a lot of money was the larder as we didn't need to buy several expensive kitchen units. It's also so much better than cupboards as you can see where everything is.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT YOUR HOUSE?
The look and feel.

ANYTHING YOU WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY?
No, nothing – the house wouldn't be what it is if I had done anything differently.

UPSTAIRS
A luxury bathroom has a walnut floor and full-height window offering stunning views of the Solent.

The majority of the ground floor has ceramic tiles, while Des fitted carpet to the bedrooms, lounge and cinema room.

An integral shed is accessed from outside, and there's also a separate double garage to the front of the house. Generously proportioned gardens include a breeze house garden shelter, a barbecue, fire pit, climbing frame and a pirate ship which Des built using the old roof timbers.

It may have been designed with forever in mind but Des and Michelle have decided to embark on a new adventure. The house is now for sale and, once sold, the family is travelling to New Zealand, taking their camper van for a year of exploration. "Things happen sometimes that make you realise there is more to life than living in a big house. We want to have some new experiences and make some great memories," says Des. He has left the flooring business behind for good and, on their return from New Zealand, he plans to go into the property development business, to put to use everything he has learnt.

PLAYROOM & CINEMA
Indoor football and tennis are regularly played on the top floor, while the ground floor provides a state-of-the-art home cinema.

Taking out the bins wearing
your wife's dressing gown.
A not-so-clever choice.

Installing an underground gas
tank to heat your off-grid home.
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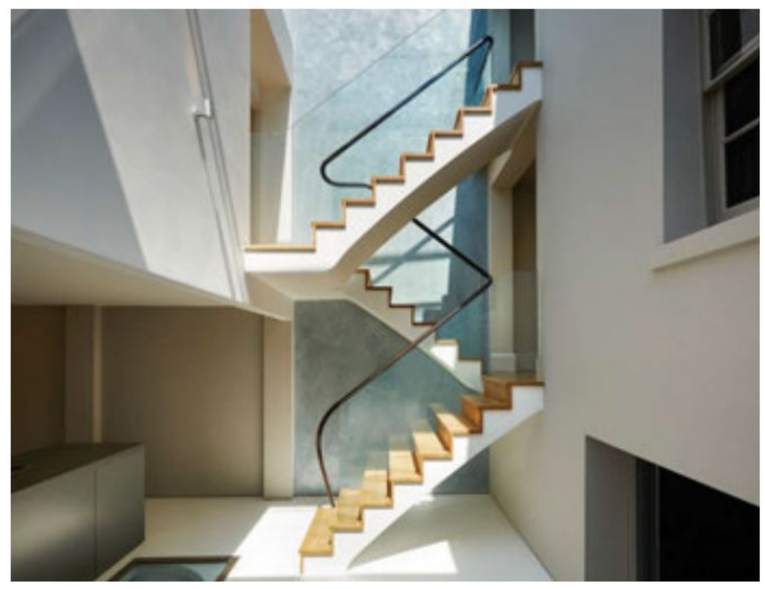
CALOR

Subject to site survey.

8 TOP TIPS

Commissioning a STAIRCASE



Richard McLane explains why a good staircase is just as important to your new home as a kitchen or bathroom.

Unless you are a serial selfbuilder, building your own home can be one of the most challenging, stressful, time-consuming, but ultimately rewarding, projects you undertake in your entire life. At the very beginning you have a blank canvas and hundreds of ideas all vying for a place in your new design; arranging these ideas to optimise your space and create a home that works for your family is the tricky part. Regardless of how much it costs, how it looks and what type of property it is for, there are some important points to consider when choosing your new staircase.

1: Budget

If you have your heart set on a bespoke staircase, it's always worth allocating a budget for the staircase element rather than lumping it in with the main project costs, as your budget will define what type of staircase you can have. Prices for a complete staircase and balustrade vary from as little as around £400 for a DIY store MDF option to a fully bespoke design from specialist staircase manufacturers starting around £22,000.

2: Space

Consider the space as a whole, not just the hallway or immediate vicinity of the staircase. If you have an open-plan configuration, remember the staircase is on view from other areas of the home. Think about direction of traffic and how you approach the staircase. Would a curved staircase or directional bottom treads be an option?

3: Time

Don't underestimate the amount of time it takes to commission a bespoke staircase. To avoid backing into a compromise it's worth getting your staircase specialist involved as early as possible to get some layout ideas and outline costs. Companies are usually able to give you a guide price, based on drawings and provide layout schematic, sketched visuals, samples and a budget cost based on a survey and materials of your choice.

4: Treads

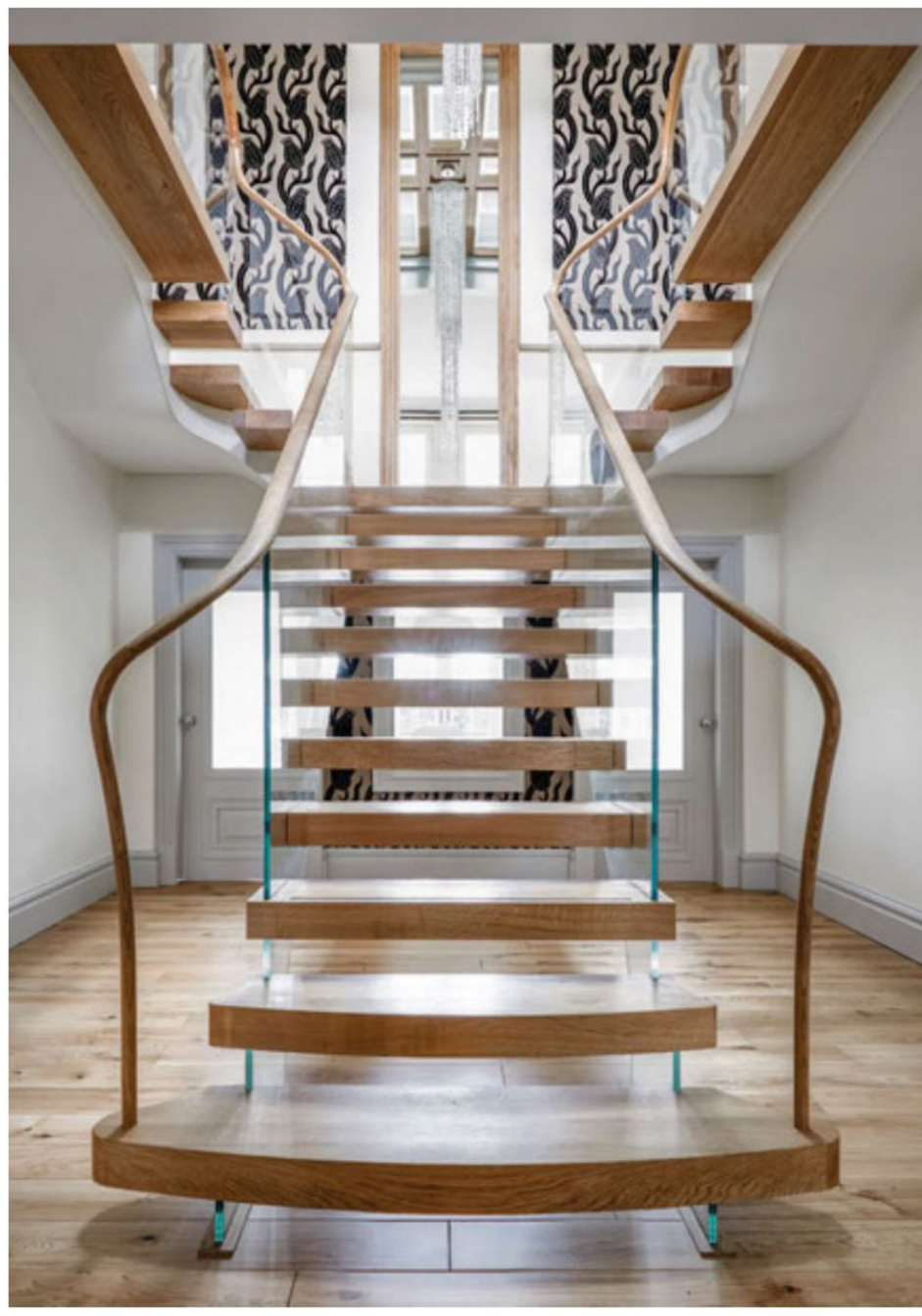
Open treads are a great way to let light into the area, and glass, timber, stone, marble or even Corian are all materials you could consider. Most bespoke staircase manufacturers will try to match existing timber in the property if this is important to you. Without question brash and bling has made way for tactile and timeless classic. Innovation in floor finishes has also revolutionised timber staircase components with a wide choice of washed, raised grain and pigment finishes for timber treads and handrails.

5: Balustrade

Roughly speaking, you have the choice between glass, timber, steel or plaster. Position, family requirements and budget are all important factors in making the right decision. It's important to consider any landing or galleries when obtaining quotations not just the staircase itself. Glass is not perhaps the best option if you have a young family – unless you relish the chore of regular cleaning to remove tiny hand prints! Timber spindles will give you a more traditional look and are a cost-effective option, whilst forged or machined steel balustrades can be as simple or as ornate as you like.

6: Comparisons

Comparing prices for any bespoke item on paper is always open to interpretation due to the variable nature of the item and its method of manufacture. It is worth doing your homework to understand quoted specifications so you can make an informed decision.

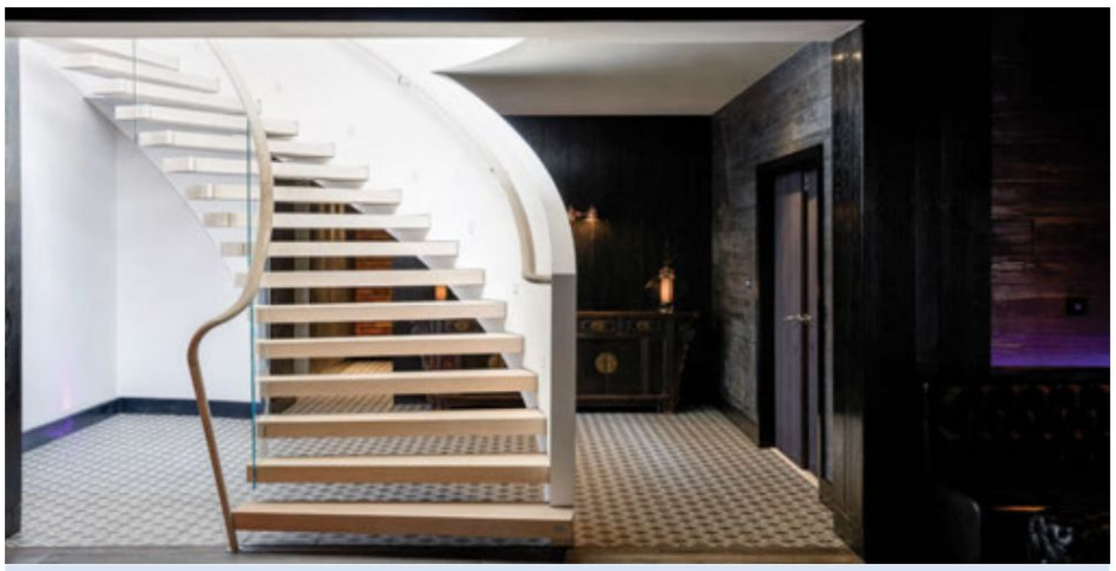


The choice of staircase can dramatically affect the look and feel of an interior, as well as its functionality. Three examples of bespoke stairs from Bisca.

GLASS: Quotations will be for standard glass with visible green tint and not low iron glass used in many bespoke designs for superior optical quality and reduced tint.
GLASS FIXINGS: Visible fixings, clips and clamps are used by 24-hour staircase suppliers and those offering modular customised options for reasons of speed or cost. A carefully designed bespoke glass balustrade does not need visible fixings as it can be designed without the need for them.
HANDRAIL: Firstly, is it included? It is not uncommon for me to be contacted towards the end of a build to retrofit a balustrade, because the company which was awarded the work based on price cannot fulfill the balustrade aspect or omitted it from their quote. Secondly, angular sections of stained softwood will always be much cheaper than a continuous run of hardwood but, of course, look and feel vastly different.
TREADS: Type and provenance of timber and finishes all vary greatly in price; make sure your solid timber has not been substituted for 'butcher's block' or stained softwood composition.
STEEL UPRIGHTS: Understand the material, size and shape of the uprights, the process of manufacture and how they will be finished. Uprights from overseas are cheaper than their design-led, blacksmith-forged counterpart, but may be of dubious quality and visually the two differ greatly. The cheapest, easiest and arguably the ugliest way of fixing uprights is to include a ribbon rail top and bottom rather than fixing directly into the handrail and treads. This method is favoured by fabricators but can come as a shock if it was not part of your original balustrade design.

7: Suppliers

There are major differences between a bespoke staircase design, a custom/modular stair and fabricator staircase. Of the three, a fabricator will undoubtedly be the cheapest but remember that fabricators are not designers. The staircases and balustrades can have poor detailing, ugly fixings and little or no consideration to space, layout, interfaces or quality. Custom or modular staircases allow clients to choose from a limited range of designs and components which are then modified and assembled from stock to fit the space. All bespoke staircase manufacturers are not equal. Some 'bespoke' companies limit their designs around a range of common parts. A truly bespoke staircase designer will design exactly what you want. To ensure your design is not compromised, look for a staircase manufacturer who buys material for a single project versus one that uses stock on which to base designs.
The author is MD of staircase specialists Bisca: bisca.co.uk.



8: Make the most of your new stairs

by Scott Storey, MD of bespoke stair specialists James Grace

SPACE SAVING

If planned well, a staircase can incorporate storage that looks stylish as well as creating a functional space for shelving, drawers, coat and shoe racks, meaning traditionally wasted space can become an integral part of the home.

COLOUR

Colour within the staircase design can significantly impact the overall feel of the room. Some manufacturers provide a bespoke painted finish range to suit traditional and contemporary styles. The monochromatic matching black and white theme continues to be a popular option.

MAKING AN IMPACT

Different materials can be used on your stairs to tie in with the overall style and ambience of the interior. Glass fused with natural woods is ideal for a modern interior. Alternatively handcrafted and solid wood add a touch of class.

ADDING VALUE

The staircase is often the first thing that catches your eye as you walk through the front door. Investing in a good staircase can significantly improve those first impressions and in turn add value to a home.

LIGHTING

Good lighting is fundamental, drawing attention to the staircase while providing warmth to a hallway or living space. LED lights can be fitted underneath treads or along the wall string to create a range of effects. This is ideal for brightening up dark hallways and giving the illusion of space.

Reader's home
CASE STUDY

NEW HOME NEW LIFESTYLE

Realising his dream of building his own home has led to a new life in north Devon for Paul Marlow and his wife, Carol.

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY: **PAUL MARLOW**

Our self-build adventure began on a return trip from a holiday in Cornwall. On our way back to Hampshire we decided to visit the Self Build & Design show in Exeter. There, we chatted to a builder and told him how we would love to build in Cornwall but it was too pricey so we were exploring opportunities in Norfolk. "Devon's the place for a self build," he told us. When we got home we looked online on Rightmove and sure enough saw a plot we could afford in Goodleigh, just outside of Barnstaple in north Devon.

A couple of weeks later we went to another show, this time in London. We were able to show the estate agent's details to one expert who advised us to go for it. We also showed the particulars to architect Charlie Luxton who advised us to include plenty of solar shading in the design as the plot was south-facing. With this advice ringing in our ears we decided to get ourselves down to north Devon.

The plot, located behind a pub, was a good size – 29m x 25m – with amazing views up the valley and also into the village. The access was just eight feet wide which would present a challenge for deliveries and bringing in services between the pub and neighbouring properties. Even so, we made an offer which was duly accepted.

With our son George just five at the time, living on site was not an option so our next visit was to sort out a rental property. At that stage we weren't sure if we would have to build the approved house or if we could make a new application with another design more suited to our needs and the location.

I met with the planning department to see if we could make better use of the orientation of the house on the plot, and to maximise the outstanding views.

The planners were obliging and open to the idea of a new design along with the addition of a garage. I went back to our draughtsman and worked with him on a new design. Under the planning conditions we were required to install wooden windows and doors as the house was in a Conservation Area.

"The planners were open to the idea of a new design, along with the addition of a garage."

IN BRIEF

PROJECT

New block-and-render home near Barnstaple in north Devon

CONTACTS

Builder Inspired Building Contractors: paul@inspiredbuilding.co.uk
Designer John Stromski: 01271 343489
Groundworks: Simpsons Excavating: 01271 870386
Electrics GMEC Electrical: 01271 342299
Air source heat pump RES Devon: 01271 346632
Builders' merchants Jewsons Barnstaple and RGB Barnstaple
Windows and doors Munster Joinery
Kitchen DIY Kitchens
Tadelakt training and plaster Mike Wye: 01409 281644
Luxury vinyl flooring Wickes

At a stroke, this added £3,000 to our costs, but after some initial reservations, we embraced the whole 'no plastic' thing and specified timber fascia and soffits as well.

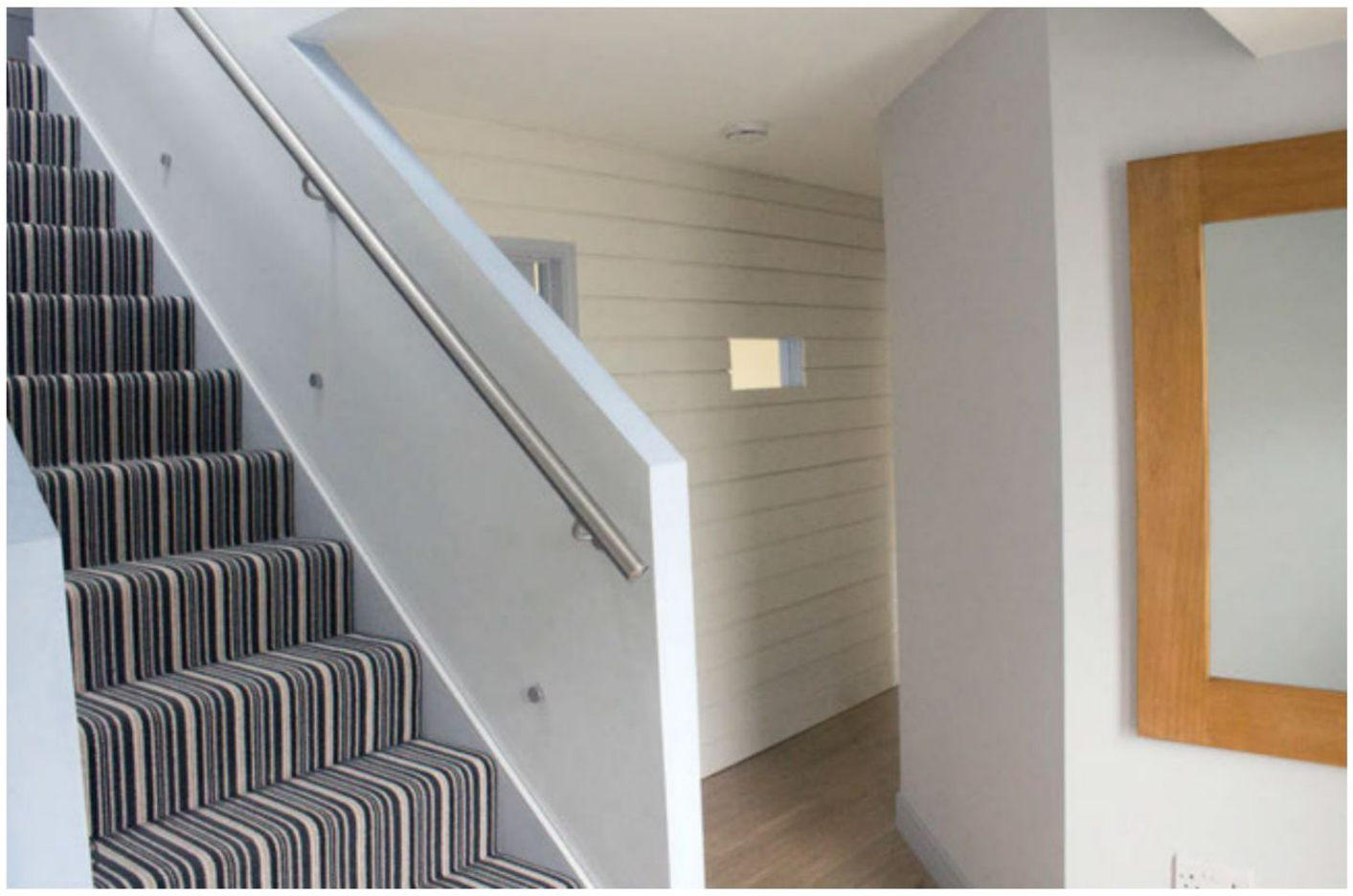
Before starting the build, I researched some of the methods of construction. As a bricklayer, blockwork was my personal preference but we kept our options open and invited a timber frame company to quote to supply a shell-ready frame. Their price turned out to be as much as the foundations, walls and slated roof combined if I took the blockwork and render option.

Everyone wants a Passive House when they start but you soon realise this comes at a price. We were on a tight budget so value for money was key. We were faced with a seemingly endless list of choices with everyone telling us their system was best while the others were rubbish.

We opted for Celcon extra long blocks inside and out with 100mm cavity, fully filled with 100mm of Dritherm 32 insulation. The timber flooring has 165mm Celotex between the joists and a 35mm screed with the underfloor heating pipes and 18mm chipboard on top. Actis insulation has been installed in the roof, with felt on top and Hybris between the rafters. We were one of the first in north Devon to use this combination and found it an excellent time saver.

KITCHEN
Paul built the polished concrete kitchen worktops, which are topped with glass.

BATHROOM
Moroccan plaster has been applied to the bathroom walls, while the handmade top of the bathroom cabinet uses timber recycled from the pallets in which the slates were delivered.



INTERIOR
The split slate TV unit in the lounge was designed and built by Paul.

We were lucky enough to have a brilliant digger driver. The footings were dug within a couple of days so that 12 cubic metres of concrete could be delivered by dumper. We ended up buying a clapped-out old forklift which made life easier, after some TLC applied by a mechanic who lived up the road.

Due to the sloping site, around 400 trench blocks were laid to reach the required height. The blockwork went up quickly with the assistance of my new apprentice, a former chef looking for a career change. Only the occasional heavy shower of rain hindered progress. The roof trusses were a different story. They were hard work, with four of us required to manhandle them the 70 metres from the road onto site.

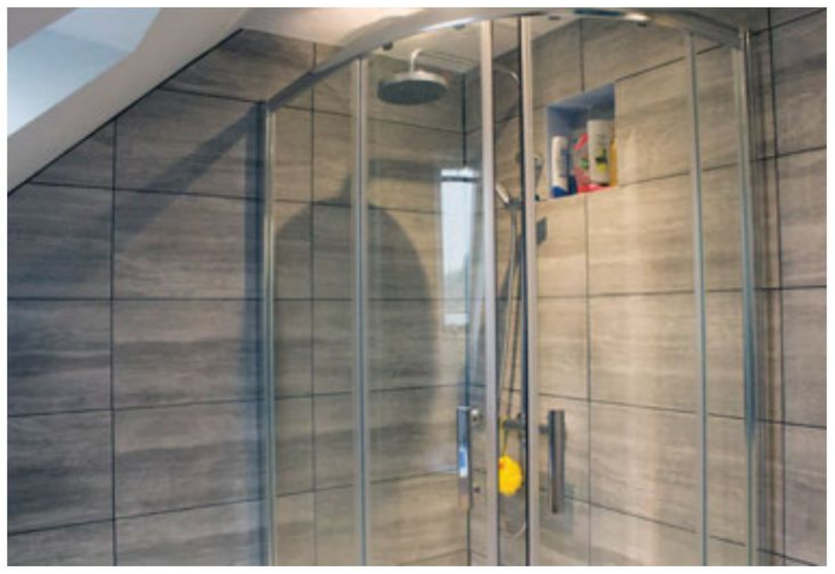
We planned to bring in the services over the half-term week as the pub was closed and the owners were on holiday. There was also no school traffic. The council decided to close the road for the week and we were able to bring in the water, electric and telephone which was always going to be a challenge dealing with the various utility companies.

We had fantastic weather in October and were pleased to get the roof on and install the windows. By December we had lined up a mason to start on the render, only to find it rained nearly every day until the end of February. The scaffolders were not too happy but they eventually got their poles and boards back.

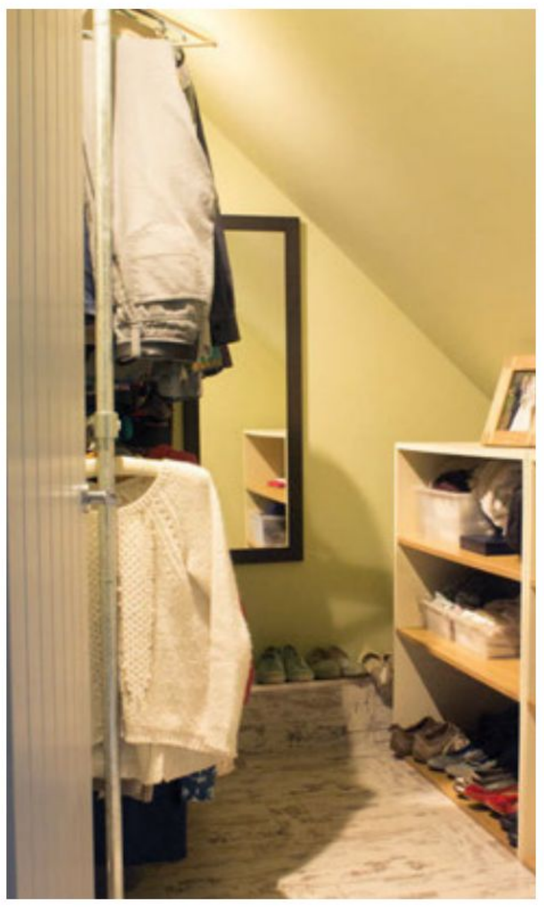
It was really pleasing to be able to design the interior the way we wanted. We applied Tadelakt, a waterproof Moroccan plaster, in the bathrooms and added character by using some of the hardwood timber from the pallets in which the Brazilian roof slates were delivered. This made an interesting cabinet top in our toilet and a shoe store under the stairs. We even incorporated timber cladding on one wall in the hallway to break up the plasterwork.

We made the bold decision to make our own concrete kitchen worktop. I consulted YouTube and worked out how to do it using square guttering as an edge former. The units had OSB boards over the top and a reinforced bar was put into the concrete. We also dropped in some glass on the top and trowelled the surface smooth. After a couple of weeks it was given a very light sanding and polished, with an impregnator then applied to seal it. The concrete gets waxed once a month to help protect it. The effect is quite industrial but we both like it and are pleased in the knowledge that you will never find another one the same.

"We made the bold decision to make our own polished concrete kitchen worktop."



STORAGE
A clever shoe storage shelf has be en built under the stairs and faced with hardwood recycled from the slate pallets.



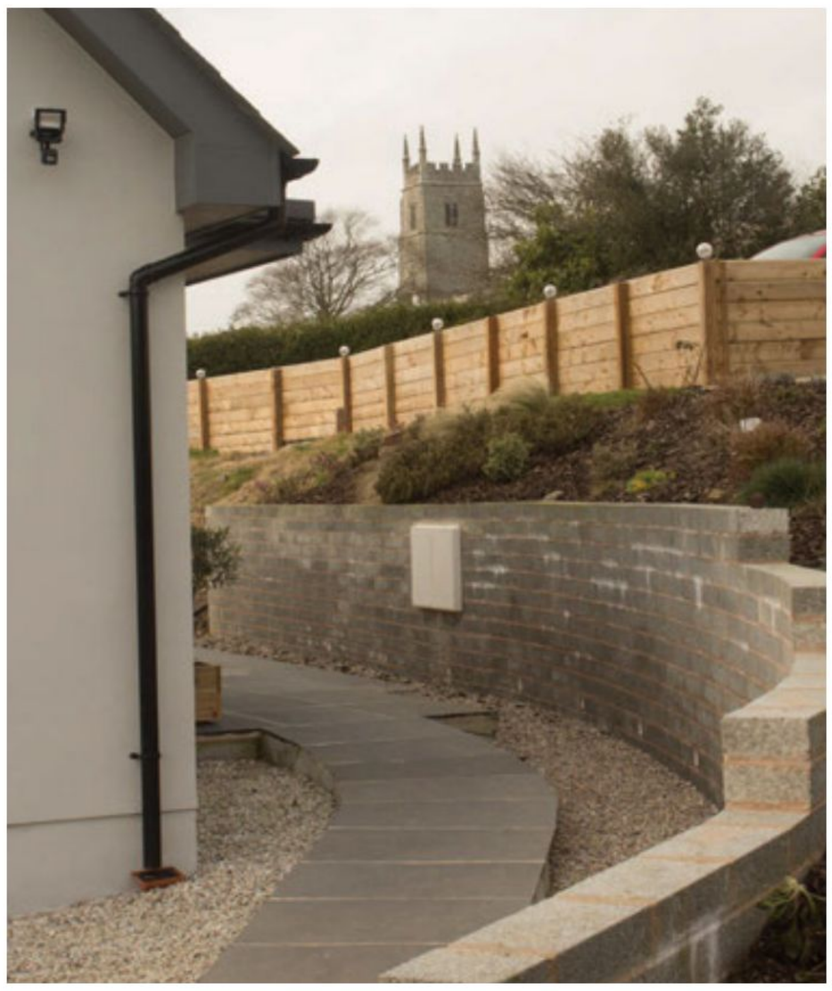
In our experience it wasn't the trades who caused problems, it was the so-called professionals. We discovered to our cost that a lot of mortage lenders have hidden fees and charges. Also, the private building warranty company didn't seem to be that interested in visiting the site. Fortunately we had a good Building Control Officer who we could phone to chat things through.

Sticking to a tight budget is tough. It is not one item that causes you to overspend, but if every item costs a little bit extra it's surprising how it adds up. If you are nearing the end of the build and still have money left over it is nice to be able to afford to do the landscaping properly. Now that we have created a beautiful home we are trying our best to make sure the exterior is up to the same standard.

Living in the house has made us appreciate the high levels of insulation. Our home also has good thermal mass and really holds the heat, even with the front door open. We ended up extending the soffit on the rear to help with solar shading, as Charlie Luxton had recommended, so that even when the temperature soars to 29°C it is still comfortable inside.

We are really looking forward to much lower fuel bills than our old house. Prior to last winter it was costing us £1.50 a day for electricity, and that is likely to be even lower when we switch to a lower tariff.

Having realised a childhood dream, building my own home has been really special. We are glad we took the opportunity to relocate and have been blown away by the people of north Devon, the beaches, the landscape and sometimes even the coastal breezes.



Contura 710

Grandeur that takes up little space

The slightly angular design of the Contura 710 makes it very easy to position. The new, simple style stove without glass side panels fits neatly in a corner.

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ON TREND

The latest trends for your project

Only time will tell

This sundial can be made to order, and is available in two types: flat and armillary sphere. Five different designs make up the range of flat sundials, from classic to topograph, each of which can be personalised. Made to measure time accurately by reflecting the exact co-ordinates of where the dial will sit, the flat sundials come in either marine-grade Italian brass or bold, eye-catching bronze. The Armillary spheres are modelled on the Earth, with the equator, tropics, polar circles and your meridian represented by concentric rings and the North and South poles shown as an arrow pointing to Polaris. Each element of the sculpture is handmade and designed to last. Price: from £139 for a flat sundial or £2,000 for an armillary sphere. (bordersundials.co.uk)

CLADDING COLLECTION

Six new cladding designs have been added to the wall tile collection from Indigenous. Four metallics, an oak and metal patchwork and a vintage chestnut pyrography each provide a 3D feature area or whole wall decoration. Metal creations include burnt orange-toned copper and ochre-toned brass; the patchwork cladding combines copper, brass and zinc with rustic oak; and the pyrography is a warm-toned decorative wood cladding with embossed French text, in the style of an antique wine crate. Each tile measures 100mm x 100mm x 10-25mm, and has an MDF backing for easy installation. Price: from £164.40 per sqm. (indigenous.co.uk)

A GRAND ENTRANCE

Aura Grand Entrance paint from Benjamin Moore makes a memorable first impression to your home. The rich, vivid tones are easy to apply and have been specially formulated to retain colour and gloss for years to come, offering durability to your front door and trim. The collection has a colour palette to include Morning Fog, Claret Rose red and Notting Hill blue, all of which have a lustrous finish for added elegance and style. Aura Grand Entrance is available in satin or gloss. Price: £39.50 for 0.94 litres. (benjaminmoorepaint.co.uk)

Restoration project

These 1950s lights were salvaged from the St Barnabas Church in Bethnal Green, east London. Originally installed in 1957, the lights were removed from the building during a recent period of restoration. They were covered in layers of pink paint, and have been revived by Skinflint to reveal original polished aluminium shades. Available as wall or ceiling lights. Price: from £150. (skinflintdesign.co.uk)

SET IN STONE

Beswick Stone has introduced a wide range of aged limestone flooring to create a classic period backdrop to your room. Featuring textured surfaces and rounded worn edges, these limestone floor tiles have a vintage feel and are available in various colour tones and textures. Hand-aged and lightly brushed for a velvety look, the tiles reflect more light than traditional hand-aged limestone flooring, making them more suitable for airy, contemporary spaces. Shown here in the Verona finish, the tiles are priced at £38.40 per sqm. (beswickstone.co.uk)

Two-in-one

The Nexus Grand III is a towel warmer with twin-column radiator inset, designed specifically for high efficiency, storage and aesthetic appeal. The radiator is manufactured from high-quality mild steel in white as standard, with other colours and finishes available, such as RAL, metallics or coffee contemporary shades. The three double-bar towel rails with rounded edges are made from brass and finished in chrome. The Nexus has a heat output of 2,477 BTUs and is suitable for central heating, dual fuel or sealed electric systems. It measures 900mm high x 525mm wide and is priced from £930. (vogueuk.com)

SPACE SAVING

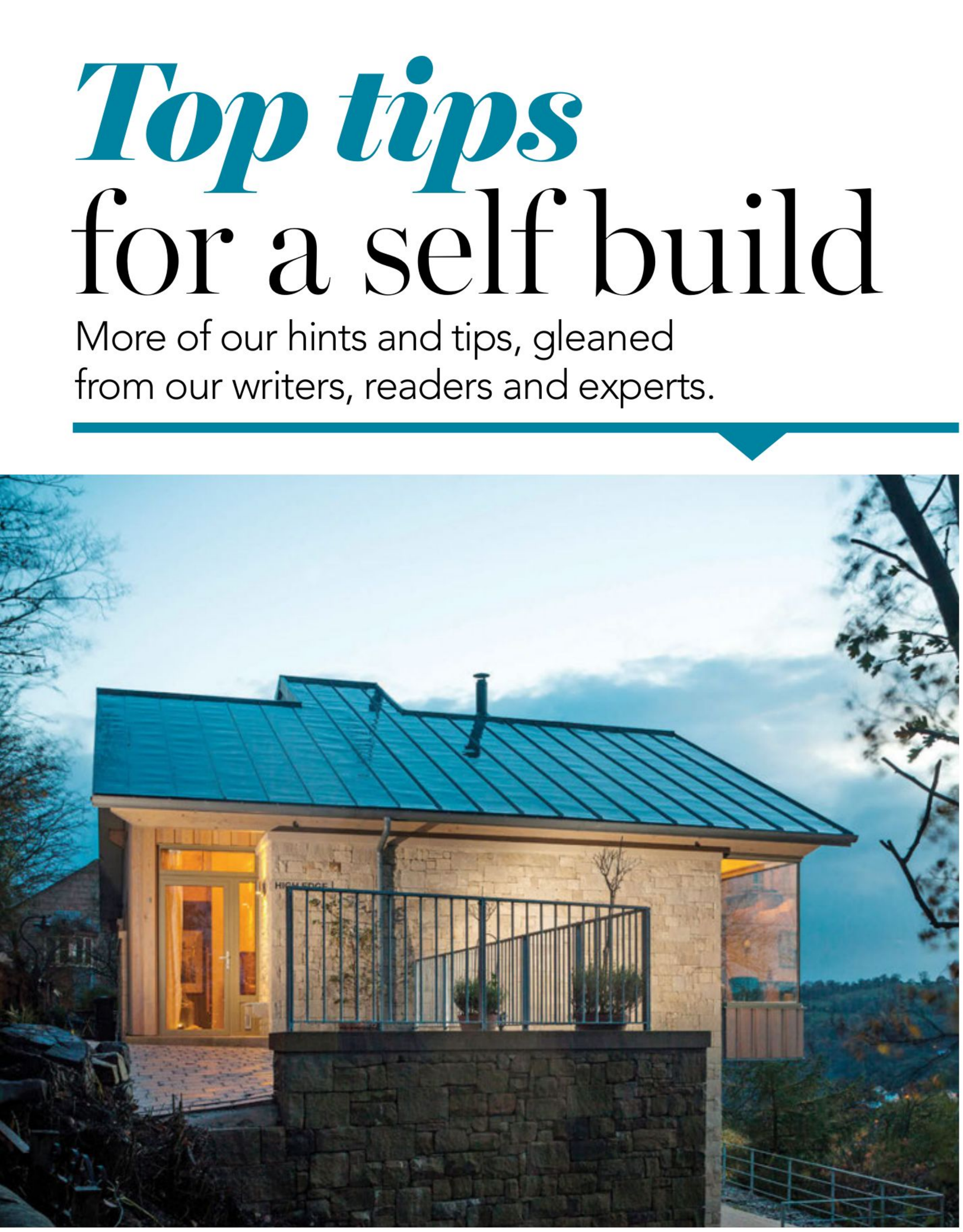
The Maris pull-out slim 60 and 90 hoods can be installed under a kitchen cabinet to save space. When not in use, the hoods are almost invisible due to their minimalist design. The stylish sliding glass panel glides out effortlessly during cooking and neatly tucks away when no longer needed. Easy to install, the hoods have three operating speeds and an intense setting for short, powerful bursts to quickly rid your kitchen of unpleasant odours. Brushless motors are more efficient than standard ones, and LEDs provide practical task lighting or a gentle light for ambience and are easily operated at the touch of a button. Price: from £849. (franke.co.uk)

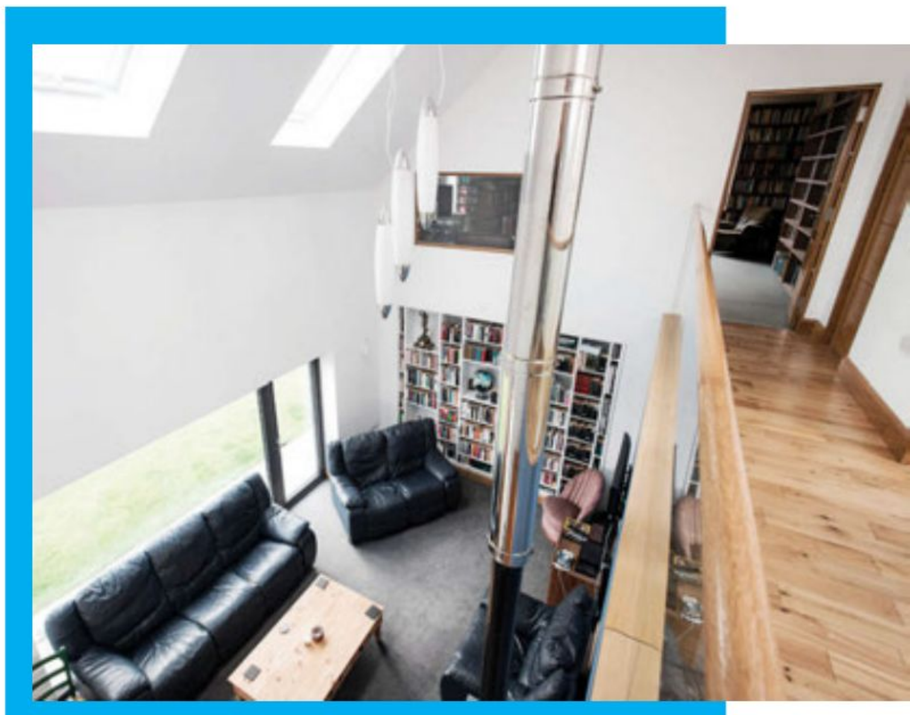
SWEET DREAMS

Two new patterns have been added to Hibou Home's children's wallpaper collection. The first (left) is inspired by the Hans Christian Andersen fairytale The Wild Swans, and features gold-crowned swans. Available in muted blush pink or soft mint, the pattern also boasts hand-drawn feathers and stars, creating a whimsical feel. Starry Sky features an assortment of textured clouds and stars. The design is available in cool white and silver tones or blush and gold tones. Price: £59.95 per 10m. (hibouhome.com)

Top tips for a self build

More of our hints and tips, gleaned from our writers, readers and experts.





BUILD
Passive House

"We would ensure the builder has a better understanding of Passivhaus construction prior to commencing on site. It was difficult for the builder to achieve the standard for this first project as it is only the second Passive House constructed in Northern Ireland and experience in building to this standard is still rare."
Architect Paul McAlister who designed a budget Passive House for his clients at a cost of £1,000 per sqm.

LANDSCAPING
Instant garden

When people design their kitchens they don't think twice about spending thousands of pounds, and it can be so important with a brand new garden to spend money and bring in a couple of elements that lend instant maturity. A large tree can cost upwards of £300 but just one or two will be a worthwhile investment on a completely bare site.
Garden designer Anne-Marie Powell

Owners' TIPS

Architect **Robert Evans** who built his Alpine-inspired family home in Derbyshire.

"Don't rush it. If you can tweak as you go, you will get the best result."

ECO BUILD
Listen to experts

Listen to the experts – it took our architect, builder and eco specialist working together as a team to come up with solutions. We were all friends at the end of the build."
Selfbuilder Simon Kiddle who built a five-bedroom eco house with large open-plan living areas.

FINISH
Snagging

Snagging is where faulty workmanship or faulty materials have caused a problem with the finishing of the work and, rightly, should be rectified by the builder/contractor. Get involved in the snagging list procedure. You know your home better than anyone and will have a heightened awareness of how things should be left upon completion of the work. Insist on including anything you are not sure about on the list; you can always talk it over with your builder later on.
Robert W Howe, author of The Building Work Hand Book

WINDOWS
Double or triple glazing?

Triple glazing is recommended by Passivhaus experts to eliminate cold spots close to windows. It is worth noting, however, that while triple glazing has a higher thermal resistance than double glazing which cuts down on heat losses during the heating season (winter), it also reduces solar gain and light transmission. As a rule of thumb, each pane of glass reduces solar radiation passing through by 10 per cent, though more light passes through low-iron glass. In a maritime climate such as southern England a sensible compromise may be to triple glaze north-facing windows and double glaze elsewhere.

DESIGN
Materials

Choose a local brick. Once all bricks were made from local clay, so they reflected the colours and textures of their surroundings. For most local planning departments, insisting on a brick with a local history is a default position. So pre-empt them and win brownie points. It is also important not to leave the choice of brick to your designer or bricklayer. Your design may be stunning but 70 per cent of the overall look of a brick house is down to the brickwork. So spend time choosing. It'll be worth it. Bricks generally only account for around four per cent of the total build cost of a brick and block house.

Gerald Cole, author of Build Your Own Brick House

ADVICE
Legal fees

You don't need a lawyer for everything. Plot buying can be done cheaper on the internet through a regional firm or licensed conveyancers. Legal disputes can be carried out in the small claims court if they are less than £5,000, debts can be given to debt collection agencies that do not take a fee unless they recover your monies, and, contracts for home builders such as those prepared by FMB and the JCT are designed to keep lawyers out of the transaction. The best way to avoid disputes is to plan the programme of works and ensure that the critical path has reasonable floats to allow for weather. Accept that some elements will go over budget and have an active rather than 'arm's-length' style of management. If your legal fees look like the debt of a developing country then contact the Law Society who have procedures to ensure that the fees are an accurate reflection of the work undertaken.

Solicitor Guy Elyahou who is the author of Law For Home Improvers and Self-Builders

Holiday LETS

Holiday let specialist **Sarah Stanley,** who set up Unique Homes Stays after renovating several properties in Cornwall:

"Buy close to – not in – popular areas, as you'll get much more for your money being a stone's throw away instead of ensconced in such localities. If you think 'wow' when you see the property and location then it is likely to have the same effect on others. A stand-out property will generate more interest in terms of bookings and press interest. Bolt-hole properties accommodating two guests will generate year-round bookings as well as being more cost-effective for renovation and upkeep."

PROJECT
Budgeting

Spend time mapping out detailed costs at the start. We would probably spend more time with a quantity surveyor when we build again. Many modern devices on the face of it don't look as though they are that expensive, but when woven into the fabric of the house during the build they can often have an effect on other trades, adding extra cost to the project.

First-time selfbuilder Simon Dronfield who designed and built a traditional-fronted home with a contemporary rear and interiors, using SIPs

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BEFORE

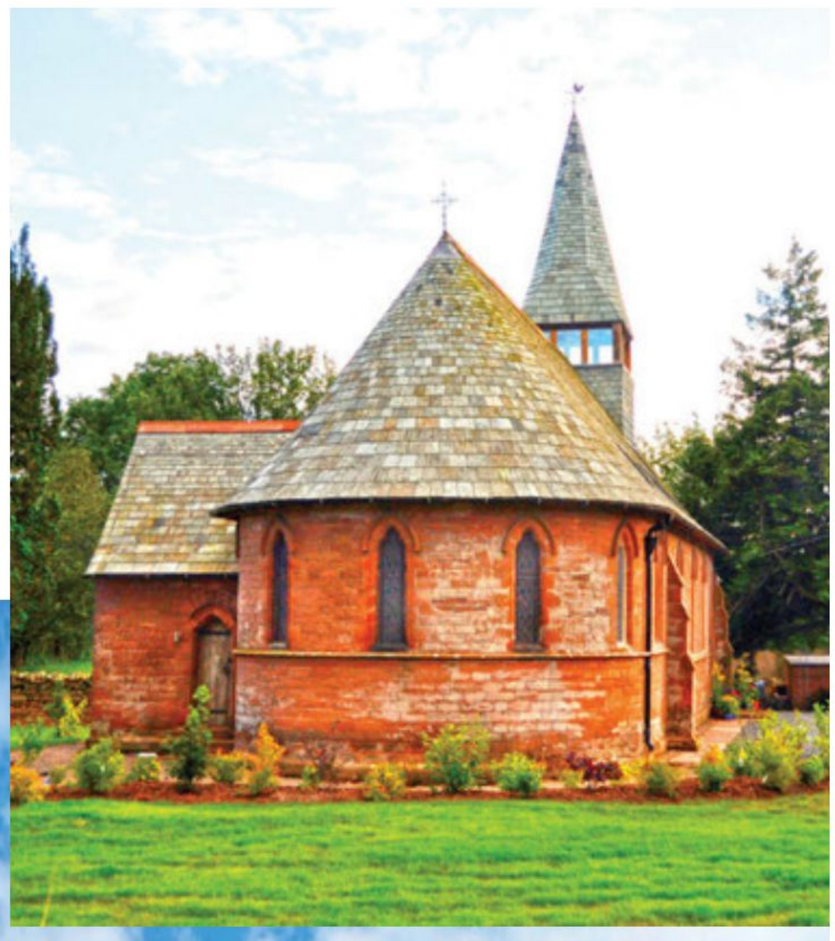
Church conversion
CASE STUDY

Preaching to the converted

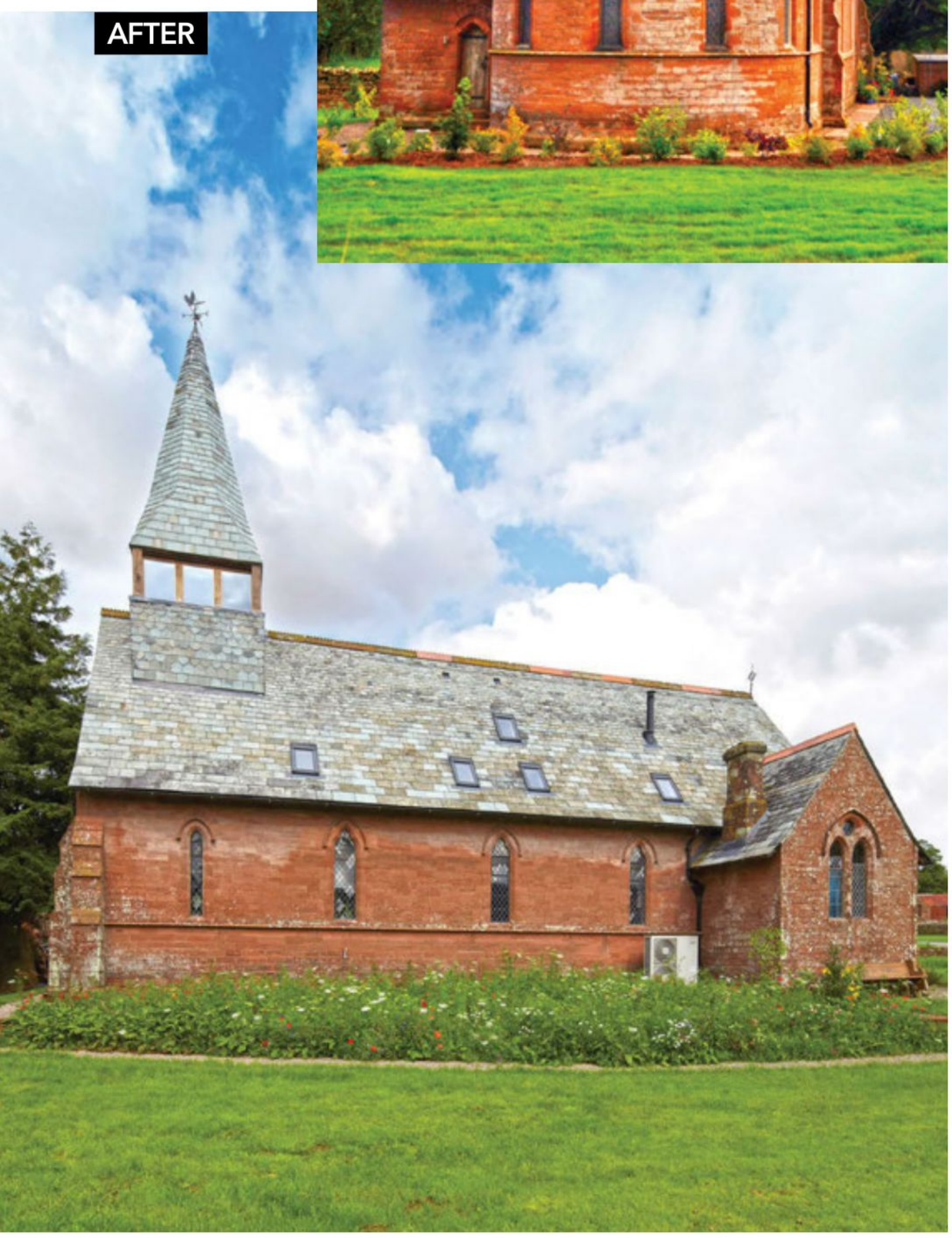
Phil Evans and Joanne McGirr gambled everything to save a redundant Victorian church and convert it into an amazing three-bedroom home.

STORY: **DEBBIE JEFFERY** PHOTOGRAPHY: **PHILIP EVANS**

EXTERIOR
The distinctive stone and slate Grade II-listed church conversion, with its handsome spire, now provides three-bedroom accommodation in a conservation village setting. It stands on a plot of around 0.37 acres.



AFTER



Ploughing all of their money into a derelict Grade II-listed church meant that Phil Evans and Joanne McGirr found themselves mortgaged up to the hilt and teetering on the brink of financial ruin. Despite numerous setbacks, including appalling weather conditions, they managed to complete the huge conversion project – all while working, bringing up a young family and living 90 miles away from their site.

The couple first viewed Old St John's Church in the rural Cumbrian village of Gamblesby after spending two years searching for a renovation project. "We were smitten with the church as soon as we saw it, but cash buyers had made an offer just two days before, so the chances of us ever owning it were slim," says Phil, a research scientist. "Then the offer fell through and we were able to buy the building, which had been empty for seven years."

Built for £1,075 in 1868 as a chapel of ease, the Gothic-revival-style stone church has a 520ft high spire, lancet windows and external buttresses. It became surplus to requirements as congregations dwindled, and the fine Victorian building was left empty until Phil and Joanne discovered it.

"I went to meet the conservation officer before we even purchased the church, and established a good rapport with her," says Phil. "We knew the restrictions that working with a listed building would bring, and limited the changes. Adding roof lights and replacing oak louvres in the bell tower with glazing were the main external alterations."

Planning permission had already been granted for the deconsecrated church to be converted into a dwelling, but the couple decided to redesign the layout internally – creating a double-height kitchen in the nave. "The previous plans didn't seem to make any use of the natural configuration of the church, and were more like a modern house design," says Phil. "We wanted to maintain the aisle through the middle, with a large open-plan living space, which rises to 7.5m at the curved kitchen end."

The couple worked with Phil's brother-in-law and architectural technician Alex Karanikolas to revise the plans and position three en suite bedrooms on the new first floor. A viewing platform in the spire enjoys 360 degree views of the Fells, North Pennines and North Lakes.

"Taking on such a huge project when we were both working full time was difficult, especially as our daughter Harriet was only four months old at the start of the build," says Joanne, an account manager. "Alex agreed to be our project manager, and moved into a caravan on site, employing local trades."

Early on in the conversion the realisation that the roof and rotten oak spire would need to be replaced proved stressful, and

IN BRIEF

PROJECT

Church conversion in Cumbria

FINANCE

COST £125,000 in 2010
SPENT £170,000
WORTH £375,000

Old St John's Church is available for holiday lettings: oldstjohnschurch.co.uk

OWNERS' TOP TIP

"Try to spend as much time on site as possible. We were both working, with a young family, and living miles away from the church, which didn't help the project."

BEFORE

KITCHEN/ DINER

Located in what was previously the church nave, the full-height kitchen enjoys views up to the ceiling timbers. Purple kitchen cabinets have been built into the curve of the wall.

CONTACTS

PROJECT

Structural engineer for steel frame
Bell Munro Consulting: bellmunro.co.uk

STRUCTURE

Insulation Kingspan: kingspan.com
Roof lights Velux: velux.co.uk
Oak for spire G&S Specialist Timber: toolsandtimber.co.uk
Secondary glazing Cumbria Window Systems: cumbria-window-systems.co.uk
Spire carpentry Lakeland Oak: lakelandoak.co.uk

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Air source heat pump Nu-Heat: nu-heat.co.uk
Radiators Jaga: jagahomeheating.co.uk
Cooke and Lewis kitchen B&Q: diy.com
Sanitaryware Victoria Plum Ltd: victoriaplum.com
Building materials Travis Perkins: travisperkins.co.uk
Materials Penrith Building Supplies: penrith-building-supplies.co.uk
Fixings and fastenings Ace Fixings: acefixingscumbria.co.uk
Garden Wildroof Landscapes: wildroof.co.uk

SITTING AREA
A double-sided log-burner in a rendered blockwork surround was installed between the living area and kitchen.

SNUG
The former vestry is used as a separate snug.

"We knew the restrictions that working with a listed building would bring, and limited the changes."

put a massive strain on the couple's already tight finances. "We didn't get a full structural survey before we bought the church, and needed to take out a loan for the roof because the bank wouldn't release money until the building was watertight," Phil explains.

Heavy-duty plastic sheeting was fixed over the roof to create a temporary cover, with the couple's entire contingency fund used early on in the project for the roof and spire. Villagers and the local farmer all worked together to clear snow from the single-track lane in -12C, so that a crane could lift the new four-ton spire frame into position. This supports the renovated one-ton oak spire, which was then raised to rest on top.

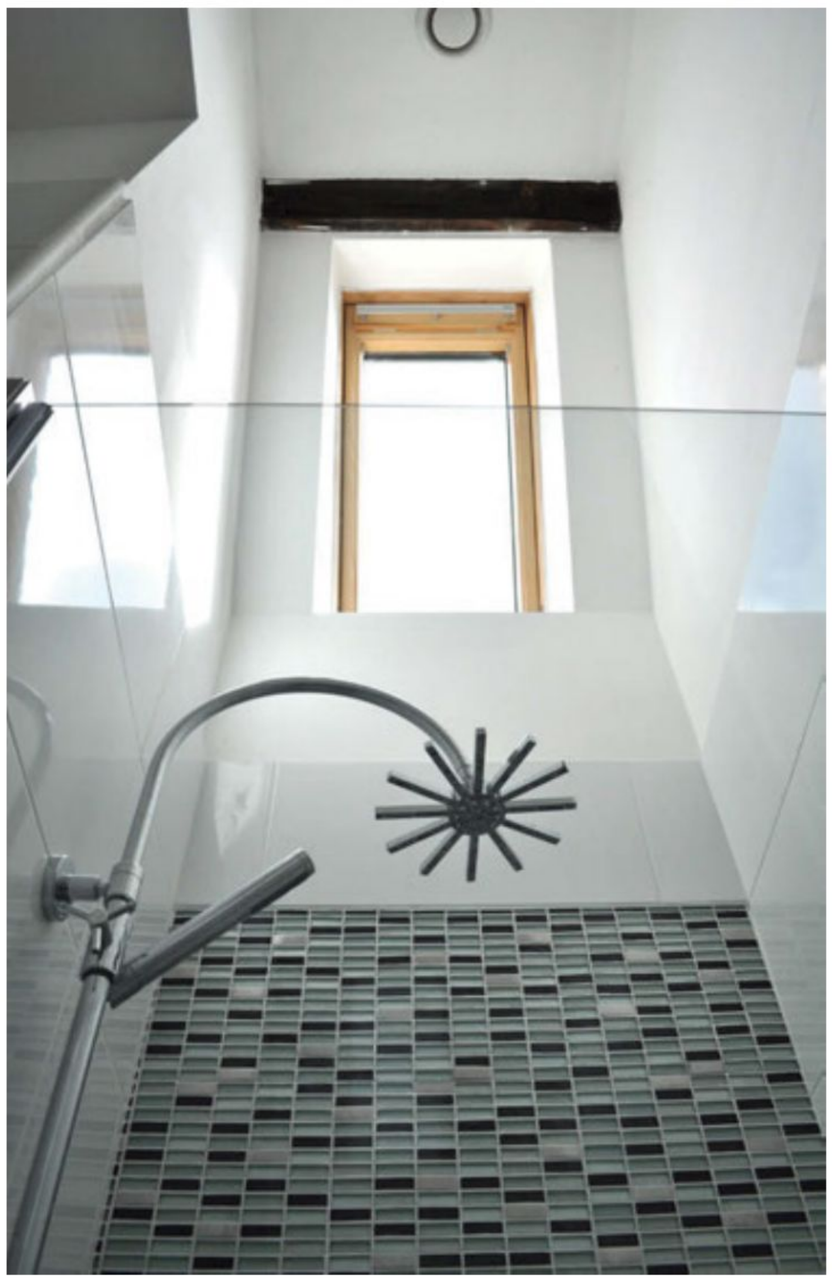
Existing Westmorland green slates have been salvaged wherever possible and used to re-roof the church, together with additional reclaimed slates. Moss has since re-grown on the roof, creating an instantly aged appearance and ensuring that the church remains virtually unchanged externally.

After graduating from university, Phil and Joanne had gutted and renovated a 19th-century stone terraced house, teaching themselves various trades and making a healthy profit on their investment. They then bought another property to renovate and sell, which not only cleared their student debt but paid for an engagement ring for Joanne.

These practical skills proved vital when it came to converting the church on a shoestring budget, which stretched from £120,000 to £170,000 over the two-year project. "As we started to run short of money I decided to make my job part-time so that I'd have two-and-a-half days a week to work on the church," says Phil, who tackled a great deal of the physical work himself.

The Cumbrian red sandstone walls of the church are around 450mm thick, and although the building was sound it had actually subsided. A structural engineer determined that this would have happened early on, because the church was originally built on a raft foundation over the village pond.

Despite this fact, the building had not lost any of its structural integrity but it did mean that Joanne and Phil were unable to add further loads to the structure. Instead, they erected a free-standing steel frame inside the church, onto which floors and internal walls have been attached.

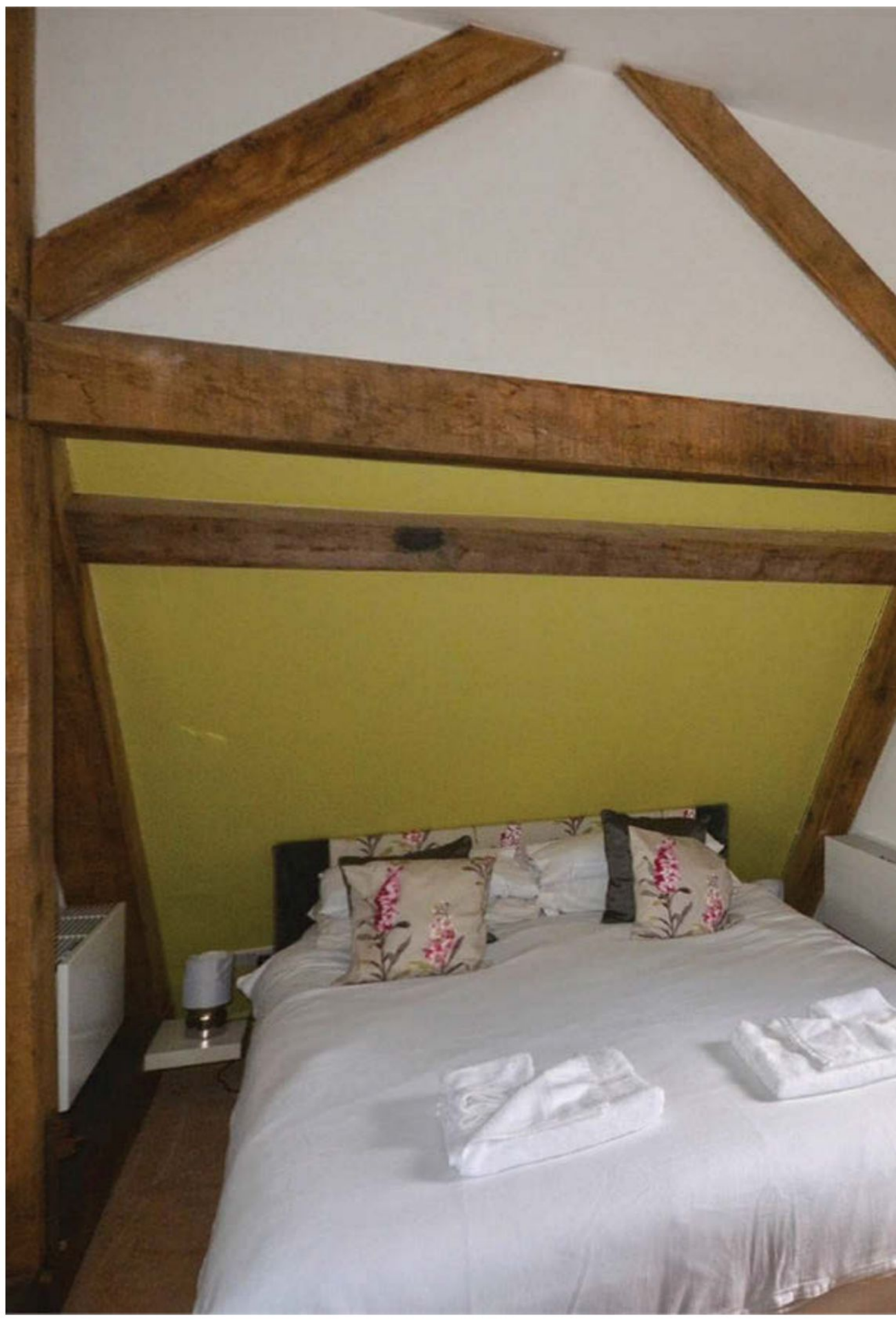


BATHROOMS

Three en suite bathrooms were created on the first floor, and the master en suite boasts a generous L-shaped bath.

BEDROOMS

Three first-floor bedrooms each benefit from their own en suite, with the master bedroom located in the church spire with access via a ladder to an upper viewing platform in the former bell tower. A sandstone window seat is located beneath the geometrical floral three light east apse by John Scott.



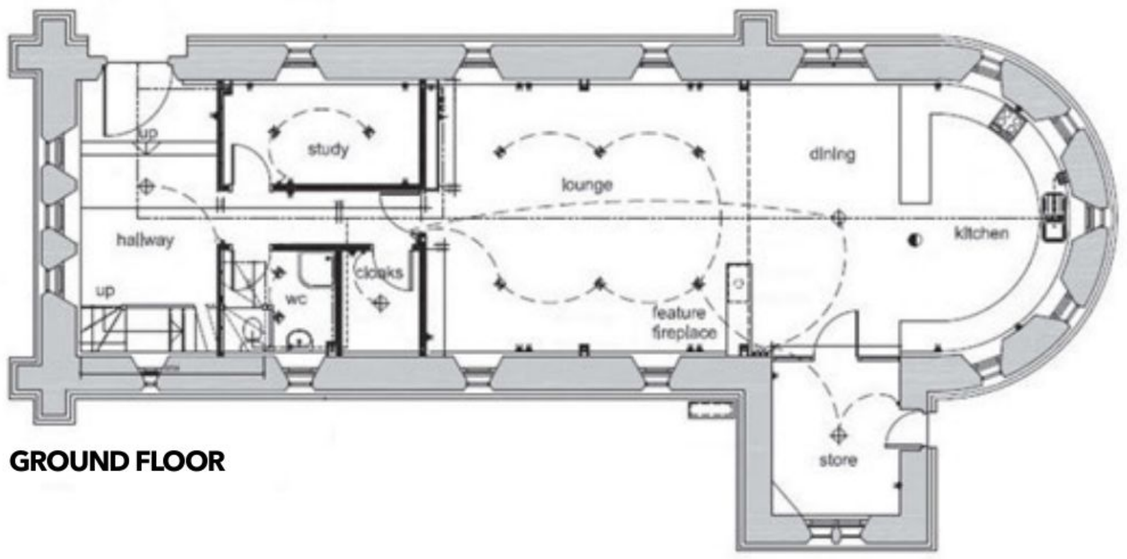
In addition to insulating the stone building, new internal secondary glazing with aluminium frames and low-E glass was installed to reduce both draughts and heating bills. Original features such as the pulpit and stained-glass windows were retained wherever possible, although the font had already been removed and destroyed as part of the official deconsecration.

The couple were also keen to introduce new technologies – installing an air source heat pump connected to a low temperature heat emitting system, designed to cope with the large volume and high ceilings. Suspended timber floors meant that underfloor heating would not have proved the most efficient option, so instead the couple chose radiators which incorporate high surface area fins and convection-boosting fans to enhance output.

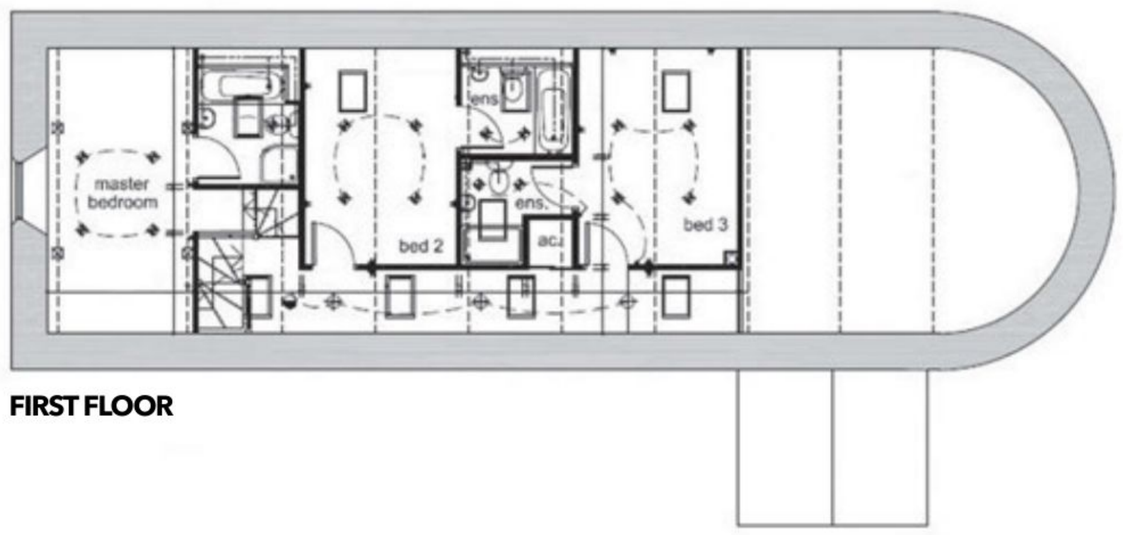
A double-sided wood-burning stove was also installed between the sitting and dining areas, inset into a rendered surround built from lightweight blockwork and incorporating log storage.

Scaffolding towers were required for access to rewire and decorate the tall double-height spaces, and to clean, treat and oil the exposed roof trusses. Reclaimed maple parquet flooring, which originated from a school sports hall in Kent, has been laid throughout the majority of the ground floor.

"Seeing the building being used again is so rewarding. It's definitely a very special place."



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

FLOORPLAN The ground floor now contains an entrance hall, study, WC, cloakroom, and an open-plan sitting/dining/living space. Upstairs there are three en suite bedrooms, with a ladder leading up from the master bedroom to a viewing platform inside the former bell tower.

SPIRE

Glazing has been inserted into the restored spire to create a viewing gallery, accessed from the master bedroom.

"We bought a job lot on eBay, hired a transit van to collect it, and then cleaned bitumen from all 7,000 blocks by hand before Phil could lay them," says Joanne, who had been searching for affordable parquet for the 100sqm space. "Then a specialist was employed to sand and finish the floor, which is one of our favourite features."

Despite their tight budget the couple have managed to create some fabulous focal points, including the purple kitchen, which was topped with curved worktops to echo the shape of the building. Beside this, two of the old pews form benches in the dining area, where the ornate pulpit also stands.

Joanne and Phil, who now have three children – Harriet, six, Hugh, four, and Henrietta, two – are understandably relieved to have finally finished such a challenging conversion, and are recouping some of their costs by renting out the church to holidaymakers.

"If we'd known what lay ahead we probably wouldn't have started such a mammoth project, but you have to be an optimist to take on something like this," says Phil. "It totally took over our lives, and cost every penny we owned, but to see the building being used again is so rewarding. It's definitely a very special place."

Final word

WHAT WAS THE HIGH POINT OF YOUR PROJECT?

The day the spire was craned into position. It had been snowing, so villagers and the local farmer all came out to help clear roads and hoist up the new frame ready for the spire to be supported on top.

...AND THE LOW POINT?

Discovering early on that the spire needed to be replaced blew our budget and put us in a financially tricky position.

YOUR BEST BUY?

Finding the maple parquet flooring as a job lot on eBay for just £6 per square metre was a huge saving.

...AND THE BIGGEST EXTRAVAGANCE?

The secondary glazing was expensive, but necessary. Nothing has really been an extravagance because we've been so careful with our budget.

BBH Architects

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BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO

Oak-framed homes

Oak framing is a time-honoured building system which has enjoyed a relatively recent revival and is now a firm favourite with selfbuilders.

Oak-framed houses have long been admired for their beauty and structural integrity, and building a new oak-framed home offers the perfect compromise, combining modern building materials with the instant character provided by exposed beams and timbers. Modern technology enables designers to utilise the appearance, strength and solidity of the frame to its full effect, creating open-plan living spaces without the need for internal structural walls.

Oak is a slow-growing wood with a tight grain which makes it durable, strong and a natural insulator. In fire, a protective layer of charcoal forms around the outside of an oak beam, delaying damage to the core, and most oak frames are sturdy enough to withstand the ravages of a tornado. At least a 200-year lifespan is an achievable target for a well-designed oak frame and, ultimately, it will bio-degrade when eventually redundant.

DESIGN

While the carpentry of frame design was already highly developed by the mediaeval period, other modern technologies such as insulation, glazing and frame infill techniques now far outperform their historic counterparts. Oak's versatility can be exploited in great open-plan spaces, soaring vaulted ceilings, galleries and atriums, adding to the sense of drama.

Many selfbuilders are unaware just how flexible the design service offered by oak-frame companies can be. They assume that they will have to build one of the standard house types shown in the brochure, but

An oak frame can be tailored to suit different styles, from the traditional cottage (above), to more contemporary designs which include large vaulted interiors and expansive sections of glazing.

these tend to be a sales aid designed for guidance rather than a limited selection.

Oak-frame companies offer a portfolio of designs which can be adapted to create individual properties, and many have in-house designers and architects who will produce bespoke plans and elevations, including detailed drawings for Building Regulations. It is possible to build contemporary homes around an oak frame, and if a structural engineer specifies additional steelwork to reinforce the building this can be concealed within an oak beam.

Alternatively, traditional frames are based upon the design and style of the vernacular oak frames found in English towns and villages. There is no county in England without examples of oak framing, and this can sometimes be extremely useful in persuading planners to grant planning permission.

A popular option is the barn-style oak frame, which combines the contemporary and the vernacular. The essential difference is that the beams are not generally exposed externally. These buildings invariably have a more open-plan feel, with fully vaulted roofs, and the heavy oak frames are well suited to accommodating large areas of glazing.

Some package companies will undertake everything from gaining planning permission and erecting the frame to organising subcontractors and completing the entire project on your behalf. Others will simply design, supply and erect the oak frame, leaving the selfbuilder to organise everything else.

PRODUCTION

Many oak-frame companies continue traditional framing techniques, passed down through generations, with hand tools still very much in evidence. Others favour fast, computer-controlled cutting machines.

The timber is used soon after it is felled so that the green timber is easy to cut and work into the desired shapes. Green, unseasoned oak is traditionally assembled with classic wooden pegged mortise and tenon joints, and the timber continues to contract – tightening the joints to give a uniquely strong structure which will last for centuries.

Most companies will make up the entire frame at their yards prior to disassembling it ready to be delivered and re-erected on site. The finished building will need to incorporate air barriers and flexible gaskets in order to meet Building Regulations. It is important to find out the lead-in time for your oak frame because these can vary enormously depending on how busy the suppliers are, your frame size and other issues.

THE BUILD

Foundations must be accurately completed before the frame can be delivered, so ensure you leave plenty of time for unforeseen problems at this stage. Oak frames need a level surface, and poorly built foundations are a frequent problem for all types of timber frame, so it pays to employ experienced groundworkers.

Make sure that site access will not prove a problem for a crane, which may be required to winch the huge trusses and cross sections from the lorry. Erecting the frame will then usually take between a few days and several weeks to complete. Once the frame has been built the timber stud infill panels and insulation can be fixed in place, and the shell clad with materials such as brick, stone, weatherboarding or render.

Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs), manufactured in a controlled environment and shipped to site ready for erection, are a modern alternative to a timber stud wall. They consist of an inner insulating core of expanded polystyrene (EPS) sandwiched between two outer skins of oriented strand board (OSB), and provide high levels of thermal efficiency.

Whether renovating or building from scratch, it is recommended that you use traditional materials such as lime mortars and plasters, which allow for minor building movement. Hydraulic

Vaulted ceilings work well in oak-frame structures. Here the timber truss is left partially exposed along with the gable end brick wall to create a semi-industrial look.

CONSTRUCTION

Modern oak frames are usually cut using high-tech computerised machinery, but the frame itself is assembled by hand in a framing yard before being disassembled and taken to the site for re-erection.

lime mortars are particularly useful in timber-frame buildings because their excellent vapour exchange properties minimise rot and damp while providing good weather resistance.

It is possible to build externally exposed oak frames that meet and exceed Building Regulations. Additionally, encapsulation systems have been developed which completely insulate the frame externally, minimising the cold bridging effect of the timbers and providing a draught-free environment.

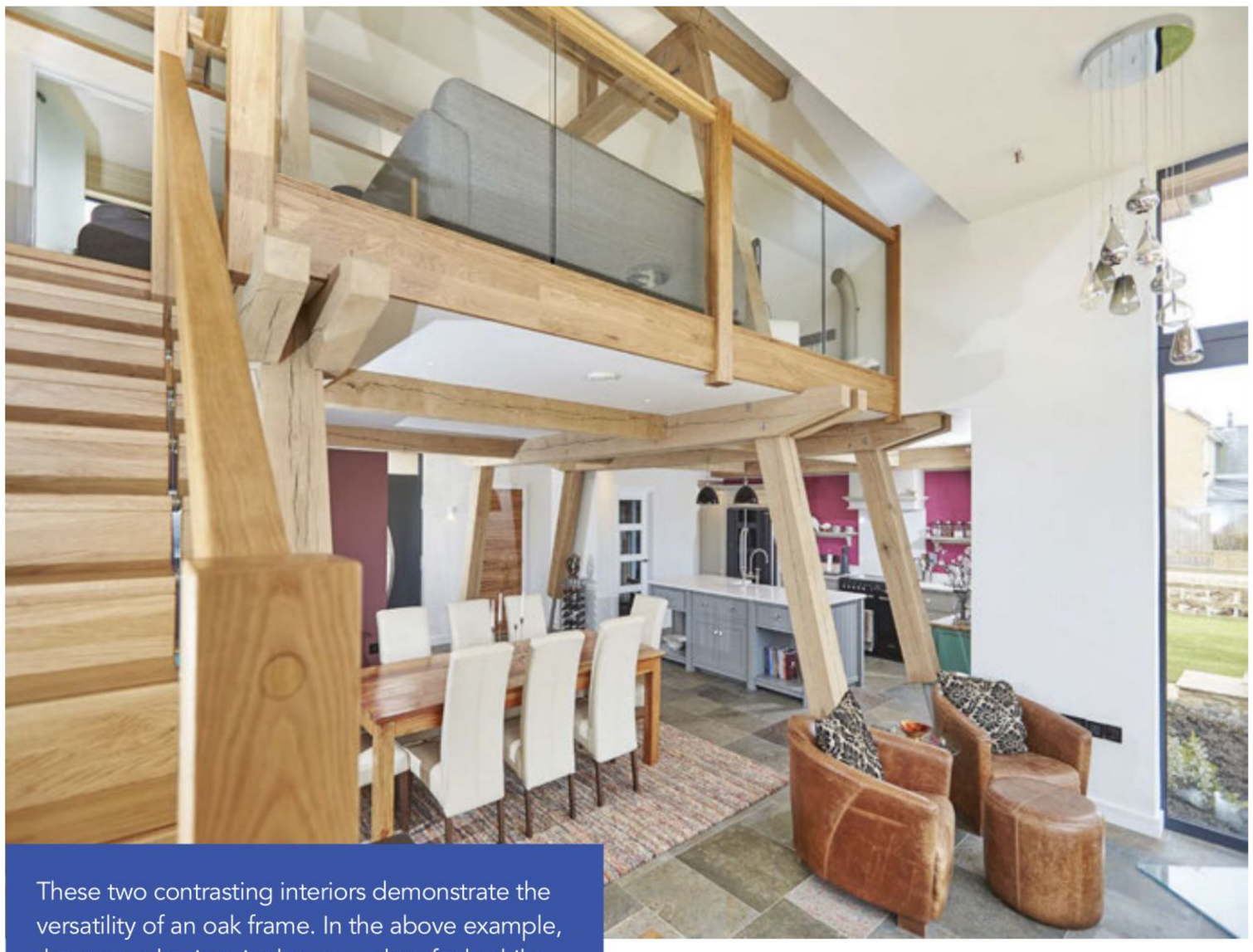
Several oak-framing companies have developed their own prefabricated encapsulation systems and most well-made, exposed oak frames with the proper detailing perform exceptionally well on airtightness tests.

Oak, unlike many other timbers, does not require preservative because the wood is naturally resistant to insects and weathering, although the frame can become marked from the natural tannin in the wood. These marks and other stains from the building process can be removed by sanding or using oxalic acid once the frame has been built.

AFTERWARDS

Untreated oak weathers to a silver grey colour externally, while remaining deep golden inside. As the oak seasons it hardens to a nail-bending density, so carpenters tend to work the wood while it is fresh and unseasoned. Oak is described as 'green' when it has been felled only a couple of years and the timber still has a high water content and is not dry in the middle.

It then takes between five and 10 years for an oak beam to dry out completely and season, and this process often results in shrinkage and movement – a factor which can alarm homeowners. As the oak dries and shrinks, the process creates minor splits or 'shakes', which are all part of the building's charm but can cause a few creaks and groans to emanate from the timbers.



These two contrasting interiors demonstrate the versatility of an oak frame. In the above example, the open-plan interior has a modern feel, while the barn-style interior (below) is more traditional.

Oak can be exposed externally without any need for artificial coatings, and is extremely resistant to insect attack. For wood to rot there must be a serious damp problem, as moisture passes through wood unless covered in materials such as cement render.

COSTS

Oak framing is often seen as an expensive housebuilding option, with oak costing at least one-third more than other timbers. In general, though, using oak will only increase the overall cost by between five and 10 per cent and the simpler the design the less expensive the frame.

Resale values are high, and there are ways to reduce costs and ensure that you get maximum value from the exposed frame without breaking the bank.

One option is to combine this form of building with a less expensive alternative, such as blockwork and areas of softwood framing. By building just one section of a house using an oak frame you can benefit from all the advantages of the wood in prominent areas like vaulted hallways and sitting rooms. Known as 'hybrid', this method is ideal for those on a more limited budget who wish to feature some oak within their home.

RESTORING OLD FRAMES

Timber-framed buildings are totally functional. Every component part of the frame serves a purpose in taking a load or a stress to keep the whole structure in equilibrium, which is why the members of a frame should never be removed or cut through. Apart from destroying the completeness of the structure this disturbance will set up new stress patterns and may cause settlement, cracking of finishes or infill panels, failure of other members and serious instability.

It's therefore essential to understand how your building works and to remember that it is a framed structure, with its forces and loadings carried on the comparatively slender timber members of the frame. If you are repairing a timber-framed building you are strongly advised to seek professional help as it is not a job for an amateur.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings advises that it is only necessary to disturb the timbers of an old oak-framed building if it is absolutely vital to ensure the survival of the building. Gentle, sensitive repairs will ensure that the oak timbers retain their character.

Oak frame
EXPERT ADVICE

Consult supplier early on

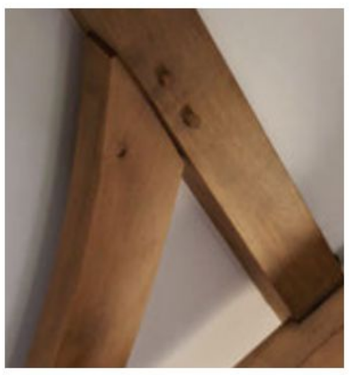
The Lawsons' oak-frame home.

Anyone contemplating building in oak should consult an oak-frame supplier as early as possible to achieve the best results. That's the advice of Welsh Oak Frame founder and director Paul Edmunds, who says that owners can sometimes be disappointed when their new home doesn't meet their expectations.

This is usually because proper consideration hasn't been given to the structural and spacial requirements that an oak frame demands. Edmunds urges selfbuilders to consult a manufacturer even before engaging an architect to save time and money, and to maximise the potential.

Using 3D visual aid software, WOF clients can take a virtual tour of their floorplans to see how the oak frame will look and feel. Retired Cheshire couple John and Sue Lawson were thankful that this service was made available to them with their own architect-designed oak-frame home.

Working with the WOF in-house design team, they altered their existing plans to make the most of the oak frame. "This proved more expensive than if they had come to us first," says Edmunds, "but they were sure glad they did in the end."



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Oak frame
CASE STUDY

GREEN & GOLD

When Rupert Osborn and his wife, Lindsay, decided to downsize from their listed manor house after their two children left home they approached Oakwrights to build a new oak-frame home in part of their old garden.

The frame, made from sustainable French green oak held together by more than 1,000 pegs, took 15 days to erect on site. The frame was then wrapped in 350mm weatherproof insulated panels so that work could start inside. "The beauty of the oak-frame model is that you don't lose any time due to bad weather," says Osborn, who became such a convert that the 52-year-old is now a salesman for Oakwrights. The new property has three bedrooms, three bathrooms and a ground-floor master bedroom. Although the property is only a stone's throw from their old Grade II listed manor house, it's a world away in terms of its green footprint. Domestic hot water and heating is supplied by a heat pump powered by an underground river 70ft below the property which qualifies for renewable heat incentive payments of £2,000 a year. There are also a separate sewage plant and 16 solar panels located away from the house.

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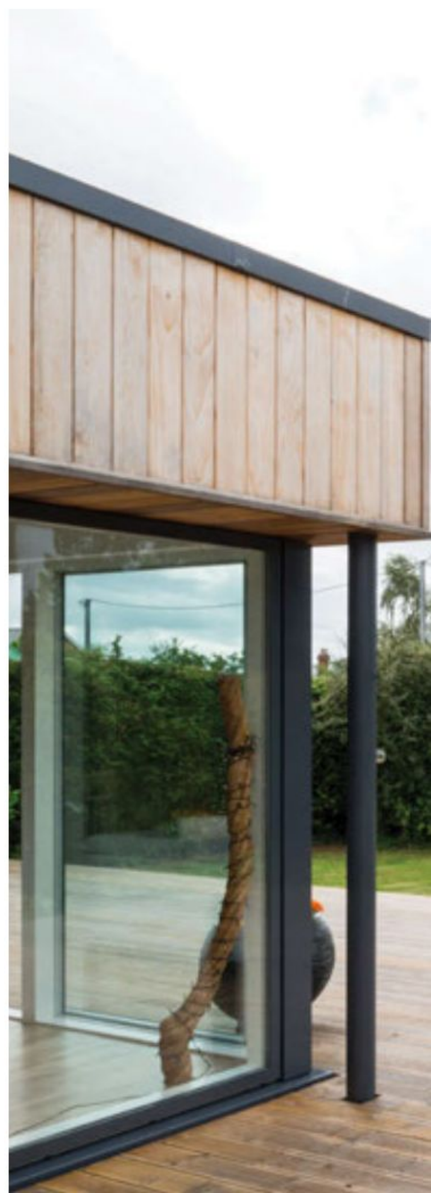
Extension
CASE STUDY

WELL CONNECTED

Connecting their 1920s house to its beautiful garden was the incentive behind Dave and Jane Catchpole's contemporary glazed extension.

STORY: **DEBBIE JEFFERY** PHOTOGRAPHY: **THE MODERN HOUSE**

EXTERIOR
A wall of glazed bifolds connects the new cedar-clad extension to the decked area and large garden. The original windows have been replaced with double glazing, matched to the grey aluminium bifolds in the new rear kitchen extension.



IN BRIEF

PROJECT

Extension and garage conversion in Herefordshire

FINANCE

PAID £305,000 in 2012
BUILD BUDGET £250,000
NOW WORTH £670,000+

The property is on the market with The Modern House: themodernhouse.com

BEFORE

OWNERS' TOP TIPS

"Use a reputable architect, consider employing a project manager if you're working full time and can afford one (which we couldn't), and try to take time to enjoy the process!"

Dave and Jane Catchpole had previously built an oak-framed cottage several miles outside of Hereford, but then family circumstances dictated a move closer to the city. "Out of the blue we heard of a house for sale in the village of Burghill, where we'd lived once before," Dave explains. "Our former neighbour had decided to sell up, and it felt like fate that we should move back to live there."

Dave and Jane went to view the pretty detached 1920s property, which had been neglected for many years and had become dilapidated. Single-glazed metal windows made the house cold and draughty in winter, and the kitchen was cramped. However, the one-acre garden was a major selling point and the couple could both envisage restoring the house to its former glory.

"We briefly considered knocking it down to build a replacement, but the house was so structurally sound and well built that it would have been a shame," says Jane. "The front has a boxy appearance, with a recessed entrance, but the rear is more Arts and Crafts in style and overlooks the fantastic garden. We wanted to bring it up to date without sacrificing the original character."

The Catchpoles, who have grown-up children, purchased the house in 2012 and moved straight into the property, which was barely habitable at the time. They tore up carpets and camped out in the cold house for almost a year while the layout was redesigned.

"Our son helped us to search for a designer and we contacted RRA Architects, who have an office in Hereford," says Dave. "They've completed a lot of work in the area and are very well respected, so we ended up choosing them."

A contemporary kitchen extension, garage conversion, underfloor heating and large areas of glass were all on the Catchpoles' wish-list, but once the measured survey had been completed and a quantity surveyor became involved it was evident that the couple's initial estimate had almost doubled.

"We needed to rethink, and abandoned our original idea of extending at the front, which would have added a bedroom, as well as increasing the size of the landing and creating a master en suite, but would have cost another £200,000," says Jane. "It was more important to focus on the ground-floor rear extension and garage conversion where we knew we'd spend most of our time."

The existing lounge would be retained as a separate reception room, and a newly constructed single-storey

extension would contain the kitchen, dining, and living areas, forming a large open-plan space overlooking the garden through bifold doors. “We knocked down the wall between the dining room and the tiny kitchen, then extended out into the garden by four metres,” explains Dave.

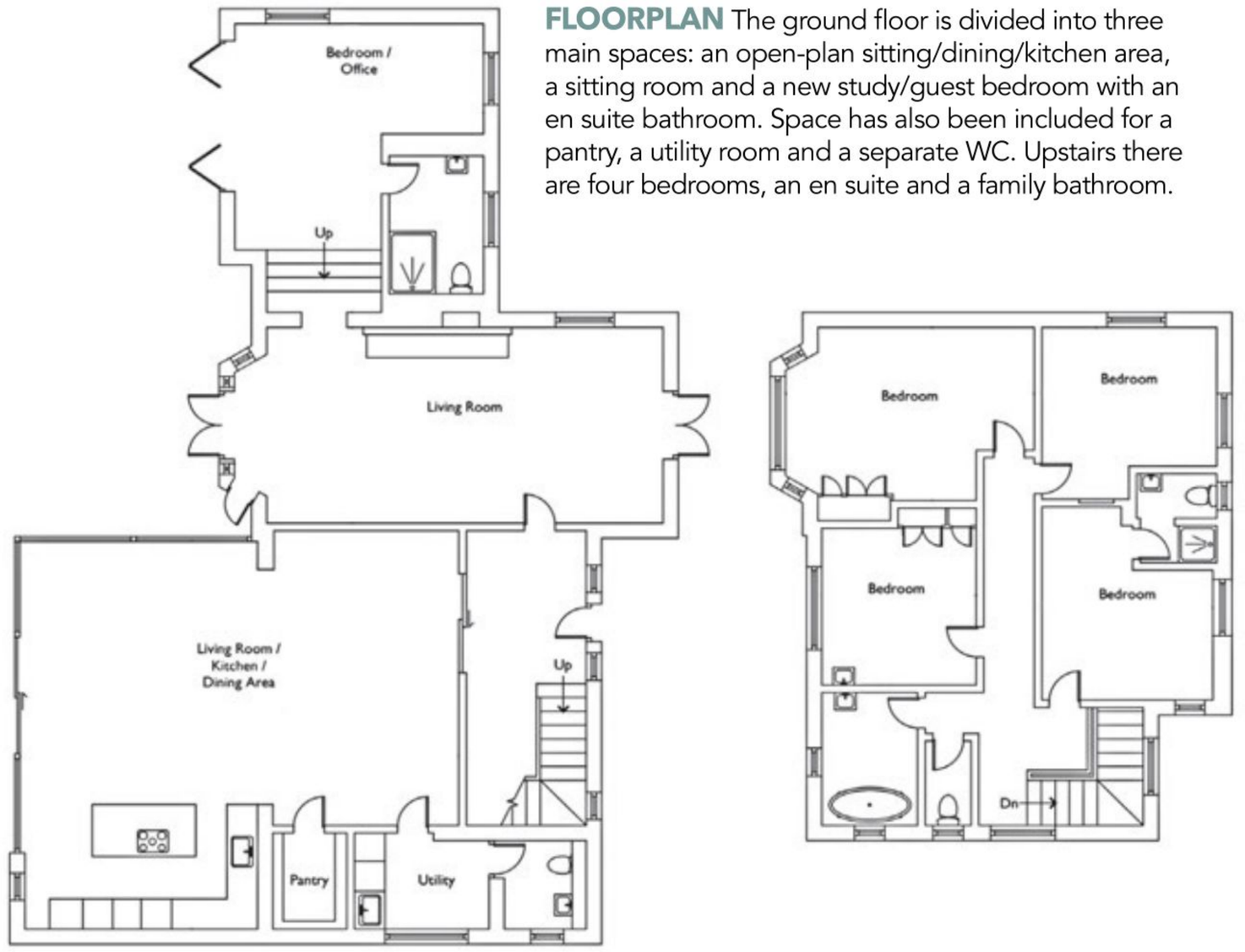
A pantry, utility and WC have also been incorporated on the ground floor, and the former attached double garage has been converted to accommodate a study/guest bedroom with its own en suite bathroom on the ground floor. Both this and the new extension were designed to be clad in western red cedar boarding, offset against the backdrop of the rendered 1920s house.

“We knocked down the wall between the dining room and the tiny kitchen, then extended out into the garden by four metres.”

LIVING AREA The modern extension has underfloor heating throughout, with Karndean flooring on top.

CONTACTS

PROJECT
Architect RRA: rra-arch.com
Structural engineer Martyn Peters: 01432 344042
STRUCTURE
Dampcourse Damp Cure Ltd: dampcurelimited.co.uk
Aluminium bifold Velfac: velfac.co.uk
Breather membrane Permavent: permavent.co.uk
uPVC windows Weatherseal: weathersealwindows.co.uk
Flat roof Sarnafil: sarnafil.sika.com
Entrance door Jonathan Elwell Bespoke Joinery: 01352 879555
Decking Wye Valley Landscaping & Decking: 01432 890266
Garage Timberworld Products: timberworldproducts.com
FIXTURES AND FITTINGS
Hwam wood-burner Minster Stoves and Heating: minster-stoves.co.uk
Kitchen and worktop Howdens: howdens.com
Timber oil Osmo: osmouk.com
Tiles Fired Earth: firedearth.com
Sanitaryware Victoria Plum: victoriaplum.com
Paints Mylands: mylands.com
Kitchen floor Karndean: karndean.com
Parquet restoration Floor Restoration Company: floor-restoration.co.uk



FLOORPLAN The ground floor is divided into three main spaces: an open-plan sitting/dining/kitchen area, a sitting room and a new study/guest bedroom with an en suite bathroom. Space has also been included for a pantry, a utility room and a separate WC. Upstairs there are four bedrooms, an en suite and a family bathroom.

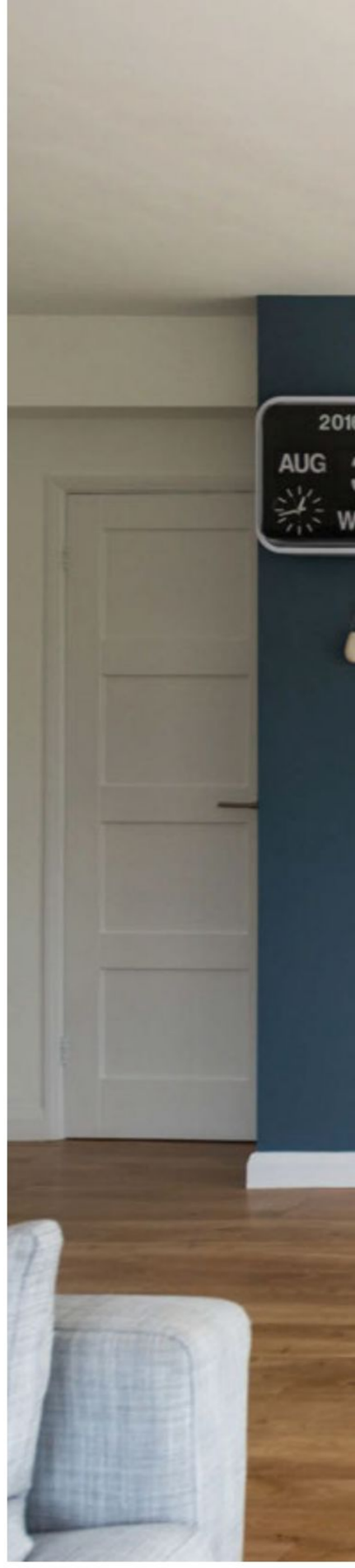
Upstairs, every room would be refurbished and the bathroom and en suite refitted with new sanitaryware. “Stripping off all the old wallpaper was a mammoth task,” says Jane, “but it’s downstairs where the major changes took place.”

The property is located just outside the limits of a Conservation Area, but the parish council requested a site visit with the architect prior to granting planning permission. “The house was on its last legs, and they were delighted that we wanted to restore what was here,” says Dave.

In the summer of 2013 the couple rented a property five miles from the site, where they lived during their eight-month project. A local building contractor was employed following a lengthy tender process through the architects, and although the quality of their work proved faultless the project did run on far longer than originally hoped.

“It should have taken about four or five months; however, the workmanship is fantastic,” says Dave. “We had weekly meetings with the builders, and our previous experience of building a house proved really useful.”

Walls were demolished, a chimney breast removed and the ugly stone fireplace in the sitting room taken out. The garage building was stripped back and partially rebuilt to create the new ground-floor study/bedroom, which has been highly insulated beneath the existing roof.



SITTING ROOM

A wood-burning stove was installed in the sitting room, which is located in the older part of the house. Original parquet flooring was restored by a specialist company.

Foundations were excavated for the rear kitchen extension which is a predominantly glazed structure with a flat roof finished with single-ply membrane. Insulated blockwork walls have been rendered to one side, and the remainder was clad with vertical Western red cedar boards, finished with natural oil to match the single-storey study wing.

"We were lucky that the main roof was in good condition and didn't need replacing," says Dave. "The damp course did need to be re-done, though, and we replaced all the windows. The extension has aluminium bifolds, with grey uPVC windows made and installed by a local company in the older part of the house. Jane matched the RAL colour, so that everything ties together."

A bespoke oak door and side windows were made for the front entrance, which shelters beneath the original porch. Jane and Dave spent several months preparing and painting the rendered exterior of the main house, and also completed all of the internal decoration.

KITCHEN
Simple white gloss cabinets and an island unit have been positioned to make the most of the views out across the garden.

"I loved the thought of cooking at the island and being able to look out at the garden."

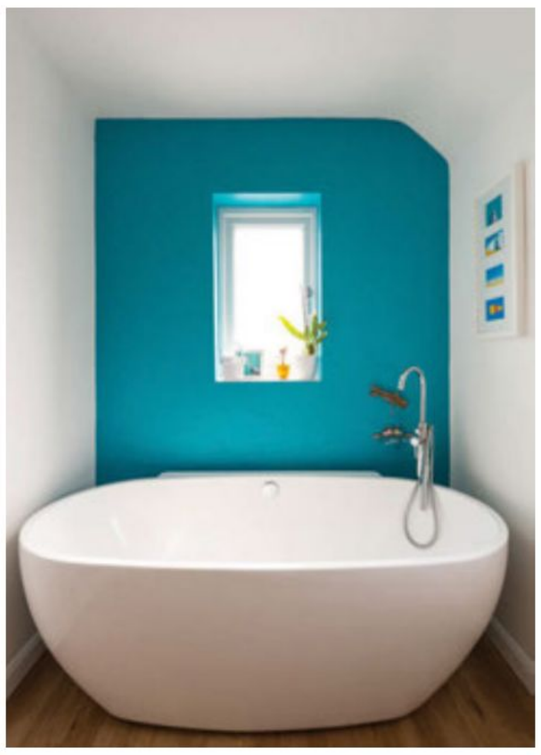
Jane chose various shades of blue to create striking feature walls in several rooms, including the kitchen, study, master bedroom and bathroom, which stand out against the predominantly white décor. She also tackled the wall tiling in the bathrooms, kitchen, utility and ground floor en suite.

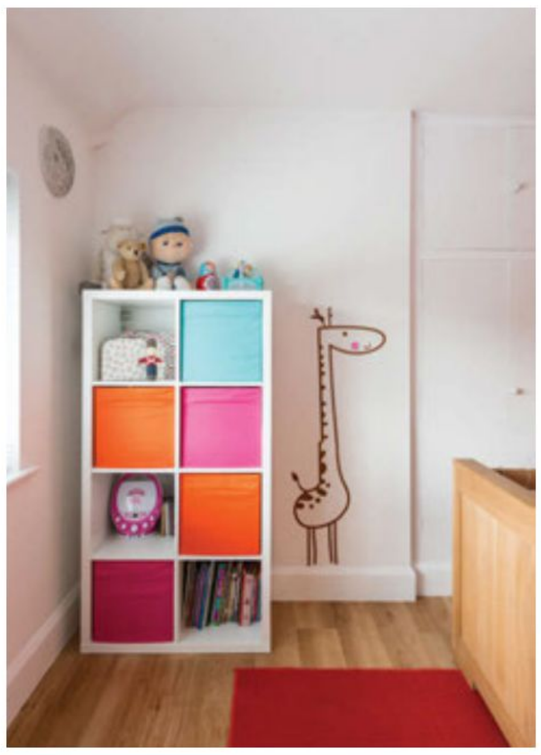
"We wanted to replace the old oil-fired heating system, and now have a gas boiler and a water tank, which runs new radiators upstairs and underfoot heating in the extension," says Dave.

The old parquet flooring in the lounge wasn't compatible with underfloor heating, but the Catchpoles wanted to keep it, and spent a considerable amount of money employing a specialist company to restore the scuffed wooden blocks. "We managed to find some other parquet to match, which was laid where the old stone fireplace had been," says Jane.

Vinyl wood flooring was chosen for the kitchen extension, after Dave and Jane visited the Karndean factory and showroom in Evesham, and this works extremely well with the underfloor heating in such an open-plan space.

"I wanted the kitchen itself to remain very neutral, and chose handle-free gloss white," says Jane, who found inspiration in magazines. The cabinets form a practical L-shape, and are teamed with white laminate





worktops. "I loved the thought of cooking at the island and being able to look out at the garden," she says.

Externally, a new softwood deck was constructed by a local contractor, and the couple have also built a double car port on the site of a former pond. It took them four months to complete the extensive landscaping, to ensure impressive views out of the house across low-maintenance manicured lawns.

"To us it was important to spend time and money on the garden, because it was the reason we decided to buy the house in the first place," says Dave. "Now we can look out from the kitchen through the glass doors, and the deck serves as an outdoor room. The work took longer and cost more than we first planned – and it was definitely harder than our new build – but finally we're really enjoying the house."

UPSTAIRS

Four bedrooms on the first floor have been revamped. The master bedroom has a blue feature wall behind the bed, while bright blue paint and striped Fired Earth tiles give the bathroom a nautical flavour. Sanitaryware came from Victoria Plum.

Final word

WHAT WAS THE HIGH POINT OF YOUR PROJECT?

Seeing all the finishing touches coming together, and watching people's reactions now when we open the front door – even the postman comments!

...AND THE LOW POINT?

Finding contractors was stressful, and the project took longer than we planned. Fortunately we didn't have a problem extending the tenancy on our rented property, but we did move into the new house before everything was finished.

YOUR BEST BUY?

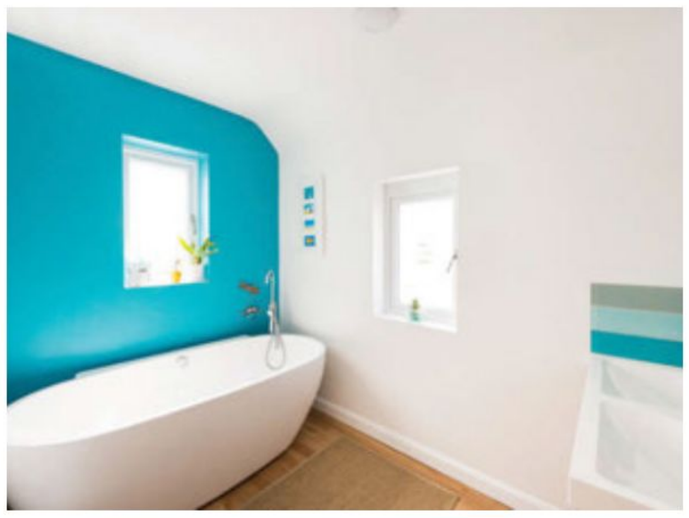
The kitchen and utility which only cost £10,000, plus £800 to fit by a local carpenter.

...AND THE BIGGEST EXTRAVAGANCE?

Restoring the old parquet flooring was far more expensive than starting again with a new floor.

WOULD YOU CHANGE ANYTHING?

We would have loved an en suite for the master bedroom and a boiling water tap, but needed to watch our budget.



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SMART IDEA

The scaffold house

Architect Stephen Lacey has come up with an innovative approach to creating garden space.

London architect Stephen Lacey was faced with an intriguing challenge when a friend became a parent for the first time and needed to turn his home office into a nursery. The friend needed extra space but didn't have a big budget and with the pressures of a new family, renovating or extending the property was not an option, but a home office was essential.

After some initial discussions, the pair came up with the idea of a scaffold-based 'space' as a potential solution to the problem. And so was born the Scaff Haus, a bespoke, elegant, outdoor structure constructed largely from scaffolding poles and timber framework. It is fully insulated and waterproof, and its industrial design can integrate into almost any outdoor setting.

"Families and young professionals are in need of additional space now more than ever, and most of us don't have the resources to extend an existing property or 'trade up' to a bigger home," says Lacey, who set up Scaff Haus as a company.

"When faced with this problem in a city as overcrowded and as overpriced as London, I soon realised there was a gap in the market for a solution which is quick, affordable and most importantly one that doesn't require planning approval."

Alongside its signature Scaff Haus Original structure, the innovative design can be adapted and tailored to fit any needs or dimensions.

"It can be used for anything and everything and can be fully kitted out with electricity and wi-fi. Home offices, gyms, play spaces or summer houses are some of the most popular uses," explains Lacey.

With prices starting at £5,500, a design tailored to the client's specific needs can be constructed in less than a week, with a DIY option available for home builds. The whole process is designed to be as seamless as possible.

"I had a clear picture of what Scaff Haus needed to be: a simple, elegant box," Lacey explains. "It was essential that it is quick to construct, cost effective and adaptable, making the material requirements basic, but very specific."

The Scaff Haus Original is designed using a standard three-metre scaffold pole, ensuring that it can be constructed under Permitted Development, with no planning permission required. The three-metre-square structure is 2.5 metres high.

Once the scaffold structure has been formed, a timber pod that is fully insulated with a damp-proof membrane is inserted. The pod is made using standard timber studs clad in OSB chipboard, creating a light, open space. The contemporary look is then completed with an aluminum bifolding door set, and a corten steel roof.

To help transform his concept into a business, Lacey turned to Insulation Superstore to supply and advise on the best materials to use.

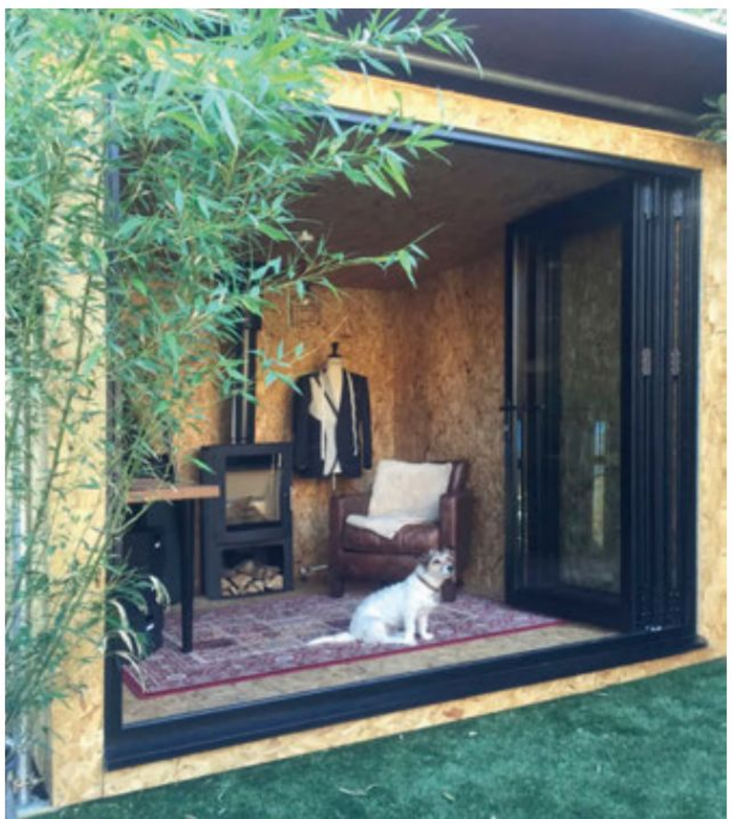
Scaff Haus offers the option to self assemble the structure, issuing a construction manual and materials package from Insulation Superstore.

As well as suiting space-starved Londoners, Lacey believes his concept can help tackle the UK's wider housing shortage, with its simple design meaning that it can be easily erected and removed in any location.

"Temporary shelters for the homeless or emergency relief locations are just some of the possibilities with Scaff Haus, and we are already working with charities to help make this happen," he says.

Scaff Haus Garden Rooms: scaffhaus.com

Stephen Lacey and his Scaff Haus concept, which he believes offers a solution to the UK's space shortage.



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Inspiration

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

WORDS: **LUCY WILLIAMS**

The Jewel daybed is handcrafted from the finest quality rattan. It features a brown frame finish and waterproof grey/beige scatter cushions. Price: £4,999. (bridgman.co.uk)

Planning a garden from scratch offers a unique opportunity to make the most of your new surroundings, and to create a space to savour long summer days with family and friends. Including a terrace, seating area, pergola or shed into your landscaping scheme combines practicality and style. And to really impress your new neighbours, there is a mind-boggling choice of outdoor furniture, grills, and hot tubs to make your garden really special. So grab a cocktail, put your feet up, and take a look at these...

Left: The Keter Eden is a polypropylene garden bench and storage box in one, also seating two adults. Price: £99.99. (wickes.co.uk)
Right: This timber tree seat can wrap around the trunk of a tree, measuring 85cm x 166cm x 75cm. Price: £159.99. (forestgarden.co.uk)
Below: The wheel bench garden pod is constructed from stainless steel, polycarbonate and two pressure-treated laminated timber rings with a large table and two wooden benches at the centre. Price: £3,495. (cuckooland.com)

The Exo range includes spheres in two sizes, a cube stool, table lamp, and ice bucket. Each one lights up in 16 pre-set colours, enhanced by a dimming function, colour fade and colour flash settings. All items can be controlled simultaneously from one remote. Price on application. (my-furniture.com)

Above: Weather resistant and fuel efficient, these outdoor heaters run on bio-ethanol fuel. They are portable and come in a range of styles. Price on application. (smartfireuk.com)
Right: The Parc rocking chair has a seat and back in teak and legs in lava grey powder-coated aluminium. Price: £710. (iqfurniture.co.uk)

The Roble swing seat measures 1,700mm high x 2,230mm wide x 1,490mm deep. Price: £1,395. (potterandrest.co.uk)

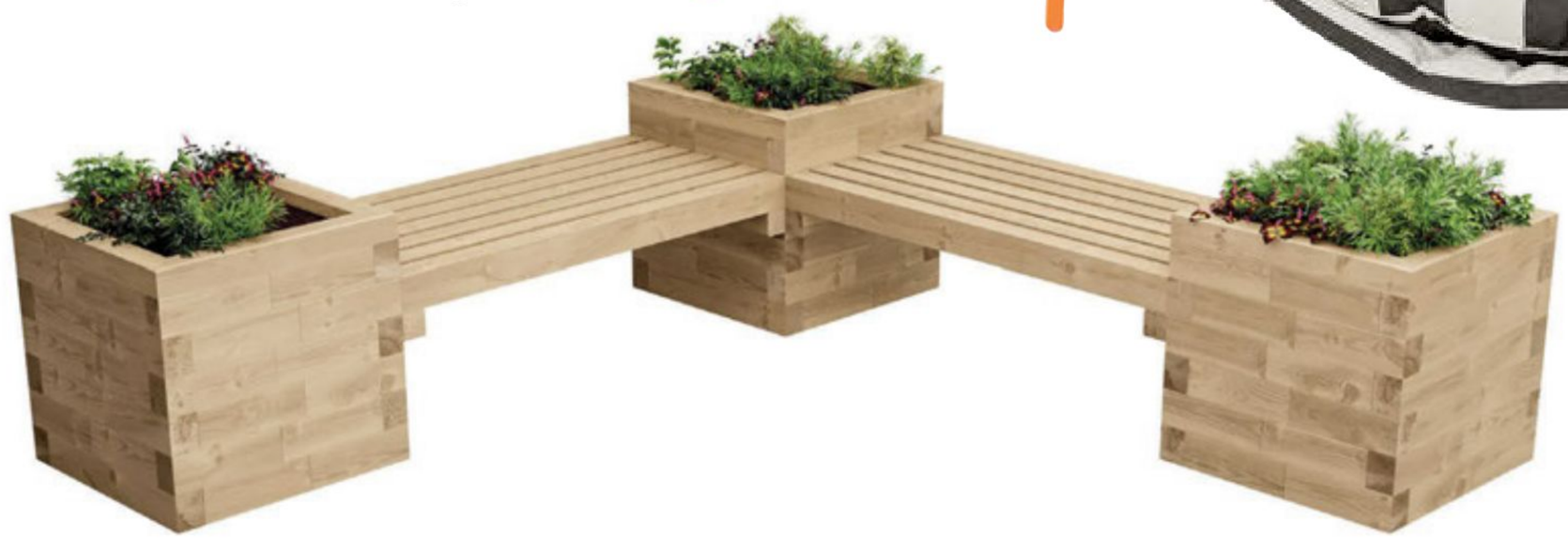
Above: The Castello hanging chair with base is shown here in grey. Price: £315. (barkerandstonehouse.co.uk)

INSPIRATION

Sitting room

Right: Woven onto a powder-coated aluminium frame, the Milan lounger features convenient robust wheels and adjustable back. Available in two colours. Price: £299. (modeliving.co.uk)

The Royal garden chair, available in orange, blue and green, adds a retro touch to the garden. Price: £99. (outandoutoriginal.com)



Above: The Halima hammock chair is handmade from cotton with a striped pattern. Price: £75. (outthereinteriors.com)
Left: With each wooden block made from pressure-treated pine, the double planter seat costs £770. (woodblocx.co.uk)

Above: Available in grey or brown, the Peach daybed set comes with two large stools, two coffee tables, curtains, a base cushion and scatter cushions. Price: £1,499. (modeliving.co.uk)
Right: The Monolith grill features a ceramic Mushikamado barbecue, combining the advantage of a stone oven with a traditional grill. Price: from £360. (monolith-grill.eu)

Above: The Canadian Spa Toronto hot tub accommodates five to six people. Price on application. (diy.com)

INSPIRATION

Fun times

Below: Handcrafted from premium wood with stainless steel, the Naked Flame Eco LovTub is perfect for small spaces and takes around 30 minutes to heat up to full temperature. Price: £2,550. (boutiquecamping.com)

The Uuni 3 wood-fired oven reaches up to 500°C in 10 minutes. It runs on wood pellets, making it less expensive. Made from stainless steel, it is portable and weather resistant. Price: £199. (cuckooland.com)

Above: This waterproof cotton tea tent measures 6ft x 4ft, perfect for two people, with a roof height or 8ft. Includes roof lining, walls and fold-out canopy. Price: £1,000. (rajtentclub.com)

Right: Measuring 6ft x 10ft, this wooden greenhouse provides space to work while accommodating taller plants with a high apex. It has single door access and two roof windows for ventilation. Price: £849.99. (waltons.co.uk)

Above: This swinging daybed is shown here hanging from a pergola. Price: from £5,380 dependent on accessories chosen. (sittingspiritually.co.uk)

Above: Featuring smooth timber and rounded rafters, the Forest ultimate pergola supports the growth of plants. It measures 2.8m high. Price: £314.99. (screwfix.com)

Above: With a powder-coated steel frame and heavy-duty polyester roof, this three-metre Vermicelli gazebo also comes with a gas lift side panel to allow another three metres of coverage when erect. Price: £349. (hayesgardenworld.co.uk)

Above: The Victoria garden picnic set is 220cm long and has been engineered from reclaimed teak and high-quality aluminium. Price: £1,499. (outandoutoriginal.com)

Right: Available for indoor and outdoor use, the Monaco deckchair is made from pine and rope, and provides two sitting positions. Price: from £130. (oliandgrace.co.uk)

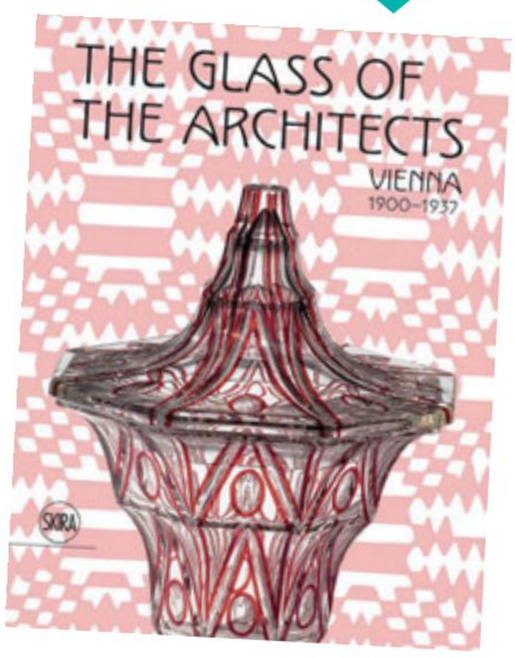
Above: House in Jigozen, Itabashi, Japan, Suppose Design Office, 2009 (Picture: Toshiyuki Yano).

Right: Volga House, Tverskaya, Russia, Peter Kostelov, 2009 (Picture: Alexey Knyazev).

Bottom right: Grotto Sauna, Ontario, Canada, Partisans, 2014 (Picture: Jonathan Friedman).

Reviews

The Glass Of The Architects Vienna 1900–1937
Edited by Rainald Franz
Artifice £42.00



This is the first publication to focus on the history of glassmaking in Austria from 1900 to 1937, a period spanning the last decades of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the First Republic. In the early 20th century, a group of young architects, designers, and fine arts and architecture students developed a special interest in the process of glassmaking. Many of them went on to win fame as leading figures in Viennese Modernism: Josef Hoffmann, Koloman Moser, Joseph Maria Olbrich and Leopold Bauer, to name just a few. These figures worked with the furnaces in order to gain a thorough understanding of the material, paving the way for the first pioneering developments in 20th-century glass production. This collaboration between architects and designers, along with the resulting innovations in production methods, created the distinctive style of Viennese glass as found in new projects such as the Wiener Werkstätte or the Austrian Werkbund.

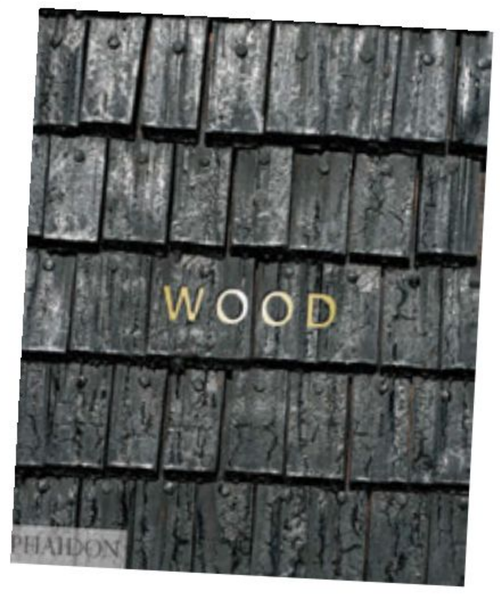
New from RIBA Publishing...

The Environmental Design Pocketbook 2nd edition contains a host of information around sustainable, low-energy building design. Full of diagrams, tools and tips, the new edition cuts through the complex mass of technical data and legislation, and distils all the key guidance into a single reference. It is fully up-to-date with the latest Building Regulations, legislation and guidance. New material includes care and maintenance of buildings, with information on the Performance Gap, Zero Carbon, and the Green Deal. There are updated references, web links and further reading sections throughout, while the Retrofit chapter and the ventilation, airtightness and heat-loss sections have been expanded.

Mobilising Housing Histories: Learning from London's Past by Peter Guillery and David Kroll (£40) illustrates that the problem of creating affordable, adequate housing for a growing population is not a new one. Aimed at anyone with an interest in improving housing, the book offers in-depth studies of London's past and looks to provide sustainable solutions for the future by linking to wider contemporary historical and social contexts. It showcases lessons from the past and highlights examples that will be measured in terms of their longevity, sustained popularity, liveability, average densities and productivity. This is a handy resource for academics, architects, designers, sociologists and journalists.

Good things come in WOOD

Wood
By William Hall
Published by Phaidon £29.95



Following on from its predecessors in the same series – Concrete and Brick – Wood takes a fresh look at the world's most versatile and prolific building material.

Phaidon's handsome tome is a fitting celebration of one of our most ancient and readily available resources, and showcases an eclectic selection of wooden structures from the last 1,500 years.

The appeal of this much-loved material is reflected in the beautiful photography, which provides the perfect reference for anyone with an interest in its wide-ranging architectural applications.

It features contributions from some of the most influential and innovative architects of the past 100 years as well as some striking projects by their contemporaries, including our own Hopkins Architects, responsible for the Velodrome at the London 2012 Olympics.

The projects go beyond the well-trodden confines of log cabins, encompassing churches, monuments, and cultural spaces, and no better illustrated than in the organically undulating interior of Grotto Sauna on Lake Heron, Ontario.

From Le Corbusier's room-sized cabin to the whimsical Japanese House in Jigozen, with its pentagonal windows, to the Soviet-influenced Volga house which utilises no less than seven differently slatted wood panels, there is plenty to appreciate and enjoy as you thumb through the 200-odd pages – all carefully arranged to encourage comparison and prompt discussion.

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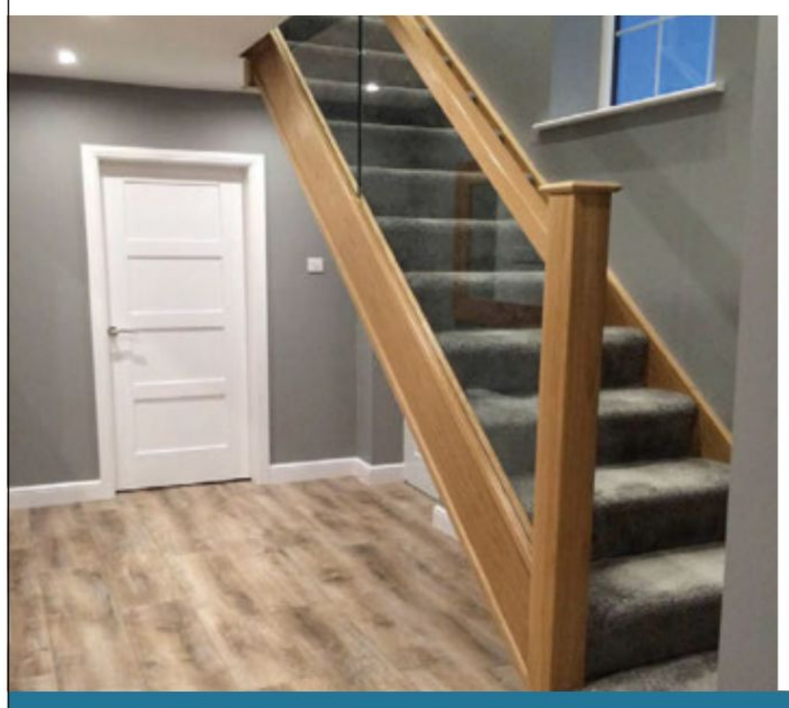

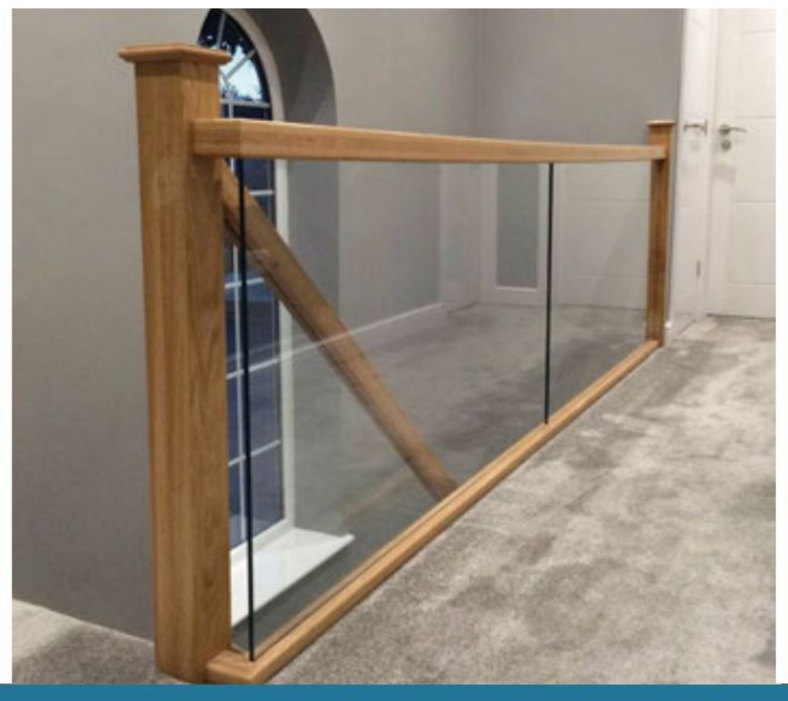

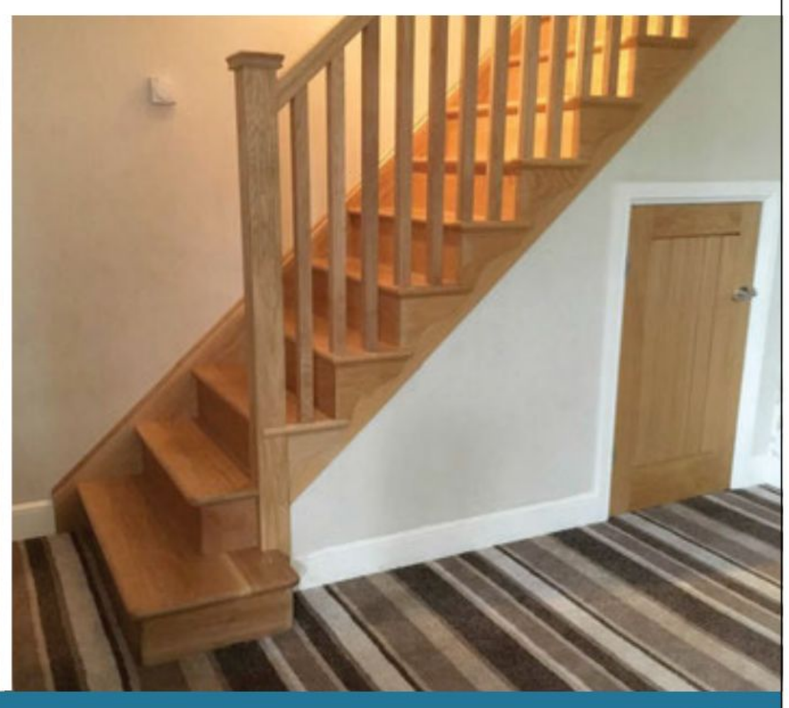

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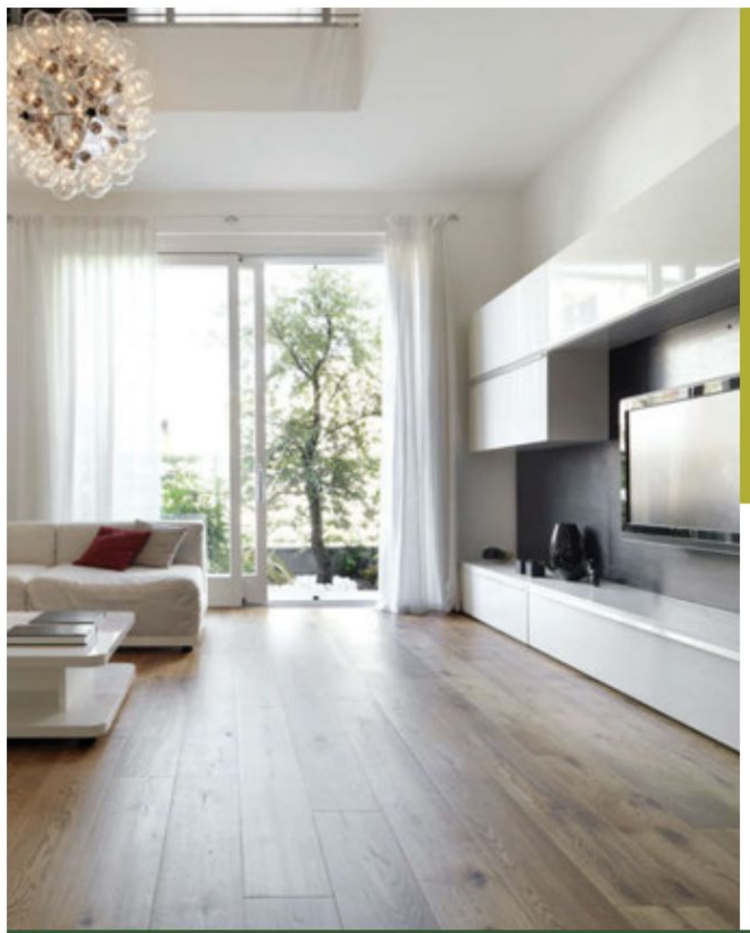

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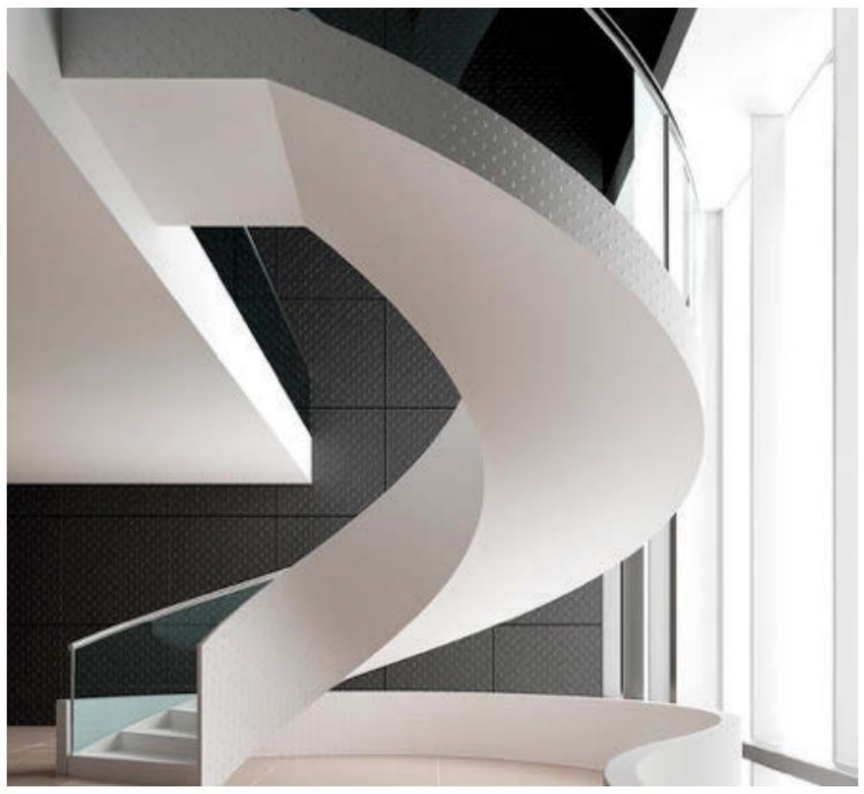
Building news

The latest products and ideas

LARGE FORMAT CLAY SLATES

The Westminster Slate from Redland has the visual appeal of a traditional clay tile, but is more cost effective because of its large size and interlocking design. Only 10 tiles are needed per square metre, compared to 60 for traditional tiles. A finely tapered leading edge along with a hidden cut-back interlock, raised nail holes and custom-engineered head, mean the slate can be installed on pitches down to 17.50.



TEXTURED SURFACE THAT CAN TAKE ON ANY PATTERN

HI-MACS Structura is a new material which offers unlimited 3D surface textures for domestic and commercial applications. The material is created using a new technology by LG Hausys and comes in 10 colours and 10 standard surface designs – from the hexagonal print of Hive to the pebble-like feel of Zen or the raised relief detail of Dunes.

The textured surface can take on virtually any pattern, allowing designers and architects to design their own bespoke surface. It can be applied as wall cladding in bathrooms, ensuites and spas as well as showers and wet rooms and can also be used as an exterior cladding or façade with large-scale patterns that create dramatic effect, even from a distance. Bespoke patterns, drawings, fonts and logos can be reproduced into its surface.

Depending on the pattern and design, HI-MACS Structura can also be thermoformed for a better finish and can be more cost effective than a CNC-produced panel.

Greenworks' new Build Aviator provides a quick, accurate and reliable estimate of the materials, labour and plant equipment required to complete a self-build project. The service directly links to products and prices available from Greenworks' sister brand Jewson. The bill of quantities that is generated is set out by stage of works, material orders and product types, and allows selfbuilders to successfully complete their project, based on design and construction drawings. Build Aviator ensures the specification fully complies with Building Regs, and can link to the SAP assessment.

MATCHING MAILBOX

The Safety Letterbox Company, based in south Wales, manufactured this bespoke mailbox for an award-winning South Street house in Lewes, East Sussex, which appeared recently on Grand Designs.

The upper walls and roof of the property are clad in a continuous skin of corten steel to enable it to self-weather to create a prominent ochre colour. The letterbox was finished in the same corten steel so it too could weather to match the property.

The corten steel look was chosen to resonate with the local red clay brickwork and allude to the industrial heritage of the site. The mailbox is finished in a sleek jet black polyester powder-coated paint and also features an integrated speaker grill, along with a vandal-resistant stainless steel intercom push button.

The property, designed by Sandy Rendel Architects, was the winner of the 2016 Manser Medal.

NEW EVOKE FASCIA JOINTS BY MARLEY

Marley Alutec has made the installation of its Evoke fascia and soffit range easier with the launch of new H-section joints. The aluminium composite fascia and soffit system has been hugely popular since its launch in 2011 and the latest change is sure to appeal to installers. The new H-section joints replicate PVC jointing systems for convenience but retain the strength and durability of aluminium. The Evoke range requires no specialist tools or training for installation and standard carpentry tools will suffice. The H-section slots easily together to provide perfect alignment at the joints and, being made from composite aluminium material, offers a life expectancy of 50 years. At 4mm thick it doesn't require a backing board, making it perfect for fitting over existing systems without reducing tile overhang. One of the main advantages of Evoke's fascias and soffits is that the PVDF paint finish has a self-cleaning additive that helps to reduce the build-up of dust and algae, resulting in an eaves system that stays straighter and cleaner for longer.

ON SITE AND ON TREND

Mascot's new Freestyle range is aimed at tradesmen who want to stand out both at work and in their spare time. The new tops in fashionable colours can be combined with traditional workwear for an individual look. The colours match most of those used in building and construction wear and make it possible to be stylish at work and play.

STYLISH ROOF LANTERN

Nordic Aluminium, the Leeds-based manufacturer of Smart and WarmCore aluminium products which is part of the HWL Windows Group, has added the Stratus roof lantern to its product range. Discreet and stylish, with minimal sight-lines, the Stratus roof lantern was developed by Synseal and is up to 65 per cent more thermally efficient than other aluminium roof systems. Nordic offers the lantern in a two-way, three-way or contemporary design, and is available in Anthracite Grey or Crisp White to the exterior, with a white interior finish as standard. (nordic-aluminium.co.uk)

Drainage ventilation specialist Studor has responded to market confusion by declaring that air admittance valves can be used externally. "Both our Maxi-Vent and Wavin's OsmaVent 110 can be used externally," says Studor's technical director, Steve White. BBA certificates verify that the valves perform in -20°C to +60°C temperatures. The certificates note that these external AAVs should be installed with the aluminium cover and insulating cap which fits on top of the valve to protect the unit.

AN END TO NOISY PIPEWORK

Noise created by wastewater pipes and internal rainwater systems is one of the most frequent sources of disturbance in living and working environments.

This usually only becomes noticeable when the building is completed, at which stage it is much more costly to remedy.

Armacell, leading manufacturer of flexible technical insulation materials, has unveiled a new range of acoustic foams designed specifically for noise control in plumbing applications.

ArmaComfort AB and Alu are easy to install, with the multi-layer 2mm foil-faced acoustic EPDM-EVA barrier and 10mm polyurethane foam layer for decoupling, making it far more effective compared to traditional products, and at much reduced thicknesses.

The flexible material is easy to fit, allowing it to be installed in tight spaces without the need for special tools or accessories, while the self-adhesive backing makes for fast and simple installation.

ArmaComfort AB reduces the airborne sound pressure level of a Geberit roof drainage system by 16 dB (A) at 2 l/s water flow.

HALF THE NOISE

Similar ArmaComfort AB tests on a PVC pipe, where the vibrations caused by flowing water are stronger because of the lighter-weight PVC, achieved a noise reduction of 12 dB (A). The human ear perceives a reduction of 10 dB (A) as halving the volume.

ArmaComfort products achieve a weighted sound reduction

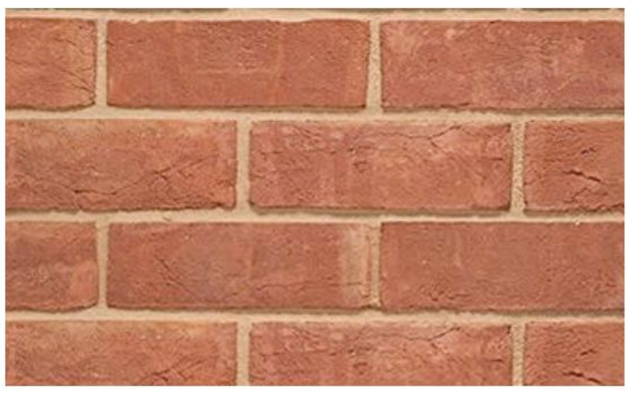
index (Rw) up to 28 dB when pipe and elbows are insulated.

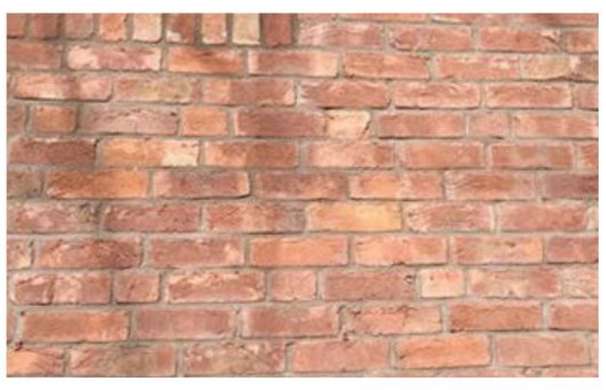
The new materials have good acoustic damping and acoustic isolation properties across the frequency range relevant for building acoustics – irrespective of whether it is installed on cast iron or PVC pipes.

Aluminium foil pressure bonded to the decoupling foam complements metal-clad installations in areas where the pipes are visible and as a closed-cell insulation construction, ArmaComfort AB prevents condensation forming on pipes.

HANDMADE BRICKS TO MATCH MIDLANDS AND THE NORTH

Imperial Bricks has launched a new range of three-inch handmade bricks. Available in a rustic red shade in three different textures the bricks match perfectly the imperial sizes commonly found in the north and Midlands, making them suitable for historic buildings that require renovation – or new builds looking for a more traditional character. The Facing Handmade Brick is finely textured and typically used on front facades. The Handmade and Reclamation Handmade (a heavily weathered version of the former) are coarser textured to create a more established, aged look. The bricks are fully frost-resistant with an F2 rating. The bricks will be on display at the Materials Show in London on April 25-26.





TOOLS

Smart tech from Black and Decker

Black and Decker offers new possibilities for DIYers with its new lithium-ion smart tech 18V lithium-ion battery. Tools that have been packed away and forgotten about can now be easily located using the bluetooth connectivity in conjunction with a smartphone app. Smart tech can also be used to disable the battery whenever the tools are not in use. The battery is engineered to power more than DIY tools. With integrated USB connectivity, the user never needs to worry about their smartphone or tablet running out of juice at a vital moment.

New thermal imaging systems

FLIR Systems has launched three new advanced thermal imaging cameras for electrical, mechanical and building applications.

The FLIR E75, E85 and E95 are wi-fi enabled and feature intelligent interchangeable lenses, laser-assisted autofocus modes and area measurement functionality, and a large four-inch touchscreen.

Professionals can identify hot spots or building deficiencies with increased sensitivity and resolution over previous models.

FLIR has also developed a new range of compact intelligent interchangeable lenses, automatically recognised by the camera and calibrating.

The cameras offer ULtraMax, FLIR's embedded, super-resolution process that improves effective resolution by four times – up to 645,888 pixels – and thermal sensitivity by up to 50 per cent.

GREEN SCENE

The latest eco building news and products

BUMPER YEAR FOR GREEN ROOFS IN THE SOUTH-EAST

The number of planning applications for green roofs across Great Britain in 2016 surged by 34 per cent compared to the figures registered in 2015, according to data published by Barbour Product Search. The southern regions dominated, accounting for 65 per cent of the total. Regionally, London accounted for the highest number of applications with 266 in the year.

Across all the construction sectors it was housing that generated the most green roof applications in 2016, with 42 per cent of the total, almost three times the amount from the second-placed commercial and retail sector.

Until last year, applications for green roofs had been stagnant since 2013. The boost in application numbers has been linked to a number of factors such as biodiversity awareness, environmental effects and the potential financial benefits from installing a green roof.

Commenting on the figures, Michael Dall, lead economist at Barbour ABI, sister company to Barbour Product Search, said: "With an ever-growing concerted effort to make cities greener, it is no surprise to see London lead all regions with 47 per cent of green roof applications in 2016. Furthermore, we must also consider the spread of wealth throughout the country - with property and new build projects predominantly more expensive in southern England, residents need a larger income, thus often having more flexibility to add a green roof to their properties."

ECOBUILD UNVEILS 2018 PLANS

Futurebuild Events has announced that the next Ecobuild will be held from March 6-8, 2018 at ExCeL London. The Ecobuild Conference arena will continue to be at the heart of the show, with next year's programme taking a fresh approach to cross-sector collaboration, uniting the many distinct communities that make up the built environment, supported by themed destinations and feature areas to be known as the Futurebuild Series.This year's Ecobuild attracted 20,000 visitors and more than 450 exhibitors. Conference speakers included Tony Pidgley, chairman of Berkley Homes; Michael Portillo, former defence minister; Lord Foster of Bath; Ben Derbyshire, RIBA President-Elect and Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor of London.

MEDITE TRICOYA EXTREME USED ON FLOATING HOUSE

Designer Julius Taminiau has created a floating house using panels made from acetylated wood fibre material that can withstand continuously wet and damp conditions.

The Dutch architect first discovered Medite Tricoya Extreme at an exhibition in London and took his findings back to the Netherlands and set about designing his dream build.

The 100sqm houseboat consists of two floors with the rooftop half covered with solar panels, concealed by a balustrade. Apart from the living and sleeping rooms, there is a double-height working space with a mezzanine floor that provides separate work and meeting areas.

The floating house idea had to fulfil Taminiau's two key objectives: ingenuity and sustainability.

"The budget for this project was tight and therefore we decided to rationalise the design and make it as clever as possible," he says.

The design features a fixed grid, based on the dimensions of the panels.

The sizes of the rooms, cladding, windows and other materials had to match precisely and be well proportioned. It also reduced the amount of waste material, avoiding unnecessary impact on the environment while also reducing costs.

The layout of the MDF cladding follows a tatami grid system and is applied in a fish-scale pattern. By emulating nature's pattern, the design underlines the secondary key principle of sustainability, which played such an important role in the design.

"The panels will not rot and only expand minimally, even when in contact with water. It's also guaranteed for use in these conditions for up to 50 years," Taminiau explains.

The floating house and office were built by Oranje Arkenbouw, Hardenber in the Netherlands and the panel material was supplied by local distributor, RET in Utrecht.

The finished panels are coated in a water-based matte paint which is durable for 15 years. "The dark colour of the coating gives the floating house added character and underlines the eastern mystique," says Taminiau.

The panel material can be sawN, coated, painted, sanded, nailed and mounted just like any other wood material. The class 1 durability classification makes the panel material as durable as hard timber types, such as teak.

TEXTILE WASTE RECYCLED FOR VERSATILE NEW BOARD

A Scandinavian company hopes to address the growing problem of waste in the textile industry – recycling it into a high-density board suitable for furniture and interiors.

Wickie Meier Engström, Klaus Samsøe and Ole Smedegaard founded Really in 2013 to upcycle end-of-life textiles which amount to tens of millions of tonnes worldwide each year.

The non-profit Textile Exchange expects this figure to reach 110m tonnes by 2020. It estimates that 95per cent of this could be recycled. Only 25 per cent actually is, with much of the waste burnt of consigned to landfill.

Really's Solid Textile Board collection, which was launched at the Salone del Mobile in Milan, is made from end-of-life cotton and wool from the fashion and textile industries, as well as households.

The patented production process mills used textiles into small fibres and mixes them with a special binder that does not degenerate through re-use. The manufacturing process does not involve the use of dyes, water or toxic chemicals and generates only recyclable waste. The material can eventually be re-granulated and formed into new material iterations.

The board material can be used as a substitute for wood and composites in furniture and architecture, while its tactility and unique look make it a decorative alternative to materials such as stone, wood, plasterboard and masonry.

The core of the board is made of end-of-life white cotton sourced from industrial laundries. The outer layers are available in four colours: Cotton White, Cotton Blue, Wool Slate and Wool Natural.

Leading textile manufacturer Kvadrat has purchased a 52 per cent stake in Really which used Dutch designer Christien Meindertsma and his British colleague Max Lamb to demonstrate the potential uses of the material at Salon del Mobile.

RAINWATER HARVESTING SYSTEM WINS GREEN AWARD

Graf UK's Platin rainwater harvesting package has been named a winner in the inaugural Waterwise UK Water Efficiency Product Awards.

As the leading authority on water efficiency in the UK and Europe, Waterwise launched the awards to recognise products or technologies that contribute to water efficiency and benefit the environment.

The Platin Minimax Pro rainwater harvesting system features an in-built self-cleaning filter and provides a sustainable and reliable non-potable water supply for domestic uses, such as toilets, washing and gardens.

As well as offering savings of up to 50 per cent on mains water

consumption, it also helps protect against flooding by diverting water away from drains.

The lightweight rainwater tank has a flat shape, so it can be buried at shallower depths than cylindrical cisterns, minimising labour and reducing installation costs.

The Minimax Pro filter is designed to work in partnership with the Platin, and works by sieving debris such as dirt and leaves out of the incoming rainwater flow, using a self-cleaning stainless steel mesh insert.

BIG PLAYERS BEHIND COMPOSITE DECKING

A new composite timber and plastic product that is in demand in other parts of the world appears poised to take the UK market by storm following its development by two entrepreneurs with a pedigree in both sectors.

Composite Prime is the brainchild of Yorkshire businessmen Dom Harrison and Charles Taylor. Founded in 2014, the company has undertaken extensive research and development and is now set to roll out a product range that industry experts predict could take over from timber decking in the UK.

Both men live in Wharfedale, West Yorkshire, and the venture combines their family histories in the timber and plastics sectors.

Taylor, who owns and runs Taylor's Timber Centre in Bradford, is a third-generation timber merchant, while Harrison's father, Geoff, co-founded Polypipe, the world's largest manufacturer of plastic piping systems.

Composite Prime is targeting the UK decking, fencing and cladding sectors. Harrison explained: "While the product is a manufactured mix of wood and plastic, it has the natural look and feel of timber, combined with the strength and durability of high-density plastic. It lasts for years and alleviates many of the problems associated with traditional timber-discolouring, warping, rotting, splintering and general weathering when exposed to the elements. It's also slip resistant, comes in a range of colours and requires no staining or painting.

The company claims that its HD Deck, HD Fence and HD Clad product range is environmentally friendly, containing 100 per cent Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified hardwood timber from well-managed, sustainable sources and recycled plastic.

"Composites currently hold five per cent market share in the UK, but massive growth is anticipated," said Harrison. "Traditional timber decking has had a good run over the past decade or so, but forecasts are that composites will command 60 per cent of all decking sales over the next three to four years."

VERSATILE EXTRACTOR FAN

EnviroVent has launched a new decentralised mechanical extraction ventilation fan that can operate either as a decentralised MEV or as an extractor fan to meet System 1 or System 3 of Building Regulations Part F. The ECO dMEV LC is ideal for bathrooms, kitchens or utility rooms and can be fitted in a wall, ceiling or panel. Available in five models, the fan also comes in a low voltage 17V version. As a dMEV, it is fully compliant with System 3 of Building Regulations, Part F and SAP Appendix Q eligible with a Specific Fan Power as low as 0.25 W/l/s. The unit can detect any resistance in ductwork and the airflow adjusted accordingly. The fan can be commissioned to be set at one of five trickle speed settings, ranging from 4-13 l/s to exactly meet the airflow requirements for specific applications and ensure the lowest energy consumption down to 1.5W. It can also be switched to an extractor fan setting to meet System 1 of the Building Regulations.

The Passive House STANDARD

Robert Matthews continues his in-depth analysis of the German standard.

Last month we looked at the origins of the Passive House movement. The first Passive Houses were completed in 1991 in Darmstadt, Germany, and in 1996 the Passivhaus Institut was founded there to investigate and promote Passive Houses. All climates are catered for in the standard, and the Passive House methodology has been spreading around the world.

In the UK, the largest development of Passive Houses is the social housing at Saffron Lane, Leicester with 68 homes. It is interesting to note that social housing and selfbuild lead the way, not speculative housebuilding. In practical terms, a Passive House requires:

- Ultra insulation.
- Negligible thermal bridging.
- Very energy-efficient windows.
- An airtight envelope.
- A ventilation system with efficient heat recovery.

Any heating that is required in a Passive House is minimal, and can, if so desired, be achieved by heating the supply air of the ventilation system. In common practice, small heat sources such as heated bathroom rails are often provided to aid the perception of warmth. No central heating system is required. Comfort is high. The air is clean. Running costs are low.

The Passive House Planning Package

For calculating the figures required for a Passive House assessment, the Passivhaus Institute publishes the Passive House Planning Package – PHPP. This is an Excel workbook with more than 30 spreadsheets. The first version appeared in 1998, and the current version is PHPP9, released in 2015. (Price €190.)

The Passive House Standard

To meet the standard, a house (or indeed any building) must satisfy the following four criteria:

1. SPACE HEATING

Per square metre of usable floor area, at least one of the following two requirements must be met:

- **The power required for heating in very cold weather is no greater than 10W**. In Passive House parlance, 10W is the maximum 'Heating Load'. (The weather parameters for what I have called very cold weather are supplied with the local climate data for PHPP. See the Footnote, 'Correction'.)

And/or:

- **The annual amount of energy required for heating is no greater than 15kWh.**

This is the maximum 'Annual Heating Demand'. So little heating energy is required in a Passive House that 'free' heat accounts for most of it:

Solar gains

The solar gains through windows are a major factor, both in winter (desirable) and in summer (undesirable). South-facing glazing is the most useful, overall.

Internal heat gains

Body heat is given off by the occupants of the house. PHPP makes some rather arbitrary assumptions to guesstimate the amount. Also the methodology makes a guesstimate for the heat given off by the use of electrical appliances: lights, washing machine, TV, computer etc.

2. PRIMARY ENERGY

Per square metre of usable floor area:

- **The annual amount of primary energy required must be no greater than 120kWh.**

The 'primary energy requirement' is for space heating, hot water, and domestic electricity (including appliances and lighting). What is 'primary' energy? It is energy at its natural source. Consider, for example, electricity being produced by a gas-fired power station. The generation process is about 40 per cent efficient – most of the energy of the gas is lost as heat. (In the UK, the heat is generally wasted, though in Nordic countries it is often piped along under the streets to warm the buildings.) So for 1kWh of electricity, 2.5kWh of gas energy is required (2.5 = 1/0.4). But before that, some energy has to be used to get the gas out of the ground and transported to the power station.

And later, some energy is lost in the transmission of the electricity via the grid to the home. (For wind and solar electricity, there is no energy cost upstream of the turbine or PV panel.)

So how much primary energy is required to supply a home with 1kWh of electricity? Some people who are adroit with figures work out the proportions of domestic electricity that come from gas, coal, nuclear, and biomass power stations, and from renewables, they add in grid losses and the energy required upstream of the power station, and so they come up with a figure for the primary energy for 1kWh of domestic electricity.

I trust that by now you are somewhat sceptical about the exact figure, but on the other hand, some figure is probably better than no figure.

The conversion figure in PHPP is 2.6, ie 1kWh at the domestic electricity meter requires 2.6kWh of primary energy. In reality, of course, the figure varies from country to country.

For comparison, the SAP2012 conversion figure is 3.07. It is being proposed for SAP2016, that this Primary Energy Factor should be reduced to 2.36. This reflects the move away from inefficient coal-fired power stations towards more efficient, gas-fired stations and to wind and solar electricity. Using electricity to heat a home is becoming somewhat more acceptable,

Plaques are available for fixing to certified houses!

FURTHER INFO

Passive House Trust
The UK Passive House Organisation. For a simple introduction to the Passive House approach, download their pdf: Passivhaus Goes Personal: passivhaustrust.org.uk.

How to build a Passivhaus – the UK Passivhaus knowledge base
A website published by the Passivhaus Trust: howtopassivhaus.org.uk.

Passive House Database
Details for Passive Houses worldwide, with more than 50 individual homes listed for the UK (with usable floor areas from 69sqm to 420sqm): passivhausprojekte.de

PHI accredited building certifiers (for the UK):
BRE: passivhaus.org.uk.

Cocreate Co-operative Ltd: cocreateconsulting.com

Mead Energy & Architectural Design: meadconsulting.co.uk

WARM Low Energy Building Practice: peterwarm.co.uk

An award-winning Passive House in Hackney, London. The zinc-clad two-storey home was erected in a few days from pre-fabricated structural cross laminated timber panels.

emissions-wise. (For SAP2016, the proposed figure for the Primary Energy Factor for mains gas is 1.13.)

How much domestic electricity is used in a house? The answer obviously depends on the occupants, which is why SAP excludes this factor from its calculation (except for lighting). PHPP, on the other hand, does include an allowance for the use of electrical appliances. This varies with the number of occupants, and that varies with the usable floor area – one person per 35sqm of usable floor area is the default figure.

3. AIRTIGHTNESS

A Passive House must be tested for airtightness, using a 'blower door' test.

• **The maximum air leakage allowed in the test is 0.6 air changes per hour** – averaged over test pressures of plus 50 Pascal and minus 50 Pascal. (I'll be looking at airtightness in more detail in a later article.)

4. THERMAL COMFORT

In wintertime, if the criteria above are satisfied, a temperature of 20°C can be maintained indoors. Moreover, the temperatures of all internal surfaces – in particular the window surfaces – will be at least 16.5°C, giving a feeling of comfort.

In summertime, the intent is to keep the indoor temperature below 25°C most of the time.

So:

• **The indoor temperature must not be over 25°C for more than 10 per cent of the hours in a year.**

The figure of 10 per cent sounds reasonable, but since overheating is only likely during the three months of summer (June, July and August), temperatures over 25°C are not allowed for more than 40 per cent of the time during the summer. That 40 per cent figure seems an excessive allowance. (The Passivhaus Trust and the UK Passive House certifiers think that the annual limit should be five per cent.)

In practice, I don't expect there will be very many hours of overheating for Passive Houses in the temperate climate of the UK (except possibly for houses which have exceptionally large areas of glazing).

Cooling

In this article there are many references to the energy required for heating a Passive House. The complete Passive House standards make parallel references to the energy required for cooling. I omit these as, in my view, the installation of air conditioning in a house in the UK is both unnecessary and undesirable.

Climate

The PHPP methodology is applicable for any climate. It comes with a default German data set, but PHPP sold in the UK should come with 22 UK data sets installed, ranging from south-west England to the Shetland Isles.

"Much experience on how to build Passive Houses has been gained in Central Europe, the birthplace of the Passive House Standard. It would be unwise, however, to blindly apply successful Central European Passive House design to other regions and climates. Both the advantage and the challenge of the Passive House Standard is that it can and should be applied to regional building traditions and climatic conditions."

– iPHA brochure: Active for more comfort: Passive House.

Cost analysis

Compared to a conventional new house, a Passive House has ultra insulation, top-quality windows, and HRV (heat recovery ventilation, otherwise known as mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, MVHR). These appreciably add to the cost of building a Passive House. Achieving airtightness too has a cost, though it is mainly a case of workers taking care on site. On the other hand, there is the appreciable saving that results from not installing a conventional central heating system. Overall, the build cost may be greater by, say, four per cent. Set against this are the future cost savings arising from the greatly reduced heating bills. Within a decade or two, the extra capital cost is likely to be recouped.

Building to Passive House Standard makes economic sense. The fact that only a tiny fraction of new build in the UK is built to this standard is an indication of a dysfunctional housing market, not an uneconomic standard. Of course, the economic benefit of building to the Passive House standard is not the only one. A more important benefit is the well-being that comes from living in a comfortably warm space filled with fresh, clean air.

Passive House Certification

Only a minority of Passive Houses are certified, but the proportion is likely to rise in the future as building to the Passive House Standard becomes compulsory in some localities – though not yet in the UK.

For the selfbuilder who wants to build to the Passive House Standard, the greatest benefit comes from living in a house that has been designed and built to the highest energy standard. But the certificate itself would be useful if the selfbuilder should want to sell the house in years to come. Currently in the UK there are four companies who are accredited Passive House Certifiers (see Further Info).

Correction

Last month I wrote that with a temperature outside of -10°C, the Heating Load must be no greater than 10W/sqm of the usable floor area. Even as I wrote it, I thought that a temperature of -10°C was rather severe for the UK, but that is the temperature quoted in the useful Passivhaus Handbook by Cotterell and Dadeby (on Page 18). In fact, the temperature of -10°C, applies to a house in the German standard climate. As we will see next week, in the more temperate climate of the UK, a more benign figure applies (eg, for a house in the Midlands, -1.6°C).

FURTHER INFO

The Passivhaus Handbook – A practical guide to constructing and retrofitting buildings for ultra-low energy performance By Cotterell and Dadeby. Published by Green Books, 2012. £35.

The Passivhaus Designer's Manual – A technical guide to low and zero energy buildings Edited by Hoppe and McLeod. Published by Routledge, 2015. £35.

Active for more comfort: Passive House – Information for property developers, contractors and clients Free pdf, published by iPHA. passivehouse-international.org.

Passive House Institute Their extensive website can be viewed in German or English. (The Deutsch/English button is at the top right of the webpage.) A few pages are currently available only in German. A simple way to get a translation is to use the Google Chrome browser which automatically gives a pop-up asking if you want the page translated. passivehouse.com.

Passipedia The Passive House web resource. passipedia.org.

BRE Passivhaus Free downloads of their Passivhaus Primers: Introduction, Designer's Guide, Contractors Guide, and Airtightness Guide. passivhaus.org.uk.

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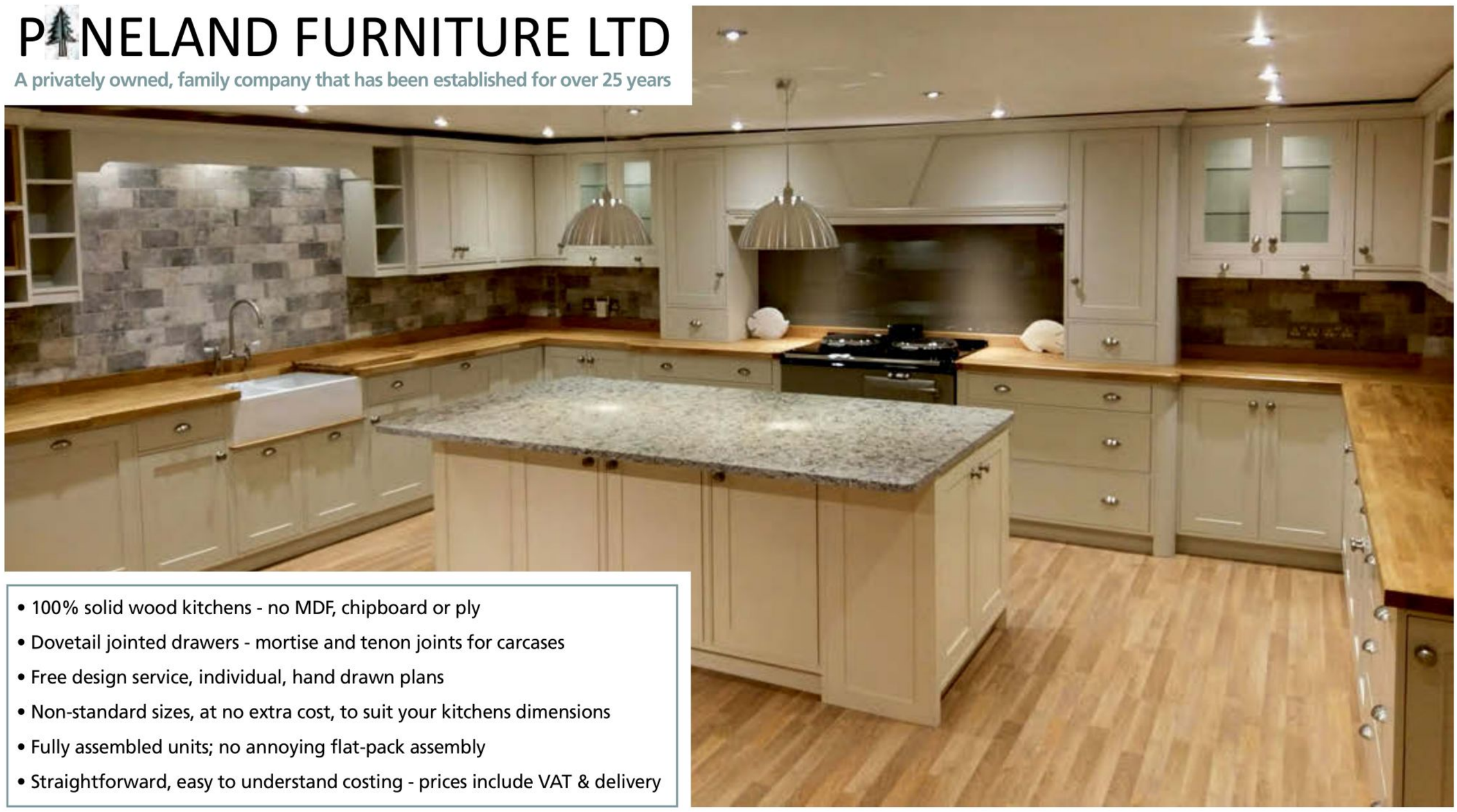

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COMEBACK ON AUCTION PURCHASES

Property law specialist **Guy Elyahou** answers your legal questions.

Q I am undertaking my own self build and have an army of friends and family who are pitching in to make this dream a reality. I have opted to purchase rather than hire most of the plant equipment I will need on site then plan to resell it at the end of the project. I think this will save me money. I have used auction websites, dealers, and even breakers' yards to great effect and have bought most of the things I need, including some professional power tools, an electric hoist, scaffolding and a cement mixer. I also bought at auction a mini-digger with which I am having some issues. I've used it a few times but it's never really worked that well. Unfortunately it won't start at all now and I fear it will cost a small fortune to repair. I could get it fixed or hire a replacement, but before I do I was wondering if I had any recourse for repair costs with the auction house or seller. Or is it simply a case of 'buyer beware'?

A Auction sites, both online and at established venues, are becoming an increasingly common way of purchasing goods, especially in the construction sector. While some good deals can be snapped up, they are not without their risks, as you have experienced. I appreciate that everyone has to balance this risk against the cost of renting, purchasing new, or buying second-hand.

In relation to self-build projects, I suggest that items which are small, don't take up much space on site and are likely to be used after the project are bought new or second-hand. Bigger items should be hired – both for the reasons you have encountered and to allow more space on site once that phase of works is complete.

In general, buying goods is subject to the protections provided by the Sale of Goods Act which provides that all goods sold:

- conform with their description; and
- are of a satisfactory quality.

What constitutes a satisfactory quality depends upon what a reasonable person would regard as being satisfactory, whilst taking into account:

- the cost and description of the goods;
- packaging of the goods;
- the absence of hidden defects; and
- that the goods are both sufficiently durable and capable of maintaining their quality for a reasonable period of time.

Finally, the goods must be:

- fit for the purpose for which they are commonly supplied;
- free from minor defects; and
- safe, durable and of suitable appearance and finish.

There are some exceptions, however. In this instance the issue is slightly complicated as you bought the mini-digger at auction. Depending upon the circumstances of the purchase, the protections provided by the Sale of Goods Act may not apply.

When you buy goods at an auction, your rights will depend on whether:

- the mini-digger was new or second-hand,
- the seller was a trader or private individual, and
- you had the opportunity to inspect the goods beforehand.

Exceptions

The Sale of Goods Act applies to new goods that are purchased at auction and second-hand goods where you did not have an opportunity to inspect them. However, you may not have the benefit of these rights if:

- the goods are second-hand;
- you had the opportunity to attend the sale in person;
- you are told that the Sale of Goods Act didn't apply or that the goods were sold as seen. This could be by way of a notice or exclusion clause in the catalogue; and
- the auctioneer can show that this was reasonable.

In this instance you are seeking a refund for the repair costs. For such a claim you should establish that the Sale of Goods Act applies.

If you purchased from a trader (as opposed to a private individual) and you were not able to attend the auction in person then you can ask the trader to replace or repair the mini-digger free of charge. The time limit is usually within six months of receipt of the goods. If it isn't possible to replace or repair the digger or it is uneconomical for the trader to do so, or he fails to repair or replace it within a reasonable time, you can ask for a partial or full refund.

If you purchased the mini-digger from a private individual then your rights are limited and the Sale of Goods Act is unlikely to apply, although your legal rights for a breach of contract, such as any misrepresentations about the quality of the machine, do apply. For example, if the seller told you that it was in perfect working order and he never had any problems with it!

Most auction houses act as agents despite the fact that you pay them direct. This means that a claim should be made against the owner and not the auction house. The latter should provide you with the owner's details in the event that you wish to take it further, although they have no obligation to do this.

Any claim against the auction house will depend upon whether they have acted negligently or have knowingly made a false statement in order to induce you to buy the goods.

I suggest you raise the issue with the owner as well as the auction house and try to negotiate a settlement, bearing in mind that you might need to settle for less than the cost of repairing the goods. The next option is to initiate court proceedings through the small claims court but check first that they have the assets to pay up if you are successful.

To kick-start any claim you will need to obtain court form N1 from your local county court. You can locate this on the county court Service website:courtservice.gov.uk.

Under certain circumstances your claim may be transferred to a different county court, usually if the defendant resides or carries on business in another area.

Form N1 is fairly straightforward, but you must consider which parties you are going to sue, on what grounds and for what amount of compensation, although the exact figure can be ascertained at a later date.

There are a few key points that you will need to establish in your claim form such as the fact that there was a contract in place, there was a breach, and that you suffered loss.

I appreciate that you are in the middle of your project right now so you probably don't want to be distracted but note that there is a six-year time limit to make a claim in court.

Before submitting the claim you must prepare all your evidence in a logical (usually chronological) manner. This will include collating things like receipts, letters, telephone notes and statements. These items will constitute your evidence.

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PLANNING CLINIC

Our Plot Doctor **Roy Speer** answers your planning questions.

CONCERN OVER NEIGHBOURS' INFLUENCE ON PLANNERS

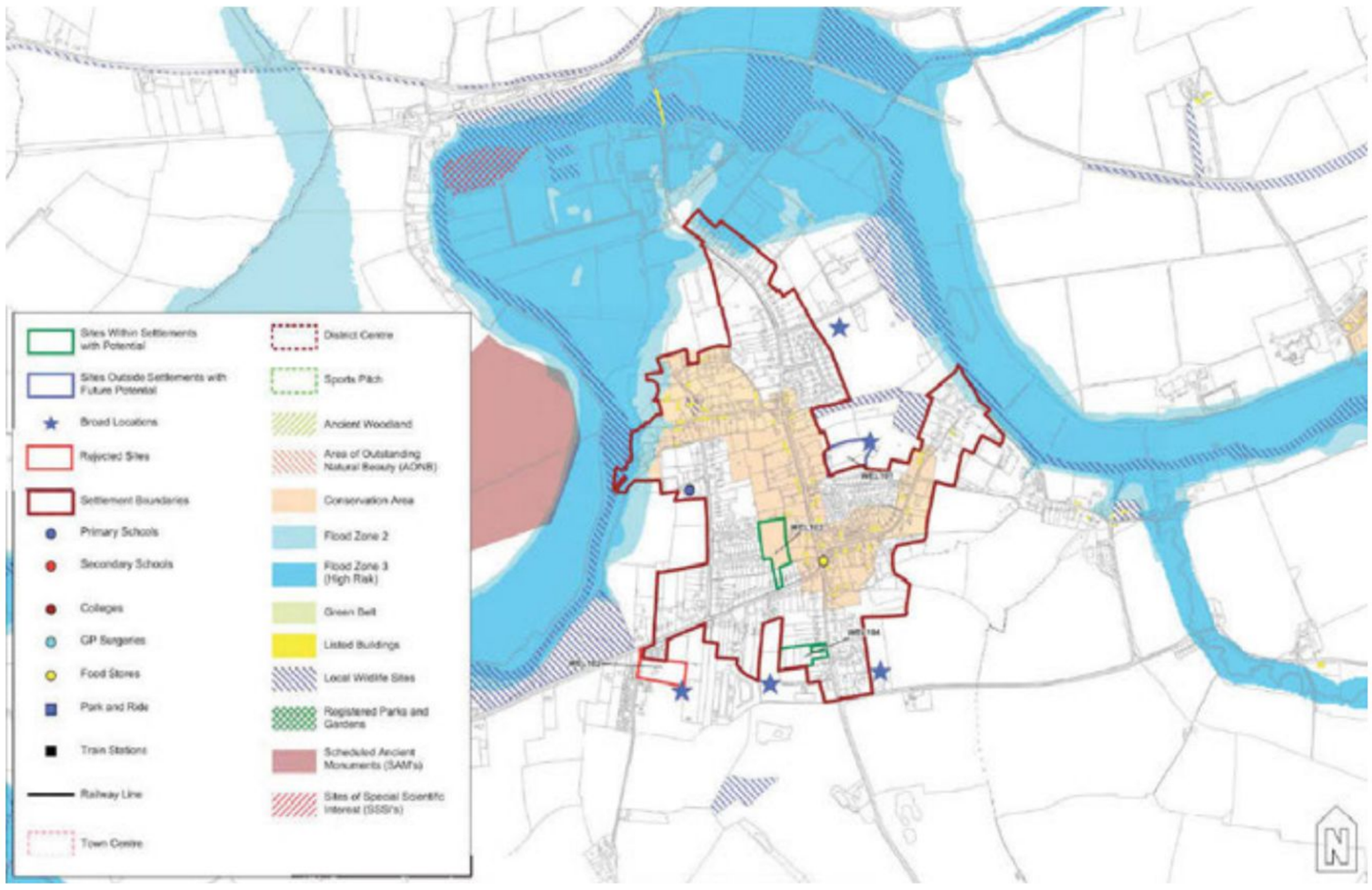
Q I applied for a two-storey side extension and a single-storey rear extension which would link together. The neighbours objected and the planning officer is picking up on their points. The officer is young and I think he's letting himself be pushed around by the objectors. As it stands, he says the application is going to be refused but he's suggested some changes. I don't want to get turned down. What can I do?

A It's impossible to know the motivations of planning officers and what might be going on behind the doors of the planning department. Your suspicions might well be correct but the important thing is to concentrate on dealing with whatever obstacles the council perceives. Consider – as objectively as you can – whether there's any justification for the officer's concerns. If you can see his point, think about whether there are any compromises which still give you what you want but would go some way to addressing the concerns raised. Discuss this with the officer and see if a deal can be done. Based on that, decide what you would be prepared to offer and, if you're willing to compromise, submit a revised drawing with a letter explaining how the changes overcome the concerns and/or how any objections not met by the changes are not justified. If permission is refused, consider appealing. There's a simplified and quicker process for householder appeals.

BEST OPTION FOR PLANNING STRATEGY

Q My parents own a semi-detached house with 15 acres. They want to extend the house and my husband and I want to build a new house on the land, as well as stables and a barn. Before going too far down the line with this, I want to know what sort of chance our plans stand. How can I do that?

A To answer your question directly, the basic choice is to employ a planning consultant to give you an opinion or to carry out a pre-application enquiry yourself. While you might get an off-the-cuff view for nothing from a private consultant, you're likely to have to pay for anything more considered or detailed. The advantage of a consultant is that he or she might be able to suggest ways to go about improving your prospects. The consultant would be focussed on your interests. Most councils have a pre-application consultation regime in place. Many charge but this is likely to be less than you would pay a consultant. Often, for example, householder enquiries on residential alterations are free. If that's the case, a householder 'pre-app' should cover the proposed extension and possibly the stables but wouldn't cover a new house. Planning officers don't offer independent advice based on your interests but give the council's line. Officers vary, of course, but they won't necessarily mention things which would be to your advantage. You will get a view from the horse's mouth, so to speak, as the officers would be making the decision when an application was submitted. Consultants can give their opinions and second guess what the officers might think but won't, of course, be making the decision.



EXCEPTION TEST ON FLOOD RISK

Q My application to build a new house was refused by the council. I live in a town on the coast and this area is classed as Flood Zone 3a. I had a flood risk assessment done which went in with the application. The council accepts that there aren't any sites outside the flood risk area, so it passes one of the tests, but doesn't think it passes the exception test. The council says the new house would have to be an affordable dwelling to meet this second test. What are my options?

A With any refusal there are three main options – re-apply, appeal or give up. If the council won't budge and there's no compromise possible, which seems likely, then an appeal looks like your best bet. That way, you will get a final decision and know where you stand. The exception test for flood risk involves two elements: first, demonstrating the development provides wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk; and second, demonstrating the development will be safe, without increasing flood risk elsewhere. The council saying the scheme would be acceptable if it was affordable implies that it considers the proposed house would be safe and not increase flood risk elsewhere – that is, the second element of the test would be met. That just leaves the sustainability issue. I don't know what was submitted in the application but this involves testing the scheme against the council's sustainability criteria. It would then be a judgment as to whether the benefits outweigh the risk. If, in reality, the risk is low and unlikely to be serious should flooding occur, then you might be in with a chance. This is all fairly specialist so it's probably best to get professional help to give your appeal maximum chance of success.

Diary*dates*

To publicise your course, seminar or exhibition, contact Sue Stelfox on 01283 742960 or email sue.stelfox@wwonline.co.uk.

Potton Self Build Academy

May 26: Introduction to Self Build
May 27: Finding and Appraising a Plot
June 9: How to Plan and Start Your Build
June 17: Design Your Perfect Kitchen and Bathroom
June 23: Making the Most of Your Plot

Venue: Potton Show Centre, Little Paxton

Dates subject to change – please check website:
selfbuildacademy.co.uk/events

TRAINING ACADEMIES

These organisations run regular courses aimed at hands-on selfbuilders.

Able Skills Dartford, Kent

Five-day courses in plumbing, plastering, bricklaying, tiling, dry-lining, electrical and kitchen fitting.
(0808 100 3245, ableskills.co.uk)

Access Training Academies

Cardiff, Bristol, London & Edenbridge

A large variety of accredited training courses for beginners and seasoned professionals alike – whether you want to become a professional electrician, earn your Gas Safe certificate, or simply learn some basic DIY skills.
(0800 345 7492, accesstraininguk.co.uk)

Builder Training Farnham, Surrey

Courses include tiling, carpentry, basic plumbing, bathroom installation, bricklaying and blocklaying. Dates are arranged depending on demand and there are never more than three or four people on each course. They also teach one-on-one and can customise courses to suit your needs.
(07780 977767, basicplumbingcourse.com)

Builder Training Centre Croydon, Surrey

Run over five days, or two weekends, learn bricklaying (mixing mortar, building walls and damp-proofing), plastering, tiling, plumbing and carpentry.
(0800 389 2775, thebtc.co.uk)

Tradeskills4U Crawley, West Sussex

Plastering, tiling, electrics, plumbing and bricklaying are taught with courses of varying lengths, including a DIY course specifically for women.
(0800 856 4448, tradeskills4u.co.uk)

Courses

Brighton Permaculture Trust
Building with Hemp Lime
June 3-4; income-based fee £155-£275
Brighton
This course provides an introduction to the theory and practice of building with hemp lime, also known as hempcrete, including how to use it in the repair and upgrading of old buildings. (brightonpermaculture.org.uk)

Build a Dream Self Build Association
Designing Energy Efficiency into your home – David Hilton
June 6
Bath
This series of talks by industry experts and experienced homebuilders provides valuable information and advice, acting as an avenue for meeting like-minded self-build enthusiasts to form strong alliances. (badsba.co.uk)

Centre for Alternative Technology
Natural Stone Walling
May 13-14; £120
Machynlleth, Wales
The two types of material featured on this course are the offcuts of slate found at quarries all over Wales, such as the one at CAT. This type of slate is a by-product and is often inexpensive to buy. It is useful for creating very uniform, almost brick-like sharp finishes seen on roadsides, landscaping projects, garden planters and ponds. The other material used is a granite-like natural stone, though more porous and gritty than the usual blue granite. This is commonly used in farm boundaries in south Snowdonia, as well as roadside walls and retaining walls. (cat.org.uk)

Dorset Centre for Rural Skills
Lime: Plasters, Mortars, Renders and Washes
May 5; £99
Blandford, Dorset
Lime is an invaluable material, both in new sustainable building and when renovating and repairing older properties. This course combines theory and practical work, from health and safety basics to mixing and applying mortars, renders, plasters and washes. It also covers basic 'old house' technology which is invaluable for anyone living in a property with solid walls. (dorsetruralskills.co.uk)

Durisol
Training Day
May 24; FOC
NSBRC, Swindon
Durisol is a safe and reliable alternative to traditional brick and block. It's a premium construction material that's recycled, renewable and energy efficient. This course will include a talk giving a complete overview on how to build with Durisol and you get the chance to have a go at building with the blocks yourself. (durisoluk.com)

John Cullen Lighting
Lighting Masterclass
May 9; £35
King's Road, London
This is one of a series of lighting masterclasses to show how creative lighting techniques can transform design schemes in the house and garden. Stunning demonstrations will illustrate why lighting is one of the most powerful elements of interior design. Each masterclass also provides an opportunity to discover clever lighting tips that add richness and depth to any living space and explores the energy-efficient lighting options now available. (johncullenlighting.co.uk)

KLC School of Design
Power of Colour
June 28; £185
Chelsea Harbour, London
Colour theory has its foundation in the human experience of colour and helps us to classify harmonious colour associations and hierarchies. With a good understanding of colour theory, artists and designers are able to employ colour strategies – to use colour intentionally – and to enjoy a confident and playful relationship with hues, tints and shades. Initially this workshop references colour theory and then quickly breaks out to practise colour palette creation from different starting points, and using group and individual approaches. (klc.co.uk)

Mike Wye & Associates
Lime Plastering
June 23; £144 inc lunch
Buckland Filleigh, Devon
This course covers the traditional skills for repairing and restoring with lime mortars, renders, plasters and limewash. For each session, there is a practical demonstration, then participants are encouraged to have a go themselves, with guidance at hand. (mikewye.co.uk)

National Self Build & Renovation Centre
Self Build
June 17; £150
NSBRC, Swindon
This course covers project management basics, budgeting, trades and materials, site preparation and set-up. It teaches the detail and steps required in a housebuilding project, giving you the confidence to undertake the management of your own self build. (nsbrc.co.uk)

Poppy Greens Home
An Introduction to Chalk Paints and Techniques
June 17; £65
Advanced Paint Techniques
June 17; £75
Wells, Somerset

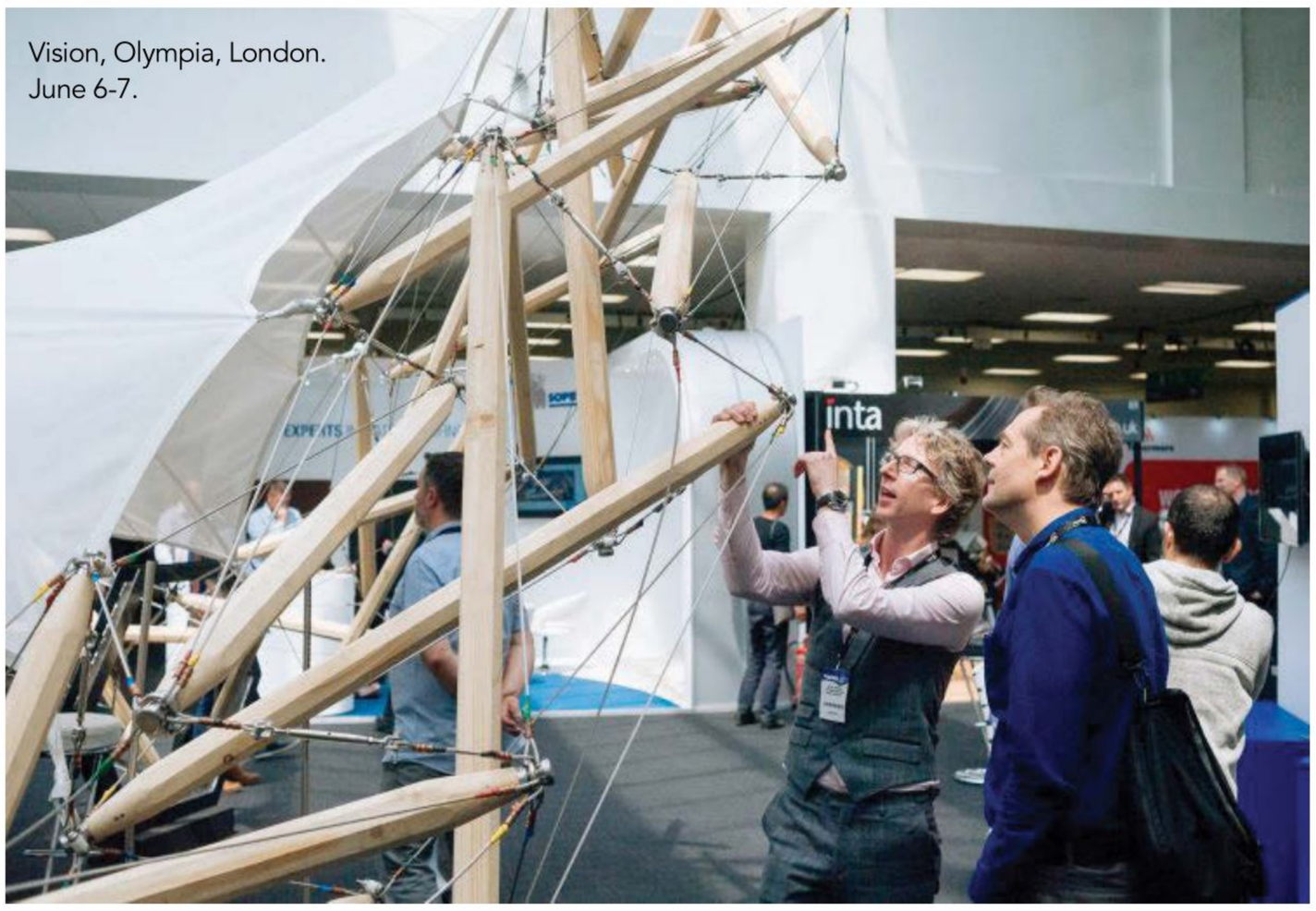
Talks & exhibitions

Grand Designs Live
April 29-May 7
Excel, London
Running for nine days, the show offers visitors a unique opportunity to see all the latest trends for the home as well as many products not seen before. Based on the Channel 4 TV series and presented by Kevin McCloud, the event will host 500 exhibitors, across seven different sections where you can take away ideas and inspiration for your own grand design. (granddesignslive.com)

The National Self Build & Renovation Show
May 19-21
Swindon
Based at the home of self build, custom build and renovation, this is an event not to be missed by anyone serious about building their own house or planning to make major renovations. With over 200 exhibitors, live demonstrations and free seminars, there are also opportunities to meet architects and designers. (nsbrc.co.uk)

Homebuilding & Renovating Show
May 20-21
Glasgow
The world of housebuilding and renovating doesn't stand still for long. That's why this show is full of information on the latest trends, technologies and tips for getting the most out of your project. At Scotland's biggest self-build and renovating event, there are thousands of ideas from suppliers based across the country – all in one space, with seminars, masterclasses and the Advice Centre. (homebuildingshow.co.uk)

Clerkenwell Design Week
May 23-25
London
Clerkenwell is home to more creative businesses and architects per square mile than anywhere else on the planet, making it truly one of the most important design hubs in the world. To celebrate this rich and diverse community, Clerkenwell Design Week has created a showcase of leading UK and international brands and companies presented in a series of showroom events, exhibitions and special installations that take place across the area. This award-winning gathering has firmly established itself as the UK's leading independent design festival and annually attracts the international design community to this small area of London for three days of exciting events. (clerkenwelldesignweek.com)


Vision, Olympia, London.
June 6-7.

London Festival of Architecture
June 1-30
London
The 2017 London Festival of Architecture aims to connect with as many people as possible, in ways that demonstrate architecture's relevance to London and its diverse communities. The community theme will explore how Londoners and visitors to the city can be active participants in its growth and evolution – from reinterpreting or redesigning familiar places and spaces through installations and animations, to testing interactive forms of consultation and planning for future development. This annual public celebration of architecture will return to venues across the capital throughout June. The festival programme will feature exhibitions and events organised by London's leading architectural, cultural and academic institutions alongside practising architects, designers, curators and community groups from around the UK. (londonfestivalofarchitecture.org)

Vision
June 6-7
Olympia, London
Held annually, Vision is the place where architects, suppliers and clients come together to discuss, debate and showcase the latest innovations and developments in architecture, design and the built environment. Vision focuses on innovative building products, materials and technology and provides ideas for new and inventive ways to achieve better building design and comply with changing legislation. The educational programme is free to attend and features a series of seminars, live debates, technology talks and interactive show features alongside a carefully curated exhibition of cutting-edge products. (visionlondon.com)

Salvo 2017
June 24-25
Henley-on-Thames
As well as the usual unique mix of reclaimed materials, architectural salvage, decorative and garden antiques, mid-century and industrial, this year's theme is Green Living and will feature ancient and modern eco-friendly products, services, craftspeople and a pop-up from zero waste restaurant Silo. (salvofair.com)

Taking place over one day, these two courses are designed to teach you the basic skills required to paint furniture, and to give you the confidence to start work on your own projects. You will learn how to apply the paints and waxes, two-colour paint layering, adding texture, ageing and distressing. The second course then delivers a wide range of advanced decorative techniques including gilding, stencilling, decoupage, craquelure and crackle glazing. (poppygreenshome.co.uk)

Royal Institute of British Architects
Listed Building Consent
June 15; £74.40-£106.80
Exeter
Listed Building Consent: when do you need it and how do you get it? This seminar will explore listed building consent requirements and procedures in achieving them, through the use of RIBA Plan of Work 2013. Since carrying out work to a listed building without consent is technically a criminal offence, it is important to have a good understanding of what does and does not require consent. (architecture.com)

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
Old Houses for the Future
May 6-7; £270-£290
York
This course will provide essential information on how the structure of a building can be repaired and maintained, and will explore how improvements can be made to the thermal performance of windows, roofs and floors. Students will learn how to make their homes comfortable and sustainable for 21st-century living without harming the building fabric or character. (spab.org.uk)

Ty-Mawr
Introduction to Lime and Lime Plastering
June 8-9; £264
Powys
This two-day course covers the same ground as the one-day courses Introduction to Lime, and Lime Plastering, but has a smaller group size and offers more flexibility. It has the added benefit of you being able to return to your work the following day to see how the materials react over a longer period of time. It is ideal for those who want more time for hands-on practical work, and also to absorb the information and ask questions. (lime.org.uk)

Weald & Downland Open Air Museum
Energy Conservation in Traditional Buildings
May 17; £115
This day school considers the issues surrounding the improvement of energy efficiency in traditional buildings, including the importance of performance and a review of some of the methods available for assessing and measuring; a review of some of the options available and their suitability and effectiveness when applied to traditional buildings; plus case studies applying the theory to real-life buildings. (wealddown.co.uk)

West Dean College
Conservation and Repair of Timber
May 8-11; £620
Near Chichester
This course provides an intensive introduction to historic timber-framed structures. It begins by examining the original methods of framing and construction and then concentrates on problems, failures and methods of repair. (westdean.org.uk)

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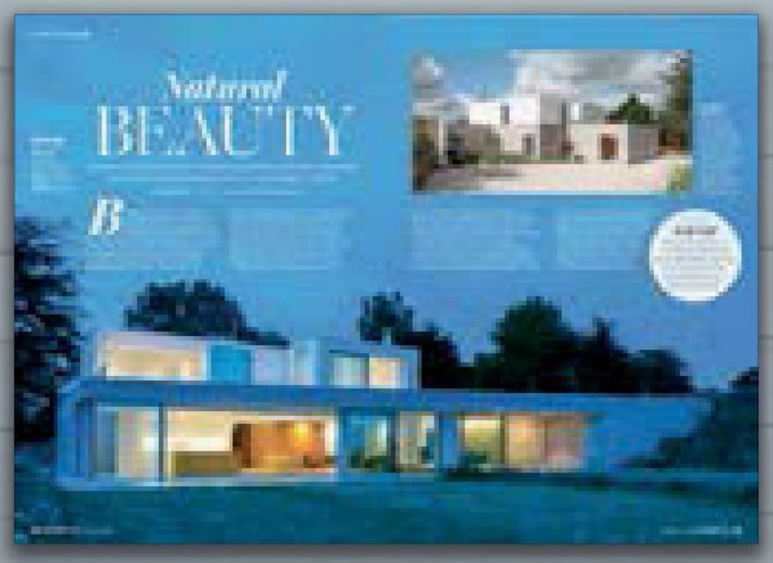

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Property & Setting

The plot is in Grappenhall, roughly halfway between Manchester and Liverpool. It's a location with good road links to the M6 and M56 and a railway station a couple of miles away in the middle of Warrington. Grappenhall is described as a 'suburban village' and I think that's a good description – it's attached to Warrington and yet has its own identity. Despite its modern-day suburban status, it was mentioned in the Domesday Book with a church built in the 12th century. There's a range of local shops, including supermarkets, doctors, dentists and vets and a few schools with more facilities within easy reach. The plot, which is on the market via local agent Mark Antony, is on a side road just off one of the main throughfares, a short distance from the main shops. It's on the eastern side of a residential road of Victorian terraces and semis and some later houses. To the south is an alley providing access to the backs of the adjoining terraced houses on the main road. On the northern side are pairs of semi-detached houses. The gable wall facing the site has the front door, two ground-floor windows, a couple of what look like small bathroom or toilet windows at first floor level and, above them, a small attic window. At the rear of the plot are the back gardens of the houses fronting the main road. Across the road is a terrace of two-storey houses, one of which is a hairdresser's shop on the ground floor. The plot itself is a more-or-less level area of ground on which it appears a building stood at the back of the site until relatively recently. The plot dog-legs because, at the front corner, there's an electricity substation contained within a small flat-roofed brick building within a fenced-off compound.

URBAN INFILL

On the lookout for a self-build plot, Colleen and Alan Hooper spotted a site for sale and Roy Speer went to cast an eye over it.

The agent's particulars say there is planning permission so I look this up on the council's website, using the application reference number supplied. My first port of call is the planning officer's report on the application, as this provides a useful summary of all the relevant factors. This states that the building that used to be on the site was a nursery which had closed five years before this planning application was made and was then occupied by another business for a year. It was then said to have been demolished to stop it becoming a nuisance to neighbours through vandalism and vermin.

A previous application had been made in 1988 but refused on the grounds that the site's size and shape couldn't accommodate a two-storey house without harming neighbouring occupiers. In 2012, the council was notified of an intention to demolish the building and the council decided prior approval of the details of that were not required. The parish council hadn't objected even though it had concerns about the size of proposed building. About 10 neighbours had not been so keen, however, and objections included that the proposed building was too large, its garden would be too small, it would be built too close to boundaries, insufficient parking, highway safety, loss of light and style of building.

The scheme seemed to have been revised twice during consideration of the application, presumably in light of the objections which had been made and planning officer concerns. The approved drawings show a chalet design which dog-legs to follow the shape of the plot. The main section of building would be behind the substation and a single-storey section would project from the front along the side of the substation site. On the first floor, within the roof space, would be three bedrooms and bathroom. On the ground floor there would be an open-plan living/kitchen area at the rear with a lounge looking into a courtyard behind the substation, a hall and cloakroom and a single integral garage at the front.

Outside, the design is quite complex. The eaves would come down to first-floor level and there would be one pitched-roof dormer and one roof light at the front and three roof lights in the rear roof slope. The slate-covered roof would have half-hipped ends. The walls would be brick on the ground floor and white render on the gable ends. The building would be set in about a metre from the side boundaries. There's space behind the house for a garden six or seven metres deep; between the substation and the house there would be the small courtyard and, in front of the garage, two car spaces.

The planning officer's report says the house would have its own distinctive appearance which would make a modest positive contribution to the mixed nature of the road. The officer thought the adjoining properties wouldn't be harmed, including the house next door to the north with its side windows. Rear dormers had been proposed originally but these were swapped for roof lights to maintain the privacy of

the gardens the house would back onto. Eleven conditions were attached to the permission. The standard three-year time limit is, of course, included and this is significant because that period will run out in a month or so. Most of the conditions are common and, while they would need to be dealt with, shouldn't pose a problem. Annoyingly, Permitted Development Rights for extensions and outbuildings have been taken away, as well as additional windows, which is more understandable. A contamination survey must be undertaken and if anything is found an appropriate remediation scheme has to be drawn up, approved and carried out. Noise insulation measures must be submitted to ensure the occupants are protected from noise arising from traffic or the substation.

PLANNING POLICY

The current Local Plan came into force in July 2014. This says most new homes will be built on previously developed or brownfield sites and about 40 per cent will be in suburban areas. In these locations, housing is allowed which meets identified needs in sustainable locations. There are standard general policies requiring, amongst other things, prudent use of resources and high standards of design and construction. One policy aims to protect the environment and neighbours. Its criteria include noise generation, the effect of traffic and respecting the residents' rights to privacy, outlook and light.

SUBSTATION

The sub-station has several implications for the development of the plot. First there's the appearance. It's not great to have a brick box at the front of a property but, then again, it's quite innocuous and better than one of the more open substations where the metal gubbins is on view. It would affect the outlook from the windows at the front of a house but, in the approved design, this has been mitigated by the courtyard, which could be laid out and planted attractively, with screening in front of the substation building. Substations can generate noise which is often low frequency and can be intrusive in houses. It might be that some sound insulation has to be included in the design. The condition attached to the planning permission would take care of that and I doubt whether any noise generated would reach the back garden. Colleen and Alan could always try speaking to the neighbours to see if they are affected, as their living rooms are close to the substation. The officer's report refers to consultation with the council's environmental health department about electromagnetic forces. Those officers seemed to be happy that the exposure would be very low and not distinguishable from levels elsewhere in an urban environment.

ACCESS

The plot already had an access for vehicles and the previous use of the site could have generated more use than one house. There was no objection to access, even though the planning officer's report says that the visibility splays were not to standard. Since the road has many terraced houses, on-street parking is at a premium. The scheme included three off-street parking spaces, which was welcomed by the highway authority. Most houses in the road don't provide on-site turning so that factor did not count against a house without such a facility.

VALUE

The three-bed terraced houses in the road have sold recently for £170,000-180,000 and the newer three-bed semis fetched around £220,000-225,000. A two-bed bungalow sold in the autumn of last year for £170,000. The sales of the newer semis are a better indicator for the plot. Being detached and a new build should attract a higher value, although the presence of the substation would have an effect.

The local agents are best placed to put an estimated value on the finished house and Colleen and Alan should ask them. Based on the sale prices, I expect a figure would be a bit less than £300,000. The guide price for the plot is £130,000 and, if my rough estimate of the finished house value is near the mark, that would suggest a lower figure for the plot. Colleen and Alan need to do their sums based on their own project and costings to see what they could afford. They should also investigate the likelihood of contamination and any possible clean-up costs. Obviously, this won't be known until a full survey is done but they need to allow something in their contingency budget to cover this.

Need Roy's help? Roy Speer is a planning consultant and co-author of How to Get Planning Permission and How to Find and Buy a Building Plot. If you would like Roy to visit your site email in the first instance: ross.stokes@sbdonline.co.uk or write to: PlotDoc, SelfBuild & Design, 151 Station Street, Burton-on-Trent DE14 1BG.

VERDICT *Doctor's diagnosis*

On the approved scheme itself, I think the designer did a good job. It was clearly a challenging site because of the surrounding houses, the substation and the shape of the site. The application file indicates it wasn't easy to come up with a design the council would support and the more ambitious original scheme had to be cut down a couple of times to meet the officer's concerns. This suggests to me that Colleen and Alan wouldn't be likely to wring much more out of the plot than has been achieved already. Whilst tweaks to taste - especially internal – are likely to be possible, it might not be feasible to do anything vastly different. One challenge with the plot is that the existing permission is about to run out. There's no reason immediately apparent to suggest that a new permission wouldn't be given but then planning policies can change and there's always uncertainty with planning applications.

The question is what to do about it. The existing permission was given under the previous Local Plan, although the new plan was adopted only a month later. It's likely, therefore, that the policies of the new plan would have been given a lot of weight in the decision. Even so, standards and approaches applied evolve over time and the fact that permission was given once, doesn't guarantee that it would be given again. I expect there'll be other potential purchasers – perhaps builders or professional developers – in the market who would take a punt without a new permission in place. However, no matter the circumstances, there would be risk involved in doing that. The safer way to proceed would be to enter a conditional contract or an option. By these means, Colleen and Alan could ensure they didn't commit to buying the plot until planning permission had been given again. This, of course, wouldn't be so attractive to the vendor as an immediate outright purchase. They would need to sound out the agent about a possible deal along these lines. As for the plot itself and the sort of house which could be built on it, it's personal preference. The approved design is quite clear, enabling Colleen and Alan to get an accurate idea of what the house would be like. They need to visualise it in place in its setting and look at the internal spaces and garden areas to see whether this would suit them and their needs. It could make a nice, relatively low-priced project to create a distinctive house to take on.

Useful contact: Mark Antony, sales and letting agents 01925 878185

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Finance

A guide to self-build mortgage lenders

The table below, while not exhaustive, is a guide to the lenders that offer self-build mortgages and the range of products available.

In association with
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LENDER'S NAME	Lend on land	% of end value of property advanced	Number of stage payments	Minimum works completed for 1st stage payment	Mortgage types available	National or local	Telephone
GUARANTEED ADVANCE STAGE PAYMENT MORTGAGES							
Bath Building Society *(Accelerator)*	85% (OPP)	80%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	4.74%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Hanley Economic *(Accelerator)*	85% (OPP)	80%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	5.54%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Hanley Economic *(Accelerator)*	85% (OPP)	60%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	4.54%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Penrith Building Society *(Accelerator)*	85% (OPP)	75%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	5.50%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Melton Mowbray *(Accelerator)*	85% (OPP)	75%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	5.24%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
ARREAR STAGE PAYMENT MORTGAGES							
Chorley Building Society*	85% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.74%	England/Wales/ Mainland Scotland	0345 223 4647
Mansfield Building Society*	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.74%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Darlington Building Society*	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.99%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Loughborough BS*	75% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	4.69%	Central England	0345 223 4647
Ipswich Building Society*	75% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	5.09%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Newcastle Building Society*	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	5.4%	England/Wales/ Mainland Scotland	0345 223 4647
Newcastle Building Society*	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	5.39%	England/Wales/ Mainland Scotland	0345 223 4647
Furness Building Society*	75% (OPP)	80%	Six	Wind and watertight	4.74%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Furness Building Society*	75% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.99%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Furness Building Society*	75% (OPP)	75%	Six	Wind and watertight	4.99%	Mainland Scotland	0345 223 4647
Furness Building Society*	75% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	5.20%	Mainland Scotland	0345 223 4647
Holmesdale Building Society*	85% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	5.49%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Buckinghamshire BS *	75% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	4.59%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Dudley Building Society*	50% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	5.49%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Ecology Building Society	85% (OPP)	85%	Flexible	Flexible	4.65%	National	0845 674 5566
Furness Building Society	66% (DPP)	80%	Eight	Excavation	5.99%	Local	0800 781 4311
Cumberland Building Society	75% (DPP)	75%	Flexible	Flexible	Call branch	Branch area only	01228 403141
Hinckley & Rugby Building Society	No	80%	Four	Footings	5.64%	England/Wales	01455 894083
Loughborough Building Society	75% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	4.69%	Central England	01509 631950
Scottish Building Society	80% (DPP)	80%	Flexible	Foundations	5.99%	Scotland	0131 313 7700
Newbury Building Society	66% (DPP)	75%	Flexible	Foundations	4.95%	Postcode Restricted	Contact branch
Progressive Building Society	No	75%	Four	Wall plate	4.25	Northern Ireland	Contact branch
Vernon Building Society	75% (DPP)	80%	Four	Wall plate	4.95%	England/Wales	0161 429 6262

* exclusive from Buildstore

Funding a self build

Self-build mortgages are paid out on the completion of various stages of the build, typically four or five.

This means that you need to be able to fund stages, either from your own resources or other borrowing, before you are reimbursed by the next payment from your main lender. In the case of a timber-frame house, where the frame might account for a third of your total budget – payable in one go – this is likely to require careful juggling of finances. Establish clearly with your lender when and how stage payments will be made so you don't find yourself running into cash-flow problems.

One solution is to raise a loan on your existing home, to be repaid when you sell it. There are also schemes, such as Buildstore's Accelerator Mortgage, which allow you to remain in your home until your new house is completed.

FOCUS ON

CUSTOM BUILD

Our monthly look at custom-build schemes around the UK.

AYLESBURY GETS SUPPORT OF NaCSBA TASK FORCE

Buckinghamshire Advantage is the first organisation to receive support from the National Custom and Self Build Association's newly implemented Right to Build Task Force which was launched in February to help local authorities, community groups and other organisations to deliver large, affordable custom- and self-build housing projects. Buckinghamshire Advantage is the operational arm of Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP), which is promoting the Aylesbury Woodlands site on behalf of several public and private-sector landowners.

The aim is to create a distinctive quality neighbourhood comprising of 1,100 new homes as part of a wider mixed-use development to the east of Aylesbury.

Aylesbury was chosen by the government in January to become one of three new garden towns.

The Right to Build Task Force will be working alongside Buckinghamshire Advantage to help to deliver a significant proportion of the 1,100 homes on a self- and custom-build basis.

Richard Harrington, chief executive of BTVLEP, said: "Within Buckinghamshire Advantage's 2016 planning application for the Aylesbury Woodlands site, we clearly signalled our intention to explore a significant custom- and self-build housing development. We are delighted to be working with the new Right to Build Task Force to help us identify the potential demand for custom and self build in Aylesbury and ways to meet that demand."

The task force was launched with the aim of helping at least 80 organisations to create significantly more affordable homes over the next three years.

The task force is funded by the Nationwide Foundation, which aims to increase the availability of decent affordable homes for people in housing need.

URBAN SPLASH PLANS FOR TYNESIDE DOCK

An historic Tyneside shipyard in North Shields is being restored to its former glory and brought back to life as a new riverside neighbourhood. Centred around three dock basins, which will form the heart of a lively community, developer Urban Splash plans to provide contemporary family homes, and thoughtfully designed public spaces with plenty of places to eat, drink and play. The long-term transformation of Smith's Dock will also open up new connections along the river between Fish Quay and Royal Quays and from the town centre down to the waterfront. Work on the site is well underway with the first 34 new homes, known as 'The Plateau,' set to be launched onto the market on May 6. The two- and three-storey contemporary family homes are from Urban Splash's hoUSe portfolio.

The master plan of the Graven Hill Village site which will eventually accommodate 1,900 homes.

GRAVEN HILL PLOT SALE SUCCESS PROMPTS RELEASE OF MORE LAND

Eight more premium serviced building plots are up for grabs at Graven Hill, following the recent auction of the first seven plots on the UK's largest custom- and self-build site.

Graven Hill Village Development Company, along with the site itself, is owned by Cherwell District Council. It reported a positive response to the release of the first Gold Brick plots which were opened to sealed bids in February.

The plots, which can accommodate up to a six-bedroom house, were opened up to bidding between January 16 and February 24 and fetched prices ranging from £270,000 to £354,000 for plot sizes of between 4,726 sq ft and 6,901 sq ft.

More than 80 per cent of plots on the first phase have now been reserved, leading the company to release a further eight plots, with guide prices of between £230,000 and £265,000.

Adrian Unitt, operations director for GHVDC said: "We had anticipated high levels of interest in these plots, given their prime location near to the hill, but we are delighted that all seven have sold as it confirms that our guide prices are right for the market.

"Given the level of demand for these larger-sized plots, we have therefore made the decision to bring forward the release of a further eight plots. These are a combination of four-, five- and six-bedroom plots.

Over the next decade the site will develop up to 1,900 new homes, many of which will be self or custom built with the potential to provide a wide variety of sizes, including plots for people on more modest budgets.

Graven Hill is expected to release a range of new products over the coming months and the first residents will move onto the site later this year.

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The following pages contain a sample of the plots, renovations and conversion opportunities which are available on PlotBrowser.com this month. To search for more plots across the UK, and receive free notifications of new plots in your county, sign up today at **www.plotbrowser.com**.

DRUMOAK, BANCHORY

Cressbrook - A garden plot that extends to 0.097 hectare (0.24 acres) or thereby with Planning Permission in Principle for a four-bedroom property in a semi-rural location (Aberdeenshire Council ref APP/2014/3157). OIEO £150,000.
Stronachs, 01224 845845/01224 626100, info.property@stronachs.com

ABERDEENSHIRE

CRUDIE
Easter Crudie - Building plot in a quiet hamlet with planning for a house and garage. Price band under £50,000. Stewart & Watson, 01261 818883, banff.property@stewartwatson.co.uk

FYVIE, TURRIFF
East Camaloun Steading - Detached steading that had planning for conversion to a three-bedroom house with garage and workshop (ref F/EX/2011). OIEO £105,000. Stewart & Watson, 01888 563777, turriff.property2@stewartwatson.co.uk

GAMRIE, BANFF
Howe of Easter Melrose - Plot in a rural location with permission granted for a house (ref APP/2013/4077, Aberdeenshire Council). Plot approx 0.39 acres. Offers invited. Stewart & Watson, 01261 818883, banff.property@stewartwatson.co.uk

HUNTLY
Hillside Cottage - Steading in an elevated position with lapsed planning for conversion to a two-bedroom house (APP/2008/1633). Price band £50,000-£99,999. Stewart & Watson, 01466 792331, huntly.property@stewartwatson.co.uk

MARYKIRK
Adjacent garden cottage, Canterland Farm - Site with Planning Permission for a three/four-bedroom property. A former agricultural building has been removed. (Aberdeenshire Council ref APP/2016/1016). OIEO £85,000. Stronachs, 01224 845845/01224 626100, info.property@stronachs.com

OYNE, INSCH
2 Rettie Cottage - A slightly elevated house site of around 0.124 ha with views over the surrounding countryside. There is Planning Permission in Principle to erect a dwelling house with parking spaces (Aberdeenshire Council ref APP/2016/1228). Price band £50,000-£99,999. Peterkins, 01466 799352, maildesk@peterkins.com

TULLYNESSLE, ALFORD
Burnside - A site that extends to 0.33 hectares (0.8 acre) or thereby with full planning consent for a five-bedroom property (Aberdeenshire Council ref APP/2014/3131). OIEO £140,000. Stronachs, 01224 845845/01224 626100, info.property@stronachs.com

YTHANWELLS, HUNTLEY
Denhead Cottage - Plot extending to approx 0.489 acres with planning for the demolition of the existing bothy and construction of a new house (ref APP/2013/1519 - Aberdeenshire Council). Price band under £50,000. Stewart & Watson, 01651 872314, oldmeldrum.property@stewartwatson.co.uk

COUNTY DURHAM

COTHERSTONE, BARNARD CASTLE
Hallgarth Hill - Sizeable building plot with planning to create a large three-bedroom dormer bungalow with extensive gardens (Durham County Council ref DM/15/02095/FPA). OIEO £150,000. George F White, 01833 690390, barnardcastle@georgefwhite.co.uk

KNITSLEY, CONSETT
The Lodge, Little Greencroft Farm - A derelict former two-bedroomed cottage in need of total redevelopment as part of Little Greencroft Farm, which comprises six properties for conversion. Planning permission has been granted to extend the existing dwelling to a larger three-bedroomed family home. OIEO £110,000. George F White, 01388 527966, wolsingham@georgefwhite.co.uk

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MIDDLETON-IN-TEESDALE
Greta Lodge, Plot 3 - Serviced plot with full planning permission for detached family property with three reception rooms, four bedrooms, garage and gardens. Potential to alter/amend current plans and option to create a smaller property (subject to planning). OIEO £90,000. George F White, 01833 690390, barnardcastle@georgefwhite.co.uk

ROOKHOPE
Stotsfieldburn Farm Barns - Agricultural buildings with planning permission and listed building consent to create a spacious detached family home with 2.3 acres of land (Durham County Council ref DM/15/03476/LB and DM/15/03475/FPA). Guide price £220,000. George F White, 01388 527966, wolsingham@georgefwhite.co.uk

WEST AUCKLAND, BISHOPS AUCKLAND
Darlington Road - Two building plots - will separate. Each plot has planning permission for a detached house (Wear Valley District Council ref 3/2006/0867). Price band £50,000-£99,999. Dowen, 01388 607889, thomas.fox@dowen.co.uk

WHEATLEY HILL
Moor View - Plot with planning permission and architect's plans available for a three-bedroom detached house. Concrete foundations down. Price band

under £50,000. Dowen, 0191 518 0181, barbara.metherell@dowen.co.uk

DEVON

CHUDLEIGH
Moor View - Single plot with outline planning for a detached three/four-bedroom house. Good-sized rear garden and off-road parking for two to three vehicles. Price band £50,000-£99,999. Private seller, 07341 567580,

GARA BRIDGE
Bluebells - Over 15 acres of land with planning permission to erect a four-bedroom home (South Hams DC ref 38/1236/12/F, renewal ref 3443/16/FUL). The bungalow that was on site has been demolished, the site has been largely cleared and the stone-fronted open bay garaging has been built. Guide price £485,000. Stags, 01803 865454, totnes@stags.co.uk

HIGHAMPTON, BEAWORTHY
Plot with implemented planning permission for a detached property. The consent is for a four-bedroom property. OIEO £127,500. Robert Williams, 01392 204800, sales@robertwilliams.co.uk

IVYBRIDGE
Godwell - Large plot with planning permission for one dwelling in existing mature garden. Price band £150,000-£199,999. Private seller, simonlemarechal@btinternet.com

MARIANSLEIGH, SOUTH MOLTON
Middle Uppacott - A former linhay and granary with planning permission for conversion to a single-storey dwelling on a site that extends to about 0.93 acres, including paddock. Total floor area (measured externally) 31.50sqm (North Devon Council refs 57723 conversion and 60977 garden). Guide price £175,000. Stags, 01769 572263, south-molton@stags.co.uk

NORTH TAWTON
Plot with outline planning for a three-bedroom detached dwelling with surrounding gardens and off road parking, which will be accessed off Barker's Way. The plot is 200sqm, (2,200 sq ft) and measures 74ft (max) x 37ft (max) (West Devon Borough Council. ref 00956/2013). OIRO £80,000. Miller Town & Country, 01837 54080, okehampton@millertc.co.uk

PLYMOUTH
Lilford Gardens - A serviced plot with full planning permission for a four-bedroom detached house, attached garage, two additional car parking spaces and garden. Price band £50,000-£99,999. Private seller, 07951 183553

STOKEINTEIGNHEAD, NEWTON ABBOT
Big Barn, Middle Rocombe Farm - One of two traditional barns with planning permission for conversion into a full residential dwelling with three bedrooms and two bathrooms. The barns enjoy the communal courtyard area and parking spaces. Guide price £100,000. Stags, 01803 865454, totnes@stags.co.uk

STOKEINTEIGNHEAD, NEWTON ABBOT
The Studio House, Middle Rocombe Farm - Award-winning architect-designed studio house with planning permission for conversion into a full residential three+-bedroom property with generous garden (Teignbridge District Council). OIEO £200,000. Stags, 01803 865454, totnes@stags.co.uk

TEIGNMOUTH
Maudlin Drive - A detached three-bedroom bungalow in need of total refurbishment and adjacent building plot with full planning permission for a detached dwelling. £340,000. Jefferys, 01726 73483, staustell@jefferys.uk.com

DORSET

BEAMINSTER
The Pinnacles, White Sheet Hill - Plot with detailed planning for three barn-shaped buildings on level access which is mostly single storey to create a contemporary four- to six-bedroom, five-bathroom detached property standing in grounds circa 1.7 acres (0.7ha) and enjoying some of West Dorset's finest views. Approx 3,400 sq ft gross internal area (West Dorset ref WD/D/15/000884). Guide price £650,000. Symonds & Sampson, 01308 863100, beaminster@symondsandsampson.co.uk

LYTCHETT MATRAVERS, POOLE
Dolmans Hill - A substantial barn in an elevated rural location with outstanding far-reaching views towards Poole Harbour and the Purbeck Hills with potential for conversion to a unique dwelling, subject to the necessary planning consents. Guide price £300,000. Symonds & Sampson, 01202 843190, wimbourne@symondsandsampson.co.uk

SEABOROUGH, BEAMINSTER
Hillside Farm - Four-bedroom bungalow in need of modernisation and traditional stone barn with a lapsed planning consent for conversion to a four- to five-bedroom property. Range of farm buildings also adjoin the site. Price band £450,000-£599,999. Greenslade Taylor Hunt, 01935 415300, residential.yeovil@gth.net

ESSEX

GREAT HORKESLEY, COLCHESTER
Meadow Barns, London Road - Two agricultural buildings with planning permission for conversion into residential use. The larger of the two barns will form a single-storey dwelling with open-plan living room/kitchen, two bedrooms and two bathrooms, whilst the second barn will form a detached double garage with attached studio/home office. About 0.5 acres with further paddock of approx 1.7 acres available via separate negotiation (Colchester Borough Council ref 163105). Guide price £275,000. Nicholas Percival, 01206 563222, info@nicholaspercival.co.uk

KIRBY-LE-SOKEN, FRINTON-ON-SEA
The Street - A garden plot with planning permission for a two-bedroom detached bungalow. £150,000. Bairstow Eves, 01255 407004, frinton@bairstoweves.co.uk

LITTLE LEIGHS, CHELMSFORD, ESSEX
Dumney Lane - A 0.9 acre building plot on a peaceful country lane with approved planning for a five-bedroom detached family home of around 3,100 sq ft (Chelmsford City Council ref 15/00212/FUL). Guide Price £450,000.
Fenn Wright, 01245 292100, chelmsford@fennwright.co.uk

LITTLE LEIGHS
Hornells Corner - A mature plot of approx 0.9 acres (STLS) with full planning approval for a five-bedroom detached home with circa 3,100 sq ft of accommodation. Guide price £450,000. Walkers, 01277 355005, sales@walkersestates.co.uk

NEWPORT, NEAR SAFFRON WALDEN
The Piggeries, Debden Road - Plot of approx 0.5 acre with permitted development rights for a single detached dwelling of approx 95sqm /96sqm (Uttlesford District Council ref UTT/14/2798/P3MPA). Consent lapses on October 23, 2017. Guide price £250,000. Mullucks Wells, 01799 582600, walden@mullucks.co.uk

THORPE-LE-SOKEN
New Thorpe Avenue - Plot with outline planning permission for a two-bedroomed detached bungalow. Price band £150,000-£199,999. Boydens, 01255 851185, frinton@boydens.co.uk

TOLLESHUNT MAJOR
East Cottage, Witham Road - Former pair of agricultural works cottages, which have been converted into a single detached dwelling in grounds of approx 0.477 acres. The property is in need of improvement and modernisation and could benefit from a replacement dwelling subject to the relevant permissions. OIEO £300,000. Fenn Wright, 01376 516464, witham@fennwright.co.uk

WENDENS AMBO, SAFFRON WALDEN
Station Road - A single plot that is roughly square and extends to approx 0.06 acres and benefits from an outline planning consent (Uttlesford District Council ref UTT/15/3267/OP) for a single two-bedroom bungalow. OIEO £100,000. Strutt & Parker, 01223 459454, harriet.lee@struttandparker.com

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

BARNWOOD, GLOUCESTER
Grove Crescent - A plot with planning consent for a three-bedroomed chalet bungalow set in a secluded cul de sac. Level site with minimal clearance needed. Guide price £124,950. C J Hole, 01452 619777, hucclecote@cjhole.co.uk

BISLEY, STROUD
Calfway Lane - Plot with planning permission (Stroud District Council ref S.16/1941/FUL) for a four-bedroom detached home with off-road parking, a garage and rear garden. Guide price £350,000. Humberts, 01285 706013,

HAMSTERLEY, COUNTY DURHAM
Saunders Avenue - A garden plot of 275sqm with planning for a two-storey, three-bedroom family home with integral garage (Durham County ref DM/15/02664/FPA). Guide price £69,950.
George F White, 01388 527966, wolsingham@georgefwhite.co.uk

BEDHAMPTON, HAMPSHIRE

Portsdown Hill - A plot with full permission for three large modern four-storey houses (approx 3,000 sq ft). Each house will be perched on Portsdown Hill with uninterrupted and far-reaching views of Haying Island, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. Property valuation of completed houses is £1,250,000. Each plot will enjoy a private and secluded one-acre woodland. There is one plot left available at £375,000. Please contact by email. Immediate proof of funding is essential. Price band £300,000-£449,999.
Private seller, sbarnett@westgroup.co.uk

sales.cirencester.enquiries@humberts.com

SOUTH CERNEY

Berkeley Close - A level garden plot with planning permission for a three-bedroom detached chalet-style home (Cotswold District Council ref 14/02281/FUL). Guide price £115,000. The adjacent three-bedroom semi-detached house is also for sale with a list price of £155,000. The sale of the plot and house would need to complete simultaneously. Both properties could also be purchased at £249,500. C J Hole, 01285 655158, cirencester@cjhole.co.uk

HAMPSHIRE

BAUGHURST, TADLEY

Long Grove - Plot with planning approved for a four-bedroom detached property (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council ref 16/04326/FUL). OIRO £160,000. Gascoigne-Pees, 01183 360451, tadley@gpees.co.uk

KINGSCLERE

Little Knowl Hill - A plot of 0.658 acres/2,666sqm/0.2666 ha with planning permission for four-bedroom detached bungalow with detached double garage (Planning ref 16/04648/FUL). Guide price £475,000. Sansome & George, 01635 297111, kingsclere@sansomeandgeorge.co.uk

WEST HEATH, NEAR BASINGSTOKE

Adjacent to Ashley - A level garden plot with planning permission for a four-bedroom detached, two-storey family house of about 1,951 sq ft with three reception rooms and three bathrooms (Basingstoke and Deane District Council ref 16/01605/FUL). Guide price £400,000. Carter Jonas, 01256 473388, basingstoke@carterjonas.co.uk

WEST HEATH, NEAR BASINGSTOKE

Ashley - A three-bedroom detached 1930s built house of about 1,300 sq ft with planning permission for a substantial extension to create a superb four/five-bedroom family home of about 3,000 sq ft. Guide price £750,000. Carter Jonas, 01256 473388, basingstoke@carterjonas.co.uk

HEREFORDSHIRE

BROMYARD

York Road - Freehold garden plot with approx 31ft frontage to Firs Lane, rear width of 18ft and depth of approx 90ft (292 sq yd) with detailed planning consent for a three-bedroom detached house to replace the detached brick-built garage currently on the site (Herefordshire Council ref 151069). Price band £50,000-£99,999. Flint & Cook, 01885 488166, bromyard@flintandcook.co.uk

DIDLEY, HEREFORD

Rogers Hill Cottage - A totally derelict detached cottage suitable for renovation or demolishing with planning permission to erect new detached cottage or bungalow set in level plot of approximately 0.3 acres. Guide price £150,000. Cobb Amos, 01432 266007, hereford@cobbamos.com

KINGSTHORNE, HEREFORD

Little Birch Road - Plot with detailed planning permission for a contemporary-style, three-storey detached dwelling with three bedrooms (Herefordshire Council refs 153552 and 170242). Price band £50,000-£99,999. Flint & Cook, 01432 355455, hereford@flintandcook.co.uk

LETTON

Bull Farm Cottage - An updated three-bedroom, semi-detached family home with planning permission to extend into a four-bedroom property and really spacious gardens, in a small rural cul de sac (Herefordshire Council ref 161630). OIEO £230,000. Cobb Amos, 01432 266007, hereford@cobbamos.com

LUGWARDINE, HEREFORD

To rear 2 Quarry House - Predominantly level garden plot of approx 25m depth x 11m width with all mains services and planning consent for a detached two-storey, two-bedroom larch-clad house of contemporary design (Herefordshire Council ref 163077). Price band £100,000-£149,999. Flint & Cook, 01432 355455, hereford@flintandcook.co.uk

TEDSTONE

Green Farm Barn - A substantial agricultural barn of steel-frame construction with block elevations under a corrugated sheet roof with planning consent for change of use to two single-storey dwellings with scope for additional first-floor mezzanine accommodation (subject to appropriate planning consents) (Herefordshire Council ref 163194). Price band £150,000-£199,999. Flint & Cook, 01885 488166, bromyard@flintandcook.co.uk

HIGHLAND

ARDGAY

Gledfield - Plot for 1.5 storey house and garage, next to small village primary school in Ardgay. Beautiful and tranquil site with views to mountains. Price band under £50,000. Private seller, 07785 706212,

MOY

Eiledon - 0.32 acre building plot in semi-rural location approximately 10 miles from Inverness. Planning Permission in Principle for detached house and garage. Services close by. Price band £50,000-£99,999. Caledonia Estate Agency, 01479 810 531, info@caledoniaestateagency.co.uk

WEST TOWN DUNTELCHAIG

Farr - Building plot with over 13 acres. Detailed Planning Consent for a 4-bedroom detached house, (Planning Consent: 11/01939/FUL). Price band £200,000-£249,999. Private seller, 0333 202 6969

ISLE OF ANGLESEY

CARREGLEFN, AMLWCH

Opposite the Old Post Office - A generous building plot with full permission to erect a two-storey dwelling and detached garage (Application number: 38C242B). £95,000. Dafydd Hardy, 01248 723322, llangefni@dafyddhardy.co.uk

LLANERCHYMEDD

Rear of the Old Police Station, Caer Delyn - A building plot of approx 289sqm with outline planning permission for a single-storey detached bungalow with attached garage and side and rear gardens (2016 planning ref 25C169C). £50,000. Dafydd Hardy, 01248 723322, llangefni@dafyddhardy.co.uk

LANCASHIRE

CATTERALL

Catterall Lane - An agricultural barn with planning permission for conversion to form a three-bedroom semi-detached property with substantial gardens and parking. Price band £200,000-£249,999. Dewhurst Homes, 01995 601814, garstang@dewhursthomes.co.uk

CATTERALL

Catterall Lane - A detached single-storey utility/office with planning permission for conversion to a two-bedroom bungalow. Spacious private gardens. Option to purchase extra land. Guide price £250,000. Dewhurst Homes, 01995 601814, garstang@dewhursthomes.co.uk

TODMORDEN

Claverton Down, Cross Stone Road - Building plot with planning permission for a four-bedroom detached property (Calderdale Council ref 15/00569/FUL). OIRO £120,000. Reeds Rains, 01706 813990, todmorden@reedsrains.co.uk

LEICESTERSHIRE

EDWALTON

Melton Road - A prime site, which extends to approximately 0.66 acres (0.267 hectares) or thereabouts, with outline planning consent for two executive-style detached family homes (Rushcliffe Borough Council ref

MARYBANK, HIGHLANDS

Easter Balloan - This small, boutique development of six individual building sites offers a range of plot sizes from 740sqm to 1,100sqm, all of which will enjoy undisturbed views across the Conon Valley to Ben Wyvis and beyond. The site benefits from Planning in Principal (Highland Council ref 14/04798/PIP). It is understood the permission will be for 1.5-storey, three- or four-bedroom homes. Price band £50,000-£99,999.
Grant Stewart Chartered Surveyors, 01463 718719, gs@gs-cs.co.uk

ORTON-ON-THE-HILL, LEICESTERSHIRE

Lot 1 and Lot 2, Pipe Lane - A site of approx 0.75 acres (0.3 ha), which includes a small paddock, with full planning permission (Hinckley Council ref 15/00633/FUL) for two substantial contemporary houses with garages. Lot 1 floor areas 2,780 sq ft (258.4sqm). Lot 2 floor areas 3,125 sq ft (290.5sqm). For sale as a whole or as two separate plots. Lot 1 £260,000. Lot 2 £310,000. Lot 1 and 2 together £550,000. *Country Properties, 01455 890898, marketbosworth@countryproperties.org.uk*

16/00937/OUT). £500,000 per plot. Andrew Granger & Co, 01509 235534, loughborough@andrewgranger.co.uk

MERSEYSIDE

CALDY
Croft Drive - Building plot in sought-after location extending to approx one acre with planning permission for a three-storey detached house. Guide price £1,250,000. Bradshaw Farnham & Lea, 0151 625 8844, westkirby@bflhomes.co.uk

FORMBY, LIVERPOOL
College Avenue - A plot of approx 0.4 acres currently occupied by a dilapidated bungalow. Although no planning permission is currently in place the plot is zoned as Primarily Residential within the current adopted Sefton Unitary Development Plan (Sefton Planning Dept). OIRO £425,000. Reeds Rains, 01704 878545, formby@reedsrains.co.uk

HESWALL, WIRRAL
Barnston Road - Garden plot approx 120ft x 51ft with planning permission for a four-bedroom detached family home (Wirral Council ref OUT/14/00169). OIEO £200,000. Bradshaw Farnham & Lea, 0151 348 4488, heswall@bflhomes.co.uk

ROCK FERRY
Bedford Road - Outline planning, two four-bedroom houses. Alternative, four two-bedroom apartments. All services available. Freehold. Price band under £50,000. Private seller, sm6704@gmail.com

MORAY

ALLAMICHIE, BY DUFFTOWN
Site with full planning permission for a single, three-bedroom dwelling, which would provide a spacious, comfortable family home with ample living space (Moray Council ref 12/00803/APP). OIEO £50,000. Stronachs, 01224 845845/01224 626100, info.property@stronachs.com

PORTGORDON
Plot 3 Earls View - 400sqm building plot with detailed planning permission and building warrant for a three-bedroom, architect-designed, single-story dwelling. Situated in an elevated position with panoramic sea views across the Moray Firth. Price band £50,000-£99,999. Private seller, 01542 831858

NORTHUMBERLAND

BELFORD
The Steading, Home Farm - A plot with full planning permission for a single residential dwelling of approx 160sqm (1,722 sq ft) gross internal area. The proposed property would have three bedrooms in a bungalow format (Northumberland County Council ref 12/00708/FUL). £105,000. George F White, 01665 603581/01665 603231, info@georgefwhite.co.uk

FELTON, MORPETH
Benlaw Grove - Garden plot of approx 450sqm (0.11 acres) with full planning permission for a single detached dwelling to replace the garage that is currently on the plot (Northumberland County Council ref 14/03606/FUL). Guide price £75,000. Strutt & Parker, 01670 516123, morpeth@struttandparker.co.uk

GUBEON WOOD, TRANWELL WOODS, MORPETH
Land at Juniper House - A plot of about 0.5 acres with full planning consent for a modern and spacious detached five-bedroom, four-bathroom home (Northumberland County Council ref 14/03855/FUL). Guide price £350,000. Sanderson Young, 0191 223 3500, ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk

HORNCLIFFE, BERWICK-UPON-TWEED
Main Street - A plot that extends to circa 0.149 acres (0.060 hectares) with planning permission for a four-bedroom detached family home (Northumberland County Council ref N/11/B/0077). Guide price £80,000. Rettie, 01289 305158, berwick@rettie.co.uk

RIDING MILL
Church Lane - A mature level garden plot with full planning consent for a three-/four-bedroom detached house with open outlook to the west over adjacent farmland (Northumberland County Council ref 16/00075/FUL). Price band £150,000-£199,999. Foster Maddison, 01434 605441/01434 607711, gillian.walker@fostermaddison.co.uk

SWARLAND, MORPETH
Admiral Close - Plot with full planning permission for a two-storey five-bedroom detached property with attached double garage. Price band £200,000-£249,999. Your Move Alnwick, 01665 603443, alnwick@your-move.co.uk

TRANWELL WOODS, MORPETH
Plot A, Seaton Ryde - A site of approx 0.465 acres in a mature wooded setting with full planning permission for a detached family home (Northumberland County Council ref 16/01482/FUL). Guide price £350,000. Sanderson Young, 0191 223 3500, ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk

OXFORDSHIRE

KIDLINGTON
A parcel of land for sale to the side of a property in a popular location for with lapsed planning for a three-bedroom property. Guide price £100,000. Chancellors, 01865 379222, kidlington.sales@chancellors.co.uk

SOULDERN, BICESTER
Somerton Road - Barn in a rural location with permission for conversion to a dwelling (ref 16/02344/Q56). Price band £300,000-£449,999. Savills, 01295 228000/01295 228010, banbury@savills.com

SUTTON COURTENAY
Drayton Road (2304767) - A half-acre plot with existing kennel and stable block offering potential to provide a single storey residence (subject to planning permission) with open countryside views. Price band £300,000-£449,999. Chancellors, 01235 524505, abingdon.sales@chancellors.co.uk

WATERPERRY, OXFORD
Manor Farm - A plot with full planning permission for a four-bedroom eco-farmhouse of over 2,000 sq ft (approx) with south-facing rear garden and access via a drive on the eastern side of the village close to Manor Farm (South Oxfordshire DC ref P15/S1875/FUL). Guide price £325,000. Breckon & Breckon, 01865 750200, headington@breckon.co.uk

YARNTON
A plot of land to the side of property in a popular location for which a planning application has been submitted by the vendors. Guide price £150,000. Chancellors, 01865 379222, kidlington.sales@chancellors.co.uk

PEMBROKESHIRE

FISHGUARD
Adjacent to Parc-Y-Shwt car park - A gently sloping plot with two garages, formerly the garden to Studio Heritage, Market Square, with OPP for a new dwelling (Pembrokeshire County Council ref 13/0554/DA). Plot access on to Parc-Y-Shwt car park. Frontage of approx 70ft and a depth approx 90ft. Guide price £85,000. J J Morris, 01348 873836, fishguard@jjmorris.com

GOODWICK
Clement Road - Plot with planning for a two-storey lightweight property of timber-frame construction. £69,950. J J Morris, 01348 873836, fishguard@jjmorris.com

LLYS-Y-FRAN
Barn B and Barn C, Clarbeston Road - Two stone barns with planning for conversion to two residential dwellings (Pembrokeshire County Council ref 13/0969/PA). Barn B has an internal area of approx 1,600 sq ft, and Barn C has an internal area of approx 1,000 sq ft. Price band £150,000-£199,999. J J Morris, 01348 873836, fishguard@jjmorris.com

NEAR EGLWYSWRW, CRYMYCH
Adjacent to Golygfa, Crosswell Turn - Plot with planning for a dwelling (Pembrokeshire County Council ref 07/1204/PA) with a 60ft x 30ft steel portal frame building on site currently used for garaging, workshop and storage. £150,000. The purchaser may have an

BAMPTON, OXFORDSHIRE

Clanfield Road - Plot that measures c.195ft x 65ft, with planning permission to build a replacement property of c.3,150 sq ft (West Oxfordshire DC ref 16/02448/FUL). Guide price £450,000.
Abbey Properties, 01993 851881, bampton@abbeyproperties.tv

MEDBURN, PONTELAND, TYNE & WEAR

Plot 3, The Avenue - A site c.0.5 acres with outline planning permission for a detached house of c.475sqm excluding garage. £295,000.
Sanderson Young, 01661 823951, elaine.newbigin@sandersonyoung.co.uk

option to purchase adjoining agricultural land up to 7.80 acres. Price band £150,000-£199,999. J J Morris, 01348 873836, fishguard@jjmorris.com

PEMBROKE DOCK

Picton Place - partially constructed detached bungalow in a popular and convenient mature residential area, having a distant view of the Haven Waterway. The bungalow is traditionally built to wall plate level. Construction to date has been supervised by a chartered architect. Drainage is already connected. The plot is contract ready. OIRO £50,000. Private seller, 07768 420140/07767 390866

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

BLAXTON, DONCASTER

Park Lane - Plot in a secluded location with full planning for an environmentally friendly, four-bedroom detached house. Price band £150,000-£199,999. Your Move, 01302 340444, doncaster@your-move.co.uk

HOYLAND, BARNSLEY

Cumberland Road - A single plot with planning permission for a four-bedroom, two-storey detached dwelling with single garage and sizeable garden (Barnsley MBC ref 2015/0573). Price under £50,000. Merryweathers, 01226 730850, barnsley@merryweathers.co.uk

RAWMARSH, ROTHERHAM

Higher Stubbin - A detached single-storey property with planning permission for change of use and extension to form a home of approx 942 sq ft (Rotherham MBC ref RB2015/0312). Standing within grounds of approximately 538 sq yd (450sqm). OIRO £110,000. Merryweathers, 01709 375591, residential@merryweathers.co.uk

TYNE AND WEAR

HEDDON-ON-THE-WALL

Station Road - A site extending to circa 0.22 acres with detailed planning granted in 1998 for the development of a substantial, split-level detached home, which is still in place. Potential for the development of an individually designed property to make full use of panoramic views over open countryside. Further land to the south is available via separate negotiation. Guide price £275,000. Sanderson Young, 01661 823951, elaine.newbigin@sandersonyoung.co.uk

MONKSEATON, WHITLEY BAY

Closefield Grove - A plot of approx 0.11 acres with planning for a contemporary three-bedroom bungalow with 7m open-plan lounge to kitchen area. The plot is accessed via a long drive and has secluded gardens to both rear and side (North Tyneside ref 15/00439/FUL). Guide price £109,950. Colin Lilley, 0191 456 9499, enquiries@clilley.co.uk

WARWICKSHIRE

COOKHILL, ALCESTER

Oak Tree Lane - Plot with planning permission for a four-/five-bedroom detached house on a site of over one acre (Wychavon District Council Ref W/09/01310/PN and W/09/03015/PN). Guide price £300,000. Fisher German, 01527 575525, bromsgrove@fishergerman.co.uk

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

End terrace cottage and kitchen garden with outline permission for a three-bedroom house both with parking. Situated at the end of the lane in the heart of the village. Price band £300,000-£449,999. Private seller, rachel.harwood@sky.com

WEST MIDLANDS

GREAT SAREDON, WOLVERHAMPTON

Yew Tree Cottage - A detached country cottage in need of renovation and refurbishment. OIRO £350,000. Bagshaws, 01785 716600, penkridge@bagshaws.com

PELSALL

Foundry Lane - A plot of approx 90sqm with outline planning permission for a detached two-bedroom, three-storey residence with integral garage and off-road parking (Walsall Council ref 15/0986/FULL) Guide price £55,000. Chris Foster & Daughter, 01922 454404, enquiries@chrisfoster.co.uk

WEST SUSSEX

PARTRIDGE GREEN

To rear of Short Row, High Street - A plot of approx 0.22 acres with planning permission (Horsham District Council ref; DC/16/2331) granted March 3, 2017 for a three-bedroom bungalow and associated works. Access via a private drive. Guide price £250,000. Strutt & Parker, 01403 246790, horsham@struttandparker.com

SOUTH MUNDHAM, CHICHESTER

Planning has been approved for the demolition of the existing house and replacement with a five-bedroom detached house of some 1,857 sq ft. The property sits in a plot of 0.6 acres including a small flint and brick building known as The Bothy which may also be considered by prospective purchasers for development. OIEO £500,000. Jackson-Stops & Staff, 01243 786316, chichester@jackson-stops.co.uk

BRANSFORD, WORCESTERSHIRE

Adjacent to Fir Tree House - A single building plot of approx 0.24 acres with planning permission for a spacious (over 2,500 sq ft) four-bedroom detached house with detached double garage with storeroom over (Malvern Hills District Council ref 16/01423/REM). Guide price £275,000.
Allan Morris, 01905 612266, worcester@www.allan-morris.co.uk

WEST YORKSHIRE

BINGLEY

Primrose Bank - Land with outline planning for a single detached dwelling (ref 16/04713/OUT). Price band £50,000-£99,999. Your Move Bingley, 01274 568240, bingley@your-move.co.uk

EAST CARLTON

Carlton Lane - Land with planning permission granted on appeal for a new four-bedroom detached house (ref 12/02301). Price band £300,000-£449,999. Dacre, Son & Hartley, 01943 463321, otley@dacres.co.uk

KEIGHLEY

2 plots, Cemetery Lane - A large building plot in a sought-after location with full planning permission to create two three-bedroom detached houses with gardens, driveways and garages. Available to buy together or individually (Bradford MDC refs: 16/03273/FUL and 16/07357/FUL). Guide price: £55,000 per plot. Hunters, 01535 600544, keighley@hunters.com

LUDDENDENFOOT, HALIFAX

John Naylor Lane - A large development plot with planning for a large detached four-bedroom property. OIRO £155,000. Reeds Rains, 01422 843988, hebden_bridge@reedsrains.co.uk

PONTEFRACT

Plot 34 Limetrees - Serviced self-build plot within the Limetrees development. The plot has full planning for a four-bedroom detached 1,303 sq ft home named The Prince. There is potential for purchasers to modify the house within the design code specified for Limetrees, and subject to planning approval. Asking price £85,000. Noble Homes, 01977 556137, glen.wilson@dnobleltd.co.uk

PONTEFRACT

Plot 30 Limetrees - Serviced self-build plot within the Limetrees development. The plot has full planning for a 4 bedroom detached 1,108 sq.ft home named The Duke. There is potential for purchasers to modify the house within the design code specified for Limetrees, and subject to planning approval. Asking price £75,000. Noble Homes, 01977 556137, glen.wilson@dnobleltd.co.uk

WORCESTERSHIRE

HARVINGTON, EVESHAM

Station Road - Building plot with planning consent (Wychavon DC ref 16/02253) for detached three-bedroom home of 1,506 sq ft (140sqm). Plot amounts to 540sqm (0.137 acres). Price band £100,000-£149,999. Timothy Lea & Griffiths, 01386 442255, sales@tlgea.com

UPPER BROADHEATH

The Old Church Hall - A building plot with planning permission granted for a contemporary-style one-bedroom house of approx 905 sq ft (Malvern Hills District Council ref 14/00692/FUL- allowed on Appeal, ref APP/J1860/W/15/3136960). £110,000. Allan Morris, 01905 612266, worcester@www.allan-morris.co.uk

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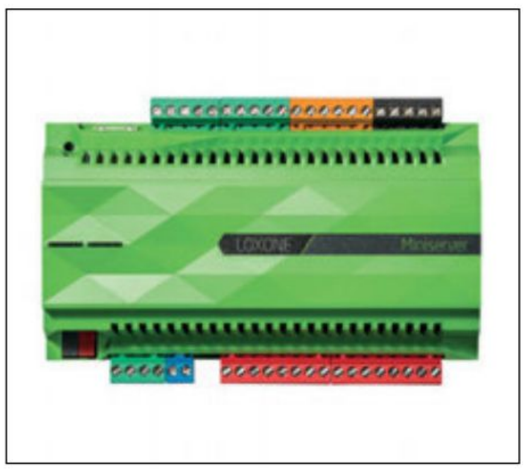

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The **MAKITA** 10.8v CXT tool range is growing in popularity, driven by the very compact size and low weight advantages combined with outstanding performance and durability. For example, the new Makita TD111D impact driver with brushless motor delivers an outstanding 135Nm of tightening torque yet weighs just 1.1kgs with an overall length of only 135mm from chuck to back of body. This machine features the latest A-mode impact operation, which drives the fixture slowly to begin with until the thread tightening reacts when the full power is switched on to drive the fastening home. With performance like this the 10.8v CXT range is proving attractive to all property installation professionals.

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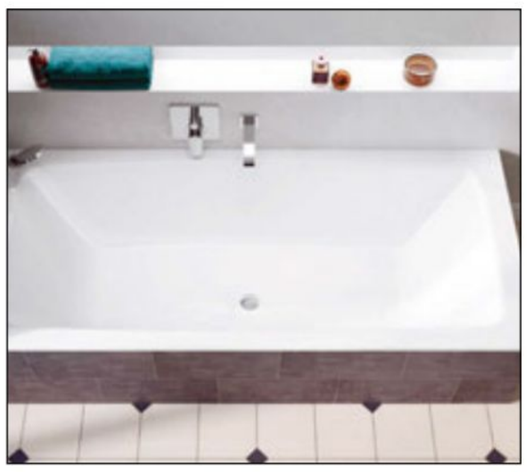
Egerton, a 'British' made double bowl, ceramic sink from **SHAWS OF DARWEN** has a unique patterned front and offset dividing wall. The sink includes 3½" waste outlets in both sinks for basket strainer or waste disposer. Basket strainer wastes are available which co-ordinate with our range of traditional and classically designed taps which are the perfect choice to complement the full collection of ceramic sinks. The heavyweight Egerton is available in white or biscuit finishes with a durable, long lasting glaze.

For further information please contact:
01254 775111 | **www.shawsofdarwen.com**

KALDEWEI



The new Cayono Duo is an extension of the popular Cayono bath family and the first double ended bath at **KALDEWEI**'s entry level price point. With two comfortable backrests, roomy interior and centrally-positioned waste and overflow outlet, there is plenty of space for two people. The Cayono Duo made of robust Kaldewei steel enamel is available in two sizes: 170 x 75 cm and 180 x 80 cm, making it ideal for many different room layouts. In terms of shape, material and colour it perfectly complements the new Cayonoplan enamelled shower surface and Puro washbasins.

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REINVENTION

A featureless brick house in Bromley has been extended and cleverly reinvented to create a bright, contemporary home.

SALTHOUSE

Former farm workers' cottages in Norfolk have been remodelled by acclaimed architect Carl Turner, using bespoke joinery, exposed services and poured concrete floors.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

Designed for retirement, this new-build SIPs Arts and Crafts-style house features an oriel window, triple-glazed oak windows, a library passage with a fake bookcase door and a sculpted staircase.

GUIDE TO SIPS

Structural insulated panels are becoming increasingly popular as an effective construction method that achieves excellent u-values, while freeing up valuable internal space.

Self build lite

Why is self build still so difficult, asks **Gerald Cole.**

come, I realised late in life, from sturdy self-build stock. The house I grew up in was commissioned from a small Essex builder on land purchased by an uncle from an elderly neighbour who was persuaded to sell off her under-used orchard.

The same uncle went on to commission his own home on a wooded plot in Berkshire. Not long afterwards my one-day-to-be father-in-law bought a stable-cum-garage close to the Surrey Thames and over the following years transformed it into a large family home. I finished my own self build shortly before the millennium.

Looking back, I wonder if my background unconsciously inclined me to build, rather than simply sell off the land. It was a narrow overgrown strip bordering the garden of a newly purchased house and apparently overlooked by the vendor. Since my wife and I had a Kong-sized mortgage, three fast-growing young children and highly volatile freelance incomes, that should have made excellent economic sense.

Twenty years on, I'm glad it didn't. But when I think back on that, and on my relatives' various building projects, the one thing that sticks out is not our comparative enterprise/recklessness. It's simply how bloody difficult it all was.

My family had stories of a desperate search for basic building materials in a 1950s Britain blighted by post-war austerity. My father-in-law devoted years of leisure time to his project. My own build needed over 18 months of negotiation with local planners and two drastically revised submissions before pretty much the original design was approved.

If all this just sounds like a big moan, that's absolutely right. But the bigger point is why, over the last three generations, has self build not got dramatically easier?

After all, Britain is supposed to be a property-owning democracy. That's been the history of the last century. In 1917 less than a quarter of UK households owned their own homes. By 1953 it was 50 per cent, and in 2007 73 per cent, the highest ever, though it's since dropped to around 63 per cent.

But throughout much of this homeowning boom the number of self builds has remained relatively stable and comparatively small: around 10 per cent of the total market. This is despite the popularity of TV shows like Grand Designs, surveys claiming that over 50 per cent of the population would like to build their own home and, more recently, the government's insistence that local authorities include self build in their local plans.

"When I think back on various building projects, the one thing that sticks out is not our comparative enterprise/recklessness. It's simply how bloody difficult it all was."

So why is that? The simple answer is that self build runs counter to the dominant model of housebuilding in the UK. That is speculative building, backed by planning legislation that overwhelmingly favours existing property owners.

Financially, this has been phenomenally successful. Britain's total housing stock, according to a recent Savills' report, is now worth £6.79 trillion pounds, nearly four times our gross domestic product. In almost every other way, however, it's been disastrous.

House ownership

Massive price inflation has now put house ownership beyond the means of at least one generation, perhaps two. Housebuilding is concentrated among a handful of big players who are unable to deliver the volume of new homes needed, and have no business incentive to do so.

Meanwhile, 80 per cent of small- and medium-sized builders have been driven out of business. Investment in training has been so small there is now a major skills shortage and the quality of design and build is at an all-time low.

But these aren't just my views. They're official. The recent government white paper, Fixing Our Broken Housing Market, for the first time acknowledged all of these and more. It argued for a more diversified market, including build-to-rent, increased building by local authorities and housing associations and, yes, self build. Or almost. Self build is actually only mentioned alongside, and subsidiary to, custom build. Which is?

Essentially it's self build lite. Instead of having to source a plot, negotiate planning consent, choose an architect and contractor then project manage the build yourself – or hire professionals to do some or all of this – you simply look for a developer offering a serviced plot with existing planning permission.

This might simply consist of outline consent, a design code providing broad parameters for individual designs or a range of approved designs, which may or may be not be linked to a specific manufacturer.

Developers can then offer a further set of options. They can build your chosen design for you or build it to just one brick above foundation level, leaving you or your contractor to finish. Known as the 'golden brick', this avoids the need to pay VAT on the sale of the plot. Alternatively, a watertight shell can be built, again leaving you to finish. Or the entire scheme can be a group build.

Currently over 70 custom build schemes are at various stages of development across the UK. Details can be found at custombuildstrategy.co.uk.

Their approaches differ widely and it's too soon to judge which will prove the most viable. But the principle of custom build is well established in countries like Germany, Holland, Austria, the United States, Australia and Japan.

Its success here will depend on publicity, on lenders providing appropriate mortgages and, most of all, on land. Current plot prices present an almost insurmountable barrier. But central or local government land, released at affordable prices, could provide just the kick-start it needs. Then, finally, self build might not to be so bloody difficult after all.

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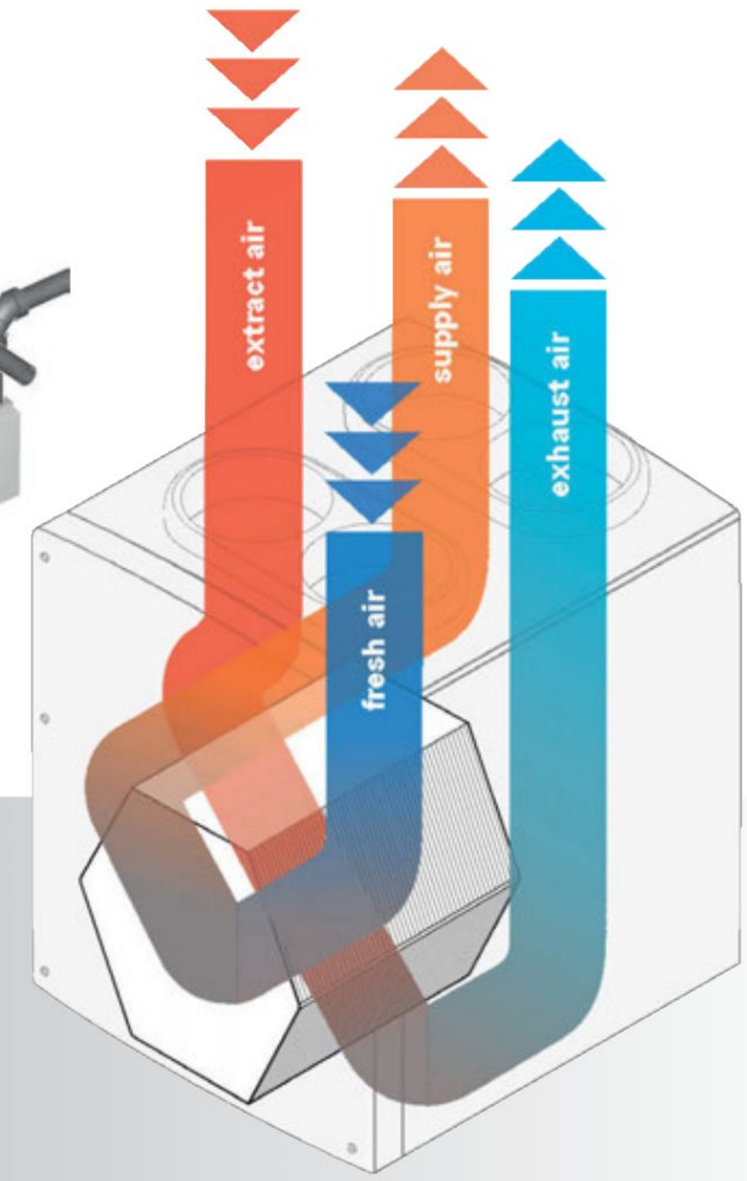

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