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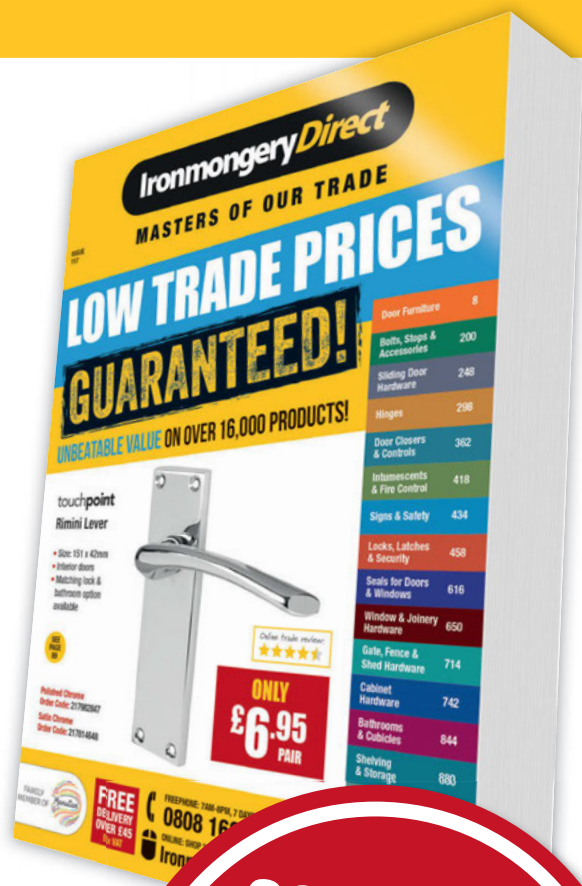
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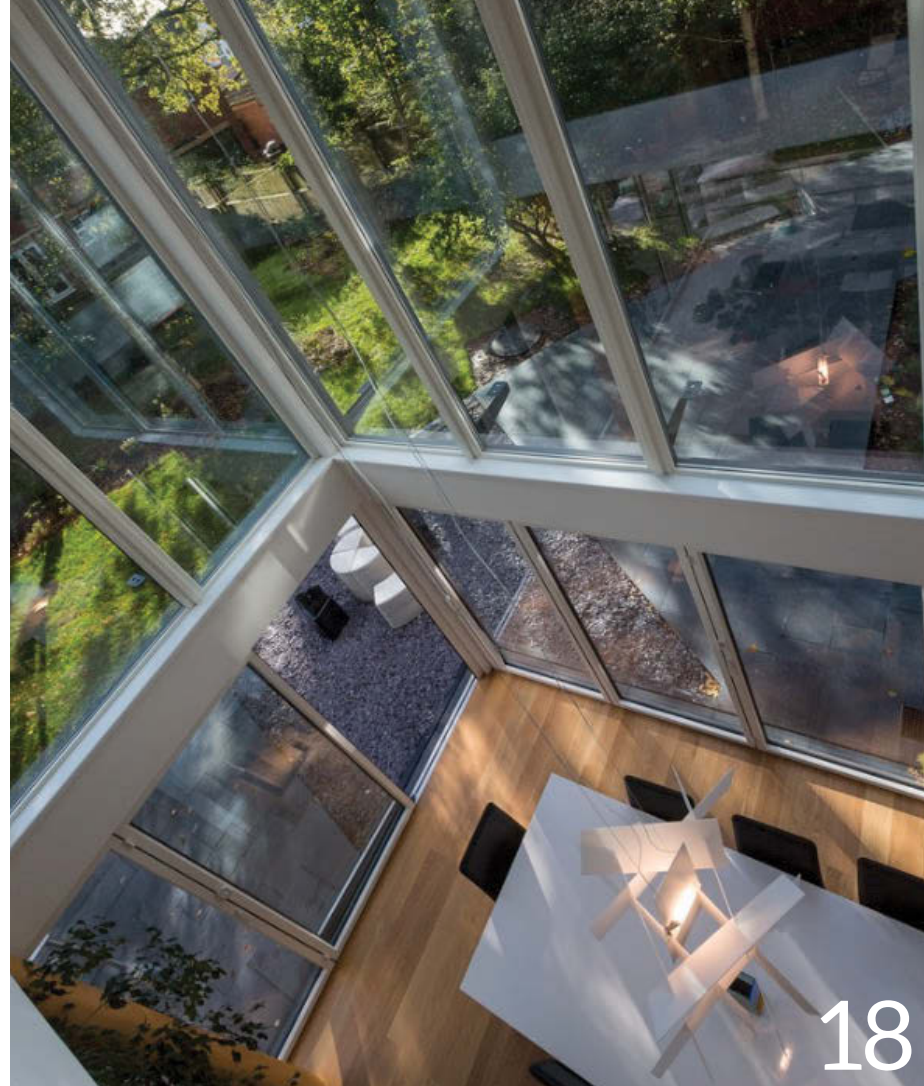
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FROM THE EDITOR

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of one of this magazine's greatest supporters, Bob Matthews. Many readers will recall his regular in-depth articles published in this magazine over almost 20 years. They covered a myriad of subjects, from explaining the difference between U- and psi-values, to taking the government to task about meeting its carbon targets. All were written with great attention to detail and accuracy, as you would expect from a physics scholar from Cambridge. Bob was particularly protective of the interests of the ordinary selfbuilder, and was always ready to challenge companies and organisations whose claims didn't always match their performance. From an editor's point of view this didn't make life comfortable when they sometimes retaliated with the threat of legal action. However, I could always be confident that Bob had checked his facts thoroughly before committing to print. And on the rare occasion when he did err, however minor, he insisted on



including a correction in the next issue. We shall miss his honesty and integrity.

On a happier note, I returned from my recent trip to Australia to be greeted with much the same weather that I left behind. Damp dark days with temperatures barely reaching double figures. Well, at least the days are now drawing out, and my favourite month is just around the corner. To celebrate the arrival of summer (hopefully), we have devoted extensive coverage to landscaping in this issue, whether you are looking to improve an existing garden or starting one from scratch. And your enjoyment of the great outdoors needn't be confined to daylight hours, with our special feature on garden lighting.

In addition, we have a great selection of inspiring case studies, including our cover story about a remarkable extension and remodel of a nondescript bungalow; the transformation of a 20s kit home in the Dartmoor National Park into an idyllic country retreat; and an architect-built home which also serves as the practice office. And to put it all in perspective, don't miss Mary Hynd's continuing saga of her hilarious adventures as a first-time selfbuilder.

In the meantime, I'm keeping my fingers crossed that summer arrives soon.

Ross Stokes

EDITOR

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SelfBuild & Design is published by
WW Magazines Ltd, 151 Station Street,

Burton-on-Trent, Staffs DE14 1BG.
Printed in England by Warners
(Midlands) plc, Bourne & London.

Distributed by Marketforce.
Tel: 0203 787 9001

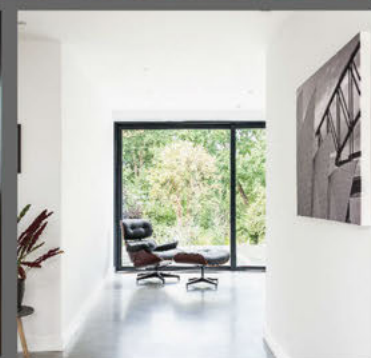
Subscriptions

UK subscription price for
one year (12 issues) is £36,
Europe/ROW Surface mail £58.50,
ROW Airmail £78.50. Phone
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44



29

Contents

SelfBuild & Design JUNE 2018

Case studies

18 BESPOKE BEAUTY

Carolyn Merrifield and Nic Downs have designed and built an incredible, sculptural, low-energy house on a garden site in Cardiff.

29 PARK LIFE

Adam Sawers and Stephen Atkins have painstakingly restored and extended a 1920s timber kit home in the foothills of the Dartmoor National Park.

44 TALES OF THE RIVERBANK

Victoria and David Austin have extended upwards, transforming their 1980s bungalow into a stunning three-storey house on the bank of the River Thames.

56 GETTING CREATIVE

Tom and Nicola Webb's second self build, a Cubist-inspired home, has given them the opportunity to make their mark.

Special features

66 CREATING A GARDEN

Self building can often mean a blank canvas when it comes to landscaping. We provide 13 top tips for creating a garden from scratch.

83 ALTERNATIVE BUILDING MATERIALS

Natural local materials such as cob, straw and rammed earth offer a green and user-friendly option for your build.



56

New Builds Extensions Conversions Renovations Inspiration

SELF BUILD & DESIGN



On the cover

From modest bungalow to dream home. See page 44.

18

Regulars

8 NEWS & COMMENT

A round-up of the latest news.

14 INTERIORS

Pale marble and neutral colours have transformed a London home into a haven of peace and elegance.

80 GREEN BUILDING NEWS

A summary of the green scene.

94 DIARY DATES

Shows, courses and seminars.

112 TOPPING OUT

Gerald Cole discusses the experiences of women tackling self build.

Interview

40 ABEL HINCHLIFFE

At the age of just 27 architect Abel Hinchliffe leads a team specialising in luxurious extensions, new builds and renovations.

Spotlight

72 GARDEN LIGHTING

Creating an atmospheric lighting scheme can transform your night-time garden.

Expert help

90 LEGAL ADVICE

Dealing with an insolvent builder.

91 PLANNING ADVICE

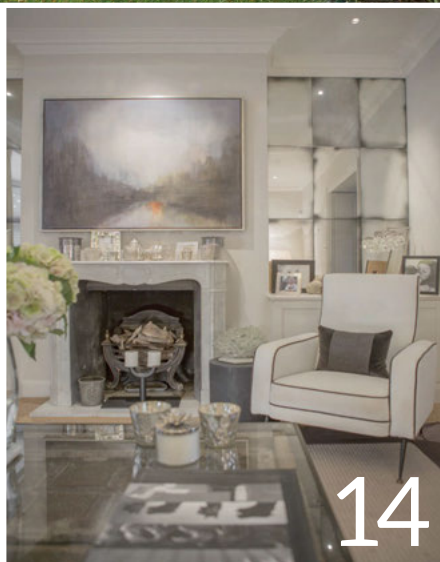
Roy Speer answers your planning queries.

96 PLOT DOCTOR

Advice on revising plans for approved home.

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14



70



66

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NEWS

June 2018



Queen's Award for Facit Homes

Facit Homes has won the Queen's Award for Enterprise in the Innovation category.

The company uses digital technology to produce highly engineered systems and components for each house it builds.

The award judges reserved special praise for the Facit Chassis, for which materials are delivered to site in flat sheet

form and cut from digital files on a CNC machine in order to create each component.

They described this process as "exceptionally efficient and environmentally respectful".

Bruce Bell, who co-founded Facit Homes in 2007 after becoming frustrated with the shortcomings of conventional housebuilding, said: "We are thrilled to have been

given this most prestigious award, which recognises our unique approach and sets us apart as a leader in our field. "Our innovation lies in the harnessing of technology to produce homes in a similar way to a product like a car or mobile phone – with certainties around quality and cost, and no mistakes or misinterpretations of design."

New house build starts up by five per cent

The latest government statistics show that annual new-build starts totalled 162,180, up five per cent when compared with the year to December 2016.

Completions for the same period were 163,250, an increase of 16 per cent compared with the year to December 2016.

In the December 2017 quarter (October, November and December), new-build starts were estimated at 41,280, five per cent higher than the previous three months, but one per cent down on a year earlier.

According to the statistics, there were 42,860 completions, seven per cent higher than the previous quarter and 17 per cent higher than the December 2016 quarter.

Private sector new-build dwelling starts were eight per cent up in the December 2017 over the December 2016 quarter. Completions were up by seven per cent.

Housing associations also increased the number of new-build starts, up two per cent when compared with the previous year. Completions were one per cent higher.

Two new self-build events

NaCSBA will host Right To Build Expos at Grand Designs Live at ExCeL on May 10, and at the Light House in Glasgow on June 20.

Both events, sponsored by Wood For Good, are aimed at those involved in navigating, promoting and creating homes through right-to-build legislation. They also offer the opportunity to network with others in the field. (righttobuildportal.org)

Snow blamed for slowdown

The Federation of Master Builders has blamed snowy weather, rising costs and uncertainty relating to Brexit for the sharp drop in construction output, based on the latest PMI data. The March data revealed a fall from 51.4 in February to 47.0 in March, against the neutral reading of 50. March 2018's figure was weaker than the average 52.3 of 2017.

Commenting on the results, FMB chief executive Brian Berry said: "The unusually cold and snowy weather in

March was partly to blame for this setback. The cold snap impacted on a broad array of construction projects, including housebuilding, domestic refurbishment and large civil engineering projects. Many small builders across the country were forced to close sites for more than a week and some employers reported that it was too cold to lay bricks." 2017. One of the most important drivers of this growth has been the significant and sustained rise in housebuilding activity.

Demand for bricks highest since 2007

Demand for bricks, blocks and precast concrete products is at its highest level since 2007, according to a new report by AMA Research.

The market was worth over £2.1bn in 2017 and has grown by around 10 per cent since 2015, and by almost 50 per cent since 2012. This is the highest value achieved since just prior to the recession in 2007, and market value is forecast to exceed this in 2018.

AMA Research director Keith Taylor said: "Growth in this market has been underpinned by recovery and rapid recent growth in the housebuilding sector in particular, as well as higher levels of output from key non-residential sectors including infrastructure, commercial offices, education and entertainment, and leisure.

"Non-residential output remains somewhat volatile, particularly since the EU vote, which introduced a level of uncertainty affecting both business confidence and levels of investment."

The survey showed that there are negative factors impacting growth in the market. Lower levels of consumer confidence and downward pressure on household incomes have impacted private RMI activity and are likely to constrain spending going forward with little sign of the squeeze on household disposable incomes being relieved.

Additionally, both the bricks and blocks sectors have experienced recent supply issues as suppliers have struggled to cope with the significant rise in demand.

The requirement for bricks has accelerated since the housebuilding sector returned to growth in 2014 and entered a period of sustained recovery after several years of volatility. In March and May 2017 brick sales in the UK rose to their highest levels for a decade and builders' merchants and other distributors were reported to be replenishing stock levels after an industry-wide destocking in early 2016.

The precast concrete blocks market is also performing well, and in 2017 sales reached their highest levels in a decade in value terms following 14 per cent growth over the period 2015-2017. One of the most important drivers of this growth has been the significant and sustained rise in housebuilding activity.

Self build conference

Dover District Council is hosting a Housing and Self Build conference on June 28 at Discovery Park in Sandwich, Kent. The free event will bring together community groups, landowners, developers, consultants and community housing and self-build experts.



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REVIEWS



House 19 in Old Amersham, designed by Jestico & White.

The best of modern architecture

British & Irish Modern – New Houses And Old Houses Made New

Edited by Hannah Jenkins

(Images Publishing - £35)

This beautiful book features a rich array of works that demonstrate how architecture in Britain and Ireland today has much to teach the world about creative high-calibre design, the innovative use of materials, and the cautious but clever reliance on resources.

Highlighting an appreciation for the relationship between

new and old architecture, the handsomely illustrated book showcases how Britain's and Ireland's architects are redefining local expectations by juxtaposing traditional and contemporary homes.

Some of the projects, such as 142 South Street in Lewes, also known as the rusty house because of its Corten steel skin, will be familiar from appearances on *Grand Designs*, while others will be recognised as winners of various architecture awards.



Invariably most of the houses are high-end and located in the South East and Dublin, but there are plenty of styles here to inspire those with more modest budgets.

Bob Matthews – a life dedicated to self build

Specialist self-build author and columnist Robert Matthews has died at the age of 77 after a short illness.

Matthews, who was a regular contributor to *SelfBuild & Design* magazine for almost 20 years, was author of three books on the subject, including *All About Self Build*, published in 2001. He also built one of the first substantial straw-bale structures in the UK at the Old Hall community in Suffolk where he lived on two separate occasions in the late 1970s, and again in the early 1990s.

He went on to complete three self builds, including the house where he lived in Godshill on the Isle of Wight up till a short time before his death on March 15.

Matthews shared much of his knowledge from these experiences, initially in a series of magazine supplements called *Help File*, and later in his columns which took an in-depth look at various subjects relevant to

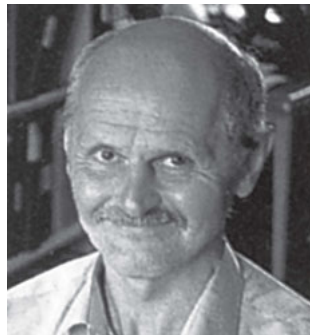
selfbuilders, often over several issues. Subjects ranged from SAPs and the Passivhaus standard, to the individual elements of a build, such as roofing, foundations, fenestration and heating.

For many years he was also a familiar face at exhibitions selling specialist self-build books.

SelfBuild & Design magazine editor Ross Stokes described Matthews as a "one-off" who was deeply committed to self build through his writing: "He wasn't afraid to challenge companies and organisations whose claims didn't meet his rigorous scientific analysis."

Matthews studied physics at Cambridge and worked as an engineer before training as a carpenter and joiner. In the early 80s he built a bungalow entirely with his own hands, and successfully completed two other self builds for himself.

He wrote around 180 articles for *SelfBuild & Design*,



writing his last in November 2017 for the 20th anniversary issue of the magazine.

He retired from writing last year to devote more time to his latest project, an electric trike capable of cruising at 30mph.

Early this year he was diagnosed with cancer of the oesophagus. One of his last wishes was for all of his works to be made freely available online.

To access the articles go to: robert-matthews.me.uk.



Adventures in France

Hosting Hapless Helpers – The Ultimate Guide

(Karen Luff £9.74)

Karen Luff left the UK with her husband John and their five-year-old son for a new life in France more than 12 years ago.

Like many expats they dreamt of running a smallholding and renting out holiday cottages. They fell in love with Le Chataignier, a 400-year-old house in the Mayenne region, which came with a cottage, several barns and land.

It wasn't until they had settled in to their new home and took stock of all the things which needed doing that they realised the full extent of their commitment, both financial and physical.

When a relative regaled them with tales of his exploits on a working holiday Karen realised that having helpers living in to assist with the work was the way forward. But nothing could have prepared them for their adventures, which continue to this day.

Having a complete stranger in your home can be hard work, says Karen, who cites this as the main reason for writing the book.

She quickly realised that an open letter on their Facebook page was essential for all prospective helpers to read before applying to visit. This forms the basis of the book.

Karen offers sound advice for anyone contemplating doing the same, and takes the reader on an entertaining roller coaster ride as she recounts various episodes with guests.

This is a good read, and its unedited rawness adds to the book's charm.



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The Tweed from Drummonds is a compact free-standing cast iron bath, measuring 1,520mm long and 522mm high. Ideal for smaller bathrooms, it features a classic double-ended design. It can be made to order, and is available in four bespoke finish options: polished, painted, primed or raw metal. Shown here hand-painted, it is priced at £4,980. The Tweed is also available to order in a footed version. (drummonds-uk.com)



ROOM TO RELAX

Create a room outdoors with this Isola 3 pergola awning, a complete solar-screen system. The aluminium powder-coated frame offers resistance against corrosion, and can be up to 5,500mm wide x 7,000mm deep. Free-standing or wall-mounted, shading screens or sliding glass doors can be integrated. Optional rain and sun sensors allow it to be automated and controlled by an app, with an optional dimmable light. Price on application. (keoutdoordesign.com)



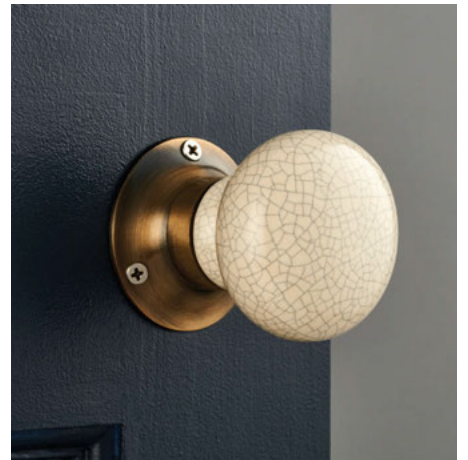
Statement floors

Avenue Floors has added some bold colourways and striking patterns to its Bubblegum & Liquorice range of vinyl flooring, offering modern shades of pale grey and duck-egg blue. New looks include Sagres (shown here), a monochrome repeat diamond design, and the Persian-inspired Shalimar. Fully waterproof and slip resistant with a natural look and feel, the flooring is available in two-, three- and four-metre lengths. Price: from £17 per sqm. (avenuefloors.co.uk)



Suede

Crown has released a new suede emulsion collection, featuring muted tones with a tactile texture and matt appearance. Creating the look of brushed suede, shades include ivory, plum, chocolate and soft grey. Price: £18.99 for 2.5 litres. (crownpaints.co.uk)



INSPIRATION

On trend

Swich it up

The Abode Swich is a device that converts a normal kitchen tap into one that can deliver both mains and filtered water. The small round or square plate (above right) is fitted to the worktop or inside a cabinet. A special filter is available for hard water areas. It costs from £189 with filters lasting for six months. (abode.eu)



Opening doors

A new collection of luxury internal mortice door knobs has been released by Pushka Home. Materials include oak and granite, and black and brown leather (top). For a more classic style, the Cream Cracked ceramic mortice door knob (above) uses antique brass and cracked ceramic for an aged look. Prices range from £25 to £45. (pushkahome.com)

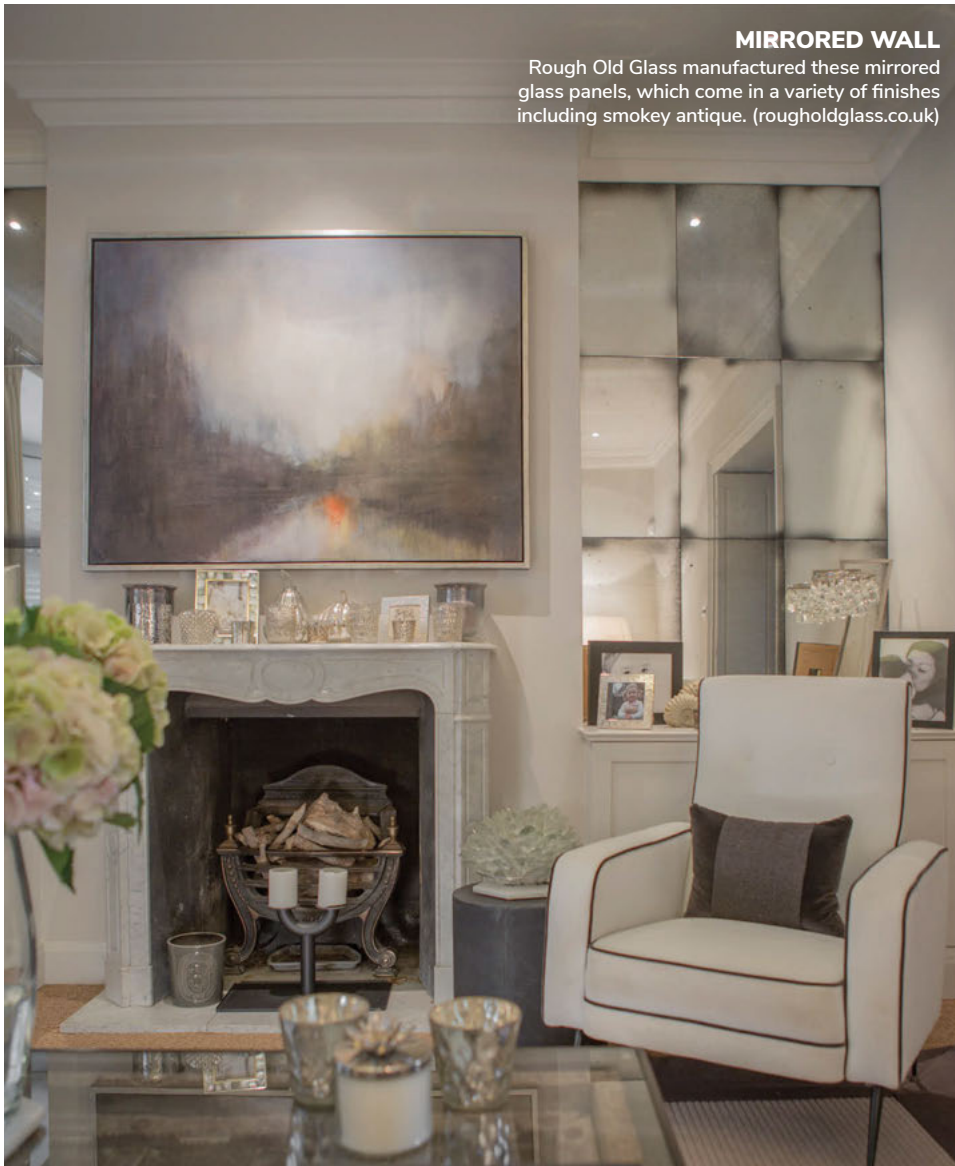


A CLEAN SLATE

The rustic new range of Peacock slate-effect tiles is made from porcelain with a matt finish. Perfect for use with underfloor heating, the tiles offer the charm of natural slate through a textured surface, with the low maintenance of porcelain. There are 32 different designs, which come as a random mix, celebrating the varied appearance of natural slate. Measuring 1,200mm x 300mm with a thickness of 9mm, the tiles cost £49.95 per sqm. (wallsandfloors.co.uk)

MIRRORED WALL

Rough Old Glass manufactured these mirrored glass panels, which come in a variety of finishes including smokey antique. (rougholdglass.co.uk)



COFFEE TABLE

Bronze has been used to create this bespoke coffee table which is topped with glass. It has been made by Decorus whose skilled craftspeople make furniture, lighting and mirrors by hand. (decorusfurniture.co.uk)



Meet the designers

Founded by Andrea Milward and Alison Teverini, Milward Teverini is a London-based design and interior architecture studio specialising in luxury residential projects for private clients, investors and property developers throughout the UK and abroad.

The studio has an established reputation for creating luxurious, elegant interiors from design stage through to implementation, incorporating interior architecture, space planning, kitchen and bathroom design and project management. (milwardteverini.com)



SOFA

This Chesterfield-style Berkeley Aurora sofa is available in a wide range of fabrics and sizes. (sweetpeaandwillow.com)

INTERIORS

Set in STONE

Pale marble and neutral colours have transformed this London home into a haven of peace and elegance.

PICTURES: PAUL TEVERINI



This period family home in the leafy London suburb of Wandsworth may provide the space needed for a family to live comfortably, but parts of the property were extremely tired and needed updating.

The design focuses on the creation of the master bedroom, which includes a luxurious en suite bathroom and reflects a classic contemporary theme with additional eclectic detailing.

A restful, neutral palette of quiet tones in the living room acts as a backdrop to showcase some key mid-century pieces of furniture and artwork, and also some bespoke storage solutions.

A striking oil painting above the fireplace acts as a focal point of the scheme, flanked by bespoke cabinets either side with wall-clad smokey antique mirror glass panels.

Carrera marble has been used extensively in the bathroom, combining different tile shapes on the floors and walls to create texture and interest. The floor has mosaic tiles, while metro tiles are used on the walls, and larger slabs clad the lower part of the wall and the bath. A made-to-measure vanity unit also has a marble worktop.

The wall above the vanity is clad in mirror glass, with a vintage brass-framed mirror and a pair of nickel box lights to give it a glamorous retro feel.

Designer Alison Teverini says: "Although all the stone specified in the bathroom is Carrera marble, we used different types of tiles. On site we found that the variation in colour was a little too great, but our supplier understands our meticulous attention to detail and we were able to hand-pick replacements that were an excellent colour match."



BATHROOM

The inset ceramic basin, bath and WC come from CP Hart (cphart.co.uk) and a range of marble and marble tiles clad the walls and furniture, including metro tiles on the walls and geometric shapes on the floor, all from Mandarin Stone. (mandarinstone.com)



The project was completed in six months by interior designers Milward Teverini who both designed and managed the project.

"We are extremely pleased with the bathroom, as our client said that whenever she uses the room, she always feels that she's in a luxury boutique hotel as the scheme is so special," says Andrea Milward.



Suppliers

Bathroom sanitaryware CP Hart: cphart.co.uk

Bathroom marble and tiles Mandarin Stone: mandarinstone.com

Mirror glass clad wall Rough Old Glass: rougholdglass.co.uk

Living room sofa Sweetpea and Willow: sweetpeaandwillow.com

Coffee table Decorus: decorusfurniture.co.uk

Artwork (fireplace) Brookpace Art: brookpace.co.uk

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Homebuilding & RENOVATING SHOW

Photograph: Simon Maxwell

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In brief

Project

Low-energy new build

Location Cardiff

Cost £360,000

Spent £450,000

Worth £1m+

“Although designing so many bespoke items meant that the budget swelled, we wanted to build something really special.”





Bespoke beauty

Carolyn Merrifield and Nic Downs have designed and built an incredible, sculptural, low-energy house on a garden site in Cardiff.

STORY: **DEBBIE JEFFERY** PICTURES: **ROBERT BOLTMAN PHOTOGRAPHY**

I was out jogging with a friend when we spotted a house for sale with planning permission for a new dwelling in the garden,” says Carolyn Merrifield. “Building our own home had always been a dream, and I knew I needed to move quickly to avoid missing out. The only problem was that Nic was away in France at the time.”

Husband and wife Nic and Carolyn are directors of an established firm of architects based in Cardiff, and by the time Nic returned home from his four-day trip Carolyn had already begun the process of purchasing the garden plot. “I met with the owners and agreed a sale in principle,” she explains. “Then we confirmed the purchase as soon as Nic got back.”

The couple put their own home on the market in order to fund building the new house, but the property remained unsold for the next two years. This gave Nic and Carolyn time to prepare detailed designs, gain planning permission and refine the details.

“We were keen for the house to be as green as possible, and thoroughly researched the sustainability aspects,” says Nic. “Planning permission had been granted for a fairly ordinary house on the plot, but we wanted to design something more imaginative which would still suit the setting.”

EXTERIOR

Ty Oriel was designed by Downs Merrifield Architects for their own use. The flexible, low-energy, contemporary house was built in the garden of the neighbouring property and designed around the family’s current and future needs.





Working within the confines of the large, relatively narrow plot, the couple designed a house on three levels. The ground floor contains a spacious kitchen/diner, a study, WC, utility and en suite bedroom, as well as the garage. The master bedroom suite, sitting room and third bedroom are located on the first floor, with a fourth bedroom, an en suite and an art studio for Carolyn on the second floor.

"We wanted to future-proof the property for old age and disability by creating a ground floor which is virtually self sufficient," Carolyn explains. "By placing bedrooms at every level the space is extremely flexible, and rooms can be adapted to our changing needs. It means the house works just as well for children and for elderly parents when they visit."

Externally, the house has been designed to fit in with surrounding white-rendered properties and the landscape. "There are a number of detached Georgian villas in the neighbourhood, as well as some modern homes, so by designing our house with rendered walls, slate and a pitched roof it ties in well, despite being so contemporary," says Nic.

The house was designed from the inside out, and the couple were keen to incorporate extensive glazing to the south side with just one bay window to the north, above the front door, which was designed to capture fabulous views up to Caerphilly Mountain.

The site is narrow, and therefore some privacy was needed within bedrooms, which was achieved

SPIRAL STAIRS

The couple's architectural studio is located above their garage, which has been extended upwards with a single room accessed by a striking spiral staircase.

DINING AREA

Double-height spaces and huge expanses of glass create a stunning dining area on the ground floor.



“Use an architect – they should come up with ideas you would never have thought of.”

CAROLYN AND NIC'S TOP TIP



In detail

PROJECT

Architects Downs Merrifield
Architects: downsmerfield.com
Plumbing M and J Plumbing:
07717 441880
Electrics Blue Topaz:
02920 890959

STRUCTURE

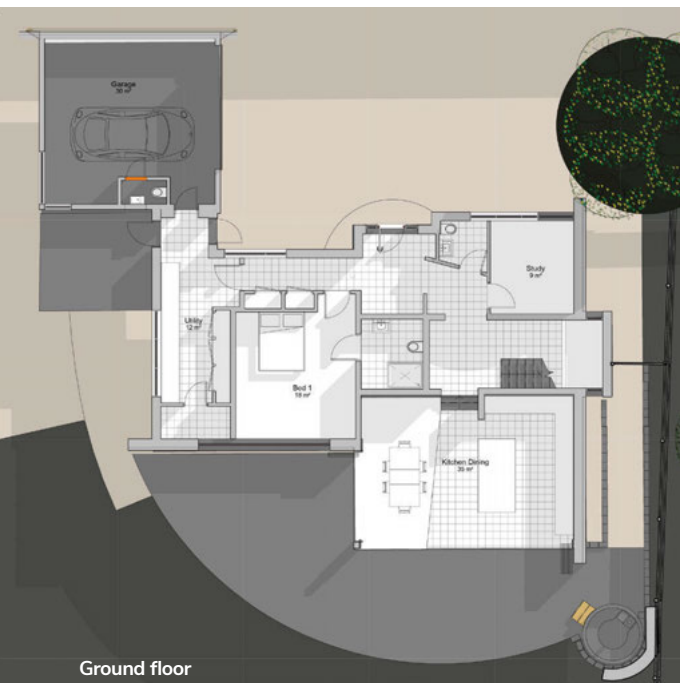
Timber frame Frame Wise:
framewise.co.uk
Insulation Warmcel:
warmcel.co.uk
Lime Green Building Store:
greenbuildingstore.co.uk
Flat roof system Fatra: fatra.co.uk
Timber products Robert Price:
robert-price.co.uk
Builders' merchants Robert
Price: robert-price.co.uk
Windows Nordan: nordan.co.uk
Plasterboard Fermacell:
fermacell.co.uk
Aluminium trims
Guttercrest: guttercrest.co.uk
Glasswork Abbey Glass:
abbeyglassuk.com

Sliding folding doors

ID Systems: idsystems.co.uk
Internal doors Howdens:
howdens.com

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Sustainable paints Earthborn
Paints: earthbornpaints.co.uk
Green products Rounded
Developments: 02920 373094
Rainwater harvesting tank
Rainwater Harvesting Ltd:
rainwaterharvesting.co.uk
Fireplace Topstak: topstak.co.uk
Kitchen Space Fitting Furniture:
spacefittingfurniture.co.uk
Sanitaryware The Tap End:
thetapend.design
Lighting design
Chelsea Lighting Design:
chelsealightingdesign.co.uk
Lighting and furniture
Momentum: momentumcardiff.com
Engineered timber flooring
Junkers: junkers.com
Ventilation system Xpelair:
xpelair.co.uk



Ground floor

by splitting windows into high and low levels.

"We came up with the idea of a roof that folds, so that our neighbours look onto a slate wall, which becomes part of the main roof," explains Carolyn.

"Three slate planes wrap around the render, and have timber soffits which run inside the house to form the wooden ceiling in the sitting room. Wales has a very wet climate, so we chose timber that wouldn't weather and turn grey when used outdoors."

The space between the two main roofs is linked with a standing seam zinc box and a cantilevered timber bay window, which doubles as a porch over the main entrance. All main living spaces face south, benefitting from as much natural light as possible and maximising heat from the sun in the winter, while being shaded by trees in the summer.

The garden plot stands in a leafy and secluded cul-de-sac, and gaining planning permission for the design proved extremely straightforward, with positive comments from the planning officers. There were few planning restrictions, other than to keep as many of the surrounding trees as possible.

Nic and Carolyn eventually sold their home and were able to move into a rented flat during the build,

THE BUILD

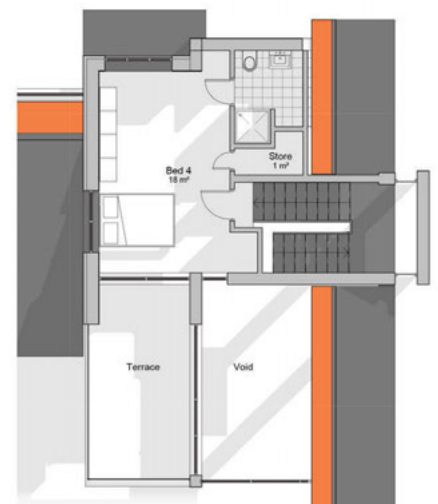
Record rainfall and freezing temperatures resulted in a six-week delay during the build, but the timber-frame construction allowed the project to get back on track. The house has been built to a green agenda, with the fabric of the building achieving near-Passivhaus standards.

FLOORPLAN

The three-storey house has been designed with flexibility and future-proofing in mind, with bedrooms on every level. It incorporates open-plan living, a home office, an art studio on the upper floor and a family kitchen/dining area which opens directly onto the garden.



First floor



Second floor



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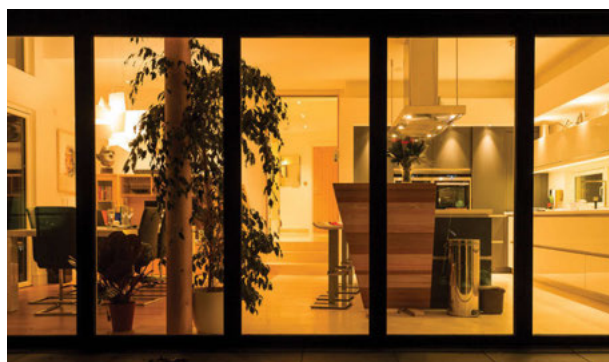
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which they project managed themselves using a team of subcontractors. The couple designed their timber frame in collaboration with a Welsh timber frame company, and pushed to the limits what was possible – including large spans and cantilevered elements, achieved entirely from using timber components.

“Building wholly in timber is more sustainable than using structural steelwork, and the fabric of the house was constructed to near-Passivhaus standards,” says Carolyn, who is President of the Royal Society of Architects in Wales. “The walls are airtight yet breathable; we included high levels of recycled newspaper insulation, woodwool slabs on the outside, and triple glazing to all but the south elevation.”

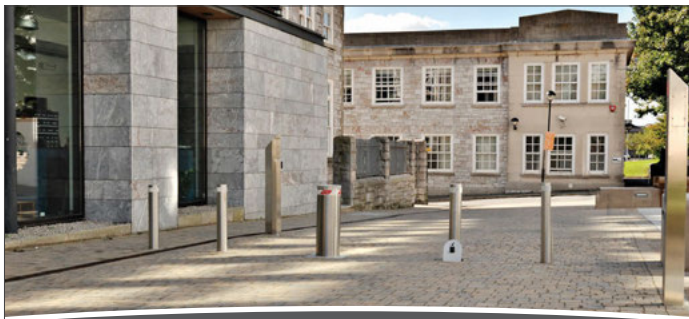
Locally subcontracted labour and craftspeople from within a 20-mile radius were employed and managed by the husband and wife team, who were also directors of a large Welsh commercial practice at the time.

The build was meticulously detailed, with overlapping elements, and took 11 months to complete – from excavating the foundations to moving in, which was slightly longer than originally predicted.

NATURAL MATERIALS

The house has been designed around the family's current and future needs. A limited palette of materials was chosen to blend in with the surroundings – natural slate, lime render, zinc and timber.





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INTERIORS

The bespoke sculptural staircase was designed by Nic and Carolyn, and made by their carpenter to appear as though it cantilevers out from the wall – letting light pass down through the treads. A gravity-defying floating breakfast bar echoes the angled motif of the roof, and was made from the same timber as the roof soffits.



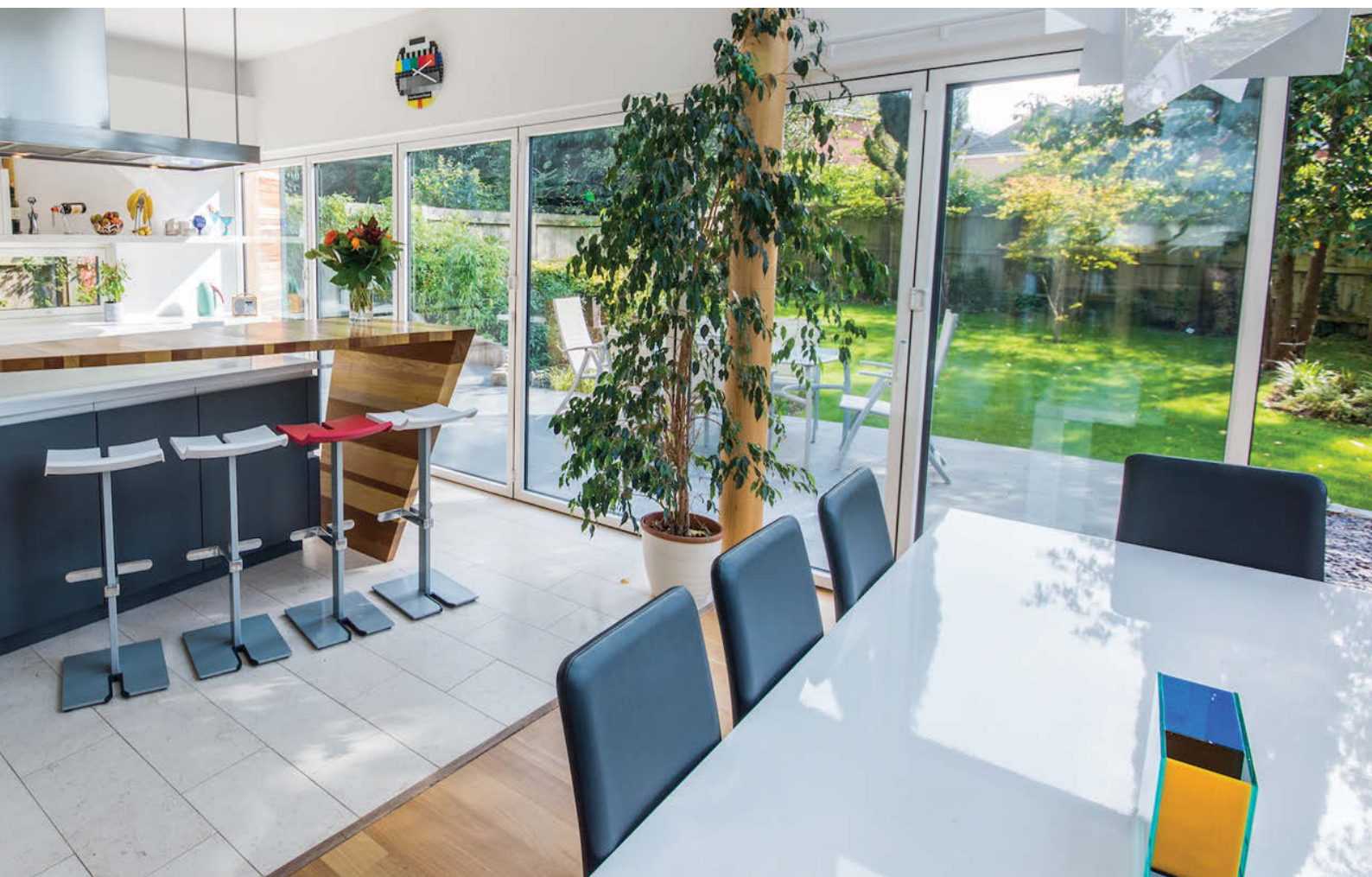
“There were problems with the weather during the first six months, and record rainfall caused water to get into the timber frame,” says Carolyn. “Then the weather turned cold, and freezing temperatures meant that we couldn’t lay the screed or put lime render onto timber laths on the outside of the building. Overall, we probably lost around six weeks, but building with a timber frame helped to keep us on track.”

With no cold bridges, and a ducted whole-house ventilation system, the house maintains a comfortable year-round temperature, with little need for additional heating. “We installed underfloor heating on all levels, which rarely needs to be turned on,” says Carolyn.

“I also wanted to include a wood-burning stove, which you really shouldn’t do in a true passive house, but I love a real living flame. We worked hard to find one with a sealed system, and to counteract potential overheating we have some high-level windows in the sitting room and above the dining room, which open automatically if it gets too hot.”

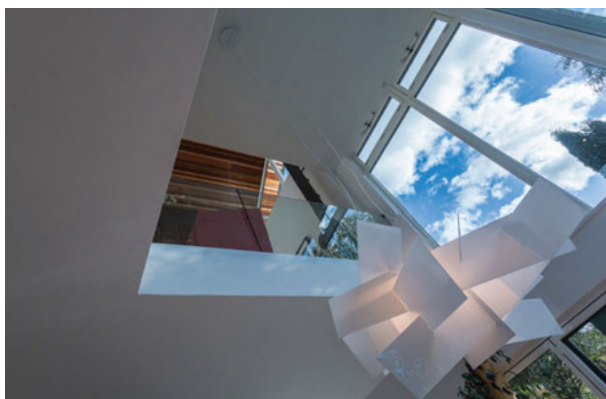
The large, south-facing roof conceals an extensive photovoltaic array, and there is a rainwater harvesting tank for watering the garden, washing clothes and flushing toilets. All elements of the house have been detailed to the highest level, with hidden gutters and a strong eaves line which runs around the building. A limited palette of materials was chosen to blend in with the surroundings – slate, lime render and timber.

All main living spaces face south, and as a result the interior is filled with natural light. The building is comfortable, while at the same time contemporary but not minimalist; a blend of both traditional craftsmanship and modern design.



SITTING ROOM

The first-floor sitting room overlooks the dining area below through a glass balustrade, and the ceiling has been clad in timber which extends outside to form the roof soffits.



Both the garden and much of the ground floor are fully adaptable to Disability Discrimination Act standards, and the house was also designed to the Lifetime Homes Standard. Their own house was the first project Nic and Carolyn had worked on together, and they enjoyed the process so much that they decided to leave their large practice and set up an architectural practice specialising in one-off houses and large residential conversions. They now have an office above the garage, accessed by a stunning bespoke spiral staircase.

"We tried to think of everything when designing the house, from a family kitchen which links to the garden, to somewhere to store Nic's extensive bicycle collection," says Carolyn. "Everything was carefully chosen to be as environmentally friendly as possible, including lime render and paints. This was our one chance to create our dream, and although designing so many bespoke items meant that the budget swelled, we wanted to build something really special."

Final word

What was the high point?

Seeing the various bespoke items, such as the staircase and kitchen, which really give the house character.

...and the low point?

Months of wet and freezing weather, which delayed the build.

The best buy?

The internal doors to bedrooms – everyone comments on them,



but they were purchased fairly inexpensively from Howdens.

...and the biggest extravagance?

Probably the free-standing bath and waterfall tap in our en suite bathroom.



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In brief

Project Extension and renovation

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Park life

Adam Sawers and Stephen Atkins have painstakingly restored and extended a 1920s timber kit home in the foothills of the Dartmoor National Park.

STORY: **DEBBIE JEFFERY** PICTURES: **MATT AUSTIN/ADAM SAWERS/STEPHEN ATKINS**



EXTERIOR

One Gidleigh Park is now a fully insulated and luxurious two-bedroom, two-bathroom home. The front of the building has retained the traditional cladding, while a rear extension is far more contemporary.



When Adam Sawers and Stephen Atkins first bought One Gidleigh Park over 20 years ago, it was an uninsulated kit home which was little more than a tumbledown shack. The couple fell in love with the stunning location though, situated within the estate of world-famous two Michelin star Gidleigh Park Hotel.

"We found the house purely by chance when we were out walking one day," says Stephen. "All the bluebells in the wood were out and we thought it was a really amazing location – then we spotted a 'for sale' sign that had been knocked over."

"We ran straight down to the local estate agent and discovered that a number of other people were also interested in buying the property, but at that time it was almost impossible in England to secure a mortgage on a timber-framed house. A year later the place was still on the market, so we made a lower offer

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STAIRS

Spiral stairs lead up to a mezzanine.

LOUNGE

Located in the original part of the house, the cosy living room has a wood-burning stove.



and managed to secure a small mortgage through a Scottish lender, because timber frame was already viewed as an acceptable form of building in Scotland."

The house had originally been constructed in 1929 as the cook's residence on the estate. It was built by Norwich-based Boulton and Paul – a company specialising in British aircraft manufacturing, construction engineering and shepherds' huts – and was one of three identical timber-framed kit homes.

"The wood was extremely well-seasoned Norwegian pine, and each property had a solid fuel Rayburn in the kitchen for cooking and heating, and a small radiator in the sitting room," says Stephen, a costume stylist and lecturer. "This supplemented the small fires in each room for heating, but without any insulation it wasn't the warmest of homes when we first moved in."

The couple used their cottage for holidays, and enjoyed virtually camping out in the building, which is totally surrounded by almost one acre of lawns, terraces, herbaceous borders and ancient oak and ash woodland.

"We were in our early 30s when we first bought the house, and Adam grew up in the area so we were always visiting family and friends," says Stephen. "Most of our time was spent in London back then, so Devon felt like a real escape when we weren't working. The house is completely secluded, but it's only a five-minute drive to the nearest village of Chagford, so we're not in the middle of nowhere."

The couple spent much of their time in Devon tackling renovation work to the house and reorganising

“The house had a history which we wanted to save, and we spent a year installing insulation and central heating, replacing floors and generally restoring the building.”





“Think very hard if a renovation is worth it, or whether it might be better to build from scratch.”

ADAM AND STEPHEN'S TOP TIP

the internal layout. Originally, the bathroom was accessed through the kitchen and there were three small bedrooms and a sitting room.

“We loved staying there, although with no heating or insulation it was extremely cold,” says Adam, a film commercials producer. “The first thing we did was to install a wood-burner, and whenever we had enough spare money we’d put it towards another job at the house, which we did up over a number of years.”

The building was gutted and all internal ceilings and floors removed by a local builder. Fortunately, the timber frame was still in incredibly good condition – a fact which convinced the couple to restore the existing structure rather than replace it.



FLOORPLAN

The original house (left) has been extended to the rear and side, creating a spacious open-plan kitchen/diner and a new bedroom, en suite and garden room. A spiral staircase leads up to the mezzanine level.

In detail

One Gidleigh Park is available for holiday lets: onegidleighpark.com

PROJECT

Architects Rud Sawers Architects: rudsawersarchitects.com; David Hayes Architect Ltd: dharchitect.com

STRUCTURE

Plaster walls Knauf: knauf.co.uk
Doors Marshall Specialist Joinery Ltd: 01837 54189

Metal roofing (Falzinc) Kalzip: kalzip.com

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Radiators Stelrad: stelrad.com

Kitchen Intoto: intoto.co.uk

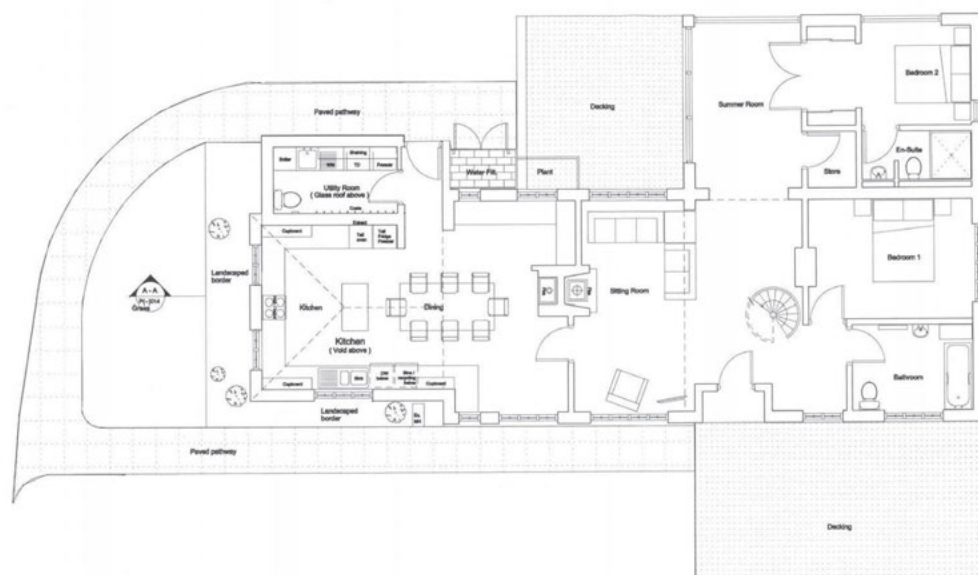
Wood-burners Elaine's Stoves: 01837 52244

Sanitaryware CP Hart: cphart.co.uk

Engineered oak flooring

Jewson: jewson.co.uk

Spiral staircase Spiral UK: spiral.uk.com





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“The house had a history which we wanted to save, and we spent a year installing insulation and central heating, replacing floors and generally restoring the building,” explains Stephen.

Most of the internal walls were removed to create a large open-plan space linking the kitchen with the sitting room. A steel frame was introduced which runs right through the middle of the house and a spiral staircase has been added leading up to a new mezzanine-level study area.

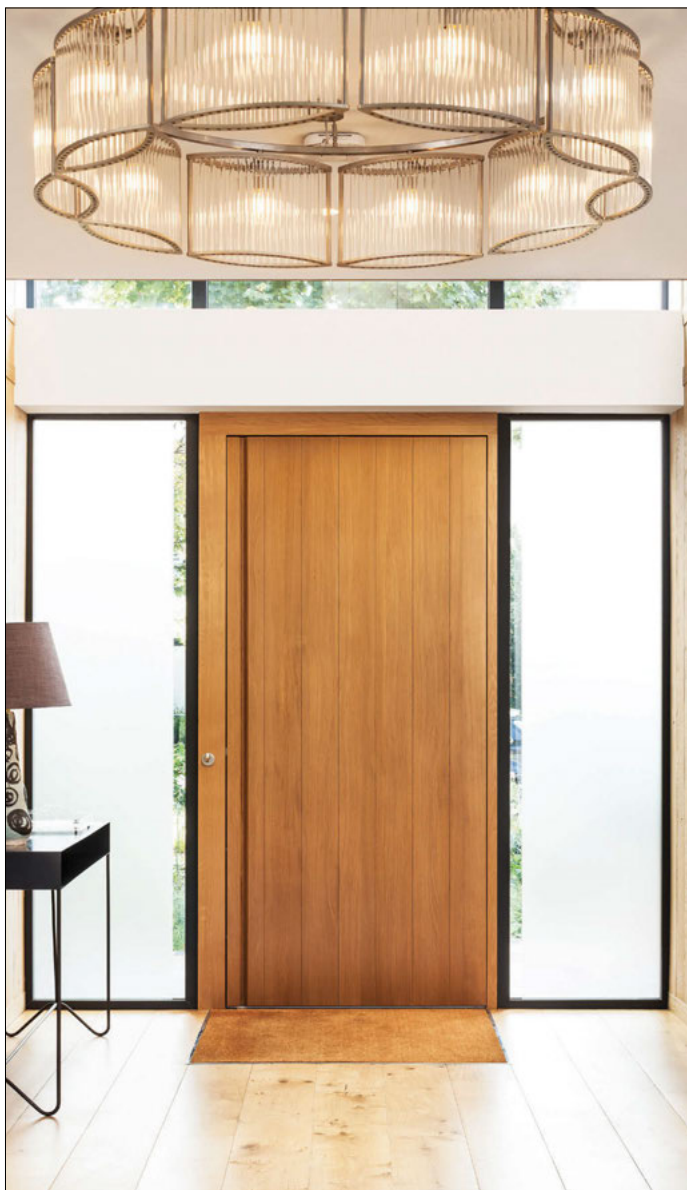
The next stage of the project involved designing and building a rear extension to contain a new bedroom, en suite bathroom, and a glazed summer room overlooking the bluebell wood.

Stephen says: “Much of the structure is glass in a self-supporting steel frame, with the rest clad in



KITCHEN

The new kitchen/dining extension was the latest phase of work to be completed, with an Intoto kitchen and island, teamed with Corian worktops. Engineered oak flooring has been laid over underfloor heating.



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horizontal hardwood weatherboarding that's been left untreated. We realised that you have to be careful using timber and steel, because wood moves and steel doesn't, so building the extension as an independent structure avoided this problem."

More recently, the house has been extended again with a kitchen/diner and utility room addition to one side. Externally, although the extension is stepped back from and slightly lower than the main house, it has been carefully matched to the original, with a pitched slate roof, weatherboarding cut to the original profile, and bespoke timber double-glazed windows copied from the older part of the house.

"We wanted to keep the front elevation looking traditional, but at the back it's far more contemporary, with a Falzinc roof to the extension and powder-coated aluminium glazing," says Stephen. "Everything needed to be approved by the National Park Authority, which can be tricky, but fortunately it went through really smoothly."

A builder was employed to complete the kitchen extension, and whenever the couple visited the site they would work as labourers, installing roof insulation during one of the hottest summers on record. Access to the house is along a single-track lane, which limited the size of delivery lorries and machinery, but generally the final stage of the project ran smoothly and without drama.

The original house had been painted white with yellow window frames, but Adam and Stephen have finished the exterior in a dark grey timber boarding, reminiscent of wooden Scandinavian houses.

"The cladding had been creosoted and was later painted over with lead gloss paint," says Stephen. "We covered this with water-based paint, but during the summer months the paintwork would bubble. Adam and I ended up using heat guns in freezing conditions last January, spending two weeks stripping it right back, sanding and repainting with water-based permeable paint. I've never been so cold or miserable."

Underfloor heating has been installed in the new parts of the house, and photovoltaic panels are mounted on the main roof, with two wood-burners supplementing the radiators and underfloor heating. "We're so high up here on the moor, with clean air and strong sun rays, that the solar panels work really well," says Stephen. "We also have a well with a filtration system, providing our own natural mineral water."

BEDROOMS

One of the bedrooms is located in the older part of the house and has a wooden floor; the other is in the new glazed rear extension with a slate floor. Internal walls are finished in a natural plaster finish with a silicon-based sealant.



EN SUITES

Both bedrooms have spacious en suite shower rooms, with porcelain slate tiles laid in the new extension and limestone in the master en suite.



MEZZANINE

A mezzanine level offers flexible space, which can be used as a home office, snug or bedroom.



GARDEN

A great deal of money has been spent on the garden, as only certain hardy plants will survive on the moor due to the altitude.

The large, previously overgrown garden has also been lovingly landscaped and planted, with two hardwood sun decks now adjoining the property at the front and rear from which to admire the wildlife and birds which are attracted to the site. The garden has been laid mainly to lawn with herbaceous borders, and leads on to bluebell woods that stretch up to Dartmoor. "We had the old tumbledown drystone wall on our boundary completely rebuilt to five feet high by an expert local craftsman," says Adam.

To the front, the sitting room enjoys stunning uninterrupted views over the garden and fields, while the glass room at the rear looks directly into bluebell woodland that plays host to deer, foxes and badgers.

"What's interesting is that none of the three original kit homes has been knocked down and replaced," says Adam. "They were in varying states of disrepair, but the owners all decided to renovate. Each one now has a very distinct style and layout, and couldn't be more different from the original identical log cabin-style homes."

One Gidleigh Park has been available as a vacation home since 2016 and has achieved a high level of reservations. "People love staying in wooden houses," says Adam. "There is a great warmth about them, and this place conjures up a feeling of a little log cabin in the woods, which is essentially what it is – albeit a luxury one!"

Final word

What was the high point?

Realising how much we use the new kitchen/dining extension – being able to sit, eat and cook in the same space – it's the most used part of the house.

...and the low point?

The slate floor in the rear extension had to be taken up and re-laid because it was uneven and looked terrible. Minimal design needs to be perfect – it's not forgiving and you can't hide anything.

The best buy?

Our bespoke furniture was made by a real craftsman, and we love the engineered wood flooring.

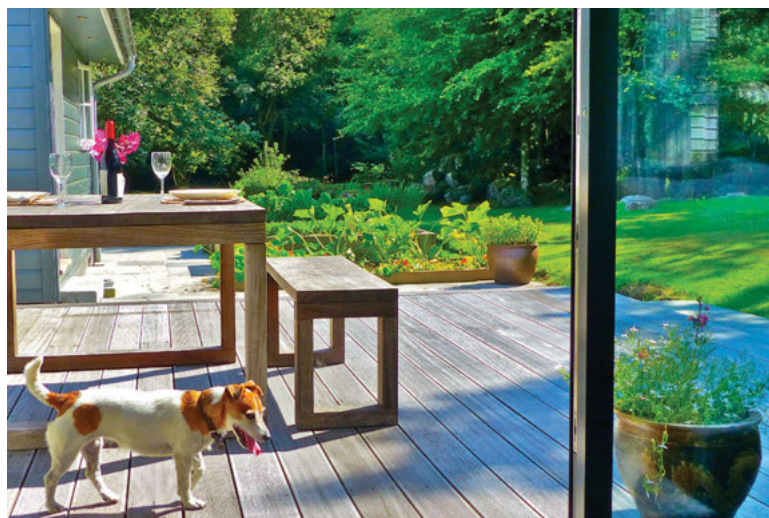


...and the biggest extravagance?

Our beautiful curved drystone wall was built by a skilled local expert, and is known as the Great Wall of Chagford!

Would you change anything?

We might consider extending the glass room across the entire back of the house in future.



Abel Hinchcliffe, 27, is an associate director and shareholder at award-winning multidisciplinary practice CODA Studios, which has offices in Sheffield and Manchester. With more than 10 years' experience, Abel heads up CODA Bespoke, leading a team specialising in designing luxurious extensions, renovations and new homes, usually overseeing around 30 projects at any one time. "CODA Bespoke was formed five years ago, and it's something which I managed from the start," says Abel. "We have grown from originally working on small domestic extensions to now specialising in luxury homes, including several multimillion-pound properties in some of the most affluent suburbs nationwide."



DRIVEN & determined

INTERVIEW: DEBBIE JEFFERY

Tell us about your childhood home

I grew up in an end-of-terrace house in Barnsley town centre, with Mum, Dad and two older sisters. The house was your typical stone-fronted terrace found in mining towns across the country. We had no real outdoor space, just a small rear yard. Dad had previously been a bench joiner and clockmaker, then moved on to a business in wedding photography. His office and studio were situated at the front of the house, limiting our family living space. When I was about five my parents built a small two-storey rear extension. I can remember watching my dad build most of the extension himself, carrying out all of the joinery work, plumbing and fitting windows. I was fascinated with how these elements were put together to create a simple structure, which would eventually be additional living space for us.

What inspired you to become an architectural designer?

It was totally by chance. I was 15, and needed to find a two-week work placement quickly to satisfy the work experience requirements for school. My dad arranged this through a family friend, David Cross, who had recently established his own architecture practice – CODA Studios. Funnily enough, 13 years later I'm now a shareholder in that very firm.



This 100-sqm ground floor kitchen/dining/living space is ideal for hosting parties, and features a 4.5m-long island with a Corian worktop.
(Photo Marc Wilmot)

An ambitious whole-house refurbishment with extensions to the rear and side and a loft conversion.
(Photo: Marc Wilmot)



During my placement I was asked to redraw a typical house-type to scale. It was during a briefing on the task where I remember being astonished at the fact that David was drawing freehand sketches to scale as he talked me through the house layouts. He then passed me a stack of magazines to look through for ideas, and I was told to design a house. There were no limitations and, with a fair bit of help from the rest of the CODA team, I managed to design my first house to scale.

It was then that I realised I would pursue a career in architecture. I actually still have the drawings in my desk drawer at work, and the design is not too dissimilar from the house I live in now.

What happened next?

Once I left school at the age of 16 I returned to CODA to start an informal apprenticeship. Over the next few years I would work at CODA two days a week while studying a BTEC in Construction at college. My evenings and weekends were never free though, as I also worked in a bar and restaurant. In 2008 the financial crisis cut my architecture career short – for nine months anyway. CODA was resilient as a business, working with a skeleton core of employees until the market picked up again, and managed to avoid becoming a casualty of the recession. Eventually I returned on a part-time basis to support the



architectural team, working on a wide variety of projects as the commissions at the time were diverse. This was a good thing for me, as my skills had to develop quickly. I was learning about detailing and implementation information; visiting sites and seeing how a drawing was used to create a building. It reminded me of my dad constructing our extension, and the processes involved in a building project. It was at this time I developed a true understanding of architecture and how a project is delivered from inception through to completion.

My passion for domestic architecture grew and led to forming CODA Bespoke, a division of CODA that was at first dedicated to small projects. However, in the five years that I've been at the helm the commissions have become larger and much more ambitious.

Describe your own home

My partner and I were looking to move to a larger property

where we could bring up a family, when an old glassworks came up for sale nearby. We teamed up with friends to buy it and build two semi-detached homes on the site.

We bought it as a derelict commercial property with no planning permission – borrowing £40,000 through bridging finance because no bank would lend to us without planning permission. Our three-storey house has four bedrooms and a roof garden, and was built using a timber frame for speed.

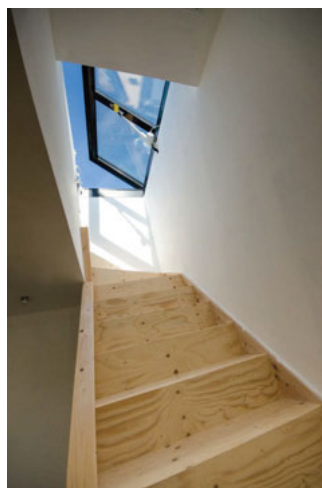
We did loads of the physical work ourselves and managed to build the house for around £110,000. It wasn't the smoothest of projects, but I'm already on the lookout for another plot to build our next house.

Sum up your style

My own house is a black steel-clad cube form, so my personal style



Abel and his partner joined forces with friends to build their four-bedroom city centre homes for just £110,000. (Photo: Vox Multimedia)



This former garage/studio was converted into a stylish two-bedroom house with some exciting contemporary features. (Photo Marc Wilmot)



Above: Wood View is a luxurious new build design incorporating a cinema room, wine cellar and underground garage.

Right: A new garden building complete with sauna and bar. (Photo: Marc Wilmot)

Below: Tolan House, a barn conversion linking to an old agricultural shed to create a luxury family home. (Photos: Mike Black)



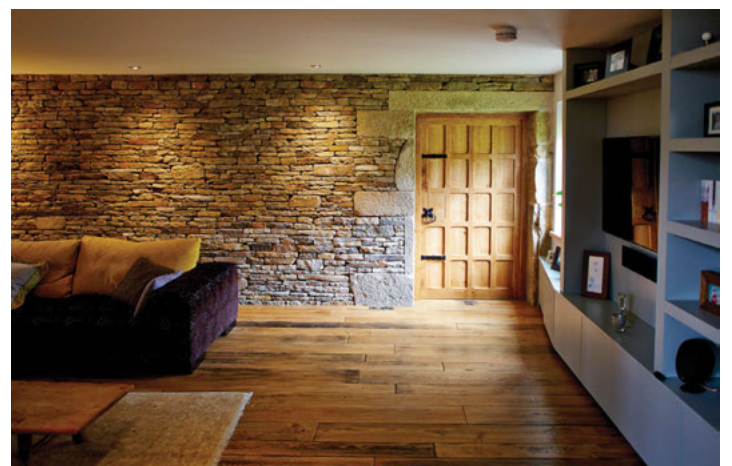
isn't something that is suited to most sites as it's quite brutalist and very striking. I like to use strong, solid materials to give buildings a feeling of presence and weight. When speaking about the exterior of a new project I ask my clients 'how bold do you want to be?' or 'how brave are you?' One of our recent super-home designs is very bold and features grey bricks with black zinc cladding, which is very much me, and getting planning for such a striking scheme adjacent to a Conservation Area has been a massive achievement for CODA Bespoke.

What advice would you give to selfbuilders?

I always say to my clients that I want the shortest brief that they can give me – at first these are bullet points and nothing more. I like to go away and respond to the brief with an initial sketch proposal. I'd like to think that we provide the client with a design that they would never have envisaged alone. The design often develops from this initial sketch and we will work with the client to ensure their aspirations are met. It is important to trust your design team and not try to lead them too much initially. Let them be creative – that's what you have commissioned them to do. I encourage clients to include as much glass as possible in the designs, and to sacrifice other features if necessary, as natural daylight promotes health, well-being and happiness. The worst kind of house is where you walk in and have to put on the lights no matter what time of day it is.

How do you like to relax?

I'm so busy with work and family life that spare time is in short supply, but very occasionally I'll take myself down to the canal to fish. It clears the mind, and you don't usually get much silence when you have young children!



CODA Bespoke: codastudios.co.uk

Tales of the RIVERBANK

Victoria and David Austin have more than doubled the size of their 1980s bungalow by extending upwards to create a stunning three-storey house on the banks of the River Thames.

STORY: **DEBBIE JEFFERY** PICTURES: **DAVID BUTLER/CONCEPT EIGHT ARCHITECTS**



In brief

Project Extension and remodel

Location Thames Ditton

Cost £700,000 in 1997

Spent £750,000

Worth £4million+





REAR

The rear elevation overlooks the River Thames and the upper two storeys have been clad in black-painted timber for a boathouse feel.

“Try to bulk buy items like flooring and sanitaryware to save money – we have the same bathrooms throughout and bought timber products direct from a timber mill.”

VICTORIA AND DAVID'S TOP TIP



“David and I have lived here for more than 20 years now, and it was the first home that we bought together as a couple,” says Victoria Austin. “We originally met through sailing, and it was always our dream to own a home on the river. After about 18 months of hunting we found a 1980s bungalow on a fantastic plot which drops down to the Thames with views of Hampton Court gardens.”

The four-bedroom bungalow had been built by the owners of the neighbouring house, who created a plot in their garden and used the brick property as a granny

annexe. “There was carpet in the kitchen and bathrooms, flock wallpaper, Artex ceilings and crazy paving,” continues Victoria. “It definitely needed updating.”

The couple now have two sons, aged 10 and 11, and initially found that living in a single-storey bungalow worked well with young children. As the boys grew older the space became less practical, however, particularly as two of the bedrooms were needed as home offices for Victoria and David, which meant that the children shared a room.

“We’d already added a conservatory and built a single-storey kitchen extension with bifold doors, which gave



us better access out to the garden, more light and river views,” says Victoria, a lighting designer. “These projects went so smoothly, and were such a success, that we decided to convert the loft to give us the extra space we needed in the form of two more bedrooms.”

The couple approached the same architectural designer who had produced the plans for their kitchen extension, and who drew up a proposal for extending into the bungalow’s roof space. The shallow pitch of the roof meant that dormers were required front and back to bring enough height to the new rooms, and the application was rejected by the local planning department.

“They disliked the dormers but – as ours was the only bungalow left in a road of more substantial houses – they said they would look favourably on us building upwards and adding another floor,” says Victoria. “We hadn’t really wanted to spend that much money, but it made sense to extend the bungalow, so we began searching for an architect to help us.”

The couple met with Mufajel Chowdhury, director of Concept Eight Architects in Weybridge, who impressed them with his clear ideas and positive attitude towards potentially staging the project as the couple’s budget allowed.

A survey revealed that the existing foundations were extremely sturdy and more than adequate for supporting another level, which meant that the brick walls and footings of the squat bungalow could be retained.

Onto this a new blockwork storey and a slate roof would be added, and the entire building rendered externally to unite old and new elements. Round windows and sections of black painted weatherboarding mimic nearby boathouses, and the property would benefit from new aluminium-framed glazing throughout.

SITTING ROOM

Steel and glass internal doors open into the ground-floor sitting room, which leads onto the garden through sliding doors. A wood-burning stove has been installed in a bespoke black metal surround designed by Victoria.

KITCHEN

Sliding glass doors were installed in the extended kitchen, where low-profile underfloor heating was laid below timber flooring. The existing kitchen units were retained and have been adapted.





An existing integral garage and the previously extended kitchen would remain, with the rest of the ground floor reconfigured to create a games room, bathroom, study and a stunning triple-height hallway. Upstairs there are four bedrooms, two dressing rooms, two en suites, a bathroom, laundry room and a first-floor drawing room opening onto a balcony with views of the river.

"The design evolved as we realised that the pitch of the new roof would also give us enough loft space to add two en suite guest bedrooms at the top of the house," says Victoria, "so our single-storey bungalow was going to be more than doubled in size to become a three-storey house with six bedrooms."

The original bungalow took the form of two wings joined by a central section, and this footprint dictated the size and shape of the new first-floor extension, with a highly glazed core and extensive glazing overlooking the north-east facing rear garden.

"The previous owners told us that they'd designed the bungalow with a large hallway so that it could potentially be turned into a house at some point, which was also why the foundations had been over-engineered," says Victoria.

The new planning application was strongly resisted by local residents, however, and took time to resolve - including dispensing with a rear first-floor balcony and two projecting glass bay windows to appease the neighbours.

Once planning permission had been approved the family needed to find alternative accommodation during the build, and came up with a novel solution - purchasing a wide-beam canal boat, which they moored on the river at the bottom of the garden.

"At first we'd planned to carry on living in the house while the work went on above us, but we then realised

In detail

PROJECT

Architect Concept Eight Architects: concept8.co.uk
Building contractor Ryefort Build: ryefortbuild.com
Staircase designer Jeremy Pitts: jeremypitts.co.uk
Landscape designers Kennedy Song Duso: ksongd.co.uk
Home automation Livewire Home Integration: livewireintegration.com
Electrical contractor Livewired Electrical Contractors: lwes.co.uk

STRUCTURE

Internal glass doors Wellington Glazing: wellingtonglazing.co.uk
Sliding doors Sunflex UK SVG30: sunflexuk.co.uk
Roof lights Velux: velux.co.uk
Render K Rend: k-rend.co.uk
Staircase kits CAD Stairs Ltd: cadstairs.co.uk
Siberian larch cladding Vastern Timber: vastern.co.uk
Solvent-based opaque woodstain Solignum: solignum.co.uk
Guttering Yeoman Rainguard: rainguard.co.uk

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Sanitaryware supply West One Bathrooms: westonebathrooms.com
Sanitaryware Duravit: duravit.co.uk
Lighting system Lutron: lutron.com

Bathroom feature tiles

Tratti range, Domus Tiles: domustiles.co.uk
White tiles Floor and Wall Tile Company: floorandwalltilecompany.co.uk
Wood-burners Jetmaster: jetmaster.co.uk
Kitchen Hæcker: haecker-kuechen.de
Flooring Whitmore's Timber: whitmores.co.uk
Cladding Inglis Hall: inglishall.com

Underfloor heating Polypipe Overlay: polypipe.com

Chandeliers Stilio by Licht im Raum: licht-im-raum.de

Heat recovery and ventilation system Robbins Systems: underfloorheating.co.uk

Door furniture Allgood: allgood.co.uk

Front door Urban Front: urbanfront.com

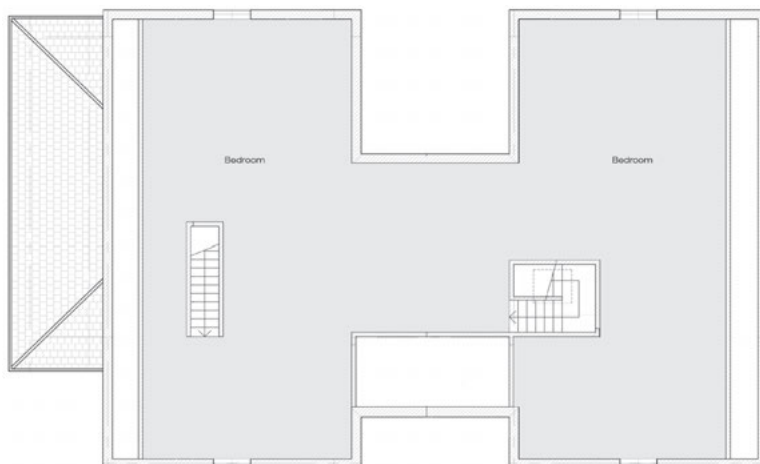
Shower screens and glass balustrades Vision Design: visiondesignprojects.com

Bespoke fire surround/mantel and over mirror Novocastrian: novocastrian.co

Handmade tiles (first floor drawing room chimney breast) The Douglas Watson Studio: douglaswatsonstudio.co.uk

Blinds Radiant Blinds: radiantblinds.co.uk

Curtains Maison Bleu: maisonbleuinteriors.co.uk



Second floor



First floor



Ground floor



FLOORPLAN

The original red-brick bungalow (top) has been completely transformed. Building a new storey and extending up into the roof space has created a three-storey house, with six bedrooms, a first-floor sitting room and a study – more than doubling the size of the original bungalow (above) to 548-sqm.

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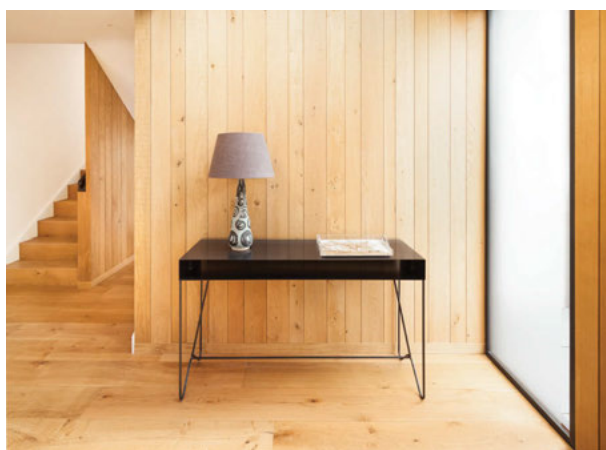
sunflexUK.co.uk





HALL

Oak clads the triple-height entrance hallway and staircases, which are illuminated by large glass chandeliers.



that the ceilings and joists would need to be replaced, making this impossible,” says Victoria. “I came up with the idea of buying a boat, and we put our belongings into storage and moved in for 18 months, which was a real adventure.”

Contractors were shortlisted from firms known by Concept Eight Architects and others sourced by the Austins to tender for the project. The red-brick bungalow was stripped out and the roof removed in readiness for new blockwork walls to be constructed, with scaffolding and plastic sheeting forming a protective box around the structure.

“We’d originally installed timber bifolds in the kitchen extension, but decided that we wanted to change these to aluminium sliding doors to maximise the views and light,” says Victoria, who sourced and purchased many of the materials and fixtures herself, including windows and flooring. “Our architect suggested making the internal glass doors full height, so I set about finding 2.5m-high doors which were also fire-rated because of the three storeys.”

Victoria, a UCL Bartlett School-trained lighting designer, chartered engineer and Member of the Society of Light and Lighting, was keen to employ her own electricians and to devise a lighting scheme for the house which would both emphasise and complement the architectural features. Large glass chandeliers were chosen for the entrance hall and triple-height void, which is clad in oak to match the staircase.

“Jeremy Pitts, a designer and furniture maker who specialises in working with timber, helped me with the design of the two oak-clad staircases and black-stained handrails, and it was his idea to build the balustrades in oak as well,” says Victoria.

“I wanted to introduce some character to the interior without blowing the budget, and ended up buying the

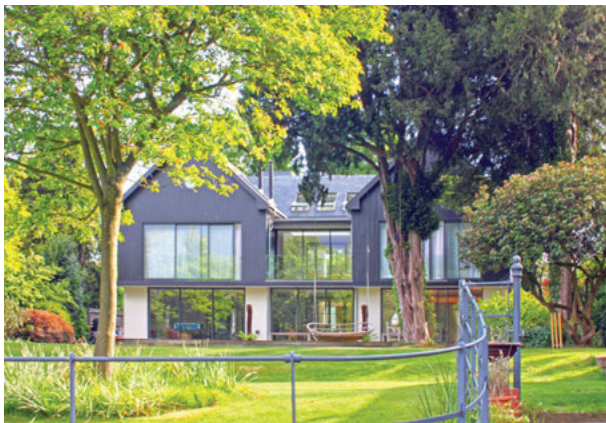




FRONT

Extending upwards, rendering, slating the roof and installing aluminium windows have transformed the front of the house.





GLAZING

A highly glazed core and extensive rear glazing overlook the garden and river.

wood for our floors and cladding direct from a timber mill. Instead of buying expensive burnt larch we painted the external timber cladding black, to save money.”

Another cost saving involved installing low profile underfloor heating, which avoided the need to dig out the ground floor in order to retain head height. “The insulating tiles are only 20mm thick and have grooves cut out of them to accommodate thin pipework,” explains Victoria.

Ultimately the build overran by several months, which meant that David and Victoria were extremely pleased to be able to finally move out of the canal boat and into their newly transformed home in November 2016. Since then they have been furnishing and fitting out some of the rooms in stages, and are now close to completing the interiors.

“The project ended up being far more extensive than we’d first imagined, but we’re very glad that we tackled the building work in one go,” says Victoria. “Having so much space is fantastic, particularly after living on a boat, and the connection to the river is exactly what we’d hoped for. Now it feels as though the house does justice to such a lovely plot.”



Final word

What was the high point?

I enjoyed sourcing and investigating the various products, especially the glazed internal doors which make such a strong impact.

...and the low point?

Life on the boat was becoming difficult by the end, and the project did drag on longer than anticipated.

The best buy?

Instead of commissioning an expensive bespoke staircase we bought a kit stair for a couple of hundred pounds and then clad it in oak. We’re also glad we installed a ventilation and heat recovery system in



the loft, which pumps out fresh filtered air into the living rooms.

...and the biggest extravagance?

The internal glazed doors cost more than the external glazing but they are a fantastic feature, add character and bring in so much light.

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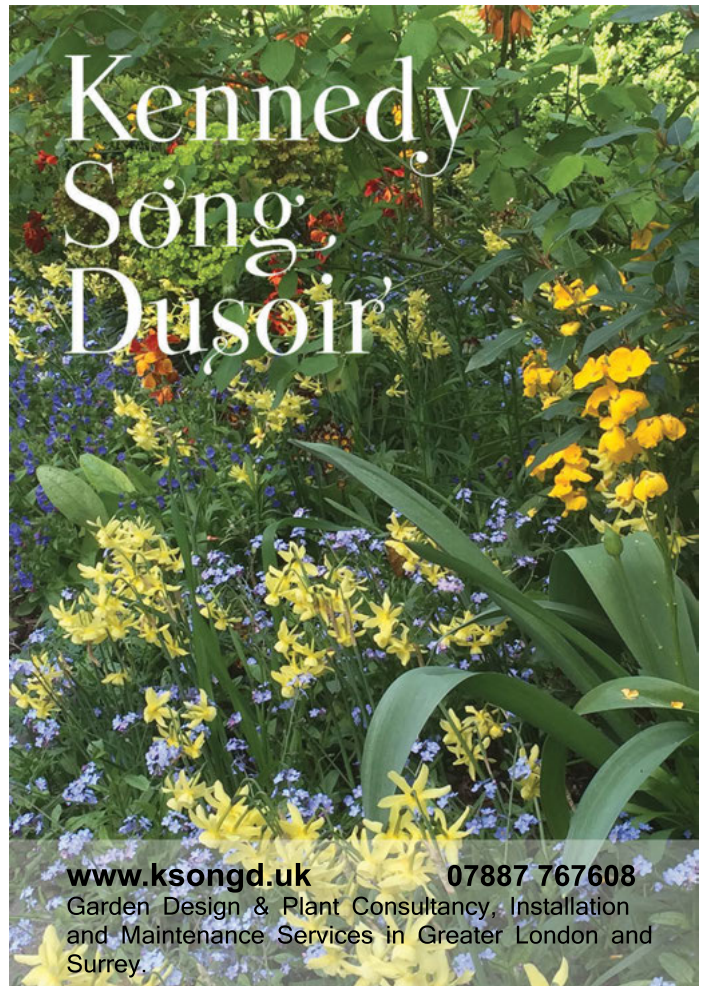
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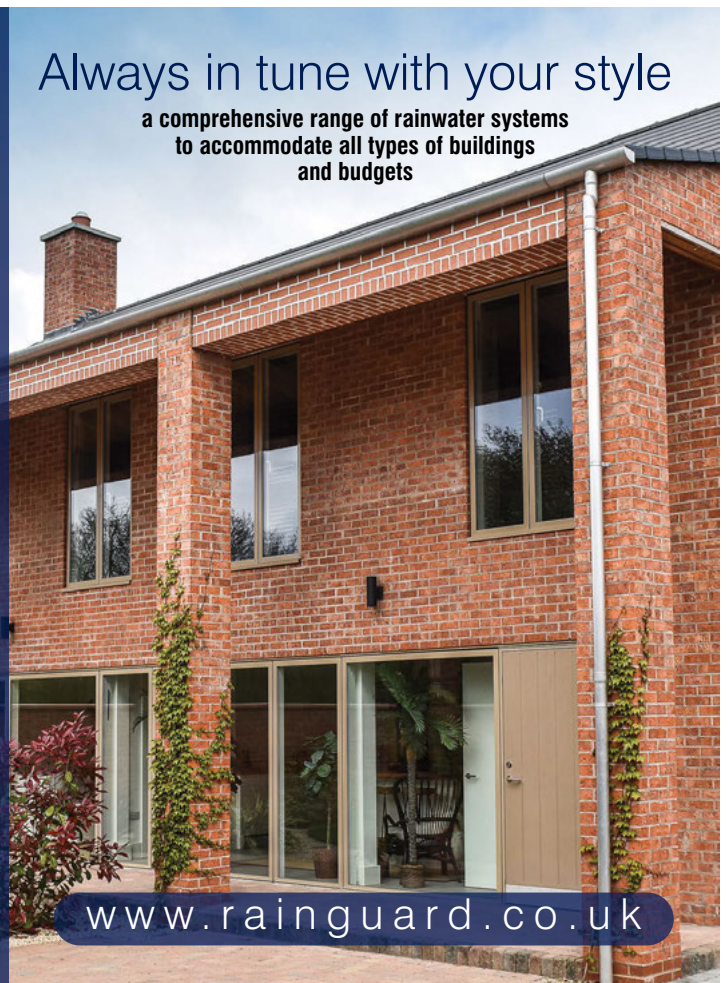
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Getting *creative*

Tom and Nicola Webb's second self build has given them the opportunity to make their mark.

STORY: LOUISE PARKIN PICTURES: NEIL PHILLIPS

In brief

Project Timber-frame new build
Location Hereford
Cost £120,000
Spent £350,000
Worth £700,000



“In the time between getting planning permission and the early stages of the build, make decisions and plan interiors to ensure it’s all in place early.”

TOM AND NICOLA’S TOP TIP



The chance to create a home to our own spec is the reason why most of us choose to self build, but Tom and Nicola Webb's first project left little room for innovation, and they were hungry for more.

Detailed planning permission was already in place which meant that only minor changes were possible. They tweaked a traditional design to make it more contemporary but were still largely bound by the terms of the consent.

For their second project they were keen to let their imagination run wild and achieve a Cubist-inspired home that would better suit their taste as well as their lifestyle.

Tom and Nicola had been alerted by an estate agent that a plot in a nearby village was due to go to auction, so Tom

approached the vendor directly. “The estate agent told me that plots around here generally go for around 20 per cent above the guide price, so I went to see the owner and made him an offer, which he accepted,” Tom recalls. The large, level plot is in the centre of a quiet village a short drive from Hereford, next to a village hall and playing fields.

Tom and Nicola already had an architect in mind. “There are very few examples of contemporary architecture here in Hereford, so we approached an architect who had done some designs locally that impressed us,” Tom explains.

A number of meetings took place before Jim Hicks of OHA Architecture produced the final design for the contemporary home which features a flat roof and boasts impressive energy credentials.



The design centres around an open-plan kitchen/diner/living area where Tom and Nicola can spend time with their children Freya (six) and Finlay (four). A strong connection with the garden is achieved with a bank of glazing, while a dramatic floating staircase links the two floors, with the bedrooms opening out onto a recessed balcony to admire the views of the Herefordshire countryside.

The forward-thinking planning department strongly supported the scheme, which came as something of a surprise and a relief to the Webbs, who immediately began preparing for the build.

Tom, a company director, managed the project while working full time, visiting the site every day on his way into work. He would spend 20 to 30 minutes with the contractors to answer questions and check progress, and would also return during the day when necessary.

INTERIORS

Industrial-style finishes have been chosen, including a concrete worktop and table top and concrete-effect porcelain floor tiles.





"I have rose-tinted memories now, but there was a lot of stress at the time," Tom recalls. "Fortunately the plot is on my way to work, and I am lucky to have the kind of job where I could be on site if I needed to be. It was a very busy year though."

Tom sourced contractors who had worked on the couple's previous project, but this time the house design lent itself to timber-frame construction. Local firm Taylor Lane Timber Frame was chosen to design, manufacture and erect the 140mm timber-frame kit, using metal web joists to construct the floors, balcony and the flat roof. High levels of energy efficiency were requested in the brief and Taylor Lane designed the frame to achieve a U-value equivalent to Passivhaus standards. For this, 120mm of insulation was inserted between the timber-frame stud walls, with an additional 30mm of rigid insulation on the inside face.

Timber battens then formed a service void, which has two functions – it creates an extra air gap to aid thermal performance, and also allows cables and piping to run through it without puncturing the vapour control layer or insulation.

Triple glazing was selected for all but one window, which would have been too heavy because of its size, and a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system keeps the indoor environment fresh and warm. The flat roof has solar panels to provide heating and hot water, which are south-facing yet not visible from ground level.

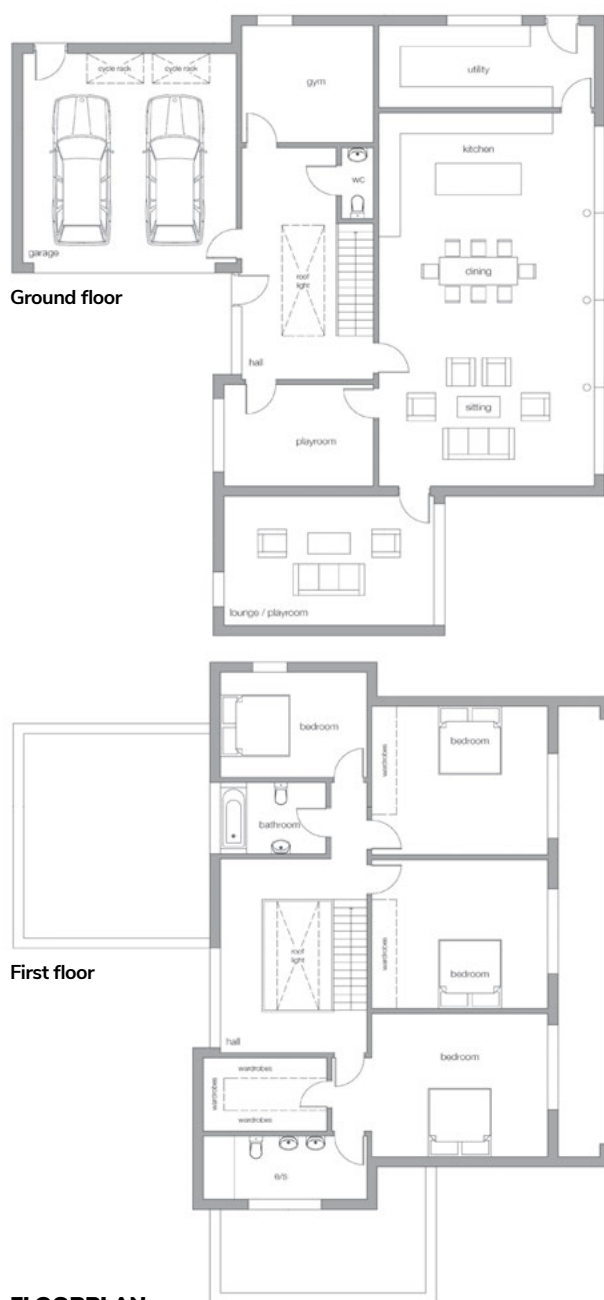
The roof is covered with an EPDM rubber membrane, while the exterior facades are clad in pre-weathered cedar that has a naturally aged appearance, with the same wood in a different cut on the balcony to create interest. This is backed with a partially visible black breather membrane, creating a shadow effect.

The floating staircase proved a challenge, with Taylor Lane's steel fabrication team coming up with a clever design that incorporated the steel structure into the timber frame. Each tread cantilevers out from the wall, so this element of the standard timber frame was replaced with a steel structure with a diagonal steel beam running the length of the staircase.

Steel runners were welded to the beam and decorative oak steps were slotted over the runners to form the stair treads, all manufactured on site to ensure pin-point accuracy.

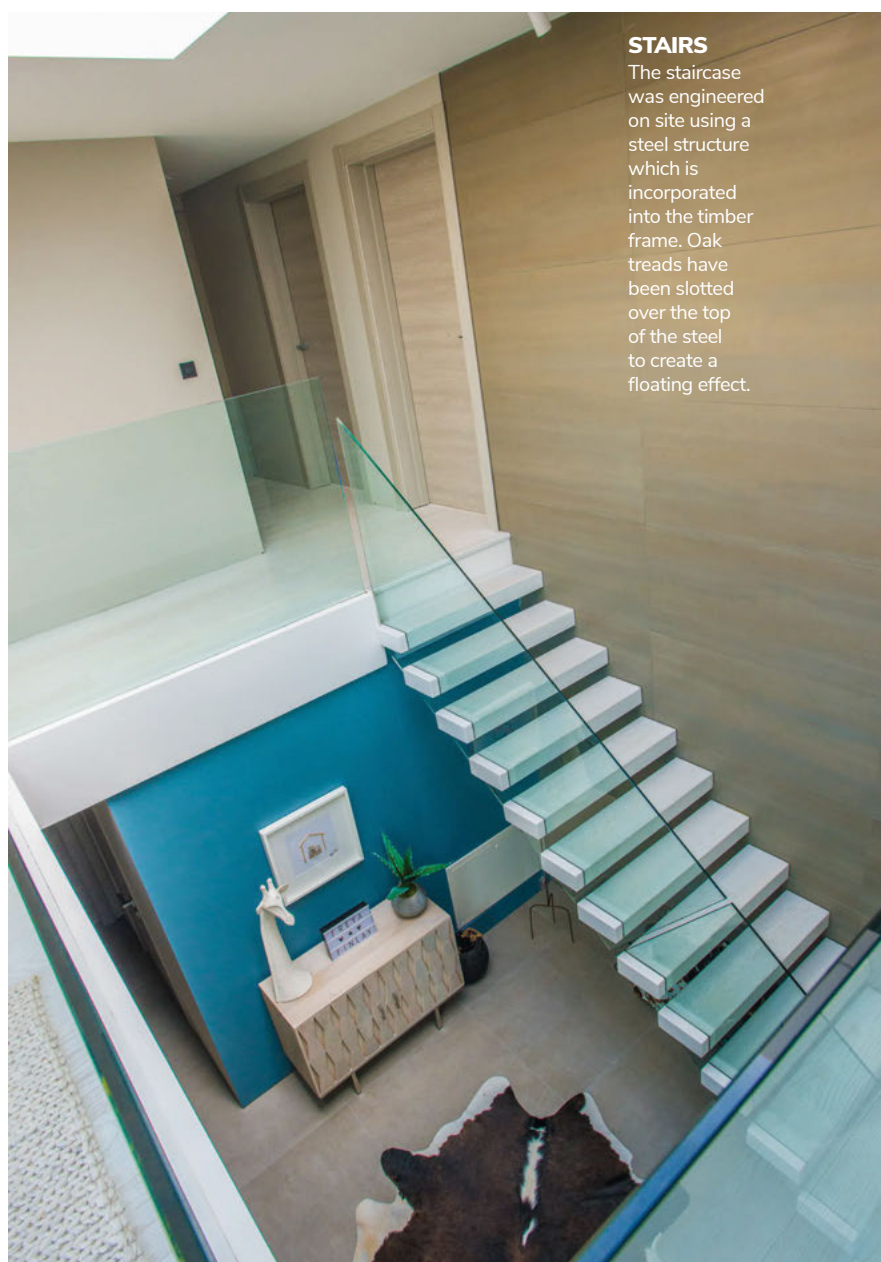
Above is a large skylight that floods the landing with daylight, percolating down to the ground floor.

The interiors have an industrial urban feel achieved by the use of concrete throughout. The worktop and table top are made from this, along with a bank of high-line wall cupboard doors, while large format porcelain floor tiles have been selected for their



FLOORPLAN

An open-plan living/kitchen/diner forms the main area of the ground floor, with a utility room, formal sitting room, playroom, office and WC. Upstairs are four bedrooms including the master bedroom, which has an en suite bathroom and dressing area, and there is a family bathroom. There is also an integral double garage.



STAIRS

The staircase was engineered on site using a steel structure which is incorporated into the timber frame. Oak treads have been slotted over the top of the steel to create a floating effect.



In detail

PROJECT

Architect OHA Architecture:
oha-architecture.co.uk

Timber frame Taylor Lane
Timber Frame: taylor-lane.co.uk

Groundworker RJ Thomas Ltd:
rj-thomas.co.uk

Plumber Efficient Energy Centre:
efficientenergycentre.co.uk

Electrician Efficient Energy
Centre: efficientenergycentre.co.uk

Roofer S&P Roofing:
sp-roofing.co.uk

Bricklayer RJ Thomas Ltd:
rj-thomas.co.uk

Renderer DMS Plastering:
dmsplastering.co.uk

Window fitter Renka: renka.co.uk

STRUCTURE

Cladding SivalBP by Vincent
Timber: vincenttimber.co.uk

Windows Reynaers:
reynaers.co.uk

Internal doors Garrifoli by
Moore and Moore Doors:
mooremooredoors.co.uk

External doors Hormann
supplied and fitted
by Renka: renka.co.uk

Render K-Rend: k-rend.co.uk

Solar panels Pleion solar
thermal panels from Zero Ridge:
zeroridge.co.uk

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Kitchen Leicht kitchen
from Contour Kitchens:
contourkitchens.co.uk

Bathrooms Bossini: bossini.it,
Villeroy and Bosch: villeroy-
boch.co.uk, Fiora: flora.es/en,
Casabath: casabath.it

Porcelain tiles Living Ceramics:
livingceramics.com

Engineered oak flooring

Blueridge Flooring:
blueridgeflooring.co.uk

Staircase structure Taylor Lane:
taylor-lane.co.uk

Staircase treads Blueridge
Flooring: blueridgeflooring.co.uk

Staircase glass balustrade
Barrs Court Engineering:
barrscourt.com

Paint Little Greene:
littlegreene.com, Farrow and Ball:
farrow-ball.com

Builders' merchant Tudors
Hereford: tudors.uk.com

Coving/skirtings Renderplas:
renderplas.co.uk

“I have rose-tinted memories now, but there was a lot of stress at the time.”

concrete-like appearance. These were discovered at Grand Designs Live but were sourced directly from Spain, providing a considerable cost saving.

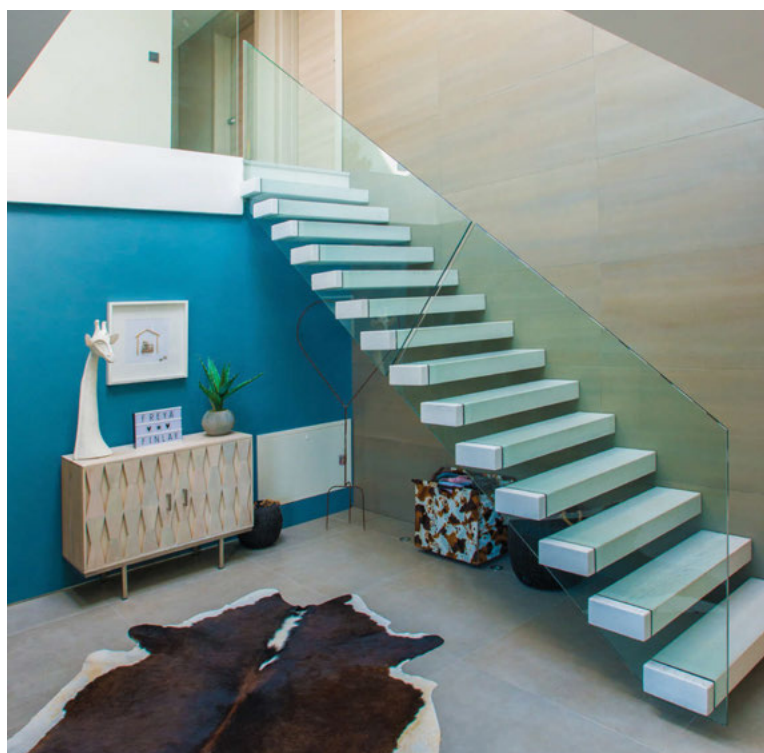
Pale matt doors were used for the kitchen island which incorporates the hob, while a floor-to-ceiling bank of wall cupboards in anthracite grey features a series of ovens.

A dropped ceiling above the large kitchen island houses the extractor, while hidden lighting around the top of the structure creates a floating effect.

“In our previous house we installed more than 100 recessed spotlights but this time we decided to hire a lighting designer,” says Nicola. “They looked at each room and planned a scheme that used a variety of lighting including some more sculptural and interesting installations. It was expensive but definitely worth it.”

A utility room to the rear of the kitchen keeps clutter out of the way and there is a small plant room that houses the AV system and all the controls for the heat recovery ventilation system and underfloor heating. The ground floor also includes a formal sitting room, a playroom, a gym and a WC. Upstairs there are four bedrooms, including the master suite with its en suite bathroom and dressing area. Here the industrial theme continues with modern concrete wall cladding. A Luxone home-technology system controls heating, security, lighting, shading and the audio/visual system.

Tom and Nicola have not ruled out the idea of building again, but for now they plan to enjoy their new home and move their attention to the lawned garden. Tom says: “There’s still lots to do outside, so that will keep us occupied for a while!”



Final word

What was the high point?

Finding out that the planners were supportive of our design was a huge relief. It was unknown territory, and we were really pushing the boundaries.

And the low point?

Ordering the wrong-sized window was stressful. I had approved the plans from a PDF on my phone screen in a hurry. That caused a four-week delay and additional expense.

What do you like most?

The open-plan area is the most used part of the house, and has a great connection to the garden which is what we wanted. I also love the floating staircase.

What was your best buy?

The smart home technology controls everything from one central point and actually saves money.

And greatest extravagance?

The lighting designer was expensive, but worth every penny.

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**STOOLS**

Lem barstools are designed by Shin and Tomoko Azumi for Italian company La Palma, available in a range of colours from John Lewis. Price: from £475. (johnlewis.com)

INTERIORS

The Zen kitchen

Paring back the design and extending downwards and outwards has achieved a simple, neutral scheme in an Edwardian house in London.

After living in the same London house for 15 years, Jenny and Phillip Porter decided to renovate rather than move. They commissioned a Korean interior designer to strip away the traditional decor and fittings of the five-bedroom Edwardian home to create a more modern, Zen-like design that would imbue a sense of peace and order.

To create additional space, a basement was excavated and the house extended to the rear to create a large new multi-purpose living space overlooking the mature garden.

At its heart is the bespoke Modulnova kitchen designed by Tom Karavla at DesignSpace London, whose brief was to create a calm interior. Oriented to make the very best of the garden views and natural light which floods the new space, the kitchen uses the Modulnova 'Fly' range. Gloss lacquer in Grigio Steel is used on flush floor-to-ceiling wall cabinets, reflecting light back into the room, while satin lacquer, in Soko Piombo, on the working island gives a more muted finish.

Tom began the design process before any building work had commenced, allowing enough time to finalise a design and produce electrical drawings for cable and pipework to be laid in the correct locations. With plenty of input from Phillip and Jenny, Tom designed large pocket doors to conceal a food preparation area with stainless steel worktops, which can all be shut away with ease to preserve an uncluttered appearance. In fact much of the functionality of the kitchen is hidden away behind these pocket doors when not in use, from the twin Miele dishwashers to the giant

**SURFACES**

High-gloss wall units contrast with a matt island unit, while a large format light-grey limestone tiled floor ties in with the shades chosen for the cabinets.





Suppliers

Kitchen design

DesignSpace London:
designspacelondon.com

Kitchen cabinets

Modulnova: modulnova.com

Oven Siemens: siemens.co.uk

Dishwasher Miele: miele.co.uk

Fridge and freezer

Vario range by Gaggenau:
gaggenau.com

Sink ABK stainless steel
sink: abk-innovent.com

Waste disposal

Insinkerator:
insinkerator.co.uk

Hot water tap Quooker
Fusion: quooker.co.uk

Worktop Zodiaq Quartz
composite in gravel grey
matt: corianquartz.com



OPEN-PLAN

The kitchen and dining room share an open-plan layout, while a small snug makes it truly multifunctional.



LIGHTING

Downlighters have been used to create mood in the kitchen while a multi-bulb pendant makes a statement over the dining table.



Gaggenau fridge and freezer. Even the extractor is discreet, fitted flush to the ceiling above the island.

The palette is natural and neutral, allowing the architectural lines of the kitchen to enjoy the limelight within the space. But this is a kitchen designed not just for family life – it's also for entertaining on a large scale. Every cupboard and drawer interior has been painstakingly designed, including storage not just for everyday necessities but also for party china, glass and crockery. The entire space is carefully planned, with the main dining room within the open-plan area, a comfortable snug adjoining the kitchen and the new basement providing yet another entertaining zone, perfect for teenagers to have their own space.



TOM KARAVLA'S DESIGN TIPS

"Research is key. Try to have a rough idea of what appliances are a must, plus a wish list in case the project comes in under budget. Search for new and interesting materials that inspire you; different textures will allow your eyes to be constantly interested. You also don't need to spend a fortune to achieve a high-end look."

Tom is a designer at **DesignSpace London**: designspacelondon.com



Creating a garden from scratch

1 Plan and budget. Don't leave your garden design till you've run out of time and money. Piles of rubble and discarded builders' rubbish scattered outside can be as depressing as uncompleted rooms. A cheap makeshift patio can impact on the view from virtually every window and ultimately devalues the property. Far better to design your garden to suit your new home and its setting. The garden should also be tailored to your particular requirements. And don't forget to ask your groundworker to save any good topsoil before excavation begins so that it can be used later on.

2 Draw up a plan. Sketch out a scale plan of your property, including the house and garage. This should also include the location of pipes, cables, sheds, greenhouses and outbuildings. Mark the position of sunrise and sunset so that you can predict areas which will be in the shade and sun at different times of the year, and remember that the sun is lower in the sky in the winter months.

3 Apply for any planning permissions. New boundary walls or fences over two metres high (one metre next to the public highway) may require planning



Above: Natural granite brings a modern and minimalist feel to any outdoor space, thanks to its straight machine cut edges and textured top surface. (bradstone.com)
Left: Panache Ground paving can make your patio sparkle with its smooth surface and light-reflecting particles. (bradstone.com)





Relax on a warm summer's evening with this mauve pink hammock featuring a white spotty design. (scandiliving.com)

Top right: Porcelain tiles add sophistication to an outdoor setting and can be laid on almost any surface. (sacwpaving.co.uk)

Below: Structures such as a gazebo add height and protect privacy. (forest garden.co.uk)

consent. You don't normally need permission to plant a hedge and there are no restrictions on height, but you are responsible for making sure it's not a nuisance to anyone else. Check if any outbuildings will need planning permission.

4 Get a kick-start. One of the drawbacks of a new build is that the site is likely to be bare, which means that it will take time for gardens to mature. So start as early as you can, even before the construction of the house is finished. Obviously, this will need careful planning so you are not interfering with contractors and that your hard work is not trampled. You may be able to tackle paths and patios, make and plant borders, and lay turf well before completion.

5 Use on-site plant equipment. Save yourself work later by employing builders to help with the hard landscaping, such as building walls,



fences, terraces and patios. At the very least, take advantage of on-site equipment such as a mini digger to excavate ponds, swimming pools or other areas that require large amounts of soil removal. Diggers can even be used to plant mature trees, or rows of hedges.

6 Consider privacy. Careful orientation and landscaping will ensure that a new home feels more private. Digging down can create a more sheltered setting, with hedging, walls, fencing and gates offering protection and defining boundaries. However, make sure that you don't create such a private site that you are prevented from enjoying the outlook, and leave some visual spaces between screens, walls and trees through which to appreciate the broader view.

7 Right plant, right place. Choose easy plants that like the type of soil in your garden. Buy a soil testing kit and try it out in several different areas to ensure an accurate reading. Improve poor quality subsoil prior to planting by replacing much of it with topsoil and compost and install good drainage. Check if your local council has a bulk compost scheme. It will be cheaper than buying it in single bags. Be careful not to waste money by over-planting. Remember, the plants will grow quickly and soon begin to struggle for space. Even a crowded cottage garden scheme needs some degree of planning, and should include a seating area or patio and paths for ease of access.

8 Engaging a designer. If you choose to use a professional designer, it is sensible to check their references and qualifications. Try to visit some of their previous gardens and ensure that they provide a full written quotation detailing exactly what will be included and how long the work should take. Websites such as the Association of Professional Landscapers (landscaper.org.uk) and the British Association of Landscape Industries (bali.org.uk) offer online directories of members. Initial site visits and quotations may be free, but it is wise to check prior to the appointment. You should also have a firm idea of your budget before the first meeting, and although it's important to be open-minded try not to be swayed by fancy high-maintenance schemes if what you really want is easy-care shrubs and a football pitch for the kids.





Barbecue areas can be permanent or moved around, depending on wind direction. This portable fire pit offers flexibility on cold nights. (alfresia.co.uk)

9 Driveways and front gardens. Rules apply to paving front gardens. If the surface to be covered is more than five square metres planning permission will be required for laying impermeable driveways. You won't need it if the new driveway uses permeable (or porous) surfacing which allows water to drain through, such as gravel, permeable concrete block paving or porous asphalt, or if the rainwater is directed to a lawn or border to drain naturally. Elsewhere around your property there are no restrictions on the areas which you can cover with hard surfaces at, or near, ground level. Generally Building Regs don't apply to a new driveway or patio area, but any alterations should not make access to the dwelling less satisfactory than it was before, such as changing levels to introduce new steps.

10 Take care with trees. Existing trees give an established appearance, provide welcome shade in summer and add height to a garden, but too many can make a site feel enclosed and dark, and their roots will be competing for nutrients and moisture with other smaller plants. Don't make any hasty decisions until you are sure of the nature of each tree and what it can offer your site, and remember that trees with preservation orders are almost impossible to remove, with permission needed even for pruning, whilst thirsty varieties such as oak, elm, poplar or willow should be located at least 20m away from a house built on highly shrinkable soil such as clay.

11 Plan garden buildings. Sheds, greenhouses, garages, barbecue huts, garden offices and summer houses which don't contain sleeping accommodation are usually considered to be permitted development, and don't require planning permission. Installed early these can be used during the build itself, as storage space and shelter for workers. Prefabricated structures can be delivered on site for quick and easy assembly. There are also numerous specialist companies who will design, manufacture and install your garden building. Good-quality insulation combined with double glazing and a simple electric heater will ensure that you can use a garden office throughout the year, so address these issues from the outset. Electricity will obviously be required for heating, lighting and running office equipment, but bringing an armoured supply to a garden building isn't a DIY job, so use the services of a qualified electrician. Familiarise yourself with what is and is not allowed by visiting planningportal.gov.uk.



12 Install services. It is essential to consider where services such as water taps and outdoor power sockets will be required. At least one tap will make watering the garden easier, especially located close to a greenhouse, while armoured cables for an underground electrical supply to outbuildings and lighting can be buried when the site is still uncultivated to save hassle and mess later on.

13 Special features. Swimming pools, saunas, alfresco dining areas, built-in barbecues and fire pits, terraces and other landscaping should be considered and located carefully as they will impact on the rest of the garden. Your contractors may be able to build some of these at the same time as the house. Another thing to consider is a water tank, preferably located underground, for collecting rainwater from the gutters. This can then be used for watering the garden.

Above: Garden buildings such as this one from the Posh Shed Company don't usually require planning permission. (theposhshedcompany.co.uk)

Below: Swimming pools should be planned early to save the possible expense of having to crane it over the roof when the house is built. (goldenc.com)





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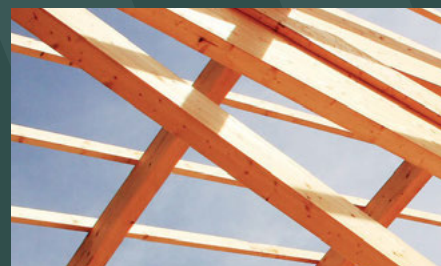
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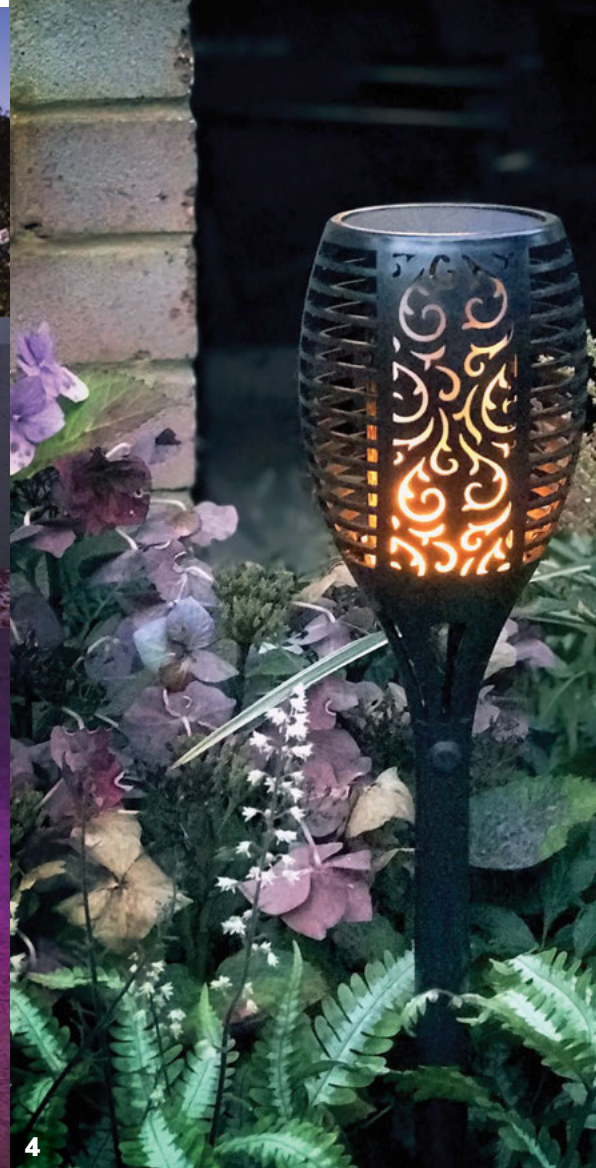
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1: The Exo sphere light is made from moulded polyethylene. Sixteen pre-set colours can be selected, along with a dimming function, colour fade and colour flash settings. Controlled by remote, the sphere is 40cm in diameter and costs from £39.99. (my-furniture.co.uk)
2: The Swedish fire log is 500mm long and burns like a candle for around four hours. It is lit using the fire-starter wick inserted at the top of the Nordic wood. Price: £16. (aplaceforeverything.co.uk)

3: The statement Gnome light has a white metal frame finished in white high-resistant paint for maximum protection outdoors, and comes complete with a satin polyethylene diffuser. Price: £595. (christopherwray.com)
4: The TrueFlame solar torch light uses a 96 LED array and advanced programming to produce a convincing flame effect. It comes complete with an optional powersaving mode which reduces brightness in favour of a longer run time. Price: £24.99. (thesolarcentre.co.uk)



5: Romeo is a table and floor lamp in dove grey concrete and frosted glass. Price: £539. (karmanitalia.it)
6: Garden Trading's Chatham round bulkhead light comes in two sizes and is crafted from aluminium with a sandblasted finish. Price: £25 for the small size or £36 for the large. (cuckooland.com)
7: The LED Wave is a surface-mounted fitting that creates a stunning visual effect. A 15° beam is projected upwards and a 60° beam downwards, making it ideal for lighting entrances. Price: £74.48. (mr-resistor.co.uk)



Night Light

Creative lighting can extend your enjoyment of your garden well into the evenings. Whether it's to create an enchanted haven just for you, or a relaxing space for entertaining guests, lighting can be used to great effect to create different moods.

Lights with a broad beam are often employed to illuminate driveways and front gardens, while traditional wall-mounted or bulkhead lights can be used in entranceways, casting a welcoming light as well as enhancing security. Post, bollard or built-in floor lights can be used to line paths or patio areas, making the garden more user friendly and safe, as well as creating nighttime pathways to different zones.

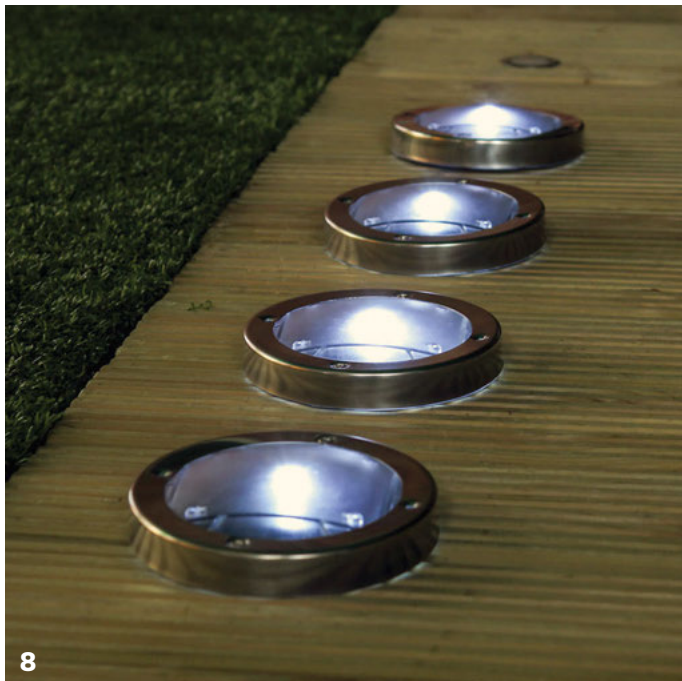
Altering the angle of a light can achieve a softer or a more striking effect, while dining areas, plants, trees and water features can be brought to life using spotlights. By concealing the light source, shadows can add a dramatic element to any space.

Different power sources are available, with mains power being the most common as well as the most effective. LED bulbs keep running costs to a minimum. The ever-increasing efficiency and durability of solar power is making it a popular alternative, delivering a warm, gentle glow, with the benefit of no cables, maintenance or running costs.

Be creative by mixing and matching different styles, but start small and build up bit by bit to avoid too much light. Here are some basic tips:

- Spike lights can be easily moved to suit the changing seasons and planting growth.
- Light steps to reduce the risk of tripping. These can be inserted into walls or decking for a subtle effect.
- Olive green light fittings blend into landscapes best, though bronze fittings blend in well with tree trunks.
- Make sure wall lights complement rather than detract from the lighting in the rest of the exterior. Alternatively use wall downlights.





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8: These solar decking lights come with a durable stainless steel casing measuring 110mm in diameter. Supplied in a pack of four, they screw into place, meaning no hole needs to be made. Price: £14.99. (festive-lights.com)

9: This oval bulkhead light is made from aluminium with a prismatic glass cover. Suitable for mounting on a wall or ceiling, it is priced at £195. (urbancottageindustries.com)

10: The Portobello LED spiked garden light is ideal for highlighting plants or pathways. Its mushroom-like cap provides a low glare illumination effect. Available in white, black or olive green, it is priced at £239. (johncullenlighting.com)

11: Approximately 1,500mm tall, this Shepherd's Crook has spiked ends to fit into the ground or plant pots. It comes with an ornate metal lantern, which measures 430mm x 140mm wide at its widest point. Ideal for illuminating pathways, the set costs £35. (moderncountrystyleinteriors.co.uk)

12: These adjustable cross beam 12W LED lights are made from die cast aluminium. Different light beams can be composed by adjusting the panels. Price: £61.55. (mr-resistor.co.uk)

13: Measuring 760mm x 250mm, this battery-powered rustic torch uses patented cool-flame technology to create a realistic flaming effect using LEDs. Price: £29.99. (haskins.co.uk)

14: The Gervaso outdoor floor lamp rests in dove grey concrete and frosted glass. It stands 450mm tall and costs £660. (karmanitalia.it)

15: Shown here in weathered brass, the Addison industrial outdoor light is also available in copper. It measures 33cm high x 20cm wide, and costs £106.80. (darlighting.co.uk)

16: Standing 1,200mm high, this garden torch is made from iron with a matt black finish, the lid attached by a small chain. The lamp uses oil, such as citronella. Price: £24. (rossandbrownhome.co.uk)



17: Constructed from white polyethylene, the Havana outdoor pendant is a simple column designed to give a dramatic lighting effect. Measuring 1,300mm in length, it costs £374. (hollowaysofludlow.com)

18: These Kontsmide solar in-ground lights are ideal for highlighting flowers and rockeries. With efficient and low-maintenance LED bulbs, each light is 400mm tall and costs £26.40. (internetgardener.co.uk)



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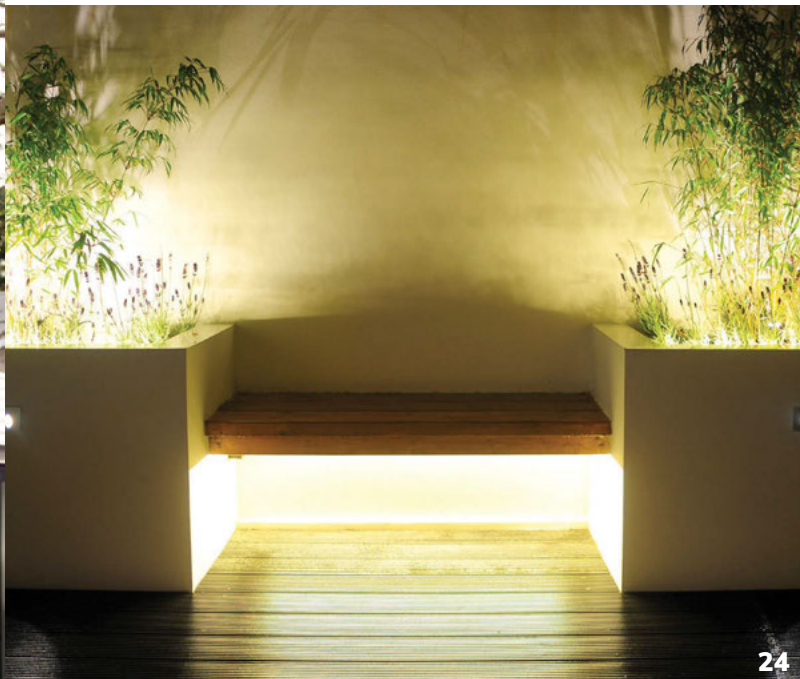
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19: This ceramic ceiling light can be used outdoors or in the bathroom. Price: £106.80. Image supplied by Artist Residence. (urbancottageindustries.com)

20: The low voltage LED step or path light is shown here in cast brass with a frosted glass diffuser. It also comes in sandblasted or weathered brass. A remote transformer is required. Price: £139. (originalbtc.com)

21: The head of this LED hood light can be angled to suit your requirements. Easy to install, it costs £19.65. (mr-resistor.co.uk)

22: The Noma LED cluster has a vintage feel with the benefits of modern technology. An in-built timer illuminates the bulbs for six hours at a time. Price: £22.99. (internetgardener.co.uk)

23: The Anglepoise giant outdoor wall light is shown here in marine blue. Made from stainless steel with a gloss powder coating, it is also available as an outdoor floor lamp. With a maximum reach of 2,300mm, it costs £2,850. (lighting-direct.co.uk)

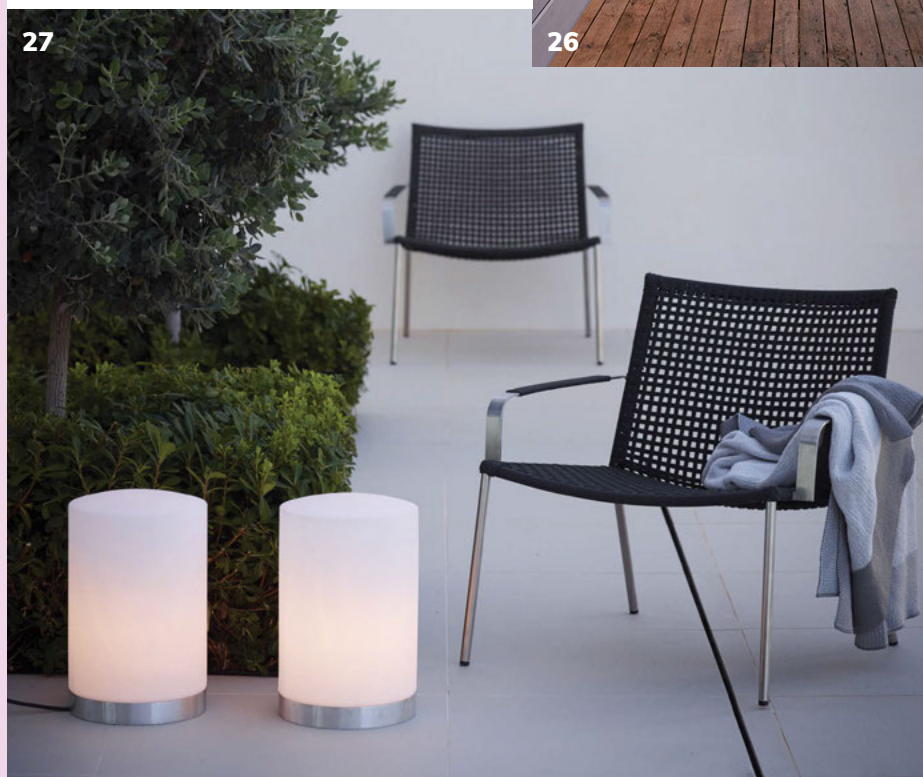
24: This LED tape is both a decorative and functional light source. Easy to install with pre-fitted double-sided backing tape, it can be cut to length. Price: £84.83. (mr-resistor.co.uk)

25: The Arjun two-light wall light has a durable matt aluminium construction and is shown here in gunmetal grey. Price: £60. (darlighting.co.uk)

26: The LED Cyberwalk is a decorative surface-mounted wall fitting. When illuminated, the mains voltage light source is split by a series of metal fins to give the appearance of the sun. Price: £93.12. (mr-resistor.co.uk)

27: The cylindrical Drum outdoor lamp was designed by Cane Line and stands 400mm tall. Made from polyethylene, it comes with an integral cord and is designed to display a soft evening light. (iqglassuk.com)

27





Prime time

Composite Prime combines hardwood with recycled plastic to create high-quality, anti-slip decking. Ideal for families with young children and pets, it is durable and rot resistant. Shown here, the HD Deck Dual boasts a double-sided design with natural wood grain, available in oak, walnut, antique and carbon. The boards are 22.5mm high x 143mm wide and can be used in various areas in the garden, including walkways, play areas and flowerbed borders. Price: £68 per sqm. (composite-prime.com)



Garden art

The classic rotunda from Deco-pak is finished in buff gold or twilight. At 1.8m, it covers an area of 5.06 sqm. Price: £149.99. Available in the same colours, the compass rotunda comes in a choice of 1.2m or 1.8m sizes, priced from £59.99. (deco-pak.co.uk)



LANDSCAPING

Hard lines



LOW-MAINTENANCE DECKING

Trex decking is a low-maintenance wood alternative, designed to resist fading, stains, scratching and mould. Hassle free, it won't warp, crack or splinter like wood, and requires no stripping or painting. Made of 95 per cent recycled materials, the product is available with curved edges as well as straight for creating more interesting designs. The decking can also be combined with outdoor lighting for added ambience. Weatherproof and cool to touch, it is safe for children. Price on application. (uk.trex.com)



Fancy fencing

This Jaktop fencing (above) features crossed pales with a rustic, criss-cross pattern. Made from robust 50mm x 22mm half-round timber, it comes complete as a fixed fence panel with rails for easy installation. Each panel is 1.83m, with prices starting from £28.60. Alternatively, these woven panels (left) create a more traditional craft look, successfully obscuring the view of neighbours while creating a delicate dappled pattern when the sunlight peeps through. Four panel heights are available, each one 1.83m wide. Constructed from Jakcured pressure-treated softwood and framed with slotted Jakposts, they are priced from £48.90. (jacksons-fencing.co.uk)



TIMBER-EFFECT

These Boardwalk wood-effect porcelain tiles are available in two sizes: 100mm x 1,200mm and 600mm x 600mm. Pictured here in nut, they also come in maple, kauri and oak colourways. They are suited for high-traffic areas, with each piece just 20mm thick with a simulated wood-grain finish, ensuring each one is different. Price: £144 per sqm. Stone and Ceramic Warehouse also offers concrete-effect porcelain paving tiles, available in greige (shown above), beige and grigio. Each tile is 600mm x 600mm, costing from £90 per sqm. (sacwpaving.co.uk)

COMPLETE COLLECTION

Selco has a range of landscaping solutions for the garden.

1. The ACO GroundGard is a lightweight ground reinforcement system ideal for grass or gravel stabilisation. The tiles provide surface water drainage and can easily be cut to shape for irregular edging.
2. The brown timber Easi Sleeper walling comes in a length of 2.4m and is treated with preservative to promote long life.
3. This natural stone project pack comes in three colours. Each one is 22mm thick, made from ethically sourced natural sandstone for added durability. It's supplied in packs of 15.8 sqm.
4. The Sussex Wave fence panel is pressure treated and measures 1,800mm x 1,800mm. Identical on both sides, it has a trellis incorporated into the panel. (selcobw.com)



The imitation game

StoneMaster is a realistic substitute for natural granite. Available in dark grey, mid grey and light grey, the block paving comes in mixed fixed packs, made up of four variations, or in a modern 300mm x 100mm single size. It is treated with Bradstone surface protection for long-lasting resistance against oil, grease, moss and other stains. Price: £40-£45 per sqm. (bradstone.com)

TOOL BOX

Development of robotic weeder

The Husqvarna Group has acquired a 25 per cent share in Franklin Robotics, a Boston-based start-up that has developed Tertill, a solar-powered weeding robot for vegetable and flower gardens.

The investment forms an important partnership for the group to further explore and accelerate innovation within robotic applications in the lawn and garden market.

Using unique design elements and a variety of sensors, Tertill patrols the garden, avoiding plants and obstacles while looking for weeds to eliminate.

A plant tall enough to touch the front of Tertill's shell activates a sensor that makes the robot turn away. A plant short enough to pass under Tertill's shell, though, activates a different sensor that turns on the weed cutter.



Bosch's latest 18V cordless drill driver features the FlexiClick attachment system to create the ultimate do-it-all tool. Using a range of adapters, the Bosch GSR 18 V-60 FCC can be turned into anything from a screwdriver to a powerful rotary hammer drill. The same system provides great flexibility for work in various difficult situations, including hard-to-reach places. At 140mm in length, the drill driver is suited to operate in tight spaces, and with the addition of flexible adapters it reaches even further. This enables drilling in wood, metal and even concrete, as well as conventional screwdriving. The tool will be available in stores from May.



FINE TIPPED BRUSHES

Scumble Goosie claims these UK-made synthetic paintbrushes are amongst the finest on the market. The bristles are finer at the tip, while the solid round tapered filaments ensure excellent paint pick-up and uniform release. The brushes have a hand-crafted solid beech handle and stainless steel ferrule and are suitable for all paint types.



Tried & Tested



The Robomow RC308 Pro, which costs around £1,300 with the installation kit. (robomow.com)

THE FUTURE IS ROBOTICS

There is something quite addictive about watching a robotic mower in action as it creeps noiselessly across your lawn with seemingly no sense of purpose or direction, leaving you to wonder where on earth it will go next. Friends and visitors who witnessed the Robomow in action last summer were equally spellbound. They were blown away, not only by the manicured cut but also by its sheer entertainment value. The fact that my lawns never looked so good was a bonus. Even better, there was no need to clog up the compost heap with lawn clippings. Robomow mulches as it goes, cutting the grass so finely that the clippings virtually disappear. The fact that it operates three times a day means there are never too many clippings in any case.

Given these attributes it is easy to believe that robotic mowers are the future. Even if, like me, you take pride in mowing your lawn twice a week in the growing season, why bother when Robomow will do it for you, without the noise, upkeep and running costs – which incidentally are a matter of pence, compared to the cost of petrol.

So how does it work? Firstly, a thin cable needs to be laid around the perimeter of your lawn to a depth of about six inches. This can be laid by hand using a shovel, but in my case an accredited Robomow installer used a rotavator which did the job in a lot less time. The cable, which acts like an radio antenna to communicate with the mower, is laid in a loop and terminates at a docking station, usually located in a discreet corner of the lawn, which is connected to mains power. This is where the mower returns after each session to recharge. The length and number of sessions depends on the size of the lawn, but for mine (about 250 sqm) the mower was programmed for three times a day. The height of the cut can be adjusted easily, and special tracks can be added to the wheels for greater traction in the wet.

The mower works automatically, releasing itself from the docking station at pre-programmed times and then returning automatically at the end of the session or when the battery is exhausted. This is fascinating to watch as the mower heads to the nearest access point to the cable, then follows along its length back to the docking station. The robot can also be operated using a smartphone app as remote control, which is particularly useful if you need to mow outside the perimeter of your cable. The same app can be used to check that it is safely secured while you are away.

EDITOR'S VERDICT: Robomow is very impressive. Installing it is relatively straightforward if you don't mind the laborious job of burying the wire, and operation is a synch. Best of all, it doesn't take up valuable room in the garage or garden shed. The only downside is the relatively expensive outlay, but taking into consideration the operation costs, it seems a sound long-term investment.



BUILDING MATTERS

The latest news, products, ideas and tips



INCREASED DEMAND FOR ZIPWALL DUST BARRIER

ZipWall is expanding its distribution of its popular dust barrier system in the UK in light of increased demand. The system can be installed in a matter of minutes, without the need for ladders or tape.

Ideal for contractors as well as painters and decorators, the ZipWall Dust Barrier is designed to efficiently section off specific areas and can be reused.

The system works using a spring-loaded pole with a choice of dust barriers which are tightly sealed to create entries, while sealing off existing doors.

ZipWall's new magnetic door has been designed to provide hands-free access to the site. Its durability means it can be reused from project to project, even those that experience high levels of traffic.

NORWEGIAN LOG ANNEXES POPULAR

Norwegian Log Buildings, one of the longest established firms in this field, has reported a sharp rise in demand from pensioners wanting high quality annexes that can be built in their children's gardens.

In most cases, planning permission is not required, as the buildings are classed as 'transportable', so the solid log structures can be installed with minimum disruption and kitted out with the latest fixtures and fittings – all at a fraction of the cost of a bricks and mortar equivalent. They are also usually exempt from council tax.

Built all on one level, with a fully-fitted kitchen and bathroom, and the flexibility to have up to three bedrooms, the homes are made from solid logs like traditional Scandinavian ski chalets, with high thermal efficiency and low running costs.

Nick Forrester, MD at Norwegian Log, which has been building annexes for more than 20 years, said: "We've seen a 100 per cent increase in families looking for a cost-effective, independent living solution for their elderly relatives."

"Our log homes are high quality, reassuringly solid, cheap to run and, as they are

transportable, can be easily sited at the bottom of the garden. If the family's circumstances change they can also be used as guest accommodation or a home office."

A recent industry report highlighted an estimated demand for 125,000 additional multi-generational homes a year in the UK.

NEW LINTEL OFFERS IMPROVED THERMAL PERFORMANCE

The Hi-therm+ lintel has been upgraded, offering improved energy efficiency. The Keystone Group's national technical and specification manager, Richard Kinloch, explains: "Hi-therm+ will now be available to suit both wide outer leaf and cant brick applications rather than just standard leaf. In addition, longer lintel lengths are now available to accommodate larger openings."

The new Hi-therm+ lintel features a structural polymer thermal break in the cavity linking an outer and inner steel leaf. Consequently, Psi values are significantly improved with figures of between 0.03-0.06 W/mk to be expected depending on the specific wall make up.

"Hi-therm+ takes practicality to a higher level, so it will be even easier to handle on site than before. This is an



increasingly important benefit and addresses the challenge of maintaining good detailing when skill levels are under pressure and introducing specialist techniques can be problematic," said Richard Kinloch.

KEEP TENANTS SAFE

The Electrical Safety Roundtable has advised landlords to stay on the right side of the law by turning to its latest Home Safety Guidance. The call comes after a landlord in Luton was fined £70,000 plus costs for multiple breaches of legislation. Exposed wires were found in a property belonging to Alyas Hussain, while the house's electricity meter had been tampered with and fire detection systems were not in place. Documents are available for download on the ESR and Home Safety Guidance websites to make landlords aware of their responsibilities, and to help them to prove that their properties are being adequately maintained. (homesafetyguidance.co.uk)

STAIR SYSTEM

'Bcompact' Hybrids are a new and unique take on a standard staircase/ladder. They fold flat against the wall to save space while offering an attractive and unique feature to a room or work space. The flat folding ladders are an alternative to the attic pull-down or metal ladder. The Hybrid Stair also folds flat but incorporates a unique automated pop-up hand rail and door system to increase overall safety and functionality. RRP: £411.50. (bcompact.com)





GREEN NEWS

Netherlands retrofit concept used to improve UK homes

A row of social housing in Nottingham has been refurbished to create zero-energy properties using the Energiesprong approach, a new system for improving the energy efficiency of homes and slashing energy use. Originating from the Netherlands, the system is now being employed in France, Germany and the US as well as the UK.

Developer Melius Homes is working with social landlord Nottingham City Homes to complete the project which sees each home upgraded over the course of one week using measures that allow the residents to continue living there while the work is carried out.

Energiesprong translates as 'energy leap', and improvements incorporated in the scheme are comprehensive, including a roof made of solar panels, new external walls, replacement windows and a new highly efficient heating system.

The cost of renovation on each home is around £65,000, a figure which will ideally reduce with economies of scale, and each resident's annual energy fee will be around £600.

Roofs were stripped back, insulated and felted before integrated photovoltaic panels were installed to generate electricity. Pre-fabricated wall panels with 200mm of insulation were added to the external walls, along with new triple-glazed windows and new doors, and the existing foundations have been insulated with extruded polystyrene.

Five boreholes power the earth source heat pump, which fills a 4,000-litre thermal store housed in a communal energy centre and also provides enough heat for the 10 homes, including seven houses and three bungalows, which is delivered via the existing heating system and radiators.

Larger radiators are often required for heat pumps, but the airtightness of the building, high levels of insulation and demand-controlled ventilation mean that the existing

radiators are adequate. The photovoltaic panels are connected to a communal network which means that power generated on one roof might be used by another house, or employed to charge a 20kWh battery. Any surplus electricity is exported to the grid.

Tenant Joan Warbuton told the Nottingham Post: "As soon as the new walls were put in place, it felt warmer straight away. It's a relief to know that next year's energy bills will be a lot cheaper."

This is the first scheme of its kind in the UK and if successful, it could be rolled out to other social housing providers, with Nottingham City Homes looking to upgrade a further 400 homes in the city. A fee equivalent to – or even less than – the residents' previous energy bill is paid to the social landlord, which covers the cost of the refurbishment and will not rise in line with energy prices.

David Adams of Melius Homes said: "These houses were probably as energy inefficient as you can get, with some of the tenants' energy bills as high as £1,300 a year. They have now been made comfortable, cosy and cheap to run, which is an exciting achievement. We hope to make the processes faster and bring costs down even further in the future, as the concept is rolled out to more homes in the city and across the country."

Stuart Elmes of Viridian Solar, who supplied the integrated photovoltaic solar panels, said: "The team at Viridian are determined to play our part in making the Energiesprong concept a big success. You only have to look at the improvement that has been made to these pilot homes in Nottingham to understand why local authorities and social landlords are so excited by Energiesprong. The opportunity it offers to completely regenerate whole areas of our towns and cities, increasing the value of property and improving the comfort of tenants, all financed by energy savings, is amazing."

Solar gets easier and cheaper

Solar installations of up to 200kW will be easier and cheaper to connect to the grid in Scotland, thanks to relaxed restrictions.

The Solar Trade Association lobbied Scottish Power Energy Networks with clear evidence on the modest network impact of most rooftop solar projects in practice.

Analysis by the network operator on data provided by the Solar Trade Association Scotland concluded that the effect of most rooftop installations on the local grid was much less than previously thought. SPEN had required a Statement of Works from developers seeking to install even small solar projects over 11kW. This meant developers had to commission a costly and time-consuming analysis of how projects may affect transmission loads at national level, adding more than £10,000 to some project costs. This will no longer be necessary.

STA Scotland chair Chris Clark said: "This goes a long way towards removing one of several barriers to Scotland realising its solar potential. We're grateful to Scottish Power Energy Networks for engaging with our members and for looking carefully at the evidence. As a result of SPEN taking a sensible approach to rooftop schemes, businesses and housing developers all over Scotland will find it easier and cheaper to go solar."



Stunning lights created from waste plastic bottles

Hundreds of plastic bottles have been upcycled to create a striking lighting installation to highlight the growing problem of global marine litter and plastic.

Multidisciplinary studio Claire Potter Design used 365 discarded plastic sports drinks bottles recovered from the beach during a Surfers Against Sewage beach clean in Brighton. The waste plastic was then subjected to seven different separation and reprocessing steps before being transformed into 30 LED-lit jellyfish lights called The Smack.

Claire Potter explains: "Single-use plastic and plastic packaging are some of the most frequent items found on beach cleans. As consumers, we are always told that we need to rethink our relationship with plastic, but manufacturers and designers need to take much more responsibility. We cannot afford to waste these materials. We need to create a true circular economy and make things from recovered and re-processed materials. The Smack is designed to add to this conversation."



In the UK 38.5m single-use plastic bottles are produced every day. Only just over half of these are recycled. Plastic drinks bottles have been identified by the Recycling Association as the second worst culprit for non-recyclability in the UK.



Promoting the presence of insects is an important way to establish a healthy garden. These bug hotels are made from pressure-treated recycled pallets and construction leftovers, and will appeal to all manner of creatures including stag beetles, lace wigs, hedgehogs and slowworms. Bird boxes can be installed into the eaves, and the centre can be hollowed out to provide space for a leaf composter. Prices start from £500. (gardendesignco.co.uk)



Concrete blocks selected for Passivhaus development

Masterdenz concrete blocks, chosen for their density and heat retention, have been used in a 72-home low-energy development in Plymouth.

The scheme has been designed to meet Passivhaus principles, using special materials and construction methods to improve airtightness, which means a reduced heating demand in the home and therefore primary energy consumption.

To help meet these standards, Aggregate Industries has supplied 14,300 sqm of its Masterdenz concrete building blocks. The high-strength blocks were laid flat for a quick build speed, and to achieve an airtightness of 0.6 ACH (air changes per hour).

Combined with triple-gazed windows, the Masterdenz blocks will retain heat within the new builds, so only one radiator is required for each home.

The scheme is the first Passivhaus development in Plymouth.



Call for rethink on wood use

Wood panel manufacturer Norbord has launched a campaign calling for a reduction in burning wood to create electricity. It argues that burning virgin wood is a waste of resources and is not an energy-efficient, carbon-neutral material as is commonly thought.

Norwood promotes an idea called 'cascade of use', which earmarks virgin timber for creating products such as wood panels that can be used in the construction industry, locking away absorbed carbon for decades.

A website has been created (usewoodwisely.co.uk) to tackle some of the myths surrounding the burning of wood. For example, the belief that replanting trees makes timber a viable renewable resource – it counters that a sapling does not absorb carbon at the same rate as a mature tree and will in fact take several decades before it can fully absorb all the carbon given off from burning an older tree. In addition, replanting rates are at an all-time low, far outstripping the numbers being felled.

The cascade of use system uses the wood to create a product, and then the wood is reused. For example, offcuts and sawdust from sawmills can be used to create MDF. The third step is recycling – for waste materials to be reprocessed into particleboard. Recovery is the fourth step, which means finding new uses for post-consumer wood waste. The final step is disposal, which includes energy use, once the wood has exhausted all uses.



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Natural *selection*

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Choice is one of the greatest benefits of a self build, but most selfbuilders still end up sticking to brick and block or timber frame for the shell of their new home without ever investigating the alternatives.

Mention of earth and straw-bale building may have you sneering, but some beautiful, eco-friendly and relatively inexpensive houses are being built using these systems.

There is no reason why the structural system you choose should dictate the building's final appearance. Cob and straw bales may have a more rounded look

No other material is as easy to build with or provides so much insulation for such little outlay as straw bale.



This straw-bale house in Norfolk by Anne Thorne Architects has a timber triple-glazed high-performance windows, lime render and limewashed walls and a Norfolk reed thatch roof.





Above:
Traditional
cob houses
built by
Devon-based
specialist
Kevin McCabe.

than bricks, but this doesn't prohibit them from being used in both traditional and contemporary designs.

Unusual forms of construction can make future purchasers and lenders wary, however, and this can affect resale values in some cases. A structural warranty should allay any fears, but be prepared to shop around for finance and competitive insurance rates, as companies may be cautious of more unusual techniques.

STRAW BALE

The first UK straw-bale house was built in the 1990s and there are now several hundred in the country. If these homes are designed and built well they can last more than 200 years, and no other building material is as easy to build with or provides so much insulation for such little outlay. Tests have found that even unrendered



Below:
Council
houses
designed
and built by
Straw Works.



straw-bale walls are less of a fire risk than timber walls, whilst rendered walls are no more flammable than bricks.

Lack of knowledge means that most selfbuilders still shun straw bales as a viable alternative to masonry or timber frame, but it is possible to work with private Building Control companies instead of local authorities, who may have more experience of these natural materials.

Designs should be kept as simple as possible to make the build both manageable and cost effective, although there is no limit to house height or the number of storeys if a timber frame is incorporated into the design. A plinth wall and roof overhang will be needed to protect the walls, in addition to a weatherproof but breathable external plaster.

Bales should be dry, well compacted with tight strings, and of uniform size and shape. The straws should be quite long (at least 150mm), with no signs of vermin having nested during storage and no damp.

There are four main ways to build using straw bales. The load-bearing Nebraska method requires no frame, and involves the straw serving as the structure, insulation and surface for plaster. This method is ideal for extensions.

With the infill or timber frame method the straw is only used as insulation and a surface for plaster. Hybrid methods combine the best of both these techniques, and are especially useful when a large section of glazing is required in a wall. For the prefabricated method the wall panels are built using timber and straw before being erected on site. Pre-fab panel homes are more expensive than other methods, but are still appealing to selfbuilders due to the speed of construction, with a three-bedroom, two-storey house weathertight in less than a week.

Although straw bale is the ideal DIY building material it's still advisable to have experienced people on site to offer advice and guidance on how to make the building airtight and thermally efficient – with straw bale homes able to achieve Passivhaus standards.

A number of companies and organisations run training courses – check out the Low Impact Living Initiative (lowimpact.org), Straw Works (strawworks.co.uk), Dorset Rural Skills (dorsetruralskills.co.uk) and Strawbuild (strawbuild.org).

Keeping the straw dry is vital to avoid rot, and ideally the roof – or a temporary tarpaulin cover – will be in place before the straw is installed. Prefabricating all the timber components and installing these first is also advisable.

The straw must be plastered and decorated with vapour-permeable materials such as lime and clay plasters, limewash and clay-based paints to prevent damp.

EARTH

Approximately one-third of the world's population live in houses constructed of unbaked earth, and in Britain the tradition is predominantly represented by cob – the West Country name for a building method in which subsoil is mixed with straw and water to make a consistency suitable for placing in horizontal layers to form walls. These are heaped onto a stone undercourse and trodden down. Cumberland also has an ancient tradition of cob building and there are thousands of earth buildings throughout this country.

If you live in an area where earth dwellings are found in the vernacular architecture you can be fairly sure that the soil will be suitable for building. Vitally, 10 to 25 per cent of the subsoil (the lower layer) should be clay, and it is possible to have your local soil analysed by experts to determine its suitability.

Building with earth is not as straightforward as it might sound, and it's advisable to work with a professional to ensure that the design and construction are sufficiently robust. It should be possible to complete some of the physical work on a DIY basis if required, but training will be needed in order to obtain the correct earth mix and to understand the build process.

For cob, a subsoil containing roughly equal proportions of clay and silt, sand and fine gravel is mixed with water and straw to a fairly stiff but malleable consistency. This is then built up in successive layers of about 600mm high on masonry plinth or underpin course. Walls are normally 450 to 600mm thick and each layer, or lift, is left to dry out before the next one is laid, until eaves level is reached. Shuttering can be used to build cob, but it is not necessary and makes the construction process more complicated.

These days cob can be mixed by rotovator, or even using a JCB, but traditionally the mixing was done in a pit with animals to trample and mix the earth and straw. This inevitably meant the addition of waste matter in the mix, and led to a common belief that cob required a small percentage of dung, which is actually untrue.

There is an old Devon saying: 'All cob needs is a good hat and a good pair of boots.' A stone or brick plinth forms the waterproof base, while the 'hat' may take a variety of forms, with thatch being the most traditional choice.

RAMMED EARTH

Rammed earth is formed by compacting moist subsoil inside temporary formwork (shuttering). Loose, damp soil, containing no straw, is placed in layers 100 to 150mm deep and compacted using either manual or pneumatically powered rammers. When the soil has been adequately compacted the formwork is removed, usually straight away.

Construction can proceed continuously, without waiting for successive lifts to dry out and wall thicknesses vary, typically from 300 to 450mm. The advantage of this method is that the process is quicker and the building won't shrink so much when drying.

ADOBE

Adobe or clay lump is an earth/straw mix similar to that suitable for cob construction, which is placed into timber or steel moulds to form bricks or blocks.

Once dried out these can then be used to construct solid or cavity walls using standard bricklaying



techniques, with the blocks being laid in either an earth or composite earth/lime mortar.

Above: Rammed earth is formed by compacting moist subsoil inside temporary formwork.

EARTH BUILDING BENEFITS

Earth building is simple and relatively inexpensive, and the materials are renewable resources which are recyclable and thermally efficient. The soil can often be dug from the building site – eliminating transportation – and the construction process consumes virtually no energy and produces no environmental pollution.

Earth construction can be used to create curving, organic shapes and, as more people rekindle the tradition, building with earth is becoming acceptable to local authorities. The thermal and acoustic properties of cob are well known for out-performing other more conventional systems, with the thick walls acting as a huge heat store. Well-built earth walls can last for hundreds of years if properly maintained and protected from the effects of rising and penetrating damp.

Planning and Building Regulations

Earth-walled buildings

should be treated in exactly the same way as those with walls of masonry or timber-framed construction by the planners. Any objections raised would normally be concerned with the appropriateness of the location, design and finishes, not with construction materials and methods.

Compliance with the Building Regulations can be achieved by supplying sufficient data and adequate construction details to enable the building control officer to make an informed assessment of the proposed building. Over the past few years numerous earth-walled buildings have been built in Britain with full Building Regulations approval.

The Devon Earth Building Association (devonearthbuilding.com) produces a leaflet explaining how cob walls can be

made to comply with the Building Regulations. New and existing cob walled buildings can be constructed, altered, extended or changed to comply, although it is important to incorporate the aims of the Building Regulations into the design process as early as possible.

Earth buildings need to 'breathe' and, move and are especially sensitive to dampness and changes in temperature. Modern materials such as cement renders and emulsion paints which restrict this can cause severe damage by retaining water within the walls, and it is important to continue the tradition of using plasters and renders made with lime and finished with layers of limewash for this reason.

For more information consult the Devon Earth Building Association and Straw Works.



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All going according to plan

Mary Hynd and her husband, Jim Harrower, reach the planning stage for their self-build home and think it's time to be decisive.



West Elevation

1:100

The front elevation and site plan of the new house

We were lucky to find a plot with outline planning permission but were still wary about our chances of building the timber home we'd like on it. Most new builds in our area (including the house going up on the adjoining plot) seem to be built of blocks and clad in a mix of stone and timber. The only timber-clad building we see nearby is a shed – not quite the home we're dreaming of.

We make a quick call to the local planning department. The planning officer checks out our builder's website and is encouraging. Wood is good. We're happy – we can start making plans.

Of course we're full of ideas – we'd like lots of windows, big kitchen, large utility room to store the dog crate and our outdoor gear which can occasionally get wet (this is Scotland), porch for more wet stuff, storage, somewhere to sit outside while watching the sun set and testing out the latest midge repellent...

We want a super-cosy Scandinavian-style timber-frame house and discover they're a bit like Lego – you can slot them together in a multitude of ways. But what constrains us most is our plot shape – it's fairly narrow and on a slope – and planning restrictions. We have to stick to one-and-a-half storeys where the bedrooms are effectively in the roof – we don't even know what this means and wonder if the house will have limited headroom upstairs. We'll need helmets.

Our builder shows us previous builds – of course there'll be enough headroom but there'll be sloping bits, ideal for Velux windows. The builder seems keen on these and has ranged banks of them over what must be roasting sitting rooms. We see houses festooned with balconies and open-plan homes where the smell

of burnt toast which usually lives in my kitchen would be free to explore at will. They all look very smart but not quite right. Then we see a house with an upstairs lounge. We remember the view from the scaffolding our plot seller put up for us. This is what we need.

Architect

The architect swings into action and plans are drawn up. Upstairs we have bedrooms, bathrooms, dressing room and lounge. Downstairs, there's a wall to keep toast fumes in the kitchen where they'll waft around the adjoining dining area, a small utility, shower room, a large lounge cum hall plus a TV room/downstairs bedroom.

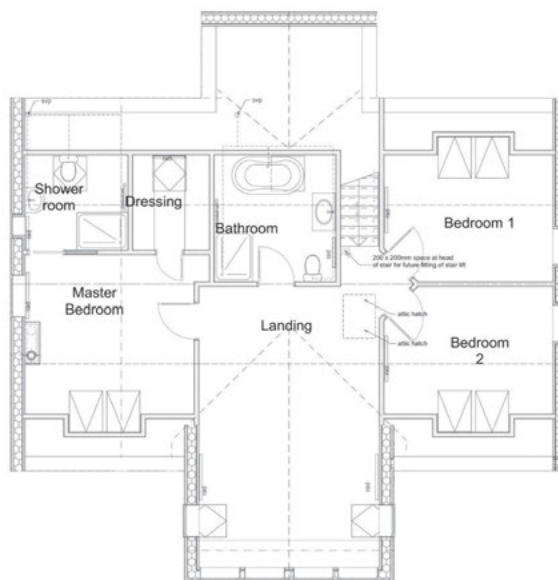
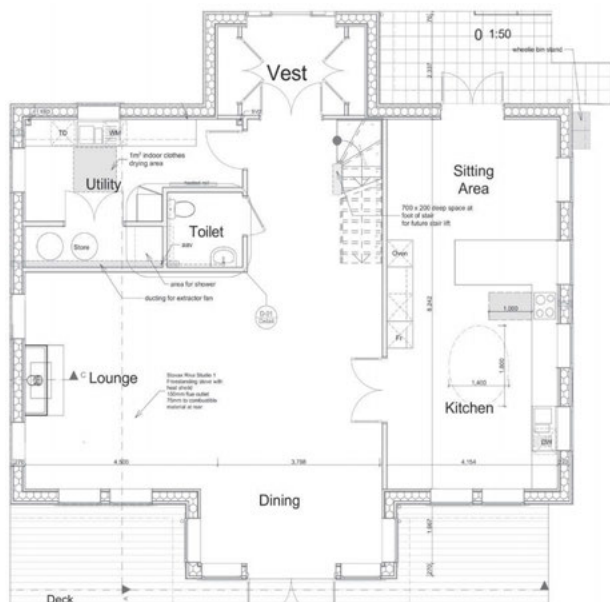
Something isn't right. I get out a ruler (a vital tool for a selfbuilder) and tape measure and measure out the actual kitchen space on the plans against the room in the cottage we're renting for the winter. It's under half the size. I can't understand this as the house is going to be over 200-sqm – plenty big enough for two. And that utility is

too small to swing our collie dog.

It's a good time to really think about how we're going to use the house. Do we need a soundproof TV lounge? Who'll be watching TV anyway when we'll be busy working through all the instructions for the new appliances? We'd like a sofa in the kitchen to make it sociable and an eating area outside of this room so dining visitors aren't treated to the sights and aromas lurking by the hob.

We want everything to be cosy and with maximum light – especially the kitchen. I feel I might be getting kitchen obsessed, having spent years cooking in a north-facing room so cold we had to wheel in a calor gas heater to supplement the radiators – it singed the dog. That really did smell bad.

A lot of doodling follows and then – hey, got it – a realisation that we can gain light from east, south and west if we run the kitchen the whole depth of the house. Can we remove some walls without the house falling down? Sure, the architect says, and he starts



The floorplan shows an upstairs lounge designed to take advantage of the views first enjoyed from a temporary scaffold put up by the plot seller. Downstairs, there's a kitchen, dining area, a small utility, shower room, large lounge and TV room/guest bedroom.

a series of tweaks. The plans are sent to our local planning department. We know we'll have to wait at this stage and that there might be changes. There are.

Funny thing, planning. Put a driveway near some trees and it'll be moved. Might harm the trees. But they're not protected – a man from the council came to look at them and said they didn't need protection though one of them was "quite interesting".

We could have bought the plot and then cut them down before we applied for planning, a cynical friend told us. Could put the driveway anywhere then. But we like trees. The architect moves the driveway away from our line of trees. This is fine but the new driveway will have worse visibility. Make the entrance wider. But that'll go nearer a tree. Perhaps we shouldn't mention this.

Amenity land

Planners also seem worried about the space we'll have to put out washing. The plot is a third of an acre – plenty of room to peg out every sheet of plans we'll accumulate. A man visits to make sure there's enough 'amenity land' which seems to be the term for a private area of ground. There's plenty to the front of the plot behind a hedge but a chunk of this will come down to put the driveway where the planners want it. Best not flag this up. The architect marks 'drying green' on an area at the back of the house where the slope means there should be enough wind to generate power.

Upstairs gable wall windows are also changed to above head height so they don't overlook a neighbour and this means the bedroom Velux windows grow longer as they'll be needed for escape. This is something else we hadn't thought about – what if people want to jump outside from the bedrooms? Should we put trampolines in the garden? There's a whole world of planning restrictions we're unaware of.

Permission is granted but celebrations are cut short by the discovery that we're only halfway there. There's the building warrant to go now. This is news to us. Technical plans which show how the house will actually be built. Why didn't we read up on what was going to happen before we started all this so we might actually have a clue about what comes next?

We're asked to plan out a kitchen and pick a stove. And think about bathrooms. Is this not a bit early? Frost grips our plot and it's difficult to imagine a house there, never mind think about fixtures. We head off



to kitchen suppliers who struggle to line up cabinets with our run of windows and understand symmetry. They give up and close for the festive season. We end up working it all out ourselves and heading off to get a flatpack kitchen plan. And the architect's bathroom layouts look fine. No need to visit the bathroom shops yet. The drains all get detailed onto the plans.

It's a good time of year to look at stoves but we're warned not to get a big kilowattage – the house will be too hot. This seems an incredible idea to people who've endured winters in Victorian houses.

Suddenly there's a flurry of activity. Which doors would we like, what about the depth of window sills and height of skirting boards? How would we like the staircase? We'd assumed the one in the picture we'd seen at an earlier meeting with the builder was the only option. Heck, no, there are different spindles to decide on, the shape of the handrail, risers, treads. We start to feel decision fatigue and the builder helps out with door handle choice.

Exterior paint colours are also needed. The architect plays a blinder and details our main colour as light green. The decision on which actual shade this'll be is delayed.

And what about an electrical plan? Here we're prepared as we've had zoned lighting in a previous house and know what a difference it can make. We have Ronald Reagan's wife, Nancy, to thank for the time we spend thinking it all out as we'd once heard her saying how important lighting is. Not sure why we remember this.

When we're presented with a completed set of plans on the day we sign our contract with our builder, we pour over them, hoping to gain at least a modicum of knowledge so we understand what's going on a little further down the line.

It all looks good to us; when can they actually start?



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Dealing with an insolvent builder

Q I am in an odd position with my build project. We are just over halfway through the build. The project is a fairly straightforward extension to the rear of the house, complete renovation of the ground floor (so new kitchen, living area and downstairs bathroom) and a conversion of the garage to a living space.

The works started well enough as it was the summer, but over winter things slowed down a little, and we gave the trades some slack as the weather was atrocious. At the start of this year the foreman asked me for money so that he could buy the materials for the garage and kitchen units, all of which he suggested be delivered to his workshop. I did find this suggestion a little odd, so as a compromise I suggested that I buy it in my name and have it delivered to the site.

After the weather improved the number of workmen on site dwindled, until at one point no one turned up! I was a little surprised as there were tools, materials and heavy machinery still on site.

After about a week all my phone calls and emails went unanswered and the site was untouched. I have spoken to some of my builder's suppliers and I am now under the impression that he has become insolvent. Some suppliers are owed money and others have materials waiting to be shipped out. Unfortunately, I don't have my builder's address, which in hindsight I accept is a little naive.

A The first thing to establish is whether the builder was trading as an individual or a limited company. Bankruptcy relates to individuals or sole traders, whilst insolvency relates to limited companies.

The main problem with an insolvent or bankrupt builder is getting the works completed, which in the first instance you are going to have to pay for.

Whilst you are generally able to sue an individual or company that is on the precipice of bankruptcy or insolvency, commercially this is not the best course of action. It is unlikely that you will recover any monies as you rank low down

in priority when it comes to claiming the company's/individual's assets.

Bankruptcy

Individuals are declared bankrupt when they can no longer pay their debts. The procedure is for the court to make a bankruptcy order. Once this order is made the individual's assets will vest in a trustee who will take control over, sell and distribute the majority of their assets.

In order to find out if the builder is insolvent you can ask the High Court to make a search for any pending bankruptcy petitions against his name.

Whilst many people may perceive bankruptcy as a 'get out' for having mounting debts, it does have severe consequences. For example, getting credit for anything from a mobile phone to a mortgage is almost impossible.

Having been declared bankrupt precludes that person from being a director of a company and carrying on his profession in a name other than the one under which he was declared bankrupt.

Not all assets vest in the trustee in bankruptcy. Bankrupts are entitled to retain the tools of their trade. As you are faced with being owed money from a bankrupt, then you will need to inform the trustee in bankruptcy of your interest.

The chances are that you will be ranked as an unsecured creditor. This means that you are going to be very low down on the ranking of the list of parties that are entitled to proceeds of the sale of the individual's assets.

Insolvency

This term is given to a company unable to pay its debts. The process of insolvency results in the company being wound up and its assets sold to pay off its creditors. There are alternatives to a company's liquidation. These are voluntary arrangements, administration and receivership.

A search on companieshouse.gov.uk will tell you if the company is insolvent. You can also look up the company's balance sheet and profit/loss account for signs of trouble. These can include missed payments, requests for accelerated payments, and any request for advance payment.

The purpose of liquidating a company is to sell off the assets and pay off the creditors. There's no intention to 'save' the company or its assets. As with bankruptcy you will rank as an unsecured creditor and are unlikely to see much, if any, of the

monies owed. It is more than likely that your builder traded as a limited company.

Insolvency will mean that the works will remain half finished and you will incur additional expenses to employ someone to complete them. Ideally you can recover these costs from the insolvent builder, but as you are likely to rank so low down the list of payees, your chances of recovering any monies are slim.

Most construction contracts don't state that insolvency is a breach of contract; however, the effect of becoming insolvent may lead to a breach. For example, the contractor will have insufficient funds to acquire plant or materials or employ a labour force.

From your details, it appears that the builder's insolvency or bankruptcy has resulted in the situation where he is now in breach of contract.

Generally speaking, JCT building contracts (mostly used for small projects) provide for the employment of the contractor to be determined in the event that it is declared insolvent, bankrupt or if an administration order is placed etc. It is possible to agree that the contractor's appointment will continue. This may work in both of your interests and is something that the builder may propose once/if he gets in contact again.

From your perspective it means that you will not be faced with the expense and delay of having to appoint another contractor, and for the builder it means a revenue stream.

As you are about halfway through the project you will need to consider what works remain outstanding. For example, if the contractor had already built the shell but not the fit-out, then it may be wiser to tender for a different type of contractor just for the fit-out, rather than going back to the original builder. If you had just started the works then it would be best to re-tender the project and appoint a new contractor.

It will not generally be permitted for you to seize your builder's plant and materials on site, even if your contract allows you to do this. However, the work done and those elements that are fixed to the land will vest in you on the presumption that you are the freeholder of the site.

Guy Elyahou is a solicitor specialising in construction law. He is also the author of *Law for Home Improvers and Self-builders*. Email your questions in the first instance to ross.stokes@sbdonline.co.uk



Planning clinic

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

Potential for plot in rear garden

Q There's some land behind my house that I would like to sell with planning permission. My house is a 1930s semi with a garden the same size as the neighbouring houses. However, beyond that the garden widens out in a T-shape behind our neighbours' houses and is backed by woods. A builder recently bought another site nearby which also backs onto the woods and building work has started on that site. There isn't room for access down the side of my house so something will need to be done to it. I'm interested to know how to maximise the property.

A Step one would be to ascertain whether the site has realistic potential for planning permission. There are some standard issues with this sort of scheme. Consider whether it would be possible to build a house which didn't harm the front houses in terms of loss of privacy, appearing overbearing from the houses or their gardens, and disturbance.

That will depend on the size and shape of the site, how it relates to adjoining properties and what screening exists. You say it's next to woodland and so you

need to work out whether a house could be built far enough away from the trees, and taking account of shading issues.

The access situation rings alarm bells. Areas vary as do councils' attitudes to access but, in many locations, new access drives in between frontage houses are frowned upon, especially where they would be close to the houses.

As there's not even enough room for an access next to your house, this is another complication which may not have a workable solution. It is probably best to get a planning consultant to look at this for you to explore the options.

What are the options for barn development?

Q I have a barn which I think was built early in the 20th century. I want to replace it with a house or maybe convert it into a holiday let. It's near the end of a private drive in a small village of about 30 houses, which are quite spread out. What are my options?

A Ascertain the planning status of the village – ie, whether it's a place where the council supports new housing. Not all councils define planning boundaries but many do, so see

whether the barn is inside any such area. If this is the case, you may be able to get permission, regardless of the existence of the barn. If it's outside the boundary, it will probably be trickier. Those are the basics but planning is more complicated these days. Government policy seems to be moving towards a more lenient approach to development in rural settlements.

Some councils allow suitable rural buildings to be re-built rather than converted. If the barn is capable of being converted, that might be an easier route. Government policy allows for this and there's a Permitted Development right in England to convert barns into houses, subject to mind-bendingly complicated ifs, buts and maybes.

Holiday let use is often encouraged over normal residential use. You would need to do some research into the council's policy on that. It sounds as though this is worth investigating and, given the complexities, you could try testing the waters with a pre-application consultation with planning officers.

Flood plain plan to achieve building plot

Q I've identified a piece of land of about five acres on the edge of a large village. It's in a flood risk area. I would like to turn most of the land into a flood plain to take the pressure off other areas and build a house on it for myself in return. I expect there would also be wildlife benefits or could be. Do you think this could work?

A Building in a flood risk zone is usually difficult and to get permission applicants normally have to prove there aren't any other sites available in lower risk areas, as well as that it would be safe for occupiers. As it isn't possible to show that in this case, it's likely to be difficult.

I don't have experience of this but, if it could be demonstrated that the benefits were so substantial, such as protecting many other existing houses where there would otherwise be a high probability of flooding, you could have something to bargain with. I suggest you speak to an experienced engineer to see whether a case could be made or if it's a non-starter. You may find that the amount of work required wouldn't justify the single house you want.





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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.



www.buildstore.co.uk

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)	95% (OPP)	80%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	4.74%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Darlington Building Society (Accelerator)	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	5.49%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Furness Building Society (Accelerator)	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	4.7%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Hanley Building Society (Accelerator)	85% (OPP)	80%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	5.24%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Mansfield Building Society (Accelerator)	85% (OPP)	85%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	5.24%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Melton Mowbray BS (Accelerator)	85% (OPP)	75%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	5.24%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Penrith Building Society (Accelerator)	85% (OPP)	75%	Six	DPP & Building Regs granted	5.50%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
ARREAR STAGE PAYMENT MORTGAGES							
Buckinghamshire BS*	75% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	4.84%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Chorley BS*	85% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.49%	England/Wales/Scot	0345 223 4647
Cumberland BS	75% (OPP)	75%	Flexible	Flexible	Call branch	Branch area only	01228 403141
Darlington BS*	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.99%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Dudley BS*	50% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	5.49%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Ecology BS	80% (OPP)	80%	Flexible	Flexible	4.65%	National	0845 674 5566
Furness BS*	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.24%	England/Wales/Scot	0345 223 4647
Halifax BS	75% (OPP)	75%	Five	Foundations	5.64%	Eng/Wales/Scot/Nl	0345 850 3705
Hanley BS*	85% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.49%	Central England	0345 223 4647
Hinckley & Rugby BS	N/A	75%	Four	Footings	5.64%	England/Wales	01455 894083
Holmesdale BS*	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.99%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Ipswich BS*	75% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	3.99%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Loughborough BS*	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.41%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Mansfield BS*	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.99%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Newbury BS	66% (DPP)	75%	Flexible	Flexible	4.7%	Postcode restricted	Local branch
Newcastle BS*	80% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.99%	England/Wales/Scot	0345 223 4647
Nottingham BS*	75% (OPP)	80%	Six	Foundations	4.39%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Penrith BS	85% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	5.5%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Progressive BS	N/A	75%	Four	Wall plate	4.25%	Northern Ireland	Local branch
Stafford BS*	85% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	4.25%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Tipton & Cosley BS*	85% (OPP)	75%	Six	Foundations	4.24%	England/Wales	0345 223 4647
Scottish BS	80% (DPP)	80%	Flexible	Foundations	5.99%	Scotland	0131 313 7700
Vernon	75% (DPP)	80%	Four	Wall plate	Call branch	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.

Diary dates

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

Courses

Brighton Permaculture Trust **Selfbuilding an Earthship**

June 1-3; income-based fee £175-£340
Brighton

Participants will learn what needs to be considered when building an environmentally sensitive home as well as what is involved in building an earthship. Learn how to gain autonomy and be free from gas and electricity bills, and understand basic building physics which can shed light on how all buildings work. The course provides the knowledge and confidence to take ideas to the next stage. (brightonpermaculture.org.uk)

Centre for Alternative Technology **Self Build Project Management**

June 30 - July 1; £150

Machynlleth, Powys

Project management is a popular option for selfbuilders undertaking their own project, but there are techniques which make the whole process easier. Learn how to create a project plan, which key elements should be included, when key tasks should happen and how long they are likely to take.

UK planning and approval processes as well as the Building Regulations and control inspections will be explained, as will managing budgets, reclaiming VAT, estimating costs and how to select and work with suppliers. (courses.cat.org.uk)

KLC School of Design **Experience Interior Design**

May 11; £185

Chelsea Harbour, London

This day provides the a concise introduction to the world of interior design. Despite the prevalence of design in today's media, confusion surrounds even some of the most basic principles. So whether you just want to gain a better appreciation for your own interior projects, or are thinking about studying further, this practical day provides a compelling, comprehensive and enjoyable introduction. (klc.co.uk)

Mike Wye & Associates **Practical Lime Course**

June 15; £120 + VAT

Buckland Filleigh, Devon

Gain hands-on experience in using lime mortars and lime plasters for the repair and maintenance of traditional buildings on this practical course, which offers an introduction to the use of the different types of building lime followed by practical sessions. (mikewye.co.uk)

National Self Build & Renovation Centre **Design and Build Workshop**

June 2

NSBRC, Swindon

Design and build companies at this workshop can help to design a home that suits individual needs, budget and lifestyle, allowing various levels of involvement from the selfbuilder. Many don't have the time to project manage, a task which can take 40 to 50 hours a week. Design and build makes it easier to control a project without having to take on the day-to-day management, providing a low risk, fixed cost build. (nsbrc.co.uk)

Heating your Home

June 16; £150

Designed specifically for selfbuilders and renovators this course explores the latest options in heat and energy sources – both renewable and conventional systems. The jargon-busting one-day session is packed full of useful tips and advice. Starting with the basics, before delving into the detail of each option, this course will allow key decisions to be made and to engage with the key trades from an informed and confident position. The most common processes will be discussed for ordering new heating systems and what might be the typical costs. (nsbrc.co.uk)

Eco Workshop

June 23

Whether motivation lies in saving the environment or saving money, this programme of eco workshops should have some answers. It brings a wealth of independent and informed advice and information on the latest energy-efficient technologies, products and services. Each of the four workshops focuses on a particular phase or aspect of energy-efficient home building and refurbishment, and attendance can be chosen depending on the relevance to particular projects. There are four in total making it possible to discover something new each time. Industry experts will be on hand throughout the day to discuss green ideas, designs and plans. (nsbrc.co.uk)

Straw Works **Design and Details**

May 11; £45

London

This one-day course answers questions on a range of aspects of strawbale building. Should foundations be car tyre, insulating, or self draining? It looks at the difference between plinth walls and foundations, and windows and doors and their effect on airtightness and settlement. It also examines how hessian can assist in weather protection and how to attach wall cupboards and sockets to straw walls, plus how compression works. How do you build the roof first on a load-bearing building? Get the answers to these questions and more. (strawworks.co.uk)

Ty-Mawr

Introduction to Lime and Lime Plastering

Seminars & Open Days

Passivhaus Trust

Lawford Road EnerPHit site visit

May 17; £19-£35

London NW5

This visit takes in a four-bedroom semi-detached house being completed to EnerPHit standard. An independent timber frame is being constructed within the existing property and it is being finished to a high design standard with exposed timber and raw materials. Designed by Ozkurt and Eland, the ground floor is to be replaced with a concrete slab to improve airtightness. Progress at the time of visit is to be confirmed, although this is likely to be prior to first fix. (passivhaustrust.org.uk)

Camden Mews Passivhaus site visit

June 21; £19-£35

London NW1

This visit showcases a new build two-bedroom urban infill project aiming for Passivhaus certification. Currently being constructed in the rear garden of an existing property, it's designed by Bere architects who were given a free hand by the client. It features a number of bespoke elements such as external shutters constructed from vacuum panels to be controlled by the smart home system. At the time of the visit the project is due to be undergoing first fix and the MVHR being installed. (passivhaustrust.org.uk)

Build a Dream Self Build Association

Building Regs Update with Andy Crooks

May 1

Bath

The first Tuesday of most months, this series of talks by industry experts and experienced homebuilders provides valuable information and advice, acting as a venue for meeting like-minded self-build enthusiasts to form strong alliances. (badsba.co.uk)

John Cullen Lighting

Learn About Lighting Masterclass

May 15; £35

June 19; £35

King's Road, London

A two-hour lighting masterclass which demonstrates how creative lighting techniques can transform design schemes in the house and garden. Presented by leading lighting expert Sally Storey (John Cullen's Creative Director) and her team of designers, the lighting masterclass is held at the London Showroom, which shows the latest in lighting technology through The John Cullen House and a unique custom-built lighting pod. (johncullenlighting.com)

May 10-11; £220 + VAT

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 being able to return 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)

Exhibitions

Grand Designs Live

May 5-13

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 six different sections of the show, which will cover Build, Kitchens & Bathrooms, Gardens, Interiors, Design Arcade and Technology, while a range of interactive workshops, instructive talks and demonstrations will inspire visitors. (granddesignslive.com)

Affordable Art Fair

May 10-13

Hampstead, London

This fair brings together works by thousands of international living artists, all available for between £100 and £6,000. It will celebrate the restorative power of art through specially curated selections of works in addition to informative talks and interactive workshops. With studies showing that being surrounded by and viewing art can have huge emotional benefits, from decreasing stress to giving your brain a mini-workout, this show is well worth a visit. (affordableartfair.com)

The National Self Build & Renovation Show

May 11-13

NSBRC, Swindon

Based at the home of self build and renovation, this is an event not to be missed by anyone serious about building their own house or planning major renovations. With more than 200 exhibitors, live demonstrations and free seminars, there are also opportunities to meet architects and designers. (nsbrc.co.uk)

Clerkenwell Design Week

May 22-24

London

Clerkenwell is home to more creative businesses and architects per square mile than anywhere else on the planet, making it 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)

London Festival of Architecture

June 1-30

London

The London Festival of Architecture celebrates London as a global hub of architectural experimentation, practice and debate. The festival returns to the capital with a lively and diverse programme of public events across London exploring the theme 'identity.' The festival began in 2004 and has since grown to become Europe's biggest

annual architecture festival. It attracts a vast public audience – 400,000 people in 2017 – and a global media audience of millions.

The vast majority of events are free, and are staged by a core festival programming team working alongside architecture and design practices and practitioners, leading cultural and academic institutions, artists and many others. (londonfestivalofarchitecture.org)

Homebuilding & Renovating Show

June 16-17

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. (glasgow.homebuildingshow.co.uk)

House & Garden Festival

June 20-24

Olympia, London

The festival brings together four leading lifestyle events, the Art & Antiques Fair Olympia, HOUSE, Spirit of Summer and GROW London, and presents an eclectic collection of products both old and new – focused on craftsmanship and quality, design, interior and garden trends and luxury lifestyle. There are free talks and workshops from leading antiques, interior, garden and lifestyle experts plus loads of inspiration to take home from the stunning room sets in Decorated Spaces and the Style Rooms and however large or small your outdoor space, fabulous ideas from the beautiful feature gardens. (houseandgardenfestival.com)

Art & Antiques Fair

June 20-27

Olympia, London

Returning to London for its 46th edition, the Art & Antiques Fair is a key event in the global art and antiques calendar, hosting 160 dealers showcasing a vast array of items from antiquity to the present day, with prices ranging from £100 to £1m. Loved by collectors, interior designers and those looking for exceptional pieces for stylish interiors, the fair offers a fine array of objects. (olympia-art-antiques.com)

Vision 2018

June 21-22

London N1

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)

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 wide range 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)

Self Build Days

Potton Self Build Academy

May 25: **An Introduction to Self Build**

May 26: **How to Find and Appraise a Plot**

June 1: **Making the Most of Your Plot**

June 16: **Kitchen and Bathroom**

Masterclass

June 16: **An Introduction to Self Build**

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

Kingspan Timber Solutions

May 19: **Self Build Day**

These events are suitable for those with land and planning permission for a new home. (kingspantimbersolutions.co.uk/events/events-for-self-builders)



SITE AND SETTING

The site is rectangular at the front, with a further triangle of land behind that, which Rado and Dan think totals about half an acre. It's level land, mostly covered in rough grass with patches of scrub, some trees across the middle and an old dilapidated greenhouse. On the road frontage is an overgrown hedge and a short length of post and rail fence, which looks like it could have been an access point. On the grass verge outside is a small brick structure, which Rado and Dan tell me is a disused gas governor box, which used to convert a medium pressure gas main to low pressure and has been redundant for many years. To the south, on the road frontage, is a pair of semi-detached two-storey houses, the closest of which might be converted into two units. The adjoining building has four windows facing the site, two of which are small. Behind these, the triangular section of Rado and Dan's site adjoins an old railway line, now a guided busway and cycle track. On the other side of that is a disused factory. To the north is a large two-storey detached house, converted from a pub, the flank wall of which has three small windows. This house has a long back garden running the full length of Rado and Dan's site with conifers along most of the boundary. On the opposite side of the road are allotments. The site is amongst a cluster of six or seven houses half a mile from a small village where there are a few shops, post office, primary school and a couple of pubs. The middle of Cambridge is only about six miles away.

REVISING PLANS FOR APPROVED HOME

Rado Petrik and Dan Wang are the proud owners of a building plot. But the permission doesn't reflect what they want to build. What should they do from here?

Rado and Dan are a recently married couple in their early 30s, both working in the technology industry on a science park outside Cambridge. They live in a small flat in a village about 12 miles from Cambridge.

There isn't a direct bus connection or a safe cycling route between their village and the park where they work. That means spending about 40 minutes in heavy rush-hour traffic driving to work every morning.

Since they moved to the area, they have been dreaming of living somewhere closer to work, from where they could commute by bike instead of driving.

However, with high house prices in Cambridgeshire, this seemed difficult to achieve in the foreseeable future. They were also unimpressed with the quality and ambience of the sort of houses they were looking at, which were mostly on new housing estates.

Then, some months ago, looking at Rightmove, they spotted a building plot right next to a guided busway route, with a

dedicated cycle path running alongside it, which goes into the park where they work. This would be a perfect location for them.

There was a lot of interest in the site as not many plots come up around here and those that do tend to be small garden plots, relatively expensive for what they are. None they had seen before had been close to the busway.

Using a combination of savings, additional mortgage on their flat, and some borrowing from family, they were able to bid for the plot and were successful in acquiring it a month ago.

The plot, despite being outside of the village planning boundary, came with outline planning permission for a very large five-bedroom house, which they would struggle to afford to build.

Instead, they would like to build a more modest four-bedroom house. However, since the price they paid reflected scope to build a five-bedroom house, building a smaller property would represent a poor investment.

So, they would like to get planning

permission for two smaller houses, enabling them to build one for themselves now and the other in the future, as and when money allows. Alternatively, they might sell off the second plot with the benefit of planning permission.

Proposal

The approved outline scheme would be too big for Rado and Dan's needs. Their optimum is a 150-sqm, two-storey, four-bedroom house, well insulated and highly energy efficient. They haven't thought much about style yet, although aren't keen on render.

In terms of site layout, they would like to build one house at the front and the other set farther back into the site in the triangular section, and live in the back one. Rado and Dan envisage having a garage for each house. They mention that next door has planning permission for a two-bedroom annexe in the back garden, which might have a bearing on whether they can build at the rear.

Rado and Dan attended a council planning department roadshow which was held locally. Planning officers gave talks and were on hand afterwards for individual consultations. Interestingly, Rado and Dan say that, although the roadshow was aimed at householder development, the people who attended were mainly self-builders.

They showed the planning officer drawings of the type of one-behind-the-other scheme they have in mind and the officer seemed positive and couldn't see immediately why it wouldn't be supported.

They looked at the Local Plan and at proposals for a new town to be built around the nearby village. This, they understand, is intended eventually to contain 10,000 houses, mainly for people working in Cambridge and has comprehensive facilities. In the long term, phase three of the development is expected to come up to the busway but nothing is planned on their side to the north of the busway.

They also found out that an application for a small number of houses just along the road was refused and then turned down at appeal with the main reasons given being encroachment into countryside and precedent. The next step they have in mind is to carry out a pre-application consultation with the council. Rado and Dan want to get on with building as quickly as they can and are allowing one year to sort out planning.

Planning history

The council website record shows that planning permission for residential development on the site, seemingly owned by British Railways at the time, was turned down in 1965. Outline permission for a fruit and vegetable store was approved

the following year. The outline permission for the five-bedroom house is on the website and the documents contain useful information. Access, scale and layout were not reserved, which means those aspects were taken into account when the application was considered.

The access point was shown at the northern end of the frontage, next to the side wall of the house, with a 2.4m x 43m visibility splay on either side, which the drawing shows can be achieved without the removal of the redundant gas governor box (see panel). The house was positioned close to the southern boundary with its rear wall lining up with that of the house to the north.

An ecological survey concluded that whilst some species were present no further surveys would be necessary and made recommendations for mitigation. This was largely accepted by the council's ecology officer who recommended conditions requiring the mitigation measures to be carried out and more detail on reptile mitigation.

There was no highway objection and the parish council supported it. Environmental health suggested a noise survey because of the nearby busway and the neighbour to the south objected on grounds of scale, proximity to boundary, loss of light and privacy. The officer's report said that, whilst

the site is outside the village development framework, the council did not have a five-year housing land supply, which meant that permission should be given, unless adverse impacts outweighed the benefits. It went on to say that there is a bus stop opposite, a busway stop nearby, the adjoining new town is under construction, which will bring facilities within walking distance and it's already possible to walk to an existing shop. The siting between houses was acceptable and the proposal represented sustainable development. The decision notice was dated September 2017. This set out standard time limits - three years to submit details of appearance and landscaping and two years from approval of these to begin work. There's also a limit on hours of use for powered machinery, a noise survey to be carried out, ecological mitigation and reptile measures and, curiously, two conditions requiring pedestrian visibility splays but not one for vehicle splays. I also find one application along the road. That was turned down by the council in October last year for the reasons Rado and Dan thought.

Roy Speer is a planning consultant and co-author of *How to Get Planning Permission*, *How to Find and Buy a Building Plot*, and *Complete Planning Permission*. He can be contacted on 01273 843737 or roy@speerdade.co.uk

DOCTOR'S DIAGNOSIS

There are two main issues here: first, the prospects for Rado and Dan to get planning permission for two houses instead of one and, second, what form of development might be permitted. The existing permission was given partly because the council doesn't have sufficient housing land supply. A new plan is at an advanced stage of preparation and, I presume, will allocate the required number of dwellings. If that's the case, the council's attitude to new houses outside town and village boundaries might well change.

The new plan could come into force soon and, quite possibly, before Rado and Dan would be able to make an application and get a decision. As a first step, they should speak to a planning policy officer at the council to ascertain the probable timing and consequences of the new plan.

It would seem strange if planning permission for an additional house were to be refused on one side of the busway when thousands are to be built on the other but then this is planning, where common sense doesn't always come into it. All the time the site has a live planning permission, that provides a fallback and potential justification for an alternative type of development. Therefore, it's vital that Rado and Dan don't let the current permission lapse, until and unless they get a new one. The site layout they want looks workable and the site is big enough to take a couple of houses.

The positive indication from the planning officer was a good sign but it doesn't guarantee that on more detailed consideration in the form of either a proper pre-application consultation or a planning

application, the council would reach the same conclusion. It's possible the planners could query building at the back of the site, when the other houses are all on the road frontage.

There would also be activity behind the neighbouring houses, including an access drive going deep into the site to get to the rear property. Careful thought would need to be given to first-floor window positions to ensure the rear house didn't look into the private garden areas of the neighbouring properties.

One of the grounds for refusing the house up the road was encroachment into the countryside. Whilst the circumstances there were different, it's the sort of point councils trot out. An alternative could be to build two houses side-by-side at the front, which would reflect the nature of the cluster of properties. This would be less desirable because the houses would be narrow and would probably have to be semi-detached. This is all conjecture and the approach Rado and Dan are proposing - undertaking a pre-application enquiry - is probably the way to go. They should check the council's requirements for pre-application submissions.

They have already produced a site layout plan and this could be supported with some illustrative house designs to test the officer's views.

I think it's worth putting the proposal to the officers to see what they say. Rado and Dan need to consider the response carefully. If it looks like there are reasonable prospects they can commission a designer to come up with a scheme.

PlotBrowser

What is PlotBrowser and how does it work?

Plotbrowser.com is a 100 per cent free listings website from *Selfbuild & Design*. Used by selfbuilders to find a suitable plot of land, conversion or renovation opportunity for their project, it is updated daily by our research team, meaning that the information you see is as accurate and current as possible. Alternatively, if you are looking to sell a piece of land, PlotBrowser allows you to do this at no cost. Every fortnight we pick out a selection of the newest plots from around the country, which are displayed on the featured plots tab of the website.

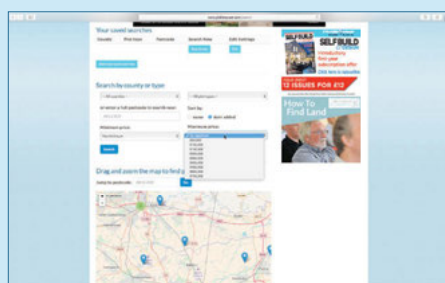


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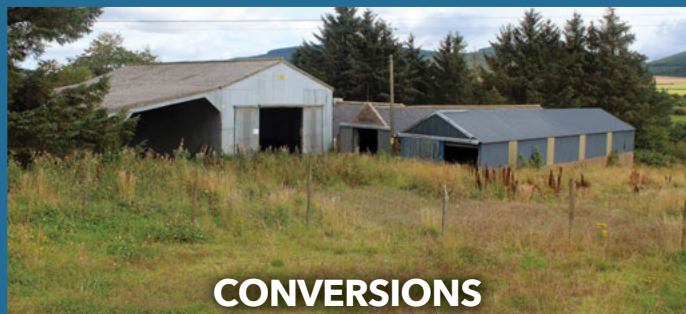
You can search by county, price band, plot type and date. Entering a full postcode also enables the user to browse the nearby area. Once you've filled in the criteria you are looking for, you will see a list of suitable plots, which you'll be able to examine further by clicking the 'more' tab.



What information is on there?

Each plot has an address, description – including a planning reference if available – and price band. Once logged in, you'll be able to see an image (should there be one included), a map with the location of the plot and more information about the seller. If interested, you can then email the seller for further details. This is all done through the PlotBrowser website.

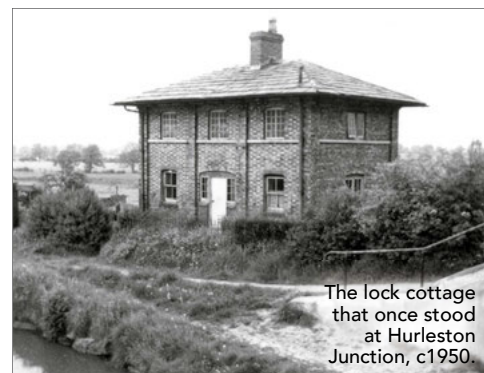
What types of plots are listed?



*Extensions, modernisations and multiple plots are also available.

CANALSIDE OPPORTUNITIES

Should some of the fine canalside properties demolished 60 years ago be reinstated? **Andrew Denny** argues that such a move could offer tempting opportunities for selfbuilders as well as providing a reassuring presence for narrowboaters.



The lock cottage that once stood at Hurleston Junction, c1950.

In the late 1950s the British Transport Commission carried out a survey of the hundreds of lock cottages and other canalside dwellings it had inherited with the nationalisation of the canals and railways a decade or so earlier.

At the time, new standards in housing were being demanded, including indoor toilets, electrification, central heating and road access. Some canalside buildings were in an extreme state of disrepair, while others were remote or considered surplus to requirements.

The BTC Modernisation of Property Survey was designed to look into them.

The survey now appears to be lost, which is unfortunate as so many of the buildings it catalogued have also disappeared – demolished wholesale in the 1950s and '60s, when BTC decided they were more trouble than they were worth.

One building at the time stood out: the lock cottage of the Hurleston flight, at the junction of the Llangollen and Shropshire Union canals, which had reputedly been built by Thomas Telford. It found a friend in Sir John Smith, a wealthy banker and Conservative MP who had earlier encouraged the National Trust to take on the restoration of the Stratford Canal.

He campaigned hard to preserve Telford's house but was ignored. And after it was demolished, he was again ignored when he suggested rebuilding it. Its loss led to the creation of the Landmark Trust, the charity that adopts, preserves and rents out old buildings.

Sir John wrote: "Until the 1950s many such handsome, unpretentious buildings served

and graced our canal system; but the Transport Commission of that day ruthlessly demolished them by the dozens, in spite of everything which I and others had to say.

"Indeed it was, in particular, the destruction of Thomas Telford's Junction House at Hurleston on the Shropshire Union Canal which maddened us into starting the Landmark Trust."

In March 2016 *Waterways World* magazine ran a memoir of a reader fondly describing his childhood at Falling Sands Lock cottage, near Stourport, beside the Staffs & Worcs Canal. With no running water, electricity, telephone, indoor toilet or road access, the building was demolished in the early 1960s.

It prompted another reader to write in with memories of his uncle's cottage at the adjacent Caldwell Lock, which is also long gone. Looking at these sites now, it seems astonishing that habitable dwellings could have been erected in such circumscribed areas. It is

perhaps for this reason that no one has ever considered rebuilding such properties.

A radical proposal I believe is that the Canal & River Trust should carry out a new properties survey, not only to determine the location of these long-lost canal cottages for historical interest, but also with a view to rebuilding some of them.

In many cases, CRT still owns the land where the original properties stood, thus greatly reducing one of the major costs of building new homes. Admittedly, the odd lock cottage is unlikely to make a significant contribution to resolving the country's ongoing housing crisis, but given the huge popularity of waterside properties, the trust should have no problem selling them for a profit and charging an annual ground rent – even if the properties are off-grid.

In fact, the reinstated cottages could make interesting testbeds for eco-friendly, sustainable technology, with composting toilets, solar- and wind-generated electricity,

rainfall collection and 4G mobile broadband in place of conventional services.

As well as adding character to canals, the properties would ensure the presence of a local resident at lonely locks, with the real benefit of reassuring boaters that there's an informal 'caretaker' present.

One bureaucratic stumbling block might be planning permission, but there's no doubt that housebuilding is being looked on favourably in the current climate. When you hear the stories of vast Green Belts being taken over by thousand-house modern dormitory suburbs, it's hard not to imagine planners being willing to correct the short-sighted wrongs of BTC 60 years ago.

Perhaps if this were to happen, Sir John Smith's aim "to rouse people's interest in their canal surroundings" and provide an important link with the history of our waterways could finally be realised.

Andrew Denny is news editor of *Waterways World* magazine.

COTTAGE RENOVATION ON MONTGOMERY CANAL



Freestone Lock Cottage, near Newtown on the Montgomery Canal, has been allowed to slide into dereliction but could offer someone the chance to turn it into a dream home. According to John Dodwell, chairman of the Montgomery Canal Restoration Trust, the trust would look kindly on anyone who wanted to carry out a sympathetic restoration, with a nominal price of £1 for the plot, "subject to a covenant to repair".

He said restoration of the canal itself is expected to take many years, but might be quicker if someone was living on site.

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BUILDING IN A DESIGNATED AREA

What is a Conservation Area?

A Conservation Area protects the historic interest of a place, preserving the features that make it unique. Physical features of the space are important, in particular the form of the buildings, their former uses and historical development. Extra planning controls apply in these areas.

How easy is it to gain planning permission?

Although possible to achieve, minor works not normally requiring permission outside of a Conservation Area, such as a roof extension or cladding, may do so within. Demolition is controlled, trees have special security, and protected species and habitats must be addressed when reviewing buildings, sites and planning works.

The local authority council will carefully review the design of the new development. Where planning permission is required, proposals are advertised on site and in the local press.

DEMOLITION

Full planning permission is in place at the site of Wereham Village Hall in Wereham, Norfolk. Set in the heart of this Conservation Village, planning specifies the demolition of the village hall, to be replaced with a three-bedroom detached house, which will have views over the village pond, church and pub.

The plot, which measures 91ft deep x 55ft wide, has electric and water connected, with mains foul drainage available adjacent to the site.

The village of Wereham lies in the Wissey Valley, five miles to the east of Downham Market and 13 miles from King's Lynn.

The property is on the market for £85,000. (williamhbrown.co.uk)



What is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

An AONB is an area of countryside which has been given a protected status. With 46 AONBs covering almost a fifth of the UK, they comprise anything from a wild moor to woodland or a quaint village, and are home to countless species of birds, plants and animals. Designated for conservation through the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, they were given further protection with the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

According to gov.uk, the area must meet the Natural Beauty Criterion. Relative wildness and tranquility, whereby the predominant sounds are natural, good-quality landscape and scenery, and cultural or natural heritage, such as the existence of archaeological remains or a distinctive species or habitat, are all contributing factors to the classification of the space.

Can I build in an AONB?

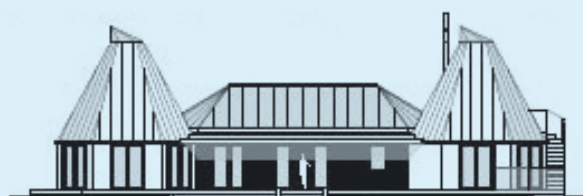
An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is also a designated area, thus affecting your permitted development rights. This means that building without the need for planning permission is restricted. Modifying or converting an existing home may have fallen under permitted development in

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

Set within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, this 11-acre rural plot has been granted planning permission for the construction of a 3,928 sq ft dwelling.

The land at Little Saxbys Farm is in an elevated position with views over the valley from Sussex into Kent, located just one mile from the village of Cowden, which has a direct train service to London in just 50 minutes. Currently the plot holds a large Atcost grain store, stables and workshops with level hard standing.

The proposed accommodation is modern with three bedrooms, all en suites.



It also comprises a study, an underground double garage and workshops and a large atrium, which will accommodate

an indoor pool and additional shower room.

The property is on the market with a guide price of £800,000. (legrys.com)

another area, but here you will most likely need to obtain planning permission first. It will be harder to gain approval for a new building in a designated area, and it is important to take into account the scale of

the project, along with choice of materials. Striking buildings may not gain support due to their impact on the local landscape, with consent more likely if the project uses materials traditional to the surroundings.

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TORLOISK, ISLE OF MULL, ARGYLL & BUTE

Plot at Fanmore – Prime building plot in an exceptional and sought-after island location extending to approx 0.205 acres. Planning permission in principle was granted by Argyll and Bute Council (ref: 15/03519/PPP) for the erection of a single dwelling. Offers over £70,000. *Bell Ingram, 01631 566 122, oban@bellingham.co.uk*

ARGYLL & BUTE

DALMALLY, ARGYLL

Development plot at Annlea – Planning permission in principle (Argyll & Bute Council ref: 12/00056/PPP) for the erection of a single dwelling has now lapsed, with vendors in the process of reapplying. Site is approx 0.6 acres in a rural location on the edge of an Argyllshire village. OIRO £35,000. *Bell Ingram, 01631 566 122, oban@bellingham.co.uk*

ISLE OF SEIL

Balvarcar Plots – One of five plots remaining, situated on a prime site with exceptional views across Balvarcar Bay. This fully serviced 0.33 acre plot has the benefit of outline planning consent (Argyll and Bute Council ref: 07/02237/OUT) for a one-and-a-half-storey dwelling. OIRO £90,000. *Bell Ingram, 01631 566 122, oban@bellingham.co.uk*

TIGHNABRUACH

Tigh Na Rathaid Cottage, Kilfinan

– A beautiful, coastal, unserviced development site of approx 0.42 acres on the Cowal peninsula with views up and down Loch Fyne. The derelict cottage has lapsed planning permission (Argyll and Bute Council ref: 14/00330/PPP) for re-development. Offers over £50,000. *Robb Residential, 0141 225 3880, sales@robbresidential.com*

BEDFORDSHIRE

BEDFORD

Southview – Two semi-detached houses in a plot of just over 1 acre. High building potential. Price on application. Private seller, 01234 742 075

COLMWORTH, BEDFORD

Topham End Farm Barn, Honeydon Road – Site with planning consent for a brand new barn style dwelling. The site has planning consent (Bedford ref: 17/02007/FUL) for a two-bedroom property of approx 800 sq ft on a plot of around 0.425 acres. Guide

price: £200,000. *Lane & Holmes, 01234 327 744, sales@hea.co.uk*

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

CHEDDINGTON

Lynces – Edge of village location, enjoying wonderful rural views. This refurbished three-bedroom 1930s bungalow has permitted development rights to extend on a plot of approx 690 sqm. Situated within easy reach of the main commuter train line to London Euston and in the grammar school catchment. Guide price: £595,000. Private seller, 07799 719 901

HAVERSHAM

Manor Drive – Building plot in a sought-after village location with full planning consent (Milton Keynes ref: 15/00522/FUL) for a three-bedroom bungalow. Guide price: £160,000. *Russell & Butler, 01280 815 999, sales@russellandbutler.co.uk*

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

BALSHAM, CAMBRIDGE

Land to the west of 10 Cambridge Road – A single development plot with the benefit of outline planning consent (South Cambs DC ref: S/1818/17/OL) for a detached house extending to approx 1,076 sq ft. The site area is around 0.139 acres. Price on application. *Carter Jonas (Cambridge South), 01223 633 276, cambridge@carterjonas.co.uk*

HILGAY

Lawrences Lane – Garden plot in a popular village location with outline planning permission (Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Council ref: 17/00780/O) for a three-bedroom detached house on the footprint of the existing double garage. Approx size of the new two-storey property will be 1,100 sq ft. OIEO £55,000. *William H Brown, 01366 387 638, downhammarket@williamhbrown.co.uk*

GOT A PLOT TO SELL?

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MARCH

17 Jobs Lane – Plot with full planning permission for a pair of single-storey two-bedroom semi-detached dwellings. Approx size: 75ft frontage x 55ft depth. Fenland DC ref: F/YR17/1036/F. Guide price: £230,000. *William H Brown, 01354 654 545, march@williamhbrown.co.uk*

WISBECH

Main Road, Friday Bridge – Single building plot with full planning consent (Fenland District Council ref: F/YR14/0470/F) for a three-bedroom chalet-style dwelling situated close to the village centre. Guide price: £72,500. *Maxey Grounds & Co, 01945 583 123, wisbech@maxeygrounds.co.uk*

CHESHIRE

BOWDON

Plot St Margarets Road – A building plot with an innovative permission to create a subterranean mansion with three bedroom suites with parking and gardens. Approx 0.3 acres. Guide price £500,000. *Jackson-Stops & Staff, 0161 928 8881, hale@jackson-stops.co.uk*

CROWTON

Crewood Common Road – For sale by informal tender by 4 May 2018. Former farm building with a steel frame construction. Planning permission has been granted (Cheshire West and Chester ref: 16/05050/PDQ) for its conversion into one residential dwelling of 4,500 sq ft. Plot itself is approx 3.6 acres, set in a rural location. Guide price:



SHERBORNE, DORSET

Bristol Road – Residential development land with detailed planning consent (West Dorset District Council ref: WD/D/16/000806) for two individual three-bedroom detached dwellings with garage and parking facilities. Each plot is 1,216 sq ft. Guide price: £150,000 per plot or £300,000 for whole site.

Greenslade Taylor Hunt, 01935 813 577, residential.sherborne@gth.net

£350,000. Meller Braggins, 01606 45514, northwich@mellerbraggins.com

WILMSLOW

Hawthorn Street – Land for sale with full planning permission (Cheshire East planning ref: 17/0730M) for a 2,185 sq ft modern detached four-bedroom house with driveway and integral garage. Convenient central but secluded location. Offers over £400,000. Gascoigne Halman, 01625 536 434, wilmslow@gascoignehalman.co.uk

CORNWALL

CARHARRACK, REDRUTH

Little Carharrack – A triangular shaped building plot measuring approx 14.1m x 30m x 38.4m. The land is predominantly level and currently has a former piggery on site. Conditional planning permission has been granted (Cornwall Council ref: PA16/10291) to convert the piggery into a single-storey two-bedroom home. Guide price: £150,000. Simon Milnes Estate Agent, 01872 810 810, sales@simonmilnes.co.uk

LANJETH, ST AUSTELL

Coombe Road – Single building plot with outline planning permission for a detached single-storey dwelling with off-road parking. Cornwall Council planning ref: PA15/01661. Guide price: £160,000. Clive Pearce Property, 01872 272 622, hello@clivepearceproperty.com

LISKEARD

Building plot at St Cleer – Site with full detailed planning consent (Cornwall Council ref: PA17/08138) for a three-bedroom architect-designed residential dwelling with parking. The proposed property will have a reverse level design and open plan living to take full advantage of the far reaching idyllic views. Guide price: £120,000. Kivells, 01579 345 543, liskeard@kivells.com

TRELEIGH

The Piggery, Land West of Kelandy Basset Road – Plot of 0.469 acres. Originally a large agricultural building,

the plot has planning permission (Cornwall Council ref: PA17/11934) for a detached residential dwelling and carport set in a southerly facing garden. Guide price: £160,000. Clive Pearce Property, 01872 272 622, hello@clivepearceproperty.com

TREWON

Tremewan – Building plot with full planning permission (Cornwall Council ref: PA15/08351) for four semi-detached two-storey dwellings with off-road parking, one with a garage. Guide price: £225,000. Clive Pearce Property, 01872 272 622, hello@clivepearceproperty.com

DERBYSHIRE

GLOSSOP

Hollincross Lane – Currently the side garden to an existing stone built property, this building plot is being sold with full planning permission (High Peak Borough Council ref: HPK/2015/0281) for the erection of a single detached family house with three bedrooms, within a well regarded residential area. Guide price: £65,000. Jordan Fishwick Estate Agents, 01457 858 888, glossop@jordanfishwick.co.uk

MIDWAY

2533 Burton Road – Land for sale with outline planning permission for four dwellings. 0.38 acres. Guide price: £275,000. Julian Owen Associates Ltd., 0115 922 9831, enquiries@julianowen.co.uk

DEVON

BARNFIELD, CREDITON

Site at Corinth – Single building plot with full planning permission (Mid Devon ref: 17/01268/FUL) for a 850 sq ft two-bedroom reverse level property with garden and parking. Set in an elevated position with views over the town and surrounding areas. Guide price: £69,950. Helmores, 01363 777 999, property@helmores.com

BOW, CREDITON

Barn at the White Hart – Barn with planning permission (Mid Devon) for conversion to a 1,552 sq ft three-bedroom home. Large garden with countryside views. Offers over £145,000. Helmores, 01363 777 999, property@helmores.com

HONITON

The Old Workshop, Kerslakes Court – Development opportunity for two one-bedroom semi-detached dwellings on a site which extends to approx 77 sqm. The plans illustrate two two-storey contemporary dwellings (East Devon DC ref 13/1115/FUL). Water, electric and drainage on site. Price band: £50,001-£100,000. Stags, 01404 45885, honiton@stags.co.uk

PRINCETOWN, YELVERTON

Plymouth Hill – Level building plot with Dartmoor National Park with full planning permission (Dartmoor National Park ref: 0606/16) for the erection of a four-bedroom detached dwelling. OIRO £115,000. Abode, 01822 618 833, info@abodewestcountry.co.uk

DORSET

CANFORD CLIFFS, POOLE

Plot, Canford Cliffs Road – A partially wooded building plot located on the edge of the Branksome Park Conservation Area. The plot is secluded and measures over 200 ft in depth making it the perfect garden for the approved 3,200 sq ft luxury five-bedroom home designed by Anders Roberts Cheer. Guide price £850,000. Frost & Co, 01202 778 855, parkstone@frostandco.net

LOWER PARKSTONE, POOLE

Alton Road – A choice of two mature building plots with planning consent already granted for the erection of contemporary four- to five-bedroom homes with large mature gardens and garage. £500,000 per plot. Frost & Co, 01202 778 855, parkstone@frostandco.net

EAST AYRSHIRE

CULROY

Plot at Knockdon – Rural plot of approx 14,500 sq ft with planning consent (East Ayrshire Council) to build a charming two-bedroom 1,033 sq ft cottage with countryside views. Offers over £55,000. Corum, 01292 880 888, ayr@corumproperty.co.uk

GALSTON

Plot at 1b Garden Street – The plot extends to around 500 sqm and has off-road parking and access at the front from Garden Street. There is detailed planning permission in place (East Ayrshire Council) for a four-bedroom detached family villa on the site extending to around 178 sqm. Offers over £59,000. Corum, 01292 310 010, troon@corumproperty.co.uk

OCHILTREE

Sinclairston building plot – This plot, extending to 419.3 sqm, has detailed planning permission (East Ayrshire Council) for the erection of a one-and-a-half-storey detached villa with three to four bedrooms and countryside views. Offers over £45,000. Corum, 01292 880 888, ayr@corumproperty.co.uk

ESSEX

ONGAR

Building plot at Toot Hill – A building plot in a semi-rural village position with planning permission (Epping Forest District Council) for a four-bedroom detached house extending to about 2,500 sq ft plus garage. Guide price: £500,000. Savills, 01245 269 311, chelmsford@savills.com

SEWARDS END, SAFFRON WALDEN

Crossways, Redgates Lane – Single building plot with full planning permission for a detached three-bedroom 1,190 sq ft chalet style home with off-road parking and a private south-facing garden. Uttlesford District Council ref: UTT/17/0854/FUL. OIEO £280,000. Cheffins, 01799 523 656, saffron-walden@cheffins.co.uk



STANSTED, ESSEX

Bentfield Mill Barn, Watermill Lane – Occupying a rural location with river frontage, this unlisted barn has planning consent for conversion into a four-bedroom family home of around 2,500 sq ft. Total plot area is approx 1.5 acres. Uttlesford District Council ref: UTT/17/0453/FUL. Guide price: £500,000.

Mullucks Wells, 01279 755 400, mullucks@mullucks.co.uk

STANFORD-LE-HOPE

Oxford Road – Site of approx 0.132 acres with planning permission (Thurrock ref: 17/01050/FUL) for a five-bedroom detached house in a popular residential area. OIEO £300,000. Kemsley, 01245 358 988, chelmsford@kemsley.com

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

CHARLTON KINGS, CHELTENHAM

Greenway Lane – Single building plot with planning granted (Cheltenham Borough Council ref: 17/01390/FUL) for a four-bedroom detached family home with garden and garaging. The house will be a contemporary design with a mixture of materials including zinc cladding, glass and timber cladding. Guide price: £435,000. Knight Frank LLP, 01242 246 959, annie.bishon@knightfrank.com

CHELTENHAM, GLOS

Plot – Detached three-bedroom recently refurbished house with full planning permission (17/02347/FUL) for a 116 sqm three-bedroom house on a 980 sqm plot. Quiet location down a lane, not overlooked, backing on to MEB nature reserve. Price band: £300,001-£450,000. Private seller, 07779 505 707

NORTON, GLOUCESTER

Norton – Large building plot suitable for one or two properties with garages. Price band: £50,001-£100,000. Private seller, 07402 548 808

THORNBURY

The Slad, Grovesend – 0.32 acres with outline planning consent granted for one four-bedroom detached dwelling and two three-bedroom detached dwellings (South Gloucestershire District Council ref: PT16/6725/F). Guide price £335,000. David James & Partners LLP, 01453 843 720, matthew@davidjames.org.uk

HAMPSHIRE

ALRESFORD

Land adj 37 Mitford Road – Land for sale with planning consent for a two-bedroom dwelling and associated parking, located within close proximity to Alresford Town Centre. Winchester City Council ref: 16/02961/FUL. Guide price: £125,000. Charters Estate Agents, 01962 734 633, alresford@chartersestateagents.co.uk

HAVANT

East Street – Planning has been approved by Havant Borough Council for the demolition of the existing buildings and the erection of ten, one-bedroom apartments and six, three-bedroom mews houses. The development site is situated in the centre of Havant and the buildings were previously occupied as retail premises. Guide Price £1,300,000. Spicer Haart Land & New Homes, paul.curtin@spicerhaart.co.uk

KINGS WORTHY, WINCHESTER

The Croft, 52 Lovedon Lane – Single building plot with approved planning permission (Winchester City Council ref: 17/01462/FUL) to build a substantial detached eco-friendly two-storey, two-bedroom dwelling with private driveway. Guide price: £230,000. Savills, 01962 841 842, winchester@savills.com

SHERFIELD ENGLISH

The Orchard, Doctors Hill – Opportunity to acquire a three-bedroom property with development potential in grounds in excess of an acre. The property has been lived in by the current owners for many years and could benefit from cosmetic renovation, or replacement, subject to consent. Guide price £750,000. Woolley & Wallis, 01794 512 129, romsey@w-w.co.uk

HEREFORDSHIRE

LEOMINSTER

Building Plots At Kia Ora, Risbury – Outline planning permission has been granted (Herefordshire Council ref: 162528) for the demolition of the existing bungalow Kia-Ora to split the site into two plots and build two three-bedroom house. The rural plots are available individually or as a pair, with the whole of the land extending to just over 1 acre. Guide price: £135,000 per plot. Jackson Property, 01568 610 600, leominster@bill-jackson.co.uk

PUTLEY COMMON, LEDBURY

Plot at Woodlands – Building plot with fantastic views in sought-after rural location, with outline planning permission (Herefordshire County Council ref: 173631) for a single detached dwelling in a former garden plot with outbuildings. Guide price: £125,000. Flint & Cook, 01432 355 455, hereford@flintandcook.co.uk

HIGHLAND

ACHAPHUBUIL, FORT WILLIAM

Development plot, Craigahulish – Site of approx 1.63 acres with detailed planning permission in place (Highland Council ref: 17/00668/FUL) for a single dwelling with integral garage, formation of access and the installation of a septic tank and soakaway. The plot is in a quiet location

with stunning views over Loch Linnhe. Offers over £80,000. Bell Ingram, 01631 566 122, oban@bellingham.co.uk

ULLAPOL

Plots at Altnaharrie – Two sites with full planning permission (Highlands and Islands Council ref: 13/02849/FUL) for the erection of a good-sized detached dwelling on each plot in this sought-after area on the West Coast of Scotland. Offers over £150,000. Bell Ingram, 01463 717 799, inverness@bellingham.co.uk

KENT

BARHAM

Southase – Third of an acre building plot with full planning permission and technical plans for 205 sqm house in AONB with extensive views. Price band: £300,001-£450,000. Private seller, 07985 739 788

CHISLEHURST

Lanniston Developments Limited – Custom build opportunity, £1,300,000 total project cost subject to specification and finish. Five-bedroom detached house in gated cul-de-sac. Price on application. Hunters, 0208 467 1818, chislehurst@hunters.com

COWDEN

Hartfield Road – 11 acre rural plot in Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Planning permission in place for a contemporary 3,928 sq ft dwelling with underground double garage and workshop and an indoor pool. Wealden District Council planning ref: WD/2017/2762/F. Guide price: £800,000. LeGrys, 01732 866 150, edenbridge@legrys.com

GILLINGHAM

Land adjacent to Woodlands Road – Building plot with planning permission (Medway Council ref: MC/16/1627) for a three-bedroom detached house with off-road parking. OIEO £140,000.

Sandersons UK, 01622 686 686, maidstone@sandersonsuk.com

LEICESTERSHIRE

GLEN PARVA

2534 Featherby Drive – Land with planning consent for two dwellings and garages. Guide price: £250,000. Julian Owen Associates Ltd., 0115 922 9831, enquiries@julianowen.co.uk

LEICESTER

45 Cosby Lane – Building plot with planning permission (Blaby District Council ref: 15/1579/FUL) for the erection of a detached three-bedroom property. Guide price: £110,000. Carlton Estates, 0116 284 9636, sales@carltonestates.co.uk

REARSBY

Gaddesby Lane – A substantial plot extending to just under 0.5 acre with planning permission for a substantial modern detached family residence of approx 4,628 sq ft with open field views to the rear (Charnwood Borough Council ref: P/15/2536/2, P/16/0863/2, P/16/0364/2 & P/14/0463/2, P/09/2502/2). Guide price: £360,000. Bentons, 01664 563 892, sales@bentons.co.uk

STATHERN

Honeysuckle Barn, Penn Lane – A substantial part stone barn with full planning permission (Melton Borough Council ref: 17/01036/FUL) for conversion into a five-bedroom village residence which will offer almost 4,000 sq ft of accommodation. Plot is approx 0.4 acres with electric gated access and superb open views. Guide price: £399,000. Richard Watkinson & Partners, 01949 836 678, bingham@richardwatkinson.co.uk

LINCOLNSHIRE

HOLBEACH DROVE

Plot – Outline planning approved for a



EAST MALLING, KENT

Plot 2 South Lodgefarmyard – Building plot of approx 510 sqm backing onto pasture. Full planning permission granted for a five-bedroom house of approx 176 sqm with detached garage. Level plot on a small development of three plots. Services to shared access. Planning application TM/17/02748/FL. Price band: £300,001-£450,000. Private seller, kathy.mitchell2@btinternet.com



SUTTON ST JAMES, LINCOLNSHIRE

Parsonage Farm Barn – Barns with planning permission for conversion to a single dwelling with separate adjacent garage / workshop. Site area is approx 0.32 acres. Price band: £150,001-£200,000.

Longstaff, 01775 765 536 / 01775 766 766, commercial@longstaff.com

four-bedroom detached house with a double garage. Plot size is 0.17 acres with the option to buy an extra 0.6 acre by separate negotiation. Quiet location over looking open fields. Price band: £100,001-£150,000. Private seller, 01406 330 055

QUADRING EAUDYKE

Yew Tree Farm Barn – Barn conversion for one dwelling with additional buildings, including stable and yard on a site area of 0.513 acres. Price band: £100,001-£150,000. Longstaff, 01775 765 536 / 01775 766 766, commercial@longstaff.com

SURFLEET

Station Road – Residential development site of approx 2.82 acres with outline planning consent including four large frontage plots. Village location overlooking River Glen and about four miles north of Spalding. Price band: over £750,000. Longstaff, 01775 765 536 / 01775 766 766, commercial@longstaff.com

NORFOLK

EAST HARLING

4 Hamblings Piece – Part constructed site with consent for a two- to three-bedroom detached house. Price band: £100,001-£150,000. TW Gaze, 01379 641 341, S.Graham@twgaze.co.uk

THORLE

The Street – Plot with detailed planning permission (Breckland ref: 3PL/2016/1167/D) for a single-storey Passive home. Rural village location with open fields and farmland views. Secluded and hidden away from the road. OIRO £175,000. Fine & Country Fakenham, 01328 854 190, fakenham@fineandcountry.com

TOFTWOOD

Land to the rear of Shipdham Road – Single building plot with outline planning permission (Breckland Council ref: 3PL/2017/0835/O) for a single-storey dwelling and garage close to local amenities. Guide price: £120,000. William H Brown, 01362 699 999, Roy.clarke@williamhbrown.co.uk

NORTHUMBERLAND

BEADNELL

Land to the rear of 7 Longstone Close – Site with full planning permission (Northumberland County Council reference: 17/01269/FUL, amended by 17/04393/VARYCO) for the construction of a two-bedroom single-storey 700 sq ft dwelling. Guide price: £95,000. George F White, 01665 603 581 / 01665 603 231, info@georgefwhite.co.uk

GUIDEPOST

Land adj 23 Sheepwash Bank – Land for sale with lapsed planning permission for one detached property and garage. Guide price: £45,000. Rickards, 01670 812 145, ashington@rickard.uk.com

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

BULCOTE, NOTTINGHAM

2530 Old Main Road – A level garden plot in conservation village with planning consent for an individual home. OIRO £495,000. Julian Owen Associates Ltd., 0115 922 9831, enquiries@julianowen.co.uk



BARROWAY DROVE, NORFOLK

2 acre plot, The Drove – 2 acre single building plot with full planning permission for a 2,228 sq ft house with 30 ft timber building, gates, fences and hardstanding area. Ideal self build opportunity with water and electric already on site (Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Council ref: 17/01746/F). Price band: £150,001-£200,000.

William H Brown, 01366 387 638, downhammarket@williamhbrown.co.uk

LONG EATON

Cornwall Drive – A building plot measuring 36ft x 81ft with an overall area of approx 2,916 sq ft. Planning permission in place to erect one detached dwelling (ref ERE/0716/0020). Situated in an established residential area, the plot is level and has drains and water supplied with connections available for gas and electricity. Price band: £100,001-£150,000. Robert Ellis, 0115 946 1818, longeaton@robertellis.co.uk

NOTTINGHAM

2529 Greendale Road, Arnold – A large plot which has lapsed outline planning permission for five dwellings. Guide price £875,000. Julian Owen Associates Ltd., 0115 922 9831, enquiries@julianowen.co.uk

NOTTINGHAM

516 Arnold Road – Outline planning permission granted for demolition of existing building and construction of three three-bedroom detached houses. Price band: £150,001-£200,000. Private seller, simonsmith@safology.com

OXFORDSHIRE

CLANFIELD

Building Plot at 22 Mill Lane – Single building plot with detailed consent for a three-bedroom bungalow of 1,360 sq ft in a popular village location, convenient for Witney or Oxford. Guide price: £175,000. Perry Bishop and Chambers, 01285 646 770, landandnewhomes@perrybishop.co.uk

OXFORD

Summers Place, Sunderland Avenue – Two planning permissions are in place (Oxford City Council 17/00866/FUL and 18/00064/FUL) for a detached three-storey three-bedroom house with different ground floor layouts. Planning has also been granted for the erection of a side storey extension to the existing house to form a two-bedroom annexe to provide ancillary accommodation (Oxford City Council ref: 15/03747/FUL).

Guide price: £275,000. Savills, 01865 339 700, summertown@savills.com

SHROPSHIRE

BAYSTON HILL, SHREWSBURY

Plot at Pulley Lane – Land with outline planning permission granted (Shropshire ref: 17/04769/OUT) for a pair of four-bedroom houses. Set on the edge of the village backing onto open fields, the plot is currently occupied by a three-bedroom bungalow. Guide price: £250,000. Cooper Green Pooks, 01743 276 666, enq@coopergreen.co.uk

HINSTOCK, MARKET DRAYTON

The Bungalow, Wood Lane – Set within approx 2.6 acres, the plot includes a range of outbuildings and a three-bedroom bungalow, with planning permission in place (Shropshire Council ref: 17/01919/FUL) to replace it with a new four-bedroom bungalow and double garage. OIRO £310,000. James du Pavey, 01785 851 886, eccleshall@jamesdupavey.co.uk

QUATFORD, BRIDGNORTH

Quatford Grange Barns – Residential site in the village of Quatford with planning permission granted (Shropshire Council ref: 17/03443/FUL) to demolish the existing barns and erect two large detached properties to a Border Oak Design with a garage block and two home offices. The large site is approximately 0.75 acres. Guide price: over £400,000. Berriman Eaton, 01796 766 499, bridgnorth@berrimaneaton.co.uk

SOMERSET

MILVERTON, TAUNTON

Lower Orchard, Rosebank Road – A modern detached three-bedroom bungalow in need of improvement and modernisation, situated in an elevated position on a plot of 0.3 acres. Price band: £250,001-£300,000. Stags, 01823 256 625, taunton@stags.co.uk

CHILCOMPTON, RADSTOCK

Bowden Hill – Planning permission has been granted (Bath and North East Somerset ref: 2017/0538/FUL) to construct two three-bedroom semi-detached houses on the site of a former chapel. The plot is located in the village of Chilcompton and has an approximate area of 0.21 acres. OIEO £250,000. Savills, 01225 874 455, bath@savills.co.uk

FROME

Little Saffron, Berkley Road – A building plot with planning permission for a four-bedroom detached property with off-road parking (Mendip District Council ref: 2014/1226/FUL). Price band: £250,001-£300,000. Cooper & Tanner, 01373 455 060 / 01373 455 100, development@cooperandtanner.co.uk

FROME

Building Plot, Wickham Rise – A building plot with consent for a contemporary single-storey property of approx 1,145 sq ft with garden and off-road parking. The modern design includes bi-fold doors, an 'open plan' living space and



NEAR CRANLEIGH, SURREY

Old Farmhouse Barn, Stovolds Hill – Built around 1700, Old Farmhouse Barn is a Grade II listed timber-framed construction on sandstone plinth with weatherboard cladding and a hipped plain clay tiled roof. There is planning permission (Waverley Borough Council ref: WA/2017/1445) to develop the barn into a four-bedroom residential dwelling. Guide price: £450,000.

Knight Frank LLP, 01483 565 171, guildford@knightfrank.com

sedum roof (Mendip District Council ref: 2017/3007/FUL). Price band: £100,001-£150,000. Cooper & Tanner, 01373 455 060 / 01373 455 100, development@cooperandtanner.co.uk

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

EVERTON, DONCASTER

Gainsborough Road – Land with countryside views to the rear and planning consent for three barn conversions and the construction of a new access. Two of the characterful new dwellings will have two storeys and the other will be a single-storey build. Guide price: £300,000. William H Brown, 01302 710 735, bawtry@williamhbrown.co.uk

HAMPOLE, DONCASTER

3/4 acre plot of land – plot with an option to drop the existing property and build new houses. Price band: £300,001-£450,000. Private seller, 07962 531 086, South Yorkshire

RET FORD

North Wheatley – Individual building plot of around 0.18 acres set in a village location with planning consent (Bassetlaw District Council ref: 17/00638/FUL) for an executive detached house with double garage. OIRO £125,000. Fine & Country, 01302 591 000, bawtry@fineandcountry.com

STAFFORDSHIRE

BALDWIN'S GATE, NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME

Plot 2 Watering Close – Full planning permission has been passed (Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council ref: 13/00551/OUT) for four dwellings on the site, with each plot being sold separately. Plot 2 has planning permission for a five-bedroom dwelling. Guide price: £200,000. James du Pavey, 01785 851 886, eccleshall@jamesdupavey.co.uk

GREAT WYRLEY, WALSALL

Station Road – Plot with planning permission (South Staffs ref: 17/01086/FUL) for a three-bedroom detached residence and alteration to existing

vehicular access. OIEO £85,000. Paul Carr Estate Agents – Land & New Homes, 0121 353 9200, sales@paulcarrlandandnewhomes.co.uk

NEWBOROUGH END, NEWBOROUGH, BURTON-ON-TRENT

Jackfields – A substantial detached three-bedroom bungalow offering generous accommodation in a pleasant semi-rural setting. The property requires modernisation but offers excellent scope to provide a very attractive property. Overall the property stands within grounds of approx one quarter of an acre. Guide Price £370,000. Bagshaws, 01889 562 811, uttoxeter@bagshaws.com

SUFFOLK

FELSHAM, BURY ST EDMUNDS

Moat Farm, Dakings Lane – 4.5 acre plot with planning permission granted (Mid Suffolk District Council ref: DC/17/03055) to construct a 4,000 sq ft house following the demolition of the existing bungalow, together with permission to convert the expansive outbuildings into holiday accommodation. Moat Farm enjoys wonderful far reaching countryside views. Guide price: £590,000. David Burr, 01359 245245, woolpit@davidburr.co.uk

IPSWICH

Foxhall Road – Planning permission granted (Ipswich Borough Council ref: IP/15/00740/FUL) for the erection of a two-storey three-bedroom detached chalet with two allocated parking spaces. Guide price: £110,000. William H Brown, 01473 226 101, ipswich@sequencehome.co.uk

SURREY

DORKING

Land at Mid Holmwood – Plot of 0.135 acres with lapsed planning permission (Mole Valley ref: MO/2010/0819) for a single-storey three-bedroom dwelling with garage. Guide price: £189,950. Haart, 01483 304 623, guildford@haart.co.uk

HINDHEAD

Tilford Road – Land with approved planning permission (Waverley Borough Council) for a 790 sq ft two-bedroom ground floor apartment adjoining an existing building, including parking for two vehicles and a secure enclosed garden. Guide price: £129,000. Warren Powell-Richards, 01428 604 016, grayshott@wprhomes.co.uk

NEWDIGATE, DORKING

Winfield Grove – Single building plot of 0.33 acres in a village location. Planning permission has been granted (Mole Valley District Council ref: MO/2014/1668) for a two-bedroom detached house. Guide price: £250,000. Cubitt & West, 01306 883 399, dorking@cubittandwest.co.uk

TADWORTH

Kenmore, Epsom Lane North – planning permission granted for four bedroom detached house with large garden. Price band: £250,001-£300,000. Private seller, 07914 000 846

WEST SUSSEX

HORSHAM

Oaklands, Coltstaple Lane – Unit 1 of 2. A modern agricultural building of around 4,800 sq ft with consent to convert (Horsham DC ref: SBC/17/1005) into a pair of semi-detached single-storey, four-bedroom dwellings of approx 2,400 sq ft each. Available as a whole or individually. OIEO £500,000 each. Batcheller Monkhouse, 01798 872 081, sales@batchellermunkhouse.com

LANDFORD, SALISBURY

Pound Cottage – A detached three-bedroom cottage requiring refurbishment and modernisation. There is also scope for extension subject to the necessary planning consents. Price band: £250,001-£300,000. Woolley & Wallis, 01722 424 524, salisbury@w-w.co.uk

SLINFOLD

Dunnottar – The plot has planning consent for a three- to four-bedroom detached dwelling. Price band: £300,001-£450,000. Private seller, 01403 823425



HARDHAM, PULBOROUGH, WEST SUSSEX

Old Bill Ben's Barn, Ingrams Farm – For sale by informal tender by 18 May 2018. Opportunity to convert an existing stable/store to a self contained two-bedroom dwelling with parking and far reaching views over fields. The generous plot is approx 0.3 acres. South Downs National Park planning ref: SDNP/16/03004/FUL. OIEO £200,000. *Comyn & James, 01798 888 111, property@comynandjames.co.uk*

WILTSHIRE

SHERSTON

Sherston Orchard Rise – A three-bedroom detached bungalow set in approx one third of an acre, with outline planning permission submitted to replace with a 220 sqm four-bedroom luxury family home. Set in the popular village of Sherston overlooking farming land to the rear. Guide price £550,000. Private seller, 01666 840 528

TIDWORTH

Building Plot, Chestnut Avenue – A single building plot with planning permission for a detached three-bedroom house (Wiltshire Council ref: 17/10875/FUL). Price band: £100,001-£150,000. Woolley & Wallis, 01722 424 524, salisbury@w-w.co.uk

WARMINSTER

Green Lane, Codford – Level building plot measuring 31.3m x 10.35m with outline planning permission (Wiltshire Council ref: 17/03818/OUT) for a single dwelling. The plot is located on the fringe of the village and enjoys a pleasant outlook over the adjoining farmland and paddocks. Guide price: £195,000. Woolley & Wallis, 01722 424 524, salisbury@w-w.co.uk

WORCESTERSHIRE

PERSHORE

Plot, Woodward Road – A site of 302 sqm with outline planning consent for a three-bedroom detached house of gross internal floor area of approx 86 sqm and a private rear garden (Wychevion Council ref: W/16/00220/OUT). Price band: £50,001-£100,000. Nigel Poole & Partners, 01386 556 506, tania.port@nigelpooleestateagents.co.uk

UPPER BROADHEATH, WORCESTER

Plot at the Old Church Lane, Crown East Lane – Plot with planning permission granted on appeal for a contemporary style one-bedroom house of approx 905 sq ft. Malvern Hills District Council ref: 14/00692/FUL. Appeal ref: APP/J1860/W/15/3136960. Guide price: £110,000. Allan Morris, 01905 612 266, worcester@www.allan-morris.co.uk

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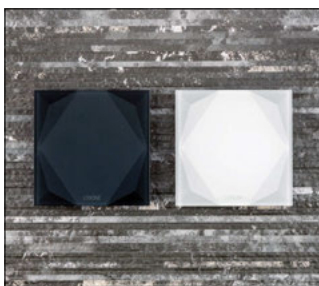
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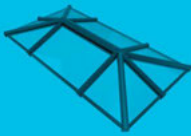



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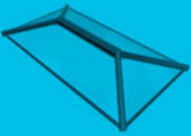
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Next month

July issue on sale 30th May 2018



Striking contemporary home

Built on the site of an abandoned 1970s bungalow, this contemporary two-storey family house is concealed behind high walls. It was constructed in record time, and the highly insulated timber frame has been clad in stone tiles and fibre cement panels.



Log cabin in northern Snowdonia

Hidden on the northern tip of the Snowdonia National Park, this log cabin has been given a complete makeover and now boasts a sauna and hot tub from which to enjoy views of the soaring mountains.



PLUS

Focus on stairs

Make your staircase the star of your new home.

Beginner's guide to basements

Why it makes sense to consider going down under.

Vinyl flooring

Affordable options to add elegance and style.



WOMANSPLAINING SELF BUILD

Do builders bamboozle female selfbuilders? asks **Gerald Cole**.

I come from a family of formidable women. As a child I spent hours of agonising embarrassment as my mother argued the toss at supermarket checkouts. When my children were growing up it was a family joke that whenever my wife returned an item to the local Waitrose the manager hid.

When we embarked on our first self build, my wife was the logical choice of front person with our main contractor. She had worked as office manager of a small building firm and spoke fluent builderese. My construction experience at the time was limited to some rather shaky DIY shelving.

All this has coloured my view of a woman's role in self build, and indeed most other activities. In other words, I haven't really appreciated any distinction. Most selfbuilders, after all, are couples, who generally work together with varying degrees of involvement. Lone selfbuilders are comparatively rare and lone females, in my experience, even more so.

One of the most impressive was a widowed Dutch lady in the West Country who project managed her own timber-frame eco build while running a small farm. Her enthusiasm and obvious competence made the whole process sound a near breeze. She got on well with her builders and architect. Only a recalcitrant local planning department caused her problems. But latterly I have begun to suspect that this lady was the exception who proved a very different rule.

It started with a request for advice from a family friend. She had recently had a brick-built garage in her back garden converted into self-contained accommodation, including a kitchenette and en suite shower room. The flat roof had been fitted with a large triple-glazed roof light and a new polished concrete floor installed with electric underfloor heating.

Several months later, however, the roof light had cracked, the bitumen roof was lifting and there were signs of damp around a door, window and the floor. A local building company, recommended by a neighbourhood friend, had done the work, though most

of it had been accomplished by a single workman who had since vanished.

The original contract, it turned out, had specified a fibreglass roof. Both the very expensive custom-made roof light and the electric heating – which is cheap and easy to fit but much more expensive to run than water-based heating – had been suggested by the builder. Our family friend, who has little experience of building, saw no reason to question this.

Now, after much complaining, he was offering to install the promised fibreglass roof and remedy the other problems for just a few more thousand pounds. Deeply unsure, but wary of changing horses at this late stage, our friend accepted his offer.

Even more alarming was the experience of a lady selfbuilder building in the garden of her existing home. Again her builder, who was well respected locally, was recommended by a friend – described as 'not quite an architect'. Keen to create a well-insulated home, the lady was alarmed to find obvious gaps in the flooring insulation. When she pointed this out to the builder he insisted there was no problem; after all his years in construction he knew what he was doing. Later the client found that the gaps had been sealed with cement.

Even worse, after agreeing an initial price for the project, the builder began to demand large additional sums but was reluctant to provide invoices. By the time the lady consulted our Ask An Expert panel at the recent SelfBuild & Design East show, her budget had been exhausted and she was approaching desperation.

Now every self build has its crises, rogue builders exist and even the best get into trouble. Building is an unforgiving business. It's physically demanding, unpredictable and heavily reliant on

physical strength and manual dexterity: all usually regarded as male attributes. It's also extremely conservative.

From that mindset it can be easy to regard women clients as 'softer targets', less likely than their male compatriots to be interested in the practical details of a project. That can encourage less scrupulous tradespeople to recommend options, or materials, that suit them rather than their client. And, very occasionally, do far worse.

So how do female selfbuilders combat attitudes of this kind? The simple answer is: the same way male selfbuilders, and couples, do. Only perhaps more so, at least initially.

When you're hiring a main contractor listen to the recommendations of friends or family by all means, but check out their work and talk to previous clients (if a contractor can't put you in touch with any this is not a good sign).

Then repeat the process with two other candidates – perhaps found through the Federation of Master Builders (fmb.org.uk) or the government-endorsed TrustMark scheme (trustmark.org.uk).

If you don't feel confident enough to do this, think seriously about hiring an architect or an experienced project manager to supervise your project. They're likely to charge between eight and 15 per cent of your overall budget, but should save you at least their fees in terms of cost saving, efficiency and peace of mind.

Alternatively, opt for a package builder offering a 'turn-key' service; typically these involve timber frame manufacturers providing kit homes. Or investigate custom build where a developer provides a plot with services and planning permission and typically offers a range of designs which they can build for you.

Whatever approach you choose, it will involve a steep learning curve, so be prepared to ask questions and keep asking until you have answers you understand. Knowledge is power on a building site and the more you have – or tradespeople suspect you have – the more seriously they will take you.

Failing that, cultivate a volcanic temper. It worked wonders for my wife on our self build.

“Be prepared to ask questions and keep asking until you have answers you understand.”



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