



The NFB's Richard Beresford says it's time the CITB recognised the value of SME builders



Lewisham Homes gets planning for its first engineered timber scheme in south east London



Patrick Mooney gives a 2018 reality check on the Government's recent measures for social housing

01.18

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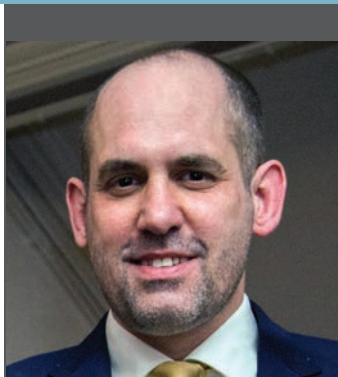
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James Parker

# FROM THE EDITOR

So we have entered a new year which is certain to bring more choppy waters for the industry. UK economic performance and wage growth is suffering, but the industry is now expected to deliver, as I'm sure you're only too aware, the 'magic number' of 300,000 homes a year.

A £44bn housing plan from Government is all very well and good, however they started the year with a botched Cabinet reshuffle, in which one of the few concrete signs of movement was yet another Housing Minister. While the industry could do with a bit of continuity in government to navigate the turbulent seas and open up supply in the next couple of years as Brexit kicks in, we now have Dominic Raab, the 15th Minister in 17 years in the role.

It's almost as if they don't quite know what to do about housing delivery. They extend Help to Buy and other levers of the already surging demand in the Autumn, but apart from reviewing planning and providing loans, where is the effort to stimulate supply? To help it be a pluralistic, healthy market that organically reacts to demand, land needs to be given to SME builders to build, but where is this being done?

Homes England, the rebadged Homes and Communities Agency, has now launched, with an avowed role to "secure land in areas where people want to live, support smaller and more innovative house builders into the market and resource brownfield sites from across the country."

It, DCLG says, will "develop a new commercial approach to acquiring, preparing, managing and developing land in areas of high demand and strategic importance," and "by focusing on using both the land and money to support builders of all sizes to increase supply will continue to support accelerated construction on a selection of sites."

This may sound familiar, but is there perhaps a sense that there will be a renewed sense of purpose to releasing land and finance? Now they just need to do something about the green belt, particularly given that a recent Mori survey found a massive discrepancy between the population's ideas of how much land is densely built up, and the reality.

The recent PMI survey showed that despite commercial property and infrastructure dropping throughout 2017, housebuilding had seen 16 straight months of increases in output, so something is going right. And although property prices are not rising in many parts of the country, particularly London, over 100,000 homes were sold each month in 2017.

As ever recently, the 'big if' is Brexit. Is there any indication that the 'flight of equity' from the powerhouse of London is going to be stopped in its tracks once we leave the EU? Or will a weak pound attract a different array of foreign investors to the capital, even if most Brits still can't afford to buy houses there?

*James Parker*

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## ON THE COVER



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Developer: Moda  
Architect: Glen Howells  
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# Hackitt says “culture change” needed in industry to prevent another Grenfell

Announcing the publication of the interim report of the review into construction regulations and fire safety following the fire at Grenfell Tower, the head of the review said a “culture change” was needed in the building industry to prevent another such disaster.

Dame Judith Hackitt told Radio 4’s *Today* programme that construction professionals “needed to commit to making buildings safer,” in light of the report’s findings so far, rather than “simply doing things at least cost.” She also said the current system left ample opportunity for shortcuts to be taken on construction.

She told the BBC that the fire in June this year was a result of a combination of regulations not being fit for purpose, and failings on the part of professionals in the industry. She said that the regulations’ complexity meant that people found them “quite difficult to penetrate to truly understand what they need to do.”

Hackitt added there was “clearly an opportunity to make that much simpler, and guide people to the right answer, rather than present them with all their information.”

The review she is chairing is due to report in full in the spring. It will look at the effectiveness of current building and fire safety regulations and will also report on tests carried out on cladding in the aftermath of the fire. The wide-ranging review also covers roles and responsibilities, compliance and enforcement, as well as quality assurance provisions and products. She said the review’s two key priorities were to “develop a more robust regulatory system and to provide further assurance to residents that the buildings they live in are safe.”

In the interim review’s Foreword, Dame Hackitt commented: “As the review has progressed, it has become clear that the whole system of regulation, covering what is written down and the way in which it is enacted in practice, is not fit for purpose, leaving room for those who want to take shortcuts to do so.”

She added: “A systematic, controlled approach to construction, refurbishment and management of occupied buildings is not by any means universal. There is plenty of good practice but it is not difficult to see how those who are inclined to take

shortcuts can do so. Change control and quality assurance are poor throughout.

“What is initially designed is not what is being built, and quality assurance of materials and people is seriously lacking. I have been shocked by some of the practices I have heard about and I am convinced of the need for a new intelligent system of regulation and enforcement for high-rise and complex buildings which will encourage everyone to do the right thing and will hold to account those who try to cut corners.”

## Javid gains new housing title in reshuffle

Sajid Javid’s Cabinet role has been rebranded as Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Amid a Cabinet reshuffle allegedly restricted by some senior Ministers refusing to change roles and Education Secretary Justine Greening quitting, Javid’s post has been rebranded to reflect Prime Minister Theresa May’s key policy goal of improving housing delivery.

Questions have been asked regarding the impact of the change, as Javid’s former remit already encompassed housing.

As part of the reshuffle, Dominic Raab has been appointed as the new Housing Minister, replacing Alok Sharma. The industry has been critical of ‘revolving doors’, Raab being the 15th politician to hold the role in 17 years, and Sharma spending little over six months in the post.

Commenting on the change of title, Brian Berry chief executive of the FMB said: “The inclusion of the word ‘housing’ sends a clear signal as to the importance the Government place on housing policy by the renaming of the Department and the Secretary of State’s title.

“However, actions always speak louder than words, which is why it is vital that we also see continuity, application and a continued willingness to be bold where necessary in housing policy. We want to see continuity in terms of building on a set of good policies to unleash the capacity of the SME housebuilding sector set out in the Housing White Paper; application in terms of effective implementation; and willingness to still be bold where Government intervention is still called for.”

**WHAT IS INITIALLY DESIGNED IS NOT WHAT IS BEING BUILT, AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF MATERIALS AND PEOPLE IS SERIOUSLY LACKING**

Dame Judith Hackitt

# Halifax index shows only modest price rises

House prices in the UK grew by 2.7 per cent in the last three months of 2017 compared with the same period in 2016, while the annual change in December was 3.9 per cent lower than the previous month.

The Halifax House Price Index (HPI) showed a 1.3 per cent increase in the fourth quarter from the previous three months.

On a monthly basis, prices also fell by 0.6 per cent from November, following a 0.3 per cent increase in both October and November. This is the first reported fall since June 2017.

The average price of £225,021 at the end of the year is 2.4 per cent higher than in January 2017 (£219,741).

Russell Galley, managing director at Halifax Community Bank, gave an explanation of the figures: "As we'd anticipated, the housing market in 2017 followed a similar pattern to the previous year. House price growth slowed, while building activity, completed sales and mortgage approvals for house purchases all remained flat. This has been driven by a squeeze on real wage growth and continuing uncertainty over the economy."

Galley believes however that, nationally, house prices in 2018 are likely to be supported by the "ongoing shortage of properties for sale, low levels of housebuilding, high employment and a continuation of low interest rates making mortgage servicing affordable in relative terms."

"Overall we expect annual price growth to continue in the range of 0-3 per cent at the end of 2018," he concluded.

Jeff Knight, director of marketing at Foundation Home Loans, commented: "Despite announcements in the Autumn Budget focused on sorting the lack of supply once and for all, the fact remains that not enough homes are being built, which continues to inflate prices even in the previously more affordable regions outside the capital."

"Until supply catches up, it's crucial that supportive measures are put in place to ensure the rental sector is supported. Improving the quality and choice of rental homes for tenants must be top of the priority list for the year ahead."

Jonathan Hopper, managing director at Garrington Property Finders, gave his perspective: "A decade on from the financial crash, there's an uncomfortable similarity in the ratio of the average property price to the average salary, with Halifax's data showing the multiple is



now the same as it was when the market fell apart.

"But despite the questions over affordability, 2018 is not 2008. Banks are better capitalised and continue to lend, and while the supply of new homes for sale is tight in many areas, the market continues to flow relatively freely."

He continued: "As long as there are no unforeseen shocks, such as change of Government or the collapse of Brexit negotiations, we expect this gradual progress to continue."

"Nevertheless, demand is accompanied by one overriding caveat, price sensitivity. With wages falling in real terms and rail commuters suffering inflation-busting ticket price rises, buyers face a balancing act when accessing value, and even the most determined are willing to walk away if the price isn't right."

## UK house price growth set for standstill

House price growth in the UK will likely come to a halt over the course of next year as the number of transactions reduces slightly, according to the RICS housing forecast for 2018.

The national prediction however includes price growth in some regions, offsetting declines in London and the south east.

The RICS UK Market Survey has recently shown buyer enquiries stalling, sales volumes stagnating and sentiment turning altogether more cautious as a result.

The RICS claims the strongest theme impacting the behaviour of the housing market in 2018 is again expected to be the overriding issue of supply, with stock on

estate agents books close to all time lows.

Going forward, and looking at sales activity, the market looks unlikely to breach 1.2 million sales in 2018, with political and economic uncertainty providing a hindrance, as well as the lack of stock, stretched affordability, tax changes and interest rate rises.

Tarrant Parsons, RICS economist, commented: "Following a pretty lacklustre finish to 2017, the indications are that momentum across the housing market will be lacking as 2018 gets underway."

"With several of the forces currently weighing on activity set to persist over the near term, it's difficult to envisage a material step-up in impetus during the next twelve months. However, the fundamentals are not much changed from the end of 2017, so levels of activity should soften only marginally when compared to the year just ending."

"That said," he continued, "despite the recent interest rate hike, mortgage rates are set to remain very favourable, with the prospect of further rises seemingly minimal over the coming year. Alongside this, Government schemes such as Help to Buy should continue to provide some support to sales activity."

Lewis Johnston, RICS parliamentary affairs manager, offered Government some advice: "To fundamentally shift the narrative on housing in 2018, Ministers need to both introduce new ideas and be much bolder on the positive but tentative moves they've made in 2017."

Johnson continued: "The lifting of the borrowing cap for councils should be brought forward, alongside a much larger package of measures for direct commissioning, and in addition to MP Oliver Letwin's review of unused planning permission announced in the Autumn Budget, there needs to be a much broader rethink of the planning system."



# Affordable housing vital to tackling homelessness

Homelessness is a “national crisis,” according to a committee of MPs, who called the Government’s attitude to tackling the issue “unacceptably complacent.”

A Public Accounts Committee report found there were more than 9,000 rough sleepers and some 78,000 families living in temporary accommodation. The cross-party research said there was a shortage of housing options for homeless people and those at risk.

BSRIA have stressed that quantity must not be at the cost of quality, however. Tassos Kougiouonis, principal consultant – residential at BSRIA’s Sustainable Construction Group, said: “The increasing number of homeless people in England is very worrying.

“An increase in affordable and social housing could be part of the solution. But we need to understand how these should be defined and how they address the different population needs.”

While he believes in the urgent need for more social housing, Kougiouonis made it clear that quality must not suffer as a result. “It is crucial that the necessary housing must be built to standards that meet the needs of differing people, for example homes that are cheap to run.

“Providing genuinely affordable homes, both to rent and to buy, as well as providing financial support to local authorities with acute shortages of suitable housing is paramount.”

To address the crisis, BSRIA staged the ‘Building Better Homes Faster 2’ event on Friday 12th January in Canary Wharf, London, focusing on the increased delivery of new homes.



## Former OPDC chief exec to head RTPi

Victoria Hills is to become chief executive of the Royal Town Planning Institute, following her resignation from her position as CEO of The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC).

Victoria has been chief executive of OPDC since June 2015, and saw its 650 hectare regeneration project in west London put under review by London Mayor Sadiq Khan in 2016.

Khan, commented on her departure: “I would like to thank Victoria for her leadership, commitment and dedication as chief executive of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation. This is one of the most important regeneration sites in London, with the capacity for thousands of genuinely affordable homes.”

Victoria Hills herself also gave comment: “It has been my great privilege to have had the opportunity to establish a new Mayoral Development Corporation and to lead an enthusiastic and skilled team with whom I have been able to create a vision and framework for delivering this enormously complex project.

“I shall be watching the development of Old Oak and Park Royal with interest and huge affection, and I wish the team and my successor well in their future endeavours.”

Victoria will be leaving OPDC in April. An interim appointment will be confirmed in due course, along with the timetable for recruiting a permanent successor.



# No-deal Brexit may cost 43,000 jobs in construction

A no-deal Brexit could cause a loss of up to 43,000 construction jobs in the UK, according to new research commissioned by the Mayor of London.

In London alone there could be 5,000 fewer jobs in the construction sector in a no-deal scenario, with the construction sector’s output in the capital potentially falling by £1.2bn, between Britain leaving the EU in April next year and 2030.

The findings are contained within analysis of the potential impact of five different Brexit scenarios on London and the whole of the UK commissioned by the Mayor last year from Cambridge Econometrics. The analysis also looks at the impact each Brexit scenario could have on nine key sectors of the economy.

Every Brexit outcome analysed would be bad for the British economy, the survey found, but the research showed that the ‘harder’ the Brexit, the more severe the economic damage could be. It reveals that with no access to the single market, customs unions or transition arrangements, there could be 482,000 fewer jobs across the UK, together with £46.8bn less investment.

Even if there is a ‘softer’ Brexit with a two-year transitional deal, and the UK remaining in the single market, there could be 18,000 fewer construction jobs, 2,000 of which would be in the capital.

Industry experts suggest that London needs an extra 13,000 construction workers every year until 2021 in order to plug the skills gap. Any reduction in a sector that already faces a major shortage of skills would undoubtedly impact on developers’ capacity to meet housing targets both nationally and in the capital.



# Uneven growth in construction output



UK construction companies have indicated an uneven recovery in business activity at the end of 2017, according to the latest IHS Markit/CIPS Construction Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI).

A robust rise in residential building was contrasted with falling work on commercial projects and stagnating civil engineering output.

There were positive signals for the near-term business outlook, with new order growth reaching a seven-month high and job creation the strongest since June. However, intense supply chain pressures continued across the construction sector, while input cost inflation picked up from November's 14-month low.

The seasonally adjusted PMI posted 52.2 in December, down from 53.1 in November, but above the 50.0 no-change threshold for the third month running. As a result, the latest reading signalled a moderate expansion of overall construction output at the end of 2017.

Survey respondents indicated that housebuilding remained a key engine of growth, with residential work expanding for the sixteenth consecutive month in December. In contrast, the latest data indicated a moderate fall in commercial construction, thereby continuing the downward trend seen since July.

The prospect of greater workloads ahead resulted in stronger rises in employment and purchasing activity during December. In fact, the latest upturn in input buying was the steepest for two years, which survey respondents widely linked to increased business requirements. Robust demand for construction products and materials contributed to another sharp lengthening of suppliers' delivery times at

the end of 2017.

Strong cost pressures persisted across the construction sector, driven by rising prices for a range of inputs. In particular, survey respondents noted higher prices for blocks, bricks, insulation and roof tiles, alongside continued rises in the cost of imported products. Although the rate of input cost inflation picked up since November, it remained softer than February's peak.

Duncan Brock, group director at the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply, explained the data: "The sector offered little in terms of comfort at the end of 2017, though the pace of new business picked up to its strongest level since May and purchasing activity rose to its fastest rate in two years, supply chains were under increasing pressure from all sides.

"The housing sector was the strongest performer again, and materials for residential building were in greater demand, fuelling longer delivery times, shortages of key materials and sharper input cost rises.

"It appears that the continued fall in commercial activity was testament to Brexit-related uncertainty on the horizon, and the sector's fear about the direction of the UK economy as clients still hesitated to spend on bigger projects.

"Business optimism was subdued at levels not seen since 2013, but the improvement in new order growth in December contributed to the biggest surge in job creation since June. Construction firms still anticipated future new work, in spite of the climate of continued uncertainty, and wanted to ensure that skilled, talented people were in place should the New Year offer more success than expected."

## Mayor refuses Barnet project over reduction in social homes

With a reported net loss of 257 affordable homes, the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has refused permission for an estate regeneration in Barnet.

The application to redevelop the Grahame Park estate in Colindale included plans to demolish 692 homes currently available at social rent, and replace them with 435 homes.

Khan withheld his support for the scheme and told Barnet Council, which had approved the application in November, they must continue working with City Hall planners and the developer to redesign the scheme to replace the lost affordable homes.

The application was also deemed unacceptable because it fails to provide a minimum of £840,000 to deliver additional bus capacity and suitable alternatives to private car use.

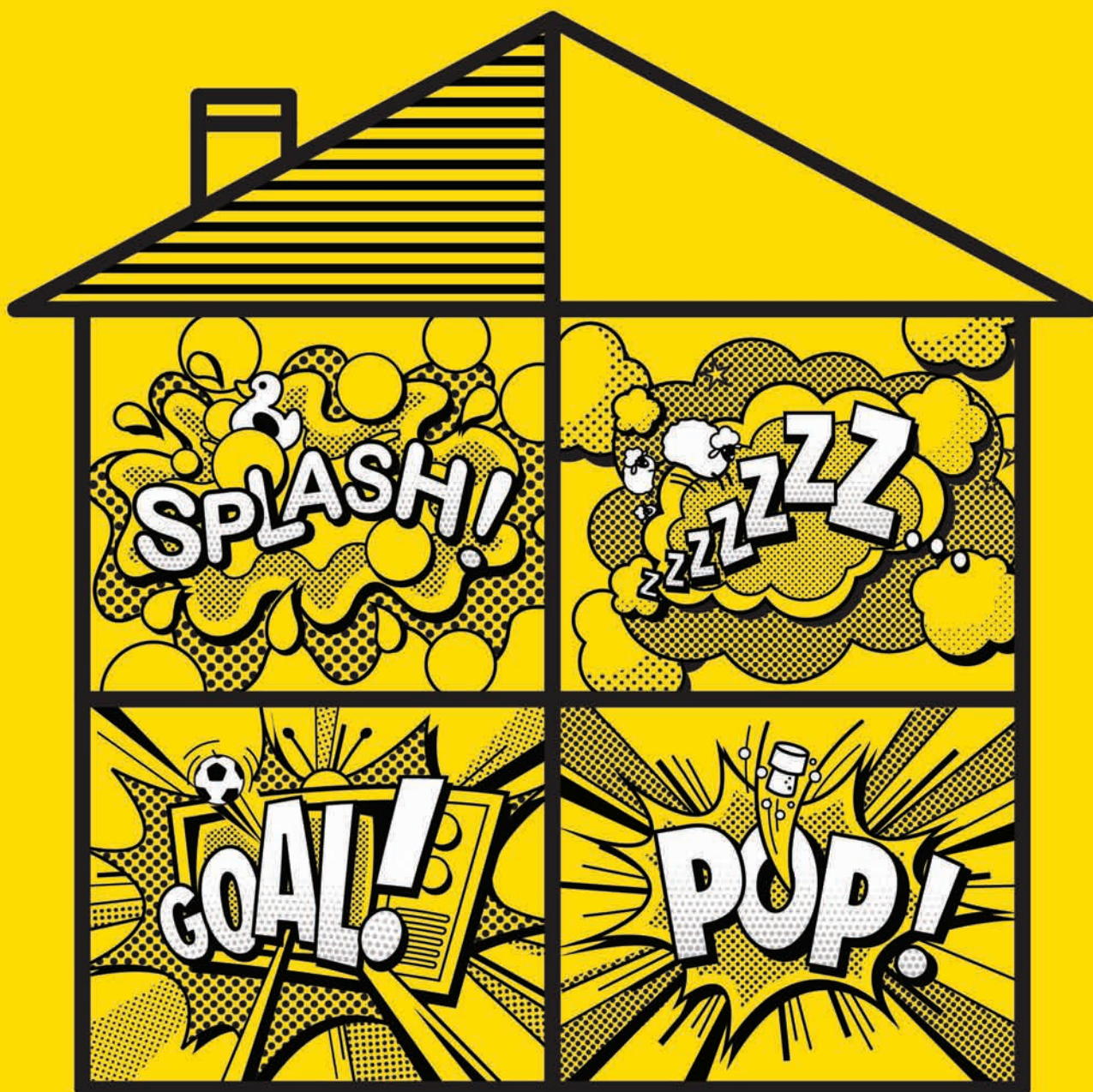
Mayor Khan called the scheme "a classic example of how not to do estate regeneration."

He said: "I fully support improving social housing on this estate and across the capital, but this scheme falls far short of what I expect of London boroughs.

"As I have made clear in my new London Plan, estate regeneration projects must replace homes which are based on social rent levels on a like-for-like basis. Londoners so urgently need more high-quality housing, not less, which makes this scheme completely unacceptable in its current form.

"I have asked Barnet Council to work constructively with the applicant on alternative plans with greater density, which do not result in the net loss of affordable homes. Given its recent record in this area, I hope the council recognises the need to replace what would be lost at Grahame Park."





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2018

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23 February, Belfast  
[www.cih.org/eventsfinder](http://www.cih.org/eventsfinder)

## Scotland's Housing Festival

27 – 28 February, Edinburgh  
[www.cih.org/eventsfinder](http://www.cih.org/eventsfinder)

## Ecobuild

6 – 8 March, London  
[www.ecobuild.co.uk](http://www.ecobuild.co.uk)

## Housing Technology Conference & Executive Forum

6 – 8 March, Oxford  
[www.housing-technology.com/events](http://www.housing-technology.com/events)

## Total Housing

7 – 8 March, Brighton  
[www.cih.org/eventsfinder](http://www.cih.org/eventsfinder)

## Housing Finance Conference & Exhibition

14 – 15 March, Liverpool  
[finance.housing.org.uk](http://finance.housing.org.uk)

## Materials for Architecture

25 – 26 April, London  
[www.materialsforarchitecture.com](http://www.materialsforarchitecture.com)

## UK Housing Awards

2 May, London  
[ukha.secure-platform.com](http://ukha.secure-platform.com)

## Driving Business Transformation in Housing

14 – 15 May, London  
[transformation.housing.org.uk](http://transformation.housing.org.uk)

## RESI Awards

16 May, London  
[www.resiawards.com](http://www.resiawards.com)

## CIH South West Regional Conference & Exhibition

16 – 17 May, Bristol  
[www.cih.org/eventsfinder](http://www.cih.org/eventsfinder)

## Housing Governance Conference & Exhibition

14 June, London  
[governance.housing.org.uk](http://governance.housing.org.uk)

## Housing 2018

26 – 28 June, Manchester  
[cihousing.com](http://cihousing.com)

# Developers waste £20m a year on unnecessary interest

UK developers are squandering £20m a year on interest they don't need to pay, new research by Thistle Finance has revealed.

Companies often take out development finance loans for the duration of their builds. However, once the physical asset is finished, many are failing to refinance to lower priced products such as development finance 'exit loans', available once the scheme presents less of a risk to lenders.

Thistle Finance estimates that £20.4m is wasted each year across the UK's entire development portfolio, which according to the BPF totalled £5.4bn of loans in 2016.

The difference in interest rate between a standard development finance loan and an 'exit loan' is typically 0.5 per cent a month. Developers on average remain on the wrong finance deal for four months.

Around one in 10 developers are also caught out when their standard development finance loan expires, leaving them on penalty rates of around 1.5 per cent per month more than an exit loan style product during this four month period.

Mark Dyason, managing director at Thistle Finance, explained further: "Developers are wasting millions on interest each year because they are forgetting to refinance off expensive development finance deals once the riskier stages of their schemes are

complete. Worse still, they can sometimes end up on a punitive penalty rate.

"When buildings are already standing, that's the point at which you can flip onto more competitive 'exit loans'. Lenders only need to charge higher rates of interest while there's a chance the scheme won't be finished.

"Depending on the size of the scheme, the savings available can amount to tens of thousands of pounds, which represents all-important cash flow or capital to be directed towards future projects."

# Commercial property has new development potential

A little-known change in the national planning regulations could mean commercial property has new and highly lucrative development potential, says Sawyer & Co.

On 1 October 2017, a new class of permitted development rights came into place to enable the conversion of light industrial units (Use Class B1c) to residential use (Use Class 3).

This form of permitted development will benefit existing light industrial units generally considered as small-medium sized businesses, which can operate successfully in residential areas without being a detriment to the neighbouring area.

Some examples of this type of business include small workshops, repair workshops and similar non-intensive enterprises.

The new rights will not however apply to all light industrial buildings, with those located in certain protected areas or with an existing floor space exceeding 500 m<sup>2</sup> unlikely to be eligible for residential conversion under Class PA.

Permitted development rights also only apply where no external alterations are required to the building. If external alterations are required to enable the conversions, planning permission will be required for those works.

Kevin Ellis, founder of the Land & New Homes Network, highlighted the opportunities: "The recent legislation change offers owners of these light industry units an opportunity to explore the residential potential of their building, which for many would not have previously been possible."



# INDUSTRY MOVERS



John White

## Miller Homes

Miller Homes has appointed John White as non-executive chairman. He joined the Board at the beginning of December.

White was previously non-executive chairman of McCarthy & Stone, a position he had held since September 2013. He announced that he will step down from this position at its forthcoming AGM on 24 January. Prior to this White spent 38 years at Persimmon plc, being appointed group chief executive from 1993 – 2006 and group chairman from 2006 to 2011.

Welcoming the appointment, Miller Homes chief executive Chris Endsor said: "John has spent all his working life in the housing industry and has unrivalled experience within the sector. I very much look forward to working with him as Miller Homes enters a new exciting phase in its development and executing our strategic growth plans of delivering 4,000 homes per year by 2021."

## Wellington

Wellington has appointed Liz Ley to its board. Having worked her way up the company, the appointment highlights the firm's commitment to career development and progression.

Ley joined Wellington straight from school as a trainee quantity surveyor in 2008, and since then has completed a degree in quantity surveying at Anglia Ruskin University.

Wellington managing director Paul Pitcher, who himself started out as an apprentice carpenter, said: "Liz is the first of a number of trainees we have supported through degree courses, and her hard work and success have inspired our ongoing programme."

Her appointment to the board is testament to our commitment to training and career development of our people."

Ley joins chairman Richard Sullivan, managing director Paul Pitcher and commercial director James Denny on the Wellington board.

## Stewart Milne Homes

Stewart Milne Homes has strengthened its senior team as it gears up for major growth with an aim to deliver 500 new homes in the Central Belt every year.

Qualified architect Stuart Henderson has been appointed to the newly-created role of design director. Former land director Gary Milne has been appointed technical director and Grant Kirkhope moves from a strategic group role to join as land director.

The internal appointments follow the recent appointment of Bryan Galloway as construction director and complete the strengthening of the senior team.

## CAPD

John Totty, who previously headed up Totty Construction is the newest addition to the team at CAPD Complete Build Solutions and will be overseeing business development.

Totty said: "Joining CAPD is a fantastic prospect. It's a family-run business with a very ambitious, hard-working team. I'm really looking forward to opening up new opportunities for the company, particularly across Yorkshire, Cheshire and beyond."

Managing director Gav Sambhi commented: "John spent many years building in the north of England's construction companies and is therefore a very exciting appointment for us."



Andy Addison

## Churchill

Churchill Retirement Living has appointed Andy Addison to the newly-created role of area director for the west country, as part of the group's south west region.

Addison will work with south west regional managing director James Barnes and chairman and CEO Spencer McCarthy to expand the Exeter team and drive growth across Devon and Cornwall.

Andy has worked for over 25 years in housebuilding.

## Truelove

Lincoln-based housebuilder Truelove Property & Construction has appointed Matthew Turner as an architectural technician.

Turner will be responsible for drawing up the working designs of all the firm's property house types. He said: "I'm really looking forward to using my experience in generating 3D renders and images to aid the team."

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Brian Berry, chief executive of the Federation of Master Builders

## THE INDUSTRY ADVOCATE

# TIME TO LOOK AGAIN AT 'LIVING OVER THE SHOP'

In the midst of the housing crisis, innovation could be vital in shaking up the industry. With this in mind, Brian Berry discusses the development opportunities that the space above shops can offer.

With the UK currently facing a severe housing crisis, it is important that we explore all options to increase our housing supply. Given the changing nature of our town centres and the willingness of recent governments to amend planning policy and enable changes of use, it is a logical extension to explore the role of space above shops for residential development.

With the aim of tackling the crisis in housing affordability, the Government has set itself an ambitious target of delivering 300,000 new homes a year in England. As most people in our industry appreciate, this is an ambitious figure, to put it mildly, and meeting it will require imagination.

The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) is of the view that there is significant untapped potential to create additional homes above shops on or near the high street. Indeed, it is estimated that as many as 400,000 new residential units could be created across the UK just by making better use of the empty spaces above shops on our high streets.

This space is lying empty and could be turned into good quality residential accommodation in a short space of time. These sorts of properties are often ideal for young professionals, or young families just starting out. They typically benefit from good transport links and are close to shops, bars and restaurants.

In order to address this issue, the FMB recently published a research report called 'Homes on our High Streets', aimed at putting forward creative recommendations for how this could be achieved. The FMB's research looks at a range of different types of town centres (in terms of market strength, architecture etc) across Great Britain and highlights the opportunities that exist for creating new homes in a range of different building types.

As well as revealing what could be achieved by innovative and ambitious schemes, the research acknowledges some of the well-

established barriers to this type of development. The report suggests some practical ways in which local authorities can help facilitate the development of these empty spaces and puts councils at the heart of the solution. The research holds that local authorities should include proposals to make use of these empty spaces in their planning documents. Local authorities can also play an important facilitating role by working with local business and community groups to highlight the potential opportunities for these types of conversion and bring different parties together to help find ways to overcome the potential barriers to this type of work, such as disparate ownership and limited building access.

Encouraging more new build homes is of primary importance and will continue to be the main focus for policy makers. However, significant opportunities also exist in the development and improvement of our existing buildings for those with capacity and expertise in this area.

This will depend on the strength of the local market, types of building and the cost of conversion involved. The report makes clear that in more difficult markets and with more difficult building types, the Government should look to make finance available, whether through low cost loans, grants or other fiscal incentives. If the finance works and there is a willingness from local decision-makers, then opportunities will arise.

Central and local government should take a keen interest in this initiative because making better use of these existing buildings could simultaneously help reverse the current housing shortage and reinvigorate our town centres. With ever-changing consumer habits, including the rise of online shopping, many high streets are struggling to remain relevant. We won't want to demolish our town centres so it stands to reason that we should increasingly look to adapt them and make better use of these buildings.

THIS SPACE IS LYING EMPTY AND COULD BE TURNED INTO GOOD QUALITY HOUSING IN A SHORT SPACE OF TIME



Steve Mansour, CEO of CRL

## COMMENT

## BACK AND FORTH

Steve Mansour recounts a rollercoaster 2017 for the industry, and considers what may lie ahead in 2018.

Last year was a rollercoaster for the construction industry and its workers. From Brexit, zero growth predictions and reports suggesting that the sector is struggling, to seemingly climbing out of a recession thanks to a surge in housebuilding, it's fair to say we've had quite a year.

It's no surprise that Brexit had the biggest impact on the industry, with 'uncertainty' becoming the word of the year. Uncertainty over the outcome of Brexit negotiations and the survival of the current administration have disrupted both commercial and industrial investment. If we pair this with the stamp duty increase on properties over £1m, it is possible you will find the catalyst to the current housing crunch.

Such factors also started the ball rolling for the shift in investment from London to the north, with developers requiring cheaper land. For a long time, the feeling has been that London is the place to buy as that's where the most money has been made. However in 2017, this myth was dispelled.

We also saw buyers invest in areas of regeneration with improved transport infrastructure planned, and this was compounded by Philip Hammond's announcement in the Autumn Budget for a £7bn expressway scheme for the Oxford-Cambridge corridor. The plan is for five new garden towns as well as new road and rail infrastructure. While these sorts of mass developments are likely to attract investors, spending large amounts of government money on such projects could be seen as a waste, with many other regions in desperate need of further investment.

While the Government's plan to tackle the housing crisis by increasing council tax on these empty homes looks positive on paper, there is not really enough of a disincentive for wealthy buyers. It might be more lucrative to simply pay the extra tax and leave them empty, rather than declare which properties they own.

Another big shift we saw last year relates to innovation, with the northern regions leading the way by building with a lifestyle purchaser in mind, emphasising how trends and purchaser requirements are changing. Structurally, it's all about convenience and modernism; with fast-paced, on-the-go lifestyles, homes have to be fit for purpose.

Currently, we are seeing developers build multitudes of three-bed family homes, in a bid

to solve the ever-evolving housing shortage. There has to be a shift this year to fit with demand, which will create more choice in the market, and respond to consumer need. Developers must start recognising this if they are to stay ahead of the game. This shouldn't mean increased property prices, it should mean a welcome change, one of bespoke or enhanced product offerings for consumers.

There isn't any doubt that technological advancements have already improved construction and we expect this to expand this year, through processes such as modular building and 3D printing. Expect more virtual reality and augmented reality use, with potential buyers visiting the shell of a virtual house, allowing them to design and configure a truly unique home. This will mean a fit for purpose property, which will hopefully result in purchasers staying in their homes for longer.

2018 must be the year we encourage entrepreneurialism and further innovation in the construction industry and because of this, we expect it to be the year of the SME builder. Not only will they continue to be the backbone of the industry, but we will see their agility and creativity come to the forefront.

It seems that Brexit will continue to be a real issue as the year progresses, particularly in terms of recruitment and careers. The UK's departure from the EU has thrown the issue into sharper focus given the industry's reliance on overseas labour, meaning the drive to attract and retain talent has never been so vital.

To solve this problem, it is imperative we showcase the true earning potential, creative roles and development paths on offer. As the use of technology becomes widespread in the sector, construction firms should find it easier to attract millennials who thrive on using the latest technology. While it is great to see the industry investing heavily in recruitment and training of young people, these initiatives are ones that must continue to receive attention, if we are to combat the current labour shortage.

Overall, the outlook for the industry is bright, but it will have its challenges. The best thing we can do is stay knowledgeable and open to new ideas and ways of working. The construction industry will continue to evolve throughout 2018, and it's up to construction firms on whether or not they want to grow with it.

IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT BREXIT HAD THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON THE INDUSTRY, 'UNCERTAINTY' BECAME THE WORD OF THE YEAR



Patrick Mooney, managing director at Mooney Thompson Consulting

## THE SOCIAL NETWORK

# OPTIMISM THROUGH GRITTED TEETH IN OUR TOWN HALLS

Patrick Mooney recaps the Government's recent actions in the social housing sector, explaining how far the new measures will really go.

It's been a roller coaster few weeks for the social housing sector with hopes and fears being given almost equal helpings of good cheer and mid winter gloom. While it feels like the Government has finally got the message about housing as a force for good, there is also a sense that at any moment Brexit could derail this, send us down a slow line or even into the buffers!

There is a pent-up frustration over whether local authorities can join the housebuilding programme and if so, to what extent. In the run up to the Budget, it looked like councils were finally going to be trusted with the tools (and more importantly, the money) for embarking on a drive to construct tens of thousands of low rent homes – the sort of building programme not seen for decades.

In the cold light of day it appears some councils will be able to build new homes in big(ish) numbers, but not until 2019/20 at the earliest and even then only in a somewhat modest way through increased borrowing. But the money involved is limited to about £1bn (which is small beer when you compare it to the sums available for Help to Buy, or abolishing

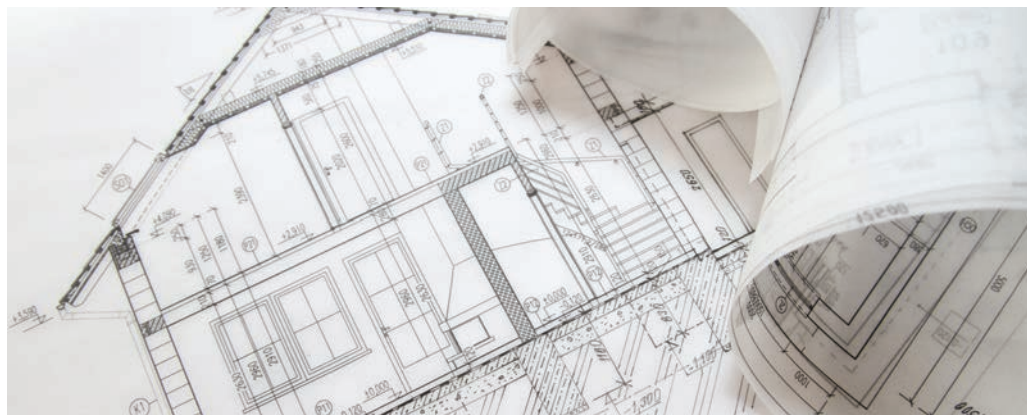
stamp duty for first time buyers) and will only be available to councils in 'high demand' areas who submit a winning bid. On this occasion the small print details really did take the gloss off!

Instead of going on a housebuilding drive councils up and down the country will continue investing huge sums of money in buying commercial properties and business parks – all with the approval of the Treasury. Personally I'd be a lot happier if most of that money was instead going into building new houses. Given the occasions when residential property actually loses value are very rare, housebuilding can be regarded as a (very) safe investment.

### POSITIVES

But sitting alongside this gloom, there were two overwhelming and unexpected positives recently – firstly the annual rent reductions have ended and from 2020 rents will be able to keep pace with inflation. Secondly the Government agreed to make a number of concessions on Universal Credit, which should alleviate some, but not all, of the hardship which this reform of the welfare system has caused.

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Would it be pushing one's luck too much to request further concessions over the welfare budget, including lifting the freeze on the overall benefit cap and the Local Housing Allowance?

At the moment councils are busy preparing for the Homelessness Reduction Act to go live at the beginning of April. Councils' responsibilities towards people threatened with the possibility of becoming homeless will grow significantly. An additional £74m to help with discharging these responsibilities was welcome but given that it's being spread over two years, this is a relatively modest sum.

Councils are more than happy to help, but really need the resources if they are to make a significant impact for the good here. With homelessness on the rise and almost 80,000 households in temporary accommodation, the local government sector believed the case had been made for them to build tens of thousands of homes, let on social rents.

The spectre of the Grenfell Tower tragedy still hangs over us and it is remarkable that seven months after the fire only 20 per cent of the families made homeless by the fire have actually been found a replacement home. All the rest are either staying with family and friends or in some form of hotel accommodation. Kensington

& Chelsea Council has committed to rehousing all of the families by no later than June 2018.

None of us thought this would be the case in the days and weeks after the fire. To compound the collective misery the Government is still refusing to provide funding for any additional fire safety measures in tower blocks across the social housing sector.

Instead the Chancellor announced that a pilot to extend the Right to Buy to HA tenants will take place in the Midlands from July, but he stopped short of announcing anything on the controversial policy of forcing councils to sell off their most valuable housing assets when they become free.

#### GREEN PAPER

By one of life's many coincidences the Welsh Assembly closely followed the Chancellor's decision by ending the Right to Buy in Wales. The move will come into effect in one year's time, but the debate neatly demonstrated the polarised stances on this topic – the best way to resolve this in a way that would satisfy all sides would surely be for the supply of new affordable housing to outstrip the loss of social housing through sales, demolitions and transitions to 'affordable' rents.

At least the pilot is to be funded by the Government, which means the Treasury will reimburse HAs the cost of the discount given to tenants who purchase their homes, rather than raiding councils' coffers. As one major supermarket says, "every little helps!"

So can we look forward to the promised Green Paper with any confidence? That's a tricky question to answer. In the immediate aftermath of the Grenfell Tower the answer would have been a resounding "Yes" but now we're really not so sure.

It is to be hoped that the Green Paper addresses the future provision of new housing at social rents. Building of truly affordable new homes has stalled and is now down to about 5,000 new homes in the latest year's figures.

As a recent report from Savills has shown – charging lower rents will feed through into a lower housing benefit bill. Surprise, surprise – so who knew that? It would also have the unintended consequence of reducing the number of tenants struggling to make ends meet and losing their homes because of rising debts, including rent arrears. Building more homes, at truly affordable rents to reduce the reliance on temporary housing would provide the bones of a sustainable housing policy. What's not to like about that?



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Richard Beresford, chief executive at the National Federation of Builders

## COMMENT

# SMES ARE CENTRAL TO FUTURE CITB SUCCESS

Richard Beresford explains why SMEs must be at the centre of the CITB's decisions if it is to succeed.

**A**lthough the construction industry endorsed the CITB levy until 2021, the training body knows that expectations are high to deliver meaningful changes in both administrative and operational duties. Many of these will require cross-industry collaboration, while others will involve tackling existing barriers. And yet CITB is on course to fail to meet its ambitions unless it places SMEs at the heart of its decision-making and governance process.

One change that already resonated positively within the industry is the move to an automated grant payment system. For members of the National Federation of Builders (NFB), who are mostly SMEs, the excessive red tape has often discouraged them from claiming any grants. This has not only impacted negatively on businesses, but it decreased the amount of potential training done through CITB and the likelihood of sharing knowledge with the organisation.

Responding to industry challenges requires strong leadership and the CITB has shown it is willing to take on the challenge. However, if it wishes to stay relevant, the CITB will also need to ensure that leadership is representative of the entire construction industry. For SMEs, the predominant rural employers who train two-thirds of construction apprentices, this means understanding their contribution and business model. The NFB believes that the best way for CITB to achieve this goal is ensuring that every part of its governance structure has SME representation. This includes the position of CITB chair.

SMEs are not just the industry's predominant employers and trainers, but a reliable indicator of future challenges. Regulatory changes in planning highlight this fact, since SMEs are the most likely to start a development with up-to-date planning rules.

Two modern examples of this are increased energy efficiency requirements on buildings and the installation of renewable energy sources. Both pose very different challenges for the CITB.

SMEs are not only delivering a skilled workforce fit for modern regulation, they are also delivering bespoke projects involving technology that has not yet hit mainstream consumption and design. Mechanical ventilation and heat recovery is a chief example of where client specification advances industry knowledge of a system or product. In many of these cases, SMEs train their own staff to become experts without the support of the CITB, or they work with manufacturers to deliver a more skilled workforce.

With modern methods of construction being more than the offsite manufacturing of homes, the CITB needs to look more deeply into whether it can better align itself with what industry is delivering and able to deliver. CITB will certainly be able to shape the direction that industry travels but it will find many more avenues for evolution if it recognises the intrinsic value of integrating industry into its decision making process.

With 60 per cent of employment in the UK private sector provided by SMEs, with a fifth of those in construction, there are more than three million reasons to make sure SMEs are the focus of the skills challenge solution. With Government also recognising the value of SMEs through the 'Housing White Paper' – where diversification of housing supply is predicated on both modern methods of construction and increasing the productivity of SME housebuilders – the CITB is in a unique position where it has clear direction from policy, industry and politicians on the value of SMEs to British industry.

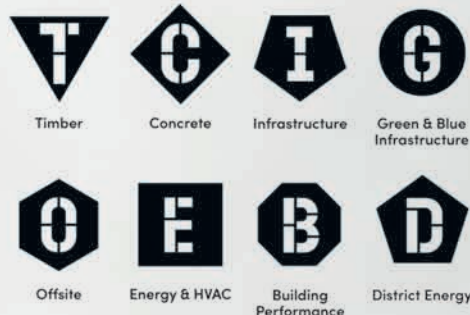
The future governance of CITB will not only reflect its understanding of the industry, but its very ambition in solving the construction skills crisis. SMEs deliver today's jobs and tomorrow's opportunities – they are the backbone of our local and national economy. We therefore implore the CITB to see the task of board representation as a test of their ambition and embrace those parts of industry who despite a difficult business environment, continue to make construction an exciting, varied and lasting career choice.

IF IT WISHES TO STAY RELEVANT, THE CITB WILL ALSO NEED TO ENSURE THAT LEADERSHIP REPRESENTS THE ENTIRE INDUSTRY

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David McWilliams (L) is partner and Frank Harner (R) is associate at intellectual property firm, Withers & Rogers

## COMMENT

# COULD 3D PRINTING SOLVE THE HOUSING CRISIS?

Despite signs of progress, 3D-printing technology has yet to realise its full potential in the housebuilding sector – so what is holding it back? David McWilliams and Frank Harner explain further.

Following this year's Autumn Budget announcement, it is clear that the Government has set its sights on alleviating the current housing crisis. At least £44bn has been allocated to capital funding, loans and guarantees to support the UK's housing market over the next five years. The Government has also pledged to provide an average of 300,000 new homes a year by the mid-2020s. While this is an important step, it may also be time to invest in the development of innovative methods of construction, such as 3D printing. The question is, how viable is this emerging technology, and could it become a mass-market alternative to traditional construction methods.

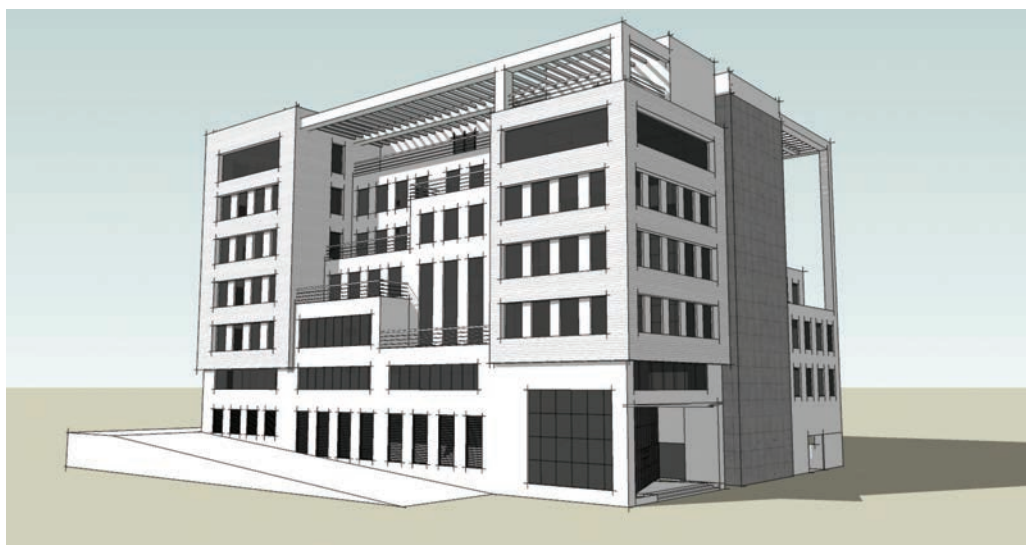
3D printing or additive manufacturing was, until recently, considered an expensive processing method, which was only viable in a relatively small number of industrial applications. This is partly because the majority of patents used to protect 3D-printing technology in recent times were held by the

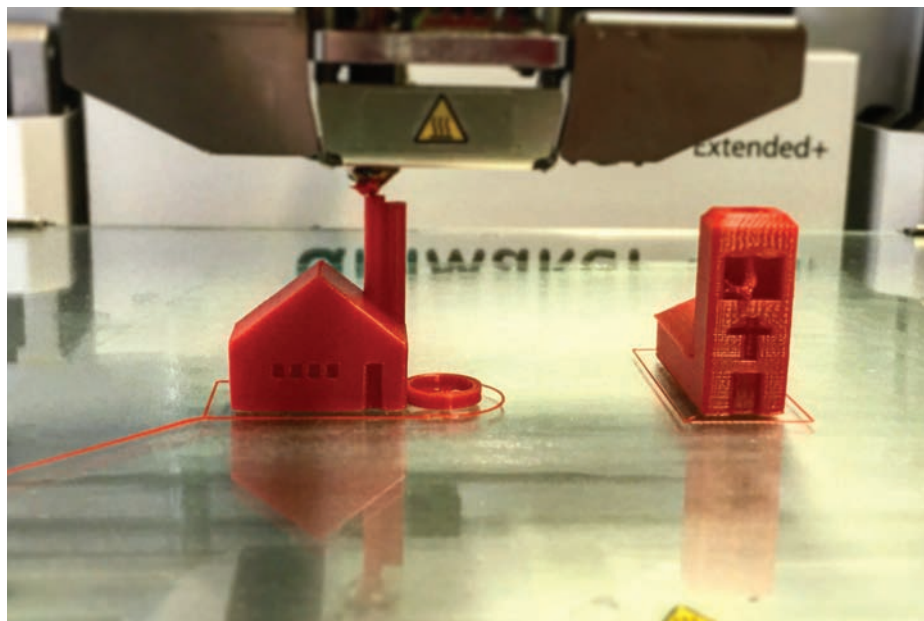
American company, Stratasys; barring opportunities for other innovators to develop it further. Some of the most essential patents expired in 2013 and 2014, however, prompting a surge in new patent applications and entrepreneurial businesses using 3D-printing technology more widely.

One of these newcomers is Apis Cor, established in 2014. The business has recently demonstrated its capabilities by 3D printing an entire house onsite within 24 hours close to Moscow. The entire envelope of the building was printed onsite using layers of concrete mix, deposited one on top of the other by an automatic nozzle. The windows, roof, piping, and all other elements were then added manually. On completion of the envelope, the printer, which weighs two tonnes, was lifted from the structure by a crane manipulator.

While such rapid construction methods might seem like the perfect way to address the housing shortage, there are still a number of important barriers to overcome before 3D printing can

SOME OF THE ESSENTIAL PATENTS EXPIRED IN 2013/2014, PROMPTING A SURGE IN NEW BUSINESSES





## AS THE USE OF 3D PRINTING IN CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES TO EXPAND, IT IS BECOMING A MORE VIABLE PROPOSITION FOR MAINSTREAM HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

become the modern construction method of choice. Apis Cor is currently one of only a handful of firms, alongside organisations such as Facit Homes in London and the French company, Nantes Métropole Habitat, to have constructed homes onsite using 3D-printing technology, although human labour has also had a critical role in these projects.

Despite progress being made, there is still a need to demonstrate that the technology can be used in a way that balances cost, time and quality. Modern 3D printers tend to be much bigger than earlier versions and can produce a wider range of bespoke parts insitu, but timing and cost is still an issue compared to some other technologies, such as laser centring for example.

The 3D-printed homes built to date are also relatively basic structures; more bespoke designs may still be out of reach without costs and construction time rising exponentially. There is also the issue of planning permission, which can be difficult to obtain when applying innovative processing methods.

While barriers to the take up of 3D-printing technology remain, progress is being made. In fact, the more innovation that is done in the field, the more likely it is that further breakthroughs can be achieved. One of the most vital things for entrepreneurs to consider when innovating in fields such as this is the potential for securing intellectual property rights. As long as an invention or service is backed by a novel technical effect, then obtaining patent protection could be a way to secure exclusivity, tax relief and other associated benefits.

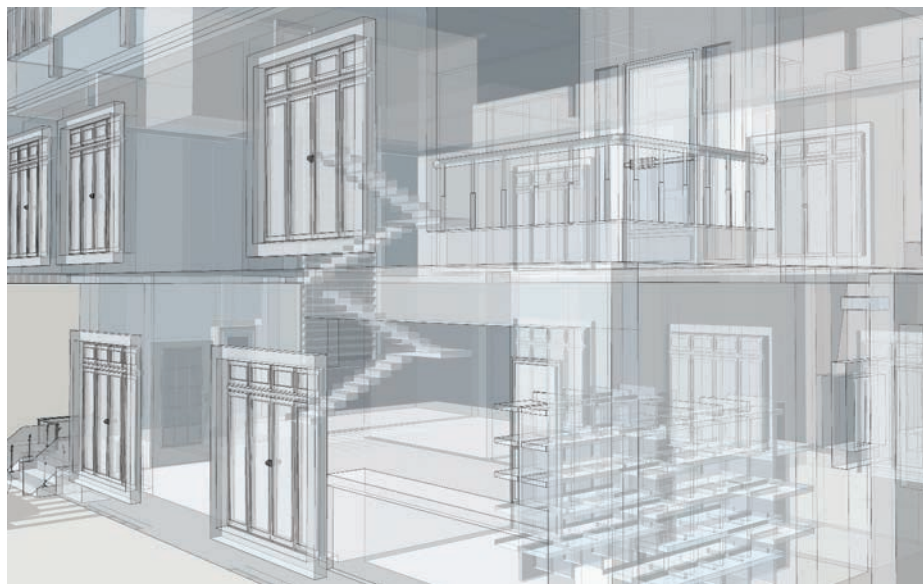
A search for patent families related to 3D printing in construction has revealed there are currently only 258 worldwide, compared to about 10,000 in other technological sectors. This indicates that the

application of 3D printing in the construction industry is still very early stage. Apis Cor's first patent application (WO2017/209786) for a 3D-printing technology was published on 7 December 2017. The patent application relates to the printer itself and the crane system which it operates on.

Clearly, the relatively low number of existing patents related to the use of 3D-printing technology in the construction sector means there is an opportunity for innovators. New developments in 3D-printing machinery for construction purposes can, of course, be protected by patents. However, it is equally important for designers who use commercially-available machinery to form new architecture to protect their intellectual property and monitor the sharing of CAD files, which are typically used to store design information in a format that can be easily copied. The nature of 3D-printed structures means

designs can also be scanned and copied by a visitor to the building site. Once stored onto a CAD file, they can then be shared widely via a popular file-sharing platform, such as Thingiverse, and reprinted by anyone with access to a suitable 3D printer. To guard against this, design innovators should consider filing for registered design rights, which protect the appearance of their creation.

As the use of 3D printing in construction continues to expand, it is becoming a more viable proposition for mainstream housing developments. Consequently, intellectual property protection will have an important role to play in helping companies to commercialise their R&D investment in this emerging market. Businesses that want to capitalise on this opportunity should seek advice at an early stage to optimise profits and re-investment opportunities while helping to modernise and transform the construction industry.



## A sound solution from SE Controls for The Recording Rooms student accommodation

The Recording Rooms, one of Birmingham University's newest student accommodation blocks, is using an integrated smoke and heat exhaust ventilation system from SE Controls to provide smoke free escape routes for more than 250 students.

Located in the Selly Oak area of Birmingham near the university campus, the £12.5 million building was designed by Glancy Nicholls Architects and incorporates 267 bed spaces in five different room styles including cluster en-suite, studio apartments and even a penthouse, as well as a gym and communal lounge.

Within the Recording Rooms, which takes its name from the recording studio that was originally located on the site, there are three individual zones, ranging from three to seven storeys high, with each having a dedicated smoke control system linked to the building's master BMS and fire protection system.

The SE Controls system is designed to protect the building's four stairwells and corridors on each floor, by keeping them free of smoke and enabling clear escape routes to be maintained in the event of a fire.



Two of the zones, which are three and four storeys high, each has an escape stair core protected by automatically operated side hung windows on each floor and automatic opening vents (AOV) at the head of the stairs. The systems in each zone are operated by SE Controls OS2 SHEVTEC Controllers linked to the OSLoop Control System.

The seven-storey zone incorporates two escape stairs, which combine a mechanically ventilated smoke shaft with natural smoke ventilation, incorporating automatically operated smoke doors, and side hung windows, as well as AOVs at the head of stairs and tamper proof MCPs.

Michael Scrimshaw, Business Development Manager for SE Controls explained: "The design of the building meant that it was essential to provide effective smoke control in each of the different multi-storey zones. We have a significant amount of experience in code compliant and fire engineered solutions for student accommodation. By combining both mechanical and natural smoke ventilation, we were able to deliver a solution that fully utilises the advantages of both technologies to provide a safe environment for students."

More information on smoke control systems and how they can protect lives and buildings can be obtained by emailing SE Controls or by calling. SE Controls has NBS Clauses and BIM objects available on NBS Plus, BIM Object and the SE Controls website.

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## NEW DEVELOPMENTS



A further 25 homes have been completed at the Muirhouse development in Edinburgh by Springfield Properties, in partnership with Dunedin Canmore.

The £23m development, which is just around the corner from Muirhouse Shopping Centre, is close to completion, with 153 of the 202 homes planned now occupied.

A mix of one bedroom cottage flats and two-bedroom terraced homes have now been handed over to social housing providers Dunedin Canmore, part of the Wheatley Group.

Each home is highly energy efficient, meeting silver sustainability building standards which keep running costs low. Householders can also keep on top of their energy usage using the 'Current Cost' smart energy meters that have been installed in each property.

Springfield Properties group partnership director, Tom Leggeat, said: "Muirhouse is one of our larger affordable developments and it's coming along really well. Together, with Dunedin Canmore, we've transformed the former BT Training Centre into a development with open spaces, scenic views and energy efficient houses.

"It's great to be able to handover a further 25 homes before Christmas before completing the final homes next year."

Dunedin Canmore, managing director at Hazel Young, commented on the effect the development has had on the surrounding area: "This development features brilliant homes for social rent as well as attractive mid-market homes for people who are on a modest income.

"They are a great boost to the Muirhouse community and an excellent example of how we are tackling the shortage of energy-efficient, affordable homes in Edinburgh. I hope that the new tenants will be very happy in their new warm and secure homes."

Kevin Stewart, Minister for Local Government and Housing, expressed "delight" about the further 25 affordable homes being completed. "This is a great example of how partnership working can deliver high quality, energy efficient homes that are a welcome addition to the supply of affordable housing in Edinburgh."

The development is part of a wider regeneration to revitalise Muirhouse and Pennywell with a mix of new housing and offering a new lease of life to the whole Muirhouse area.

## Development partners add to Muirhouse scheme


**THE DEVELOPMENT IS PART OF A WIDER REGENERATION TO REVITALISE MUIRHOUSE AND PENNYWELL WITH A MIX OF NEW HOUSING AND OFFERING A NEW LEASE OF LIFE TO THE WHOLE AREA**




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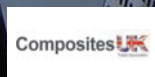
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INDUSTRY PARTNERS



# Green light for CLT social housing in south east London

Planning permission has been secured for Lewisham Homes' pioneering modular housing development in Sydenham, south east London. The 25-home Kenton Court scheme, designed by Waugh Thistleton Architects for housing provider Lewisham Homes, will be built entirely out of cross-laminated timber (CLT) and constructed offsite using cutting-edge manufacturing technology. It is the first CLT building developed by Lewisham Homes.

The scheme, which is 100 per cent social rent, is part of the local authority and Lewisham Homes' borough-wide New Homes, Better Places programme, which will see the development of 500 homes for social rent.

The development consists predominantly of family homes, with a range of housing types including duplexes, flats and wheelchair accessible homes, arranged around a landscaped courtyard.

Andrew Waugh, director at Waugh Thistleton, said: "We are very excited to be delivering Lewisham Homes' first CLT modular housing scheme. This scheme is an innovative use of a small site in south London that will deliver highly sustainable social homes for the people of Lewisham."

"Building homes offsite speeds up delivery and reduces the impact of construction on the local area. Homes constructed out of engineered timber using cutting edge technology are of a higher quality than those built using standard construction techniques, are better for the environment, as timber is a renewable resource and stores carbon, and are quieter and more energy efficient."

The site, located in a residential area of Sydenham, is currently occupied by a vacant three-storey building containing predominantly studio apartments, previously used as a residential care facility. The building was deemed unsuitable for residential care and was decommissioned in 2014.

The former care facility has been replaced by new build extra care facilities elsewhere in the borough and will be demolished to make way for the new council homes.

**THE SCHEME, WHICH IS 100 PER CENT SOCIAL RENT, IS PART OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY AND LEWISHAM HOMES' BOROUGH-WIDE NEW HOMES, BETTER PLACES PROGRAMME**





# All Saints Living Milton Keynes scheme starts on site

**IN ADDITION TO THE SIX FLOORS OF RESIDENTIAL SPACE WILL BE TWO FLOORS FOR CAR PARKING, AS WELL AS LANDSCAPED GARDENS AND COMMUNAL AREAS**

Preparation work has start on 139 new apartments for rent in the centre of Milton Keynes. The £30m project, on a three-quarter acre site on Silbury Boulevard, will replace two previously disused buildings that were last occupied as offices and a job centre.

Offering not just a mixture of one and two-bedroom apartments across six floors, there will also be two retail units on the ground floor, occupying 418 m<sup>2</sup>.

United Living has been appointed to lead the construction of the scheme on behalf of developer All Saints Living. Upon completion, the site will be handed over to Grainger plc. It will be owned by GRIP REIT, a joint venture between Grainger and APG.

All the apartments are being designed specifically for rent with the customers' needs in mind. Each unit will be finished to a high specification, featuring an open plan kitchen and lounge area. The larger apartments will have a bedroom on either side of the living space, each with en-suite facilities.

In addition to the six floors of residential space will be two floors for car parking, as well as landscaped gardens and communal areas for residents to enjoy. The development will be built on reinforced concrete pad foundations, with a reinforced concrete semi-basements, located 1.5 metres below ground level, and a steel frame construction.

Keith McDougall, director with All Saints Living, part of the High Street Group of companies, commented: "As the build to rent, or private rented sector, continues to grow due to demand for homes outstripping supply, we have taken this opportunity to expand our work beyond the north of the UK.

"Working with our partners and Milton Keynes Council, we plan to create a community with a modern village feel that will cater particularly for the needs of aspiring young professional people, helping to retain their skills and investment into the community."

The project expected to create around 100 jobs in the construction and supply chain sector during the 24 month building phase.

## CASE STUDY

# Birmingham's 'vertical village' takes off

Moda Living has got planning permission for Birmingham's tallest residential building yet, a 42-storey tower which features a running track on the roof and retail space on the ground.

A 42-storey skyscraper in Birmingham has secured planning permission. At Zone2 Broad Street, developed for rent by Moda, digital-ready apartments, wellbeing areas and a 24-hour concierge are just some of the features on offer in what will be the city's tallest residential building.

The £183m skyscraper was approved unanimously by Birmingham City Council in a meeting session that lasted 12 minutes. Apache Capital Partners is funding the project and Birmingham practice Glenn Howells Architects has designed it.

Zone2 Broad Street will offer a range of apartment sizes, from studios to three-beds, alongside a host of recreational spaces spread across the building. Family-friendly tenancies will offer residents the chance to sign up for three, or even five years, helping to reduce the perception of renters being 'transient'.

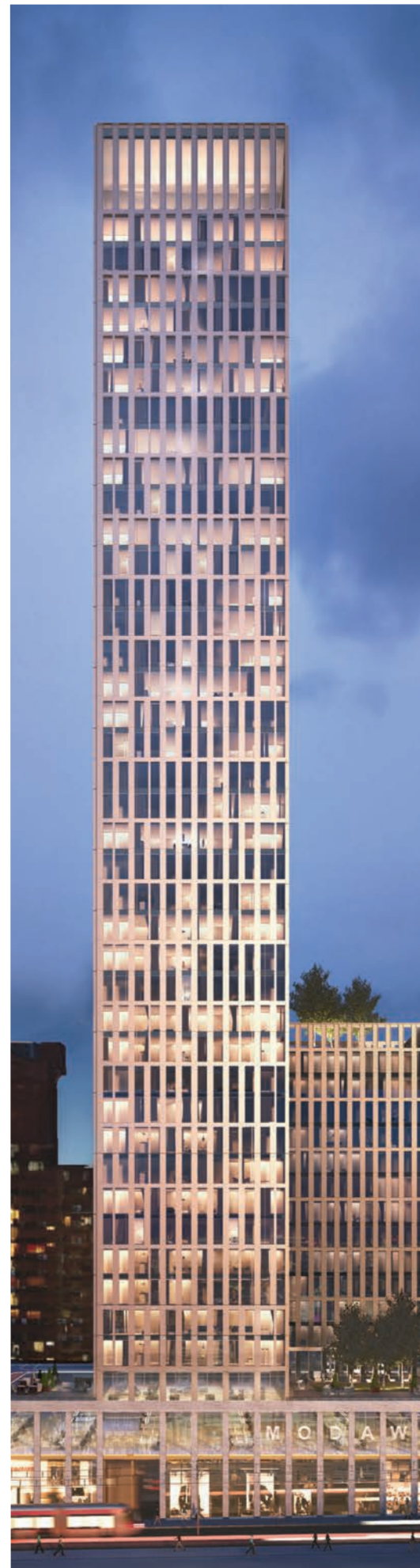
The development lies directly opposite Brindley Place, Argent's award-winning mixed-use commercial scheme, and is within five minutes' walk of Centenary Square. Backed by Apache Capital Partners, Moda Living has a £1.5bn pipeline of 6,000 rent-only apartments in high profile city centre sites across the UK.

**THE £183M SKYSCRAPER WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE COUNCIL IN A MEETING SESSION THAT LASTED A TOTAL OF 12 MINUTES**

#### AMENITIES

Among Zone2's amenities, a 200-metre outdoor running track – the UK's first in a residential building – will cater to fitness enthusiasts. The running circuit will sit outside on the podium roof, offering panoramic views of the Birmingham skyline.

The front desk, with 24 hour concierge, will collect Amazon parcels, help book cleaning and ironing, while ensuring residents are safe and secure. Smart lifts





## MORE THAN 30,000 FT<sup>2</sup> (EQUIVALENT TO OVER 10 TENNIS COURTS) OF DEDICATED COMMUNAL SPACE HAS BEEN INCORPORATED INTO THE DESIGN

that know when you have entered a building are ready to take residents to their apartment as soon as they've walked in.

More than 30,000 ft<sup>2</sup> (equivalent to over 10 tennis courts) of dedicated communal space has been incorporated into the design, including a residents' lounge, health and wellness zone and a dining club with demonstration kitchen.

Great connections are available to commuters and travellers via the extension of Birmingham's tram network and the pedestrianisation of the surrounding area.

### MODA LIVING

Moda hopes to "revolutionise the way people rent", with the intention being to create "societies" within its developments. The company believes it can turn renting from tenure of last-resort into a genuine lifestyle choice.

The developer's future customers will also be able to organise their daily lives through the bespoke 'MyModa' app, allowing them to control smart thermostats, report any problems by taking a picture, and even welcome guests through a virtual Skype-style door buzzer.

After being the first UK housing developer to partner with Uber, Moda is also in discussion with a number of other leading technology companies to help make its customers' lives easier.

Tony Brooks, managing director at Moda, was "delighted" about the recent consent. "We're confident high quality

rental housing will further boost the city's fight for talent and investment as companies realise the huge potential the midlands has to offer."

"Renters have been poorly served by the housing market, and the aim of build to rent is to change that by providing everything people need, from workspace to wellbeing, with a mix of community, security and great service."

He continued: "People are time-poor, but value experience, which is why we want to take the hassle out of city living through plug-and-play wi-fi, an integrated mobile app and a concierge who's on-hand to collect Amazon parcels to avoid those dreaded red cards from the postman."

Dav Bansal, director at Glen Howells Architects, gave his view on the building's design: "Birmingham's new addition to the skyline is an important western marker for the city.

"The simple composition with its elegant proportion creates a contemporary and confident design at a key intersection on Broad Street, helping to regenerate this important part of the city.

"The Bronze metal veil over the composed facade of the tower sits on a welcoming podium that embraces high-quality retail, managed workspace, a cycle hub and the main entrance for residents."

He concluded: "We are delighted to be working with Moda on this exciting opportunity to raise the aspirations of quality housing on the city centre."

## Capital Valley Plastics celebrates Award win



Capital Valley Plastics is pleased to announce its success at the Monmouthshire Business Awards 2017. The independent manufacturer and supplier of polythene film won the Excellence in Innovation award and was a finalist in the Excellence in Manufacturing category. The winners of the 2017 Monmouthshire Business Awards were announced

during a gala dinner and presentation night at the Celtic Manor Resort in Newport, hosted by broadcaster, Hywel James. "We feel incredibly proud of our award win and nomination," said Roger Phillips, managing director, Capital Valley Plastics. "We were one of three Torfaen businesses to receive awards and it is a privilege to be a part of such a thriving region."

01495 772255 [www.capitalvalleyplastics.com](http://www.capitalvalleyplastics.com)

## Fibo UK expands team



Fibo UK, the precision engineered wall panel manufacturer, adds to its growing team with the appointment of Jenny Gibson as Regional Account Manager (North West). Jenny comes with many years' industry and sales experience, previously working as National sales Manager for a plumbing supplies company. Fibo is experiencing strong demand from local authorities, contractors and builders' merchants

for its unique bathroom and kitchen wall panels. MD Scott Beattie confirms that the company's continuing success is driving the investment in team expansion, and in customer service and support. To find out more about Fibo's innovative kitchen and bathroom wall panels contact Fibo by calling.

01494 771242 [www.fibo.co.uk](http://www.fibo.co.uk)

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## More major house builders switch to vertical integration

Three more of the UK's leading house builders have signalled their support for vertically integrated materials sourcing with a switch away from multiple roofline supply partners to GAP's Power of One model.

In September, Taylor Wimpey committed exclusively to GAP for three more years and the following month Persimmon moved its entire roofline supply contract to GAP in a ground-breaking new two-year solus agreement. In early November Redrow handed the GAP Nationals team joint responsibility for its PVC-U fascia, soffit and ancillaries supply.

As well as the three major players, GAP's end-to-end manufacturing, logistics and 112-Depot distribution system is already the building materials source of choice for Lovell Homes, Miller Homes and Keepmoat.

### DAVE TINGLE, SALES DIRECTOR FOR GAP NATIONALS, SAID:

"It's all very exciting but let's face it - we've seen this movie before. Ikea grows wood in its own Baltic forests, Shell and BP extract, refine and retail fuel that starts life in their own oilfields, and Zara can launch a new clothing range in three weeks instead of the nine-month norm because it makes everything itself.

"For house builders, the opportunity provided by vertical integration to engage quickly and effortlessly with every stage of the supply chain via a single point of contact is obviously important, but the big difference is the commercial transparency and financial clarity that come with it.

"Gone are the days when pricing needs to be distorted by complex, bewildering and time-consuming contract support and rebate schemes. And in a modern, competitive trading climate when relationships and mutual trust have never been so success critical, it's just not good enough to expect professional buying teams to negotiate with a manufacturer and then be told that their day-to-day operational

**"WE FELT IT WAS TIME TO DEMYSTIFY THE WHOLE PROCESS AND GIVE BUYERS WHAT THEY SAY THEY MOST WANT. ONE NEGOTIATION. ONE BRAND. ONE FIXED PRICE. ONE POINT OF CONTACT. AND ONE SIMPLE INVOICE."**



112 Depots nationwide

dealings must be with a random mish-mash of sub-stockists.

Following the cash acquisition of the SIG Building Plastics and SIG Windows businesses in August 2017, Blackburn based GAP became the UK's largest distributor of PVC-U roofline, cladding and trim products to the UK's new home building sector.

### TAYLOR WIMPEY DIVISIONAL HEAD OF GROUP PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY CHAIN, NICK DYKE SAID:

"Being a truly national multi-sited house building company with 24+ business units around the country and a central distribution hub in Newmarket, key for us was a non-nonsense approach to trading and





the certainty that all our delivery points could be adequately catered for. Working in partnership with

**“SIMPLE NET PRICING WITH NO COMPLEX AND TIME CONSUMING RETROSPECTIVE REBATES, A FULL SCHEDULING SERVICE AND TROUBLE-FREE INVOICING.”**

Add to this the UK-wide reach of GAP's network and it's not difficult to see why they have quickly become one of our top tier providers and consistently rank highly in our performance monitoring programme.”

**ADAM LINDSAY-SMITH, CHIEF BUYER AT PERSIMMON HOMES ADDED:**

“As one of the UK's leading house builders, we set the bar high for all our supply partners.

**“OUR STRATEGIC REVIEW OF SEVERAL ROOFLINE OPTIONS POINTED TO THE NEED FOR RELIABILITY, CONSISTENCY, TRANSPARENCY AND A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THE DAY-TO-DAY NEEDS OF OUR SITE-BASED TEAMS.”**



We chose GAP because they were able to demonstrate that their structure, clear communication lines and culture were most suited to our commercial and operational objectives.”

**DARREN O'REILLY, SUPPLY CHAIN DIRECTOR, MILLER HOMES SAID:**

“At the end of the day, what we need from all our suppliers is certainty. The GAP model is simple and efficient - and gives us control and influence over the entire supply chain, a single point of contact and an end to complex pricing mechanisms.”

**“VERTICAL INTEGRATION IS THE ONLY WAY THAT SERVICE LEVELS CAN BE ASSURED.”**

The 24 year-old GAP group's National Deal – No Sub Stockists mantra is underpinned by its vast manufacturing centres in Blackburn and

South Wales, by its 190-vehicle logistics fleet, and by its truly national network of Depots that provide coverage from Inverness to the Isle of Wight.

As well as bringing clarity and consistency to negotiations and transactions, much of the success of GAP's dedicated Nationals teams has stemmed from its investment in processes designed to make life easier for local site teams and their management.

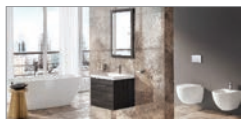
“Power of One is so much more than just a fancy slogan” added Dave Tingle. “It's become a way of life. It means as much to our estimators and schedulers as it does to our plot management and call-off teams. It's also the focus of major investment. The £1.5m spent on technology to give buyers total visibility and traceability of all current and past orders, for example, is as important as new tools such as electronic proof of delivery that we've introduced to save customers' site teams costly and frustrating administration challenges further down the line.”

**0845 313 10 12 [www.gap.uk.com](http://www.gap.uk.com)**



A Taylor Wimpey site supplied by GAP

## Selecting sanitaryware just got simpler



**Abacus Bathrooms** leads the trend for pared-back, naturally beautiful design in 2017 with a new line-up of crisp sanitaryware. Part of the brand's new Pure & Simple Collection, the sanitaryware range is designed to provide

the core building blocks for multiple bathroom styles. For a softer dynamic, there is 'Simple', which is still modern but has a gently curved silhouette with subtly classic overtones. Cleverly, the geometric and curved designs of Pure and Simple can also be successfully worked together, due to their shared simplicity, proportions and precise colour match. They are offered across a wide range of basins, WCs and bidets, from compact cloakroom products to top-end double basins with wall-hung WCs.

[www.abacus-bathrooms.co.uk](http://www.abacus-bathrooms.co.uk)

## Hi-spec and Economaire heaters

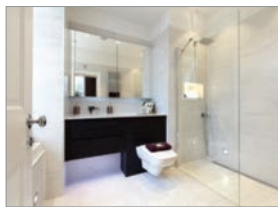


**Johnson and Starley** launched its highly successful range of WarmCair condensing warm air heaters, along with its market leading QuanTec range of boilers that can be connected to its warm air heater emitter range the Aquair. These units are highly efficient and will meet all future eco-design regulation requirements. The Aquair takes water from the boiler, and passes it through a heat exchanger which has a fan blowing across it. The Cleanflow electronic

air filtration system, which can remove airborne particles down to one micron from the atmosphere, including cigarette smoke.

01604 762881 [www.johnsonandstarley.co.uk](http://www.johnsonandstarley.co.uk)

## Bespoke Drain Service from CCL Wetrooms



**CCL Wetrooms** have launched their new Fast Track Bespoke Drain Service, enabling customers to order any length of wetroom drain up to 2000mm, using their new two to three day manufacturing service. The service applies to all stainless steel drains in a Solid or Stone-Infill finish. The new Fast

Track Bespoke Drain service complements CCL Wetrooms' standard range of grills which has grown from nine to fifteen standard lengths and offers customers an increased choice of finishing touches for their wetroom. The standard range of linear grills is available from 600mm to 2000mm lengths.

0844 327 6002 [www.ccl-wetrooms.co.uk](http://www.ccl-wetrooms.co.uk)

## Vent-Axia named as double Finalist



**Vent-Axia** is delighted to announce that it was shortlisted in two categories in The Energy Awards 2017. The company's revolutionary Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery unit, the Sentinel Kinetic Advance, was named as a finalist in the 'Energy Efficient Product of the Year – HVAC&R' and 'Innovation of the Year – Technology: Physical' categories. The innovative Sentinel Kinetic Advance is a

new breed of MVHR ventilation system with best in class performance and offering near silent, energy efficient and high-pressure operation. Designed for air-tight thermally efficient new build properties, the Advance is the first UK-manufactured web-enabled App-controlled MVHR unit, providing energy efficient ventilation and pioneering control.

0844 856 0590 [www.vent-axia.com](http://www.vent-axia.com)

## LG embedded wi-fi wall mounted air con units



**LG** has launched a range of wall mounted air conditioning units with a plethora of new features including embedded wi-fi, and compatibility with its multi-split range. In addition, the 10-year compressor warranty that already applies to its single split wall mount units is now extended to include the multi split range. They are all quick and easy to install and operate from

as low as just 19Db, offering fast heating and jet cooling. Full details of the LG single split and multi split air conditioning options and LG's complete range of heating and energy solutions is available on LG's website.

[HVAC.marketing@lge.com](mailto:HVAC.marketing@lge.com) [partner.lge.com/uk](http://partner.lge.com/uk)

## New showroom brings ventilation to life



A leading UK designer and manufacturer of ventilation systems **EnviroVent** has created a dedicated ventilation showroom at its training centre in Harrogate. The showroom contains working installations of the various ventilation units, where the ducting and airflows can

clearly be seen. Visitors are invited to make an appointment and receive a demonstration of the operation of ventilation products and how these help reduce humidity levels and prevent condensation and mould from forming in a home. Also at the new showroom, visitors can take a look at the operation of the new myenvirovent app. The app is available for the energisava 200, 250 and 380 MVHR systems.

[enquiries@envirovent.com](mailto:enquiries@envirovent.com)

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# NO FANS OF SMOG

With air pollution levels dangerously high in many urban areas, there is a reluctance among urban apartment dwellers to simply open the windows when it gets hot. Air conditioning specialist Cool You UK explains what the latest systems can do to help.

**A**partment owners often don't want to let the outside smog into their homes, and with many concerned about outside noise pollution too, air conditioning is increasingly becoming a feature that's called for in modern apartment building developments in the UK.

As a housebuilder or developer, this presents you with an interesting dilemma – how do you give potential buyers the air conditioning they want when space is limited? This can often be

an issue, as air conditioning new homes doesn't tend to lend itself well to many apartment developments, at least not in its conventional form.

Installing the vast majority of air conditioning systems into apartment buildings can be quite challenging. For all the conveniences they offer their occupants, apartments provide few options for effective cooling. Depending on the nature of the lease agreement or the contracts between the occupier and

the building management company, it cannot be said for certain that holes can be made in the walls of the apartment building. This often rules out installing an outside condenser, which is a crucial part of a conventional air conditioning installation.

The most common issue when it comes to installing air conditioning into an apartment development is simply a lack of room. Due to the nature of apartments, space is often at a premium. Apartments of course come in many different shapes and sizes, with differing installation challenges, while outside condenser units are often very standard. In many apartment developments there is not enough room to mount an outdoor unit on an external wall.

## WHAT COULD YOU SACRIFICE?

If there is sufficient room for a condenser, there is then the question of what must be sacrificed for the condenser to be installed. Would air conditioning and the outside condenser which comes with it be considered more attractive than floor to ceiling windows, offering views of the city around the development? Or could much-desired outside balcony space be



## AN INTERNAL CONDENSER UNIT IS EASILY CONCEALED BY ITS ABILITY TO BE LOCATED IN A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LOCATIONS AROUND THE HOME, SUCH AS UTILITY CUPBOARDS

sacrificed for such a cooling unit?

These are the kind of questions which developers must ask themselves in order to build desirable properties for potential homeowners, while working with limited space. There is then the issue of the obtrusiveness of the outside condensers which come with conventional air conditioning.

While more and more modern apartment buildings are being developed to add aesthetic value to the landscape of their surrounding area, outside condenser units do not lend themselves to these aesthetics. Instead, some units can even look ugly and out of place when installed on a modern apartment building.

### THERE IS A SOLUTION

This air conditioning dilemma faces many modern apartment developers working with limited space. However, save for the creativity of cooling an apartment the old-fashioned way with a series of fans and open windows, there is an answer to this problem that does not involve the use of an outside condenser unit.

The solution comes in the form of water cooled air conditioning. Offering the same cooling and air quality offered by its conventional counterpart, water cooled air conditioning solves the issues of space and adverse effects on aesthetics with its



completely internal design.

Requiring no outside condenser, this style of air conditioning instead usually utilises an easily concealed A\*\* rated DC inverter internal condenser unit. This is then connected to a choice of room cooling units by discreet and relatively standard refrigerant pipe work.

One option is internal, energy efficient, DC inverter air cooled condenser(s), available in mono and multi room split specifications. This option normally needs to be incorporated during the design of the building, with aesthetic grills to the outside from each of the apartments.

If you, as the developer do not want to include air conditioning in the finished apartment, it can instead be offered as an optional extra, or retro-fitted after

completion and sale.

Another option is internal, energy efficient, DC inverter water cooled condenser(s), also available in mono and multi room split specifications. This is the most popular option, as they can be specified at any stage in the design as an option, or retro-fitted. Everything is completely internal. The internal condenser unit is easily concealed by its ability to be located in a number of different locations around the home, including utility cupboards, under a kitchen unit, in a bathroom etc.

Without the need for an outside condenser in either of the above options, there is no need to install anything to the exterior of the development, meaning the issue of external space and outside aesthetics is solved.



## The perfect match – new tap fitting collection



C.1 harmonises perfectly with all contemporary, linear bathroom ranges by **Duravit**. Designed by Kurt Merki Jr., the tap fittings with their perfectly proportioned look form a natural synthesis with washbasins and bathtubs perfectly complementing the room with an unpretentious simplicity. Four different heights cater for a range of washbasin dimensions; three-hole tap fittings in two heights and wall-mounted fittings with a spout in two lengths offer the required flexibility for customised design and freedom of movement. C.1 also offers an ideal tap fitting solution for bidets, showers and bathtubs. The matching hand showers and showerheads are available in various sizes and with both round and square designs.

01908 286 680 [www.duravit.co.uk](http://www.duravit.co.uk)

## Saniflo features in 'Grand Designs' tiny house



**Saniflo** has helped turn a big dream of a Grand Designs tiny house into reality. The 38m<sup>2</sup> house with two bedrooms and two bathrooms features a basement and six half floors. One bathroom sits half a floor down from street level and uses a pump to take the waste to the discharge point. The industrial design wetroom features a shower, basin and WC each feeding into a Saniflo Sanicubic Pro 2 macerating pump situated directly beneath the wall hung WC in the basement. The pump also takes waste from a washing machine sited in the basement and has additional outlets for the connection of future appliances. The property was featured on TV programme Grand Designs in the autumn of 2017.

020 8842 0033 [www.saniflo.co.uk](http://www.saniflo.co.uk)

## Engel workwear stretches your comfort zone

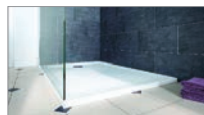


Recognised the World over for its comprehensive range of comfortably fitting, stylish and practical workwear, **F Engel** build further on their reputation by introducing a collection of slim-fit, stretchable work trousers which allow wearers to be especially comfortable in any work situation – and look and feel

smart at the same time. Called 'X-treme', the trousers are made from 65 per cent polyester and 35 per cent cotton incorporating a specially developed mechanical stretch factor; they are available in various choices both with and without useful hanging pockets.

[www.fe.dk/en](http://www.fe.dk/en)

## Kaldewei's new Cayonoplan shower

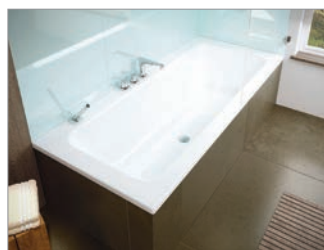


**Kaldewei's** new Cayonoplan offers the perfect answer when it comes to designing a nearly flat shower solution. The enamelled Cayonoplan shower surface adapts to many different structural requirements. For instance, if adequate

height is available it can be installed at floor level. Where the bathroom does not allow for this the shower surface can be quickly and easily installed directly on top of the floor tiles. Thanks to 19 different dimensions, its laterally-positioned waste outlet and ultra flat tray support for the easiest possible assembly, the Cayonoplan is the ideal solution available in a generous range of sizes. The Cayonoplan complements the Cayono bath and Puro Washbasin allowing for a 'Perfect Match'.

01480 498053 [www.kaldewei.co.uk](http://www.kaldewei.co.uk)

## Presenting Puro Set Wide bath from Kaldewei



Puro Set Wide is the latest steel enamel bath from **Kaldewei**, perfect for bathing and showering with a centrally-positioned waste outlet and extra wide rim, giving maximum freedom for positioning taps and fittings. With an ergonomic backrest and extra steep walls on three sides, Puro Set

Wide offers reclining comfort and optimum legroom while bathing and freedom of movement and excellent underfoot safety while showering.

[www.kaldewei.co.uk](http://www.kaldewei.co.uk)

## Norcros Pro-Gyp Base Fast Track Sealer



**Norcros Adhesives**, manufacturer of tiling adhesives, grouts and surface preparation products, speeds up tiling on to green screeds with its latest system solution. Pro Gyp-Base Fast Track Sealer greatly reduces the minimum drying times. The new product comprises a three-stage preparation

system for fixing ceramic and porcelain tiles on to screeded surfaces. It is sold as a kit containing all the elements necessary to achieve a successful bond, including a primer, moisture suppressant and gritted primer. Used together, the system allows for fast track tile installation.

[www.norcros-adhesives.com](http://www.norcros-adhesives.com)

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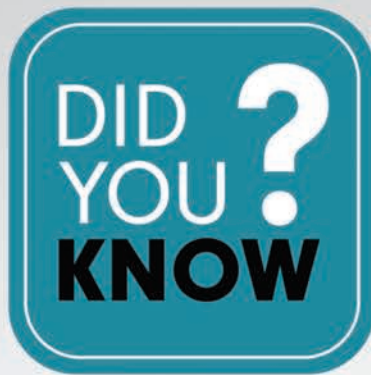
The sealants and adhesive range from **Everbuild** – A Sika Company is growing with the launch of Sika PRO Select, a fantastic new range bringing the renowned Sika technical expertise to the trade user.

This extensive new range consists of ten products including Sika MaxTrack Super Charged, an extremely fast setting adhesive with a fixing time of just 20 minutes and the ability to bond to a variety of surfaces, both indoors and outdoors and even underwater. The PRO Select range also includes Sika MaxTrack Ultra Clear, a 100 per cent transparent, high strength sealant and adhesive, Sika MaxTrack Ultimate, an extra strong hybrid sealant and adhesive for use on almost every application imaginable, SikaSeal Multi Purpose Silicone and Sika MaxTrack Instant Grab SF. So whatever the application, there is sure to be a suitable product in the Sika PRO Select range.

For more information on the PRO Select range or any other product within the Everbuild and Sika ranges, contact your local sales representative, call the sales office or visit the website.

0113 240 2424 [www.everbuild.co.uk](http://www.everbuild.co.uk)





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# ON-TREND TILES

Cameron Fraser of Ceramique Internationale explains how the use of wetroom systems is influencing both bathroom design and the creative use of tiles.

**C**onsumer demand in the bathroom environment is changing, with spa-style bathrooms and wetrooms becoming increasingly prominent.

According to a study conducted by AMA Research, the industry saw a 10 per cent increase in the demand for wetrooms between 2014-2016 – and this figure is expected to vastly increase by 2021. Wetrooms are no longer the preserve of upmarket homes with several bathrooms, but in fact can provide a stylish and practical option at almost any market level.

Previously just a practical room, homeowners are now beginning to treat bathrooms as a luxury space, a place for relaxation, pampering and escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life. They have to be practical, look good and offer a luxury element. In terms of the aesthetics, tiles can play a significant role.

Before the tiling process can begin, the wetroom needs to be designed and created, which requires skilled installation, especially as waterproofing is of paramount importance. The advent of BBA-approved construction boards has made the task of creating a spa-like environment easier for housebuilders and developers, coming in a flat pack to simplify installation. In addition, there are also a number of construction board systems that offer the opportunity to personalise wetrooms with kits for hanging-wall units, bench seats, and arched or curved walls – all of which offer the perfect substrate for the creative application of tiles and mosaics.

Once the wetroom has been created it is time for the important part, the tiles. In recent years there has been huge changes in the styles and trends. Consumers are looking for sleek, minimalist tiling to replicate hotel and spa-style bathrooms, but still want to achieve standout and focal points within the room. While this may have consisted of dolphins or a Grecian Goddess in the 1980s and 90s, we're now seeing feature walls consisting of three dimensional or textured tiles.

The advancement in inkjet printing has also enabled manufacturers to replicate natural materials, such as limestone, wood and marble on ceramic tiles, opening up new possibilities for housebuilders and developers to bring natural materials into the bathroom, while still benefitting from



**PREVIOUSLY MORE OF A PRACTICAL ROOM, HOMEOWNERS ARE NOW BEGINNING TO TREAT BATHROOMS AS A LUXURY SPACE – A PLACE FOR RELAXATION, PAMPERING AND ESCAPE FROM THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE OF DAILY LIFE**

using ceramic tiles.

One thing that has never gone out of fashion is the use of mosaics in wetrooms. In addition to more traditional mosaics, demand is rising for coloured glazing – particularly in small 12 x 12 mm mosaics mounted to 300 x 300 mm sheets – which helps to create the high-end design of spa showers.

Another tiling option, which has traditionally been seen as high end, is also predicted to see its popularity stretched across a much wider market. Marble – often associated with opulent homes of the rich and famous – has enjoyed a new lease of life, again thanks to the advances in inkjet printing, which allows its intricacies and delicate veining to be reproduced on ceramic tiles. Marble's popularity was demonstrated at this year's Cersaie exhibition in Italy, with many stands featuring marble effect tile, often in a Statuario design – a marble effect with a white background and sparse dark grey or gold veining.

This is nothing new, but now these marble tiles are being manufactured on extra-large format tiles. This is a natural extension from the large format tile trend, which has been growing in popularity over the past 12 months, with developers using large tiles as a tool to make a room appear

bigger. And of course, ceramic tiles offer many advantages over real marble – not least the reduced maintenance and care they require in a wet environment.

Selecting on-trend tiles to create a stylish and luxurious bathroom is not the only concern for developers however, they need to also consider safety. Anti-slip tiles which have an A, B, C rating – or put simply good, better, best tiles – have a surface texture or particles on the surface to help reduce the aquaplaning effect between bare feet and moisture, and should be used on the floors of all wetrooms.

The ultimate luxury in a wetroom is likely to be underfloor heating (UFH), which is simple to install at the point of floor installation. Not only does it enhance the homeowner's showering experience by offering a warm floor to stand on, but it ensures puddles of water quickly evaporate. The heating systems can be used to complement or replace traditional convected heat sources, such as radiators, helping to offer that minimalist feel.

New products and advancements in tile manufacturing are providing consumers with more choice than ever before and, in turn, offering housebuilders and developers the chance to provide a stylish, luxurious bathroom, which will help increase the price of the property.



## THE ULTIMATE LUXURY IN A WETROOM IS LIKELY TO BE UNDERFLOOR HEATING (UFH), WHICH IS SIMPLE TO INSTALL AT THE POINT OF FLOOR INSTALLATION

Cameron Fraser is director of Ceramique Internationale

### Snickers' new ALLROUND 37.5° Insulator Jacket



Sharp, stylish looks and 37.5° fabric technology make this jacket a must for winter on site or outdoor leisurewear. **Snickers Workwear** continues to lead the way with working clothes that are unrivalled in design, superb functionality and fit. This great-looking quilted jacket is padded with 37.5° fabric insulation for warmth and climate control to keep your body warm or

comfortably cool when you most need it. With a water-repellent fabric, it can be worn on its own or combined with other Next Generation working clothes or Outer Layer waterproof Shell Jackets. Fashionable and functional, this jacket has long arm cuffs with thumb grips for warm comfort and a high collar that delivers extra wind protection.

[www.snickersworkwear.co.uk](http://www.snickersworkwear.co.uk)

### Durable, professional paints



**Teknos** is at the National Painting and Decorating Show headlining its Futura Aqua joinery range, along with its Timantii interior products and Siloksan masonry paints. Futura Aqua waterborne urethane alkyd based paints are ideal for exterior and interior joinery items and provide varying sheen levels. Incredibly durable, the products are suited to professionals requiring a hand applied brush finish that flows easily with few brush marks, as well as

application by roller or spray. The Timantii product family comprises a series of professional grade interior paints for walls and ceilings in dry and humid spaces where good washability and abrasion resistance is required.

[www.teknos.co.uk](http://www.teknos.co.uk)



### New year, new products

**Freefoam Building Products** have got off to a cracking start in 2018 with the launch of two new products ranges – Anthracite Grey Round Gutter System and an Acrylic interior panelling range. Colin St John, Commercial Director, explained "New Year is always a time for new opportunities. We're delighted to launch these new products at the beginning of the year. It shows our commitment to creating new openings for our customers and these new products will open up new markets and give customers the range to meet demand from both housebuilders and the refurbishment sector". Acrylic panels – Freefoam has now added a new range of Acrylic panels to augment the product offering. The ultimate modern wall panel giving the perfect balance of style and convenience and the ideal alternative to tiles - saving time and money. Designed to be easy to fit the Acrylic panel range features a unique tongue and groove fitting system. Anthracite rainwater range – The addition of a round gutter system is the next logical step to give Freefoam customers more choice and the flexibility to meet demand from housebuilders and specifiers. The Freefoam grey rainwater system is manufactured exactly to Ral 7016 allowing customers to create a truly co-ordinated design with matching fascia, soffit and guttering, doors and windows.

01604 591110 [www.freefoam.com](http://www.freefoam.com)

## Designer Contracts click LVT ranges



**Designer Contracts** has expanded its click LVT offering as the trend for the fashionable, hard flooring grows. It's a go-to option due to minimal sub-floor preparation and ease of fitting. It is also available in a wide variety of designs, giving home owners a choice to suit their interior preference. Designer Contracts supplies ranges from proven manufacturers, Amtico, Pergo and Moduleo. Versatile and easy-

to-install, click LVT removes the need for extensive preparation, making the installation process much quicker, meaning less disruption to the home. It is also water resistant making it suitable for kitchens and bathrooms.

01246 854577 [www.designercontracts.com](http://www.designercontracts.com)

## EVO-STIK launches tile adhesive



EVO-STIK, from **Bostik**, has launched a new, white floor and wall tile adhesive, ideal for use with ceramic, stone and porcelain tiles with no risk of show through. Setting in as little as two hours, the cement-based adhesive can be used to fix tiles to a range of materials including wood, concrete and plaster. Suitable for internal and external use the new adhesive is S1 rated, meaning it offers enhanced flexibility and making it

ideal for use with under-floor heating and other applications where there may be some movement and vibration.

[www.bostik.co.uk](http://www.bostik.co.uk)

## Norbord best-selling flooring solutions



For many years, the preferred material for decking suspended timber floors has been chipboard – and that shows no sign of changing. **Norbord's** CaberBoard flooring range is a best-selling chipboard flooring product, its handy dimensions allowing ease of handling and its robust tongue-and-groove edging ensuring a secure and even surface. CaberDek and CaberShieldPlus use the same P5 moisture-resistant particleboard but also feature further added benefits meaning the floor can be laid even before the roof is installed. When installed with Norbord's CaberFix range of adhesives – Joint&Joist, T&G PVA, D4 or Pro Kit – a CaberBoard floor will produce a high quality, long-lasting, squeak-free chipboard floor.

[www.norbord.co.uk](http://www.norbord.co.uk)

## Crittall to provide specialist glazing solutions



Crittall Holdings Group, parent company of **Crittall Windows**, has announced the launch of a new fabrications division that will create and supply an impressive range of specialist steel and stainless steel glazing systems, screens and doorsets for both external and internal use. This will provide architects and

designers with bespoke, factory finished solutions to meet the most exacting client requirements. Crittall Fabrications will typically be dealing with customers in the UK and abroad on a supply only basis, direct to trade, but a full design and installation service can be provided via Crittall Windows, or one of the company's registered partners.

[www.crittall-fabrications.co.uk](http://www.crittall-fabrications.co.uk)




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## Encouraging Results for First Heat Network Consumer Survey

**H**eat interface unit and heat network billing provider Evinox Energy has welcomed the results of the first Heat Networks Consumer Survey, issued by BEIS.

Key findings from the survey - which asked around 5000 heat network consumers about their satisfaction with their heating systems, price, transparency of billing and quality of customer service.

The survey also shows that while there are issues affecting the sector that need addressing, heat network consumers were just as satisfied overall with their heating systems as non-heat network consumers, with nearly three-quarters reporting that they were "satisfied" with their heating system.

"The results are encouraging news for the district heating sector" says Chris Davis, Head of Sales and Marketing at Evinox; "there has been a dearth of qualitative market intelligence relating to heat networks, so surveys such as this are extremely valuable in understanding what consumers really think and help to gain an insight into their day to day experiences of living with these systems".

Two key observations from the report suggest that Evinox is already well ahead of the



curve in terms of the solutions it provides. Firstly, the report highlights that heat network consumers are likely to have less control over their heating system than those with traditional heating systems - with more than half of the consumers surveyed reporting that their systems were not fitted with a central thermostat, while around only a third have a heating programmer, in stark contrast to "non-heat-network consumers".

Evinox's fully electronically controlled ModuSat XR heat interface units are typically provided with a full "ViewSmart" heating programmer, allowing consumers to have precisely the same level of control over when, how and where their heating is delivered as a conventional boiler-based heating system.

ViewSmart also has the option to display current and historic energy consumption information, allowing consumers full control over their heating system usage and energy bills.

The report also highlights relatively poor transparency of billing in the heat network sector, something that Evinox is working hard to tackle directly through its in-house heat metering and billing service. Evinox has voluntarily adopted the key principles of the industry-led Heat Trust consumer protection scheme, with the aim of providing clear and comprehensive bills, as well as offering additional items such as Welcome Packs for new customers; an online portal to enable consumers to review their account status and make payments; as well as a published Fair Tariff policy, which explains how bills are calculated. The Heat Trust scheme drew praise from the report's authors.

The BEIS heat network consumers report comes as the Competition and Markets Authority has also announced its own market study into the heat networks sector, a step which Evinox also welcomes.

01372 722277 [www.evinoxenergy.co.uk](http://www.evinoxenergy.co.uk)

## Innovative heating transforms development



Housing developer, Sandrock, was keen to make its West Sussex development more energy efficient. It enlisted the help of The Gas Saving Company to design a new Home energy centre, including Alpha Heating Innovation's FlowSmart, to provide a high performing and

energy saving heating and hot water system. Alpha's FlowSmart offers the energy efficient benefits usually associated with a combi boiler while maintaining a high performance capability, making it a perfect component of the Home energy centre. FlowSmart works by sending cold mains water to the GasSaver, which is pre-heated using reclaimed flue gases, before diverting it to the copper coil heat exchanger in the thermal store.

0344 871 8760 [www.alpha-innovation.co.uk](http://www.alpha-innovation.co.uk)

## Best-ever filter launched by Sentinel



The new **Sentinel** Eliminator Vortex300 Filter has not only been independently verified to collect more magnetic debris on continuous pass than any other compact filter on the market, but is also the company's most compact, robust, and easy to install and service filter to date. What's more, the Eliminator Vortex300 filter eliminates all of the major problems installers face with most other brand filters, such as leaks and

difficult handling, instead answering the call for a powerful magnetic filter with exceptional build quality, leak-free design, and compact size. Its petite size, along with in-line installation and 360° rotating T-piece, make the Eliminator Vortex300 filter incredibly quick and easy to fit.

01928 704330 [www.sentinelprotects.com](http://www.sentinelprotects.com)



## Prepare your home for Winter

In the UK, our Winter conditions adversely affect many homes, causing water pipes to expand and rupture in properties and ultimately causing irrevocable damage, as well as triggering what has been reported as the most common type of homeowner insurance claim during the winter period - the escape of water, as a result of burst water pipes. That said, this widespread household winter insurance claim could be avoided through some basic preparation tips. Traditionally brass stopcocks have been the control valve for a home's mains water supply, however they are not always located in the easiest of places to reach and due to being susceptible to limescale damage, can be quite difficult to turn off in an emergency. There is however now a modern alternative to brass stopcocks, **Polypipe Surestop** stopcock. Fitted in easy to reach places, the Surestop stopcock features a lockdown button, that can be simply and easily pressed to instantly stop the water supply. There are no electrics or batteries involved, it works purely on the water pressure and it will not seize up or be affected by limescale - unlike brass. The Surestop stopcock is also available with a version that includes a discreet, remote lockdown switch, that could be fitted in a kitchen cupboard or surface area, for even easier access and visibility.

08456 431800 [www.polypipe.com/surestop](http://www.polypipe.com/surestop)

## New Wilo-Yonos PICO launched



Wilo has launched the new generation of the Wilo-Yonos PICO. A range of new features has been added to this renowned circulator for residential buildings. With this new version, Wilo has succeeded in not only upgrading one of the most established products in the

market, but also to an extent, it has been able to reinvent it thanks to new functionality and ease of use. As in the previous version, the outstanding Wilo ECM technology performance is combined with a precise setting of 0.1m. In addition, energy consumption can be monitored continuously on the LED display. For more information visit Wilo's website.

01283 523000 [www.wilo.co.uk](http://www.wilo.co.uk)

## H+H and SIG Offsite collaboration



In a unique collaboration, H+H UK Ltd and SIG Offsite have worked together to create the SIG I-House – an innovative housebuilding system incorporating Celcon Elements from H+H. The SIG I-House provides all the speed of offsite construction with the familiarity of a traditional build, from foundations to roof in just five days. The system can encompass the inner leaves of external cavity walls, floors, lintel, cavity closers, insulation and roof trusses. With the inclusion of soffit and fascia, the

system delivers the internal skin of a property, fully wrapped and ready for follow-on trades.

[www.hhcelcon.co.uk](http://www.hhcelcon.co.uk)

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Kingspan provides premium solution



Residents of two community housing blocks in Ashton-under-Lyne are enjoying the benefits of a more energy efficient home, thanks to a major insulation retrofit featuring the premium performance of Kingspan Kooltherm K5 External Wall Board.

After experiencing issues with the existing insulation, Ashton Pioneer Homes has invested in upgrading the thermal performance of two of its twelve-storey properties. Kingspan Kooltherm K5 External Wall Board achieves outstanding thermal conductivities as low as 0.020 W/m·K. It is designed to be installed behind lightweight polymer modified renders, such as the dry dash render applied to the flat blocks.

01544 387 384 [www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk](http://www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk)

EcoTherm launches new Eco-Cavity Full Fill



EcoTherm Insulation is pleased to announce the launch of EcoTherm Eco-Cavity Full Fill. The new foil faced, rigid PIR insulation board has been designed to allow simple compliance with the energy requirements of the Building Regulation and Standards, without requiring alterations to standard wall designs. The insulation board dimensions are sized to co-ordinate with brick and block sizes, allowing them to be quickly

installed with standard wall tie methods whilst their tongue and groove edges offer a superior fit and moisture resistance.

[technical@ecotherm.co.uk](mailto:technical@ecotherm.co.uk)

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With an intense scrutiny on the energy efficiency of homes over the last decade, the focus for building insulation has been on its thermal performance. However, as the agenda shifts towards achieving a deeper understanding on how our environment affects our health and well-being, there is now an increasing emphasis on how products can enhance the acoustic performance of our buildings too.

Whether people live in a busy city, a quiet suburb or even in the middle of the countryside, they will find it almost impossible to enjoy peace and quiet all of the time. From noisy neighbours, high trafficked roads, the humming of central heating or kitchen appliances, to the noise that building occupants can make, a home can encounter a variety of sounds which are not just annoying, but can also have a major impact on the health and well-being of those living in the property.

According to the World Health Organisation, excessive noise can seriously harm human health and interferes with people's daily activities at school, work and at home. It can disturb sleep, cause cardiovascular and psychophysiological effects, reduce performance and provoke annoyance responses and changes in social behaviour.

With this in mind, it is vital that both housebuilders and developers ensure that careful consideration is given to all building materials to ensure that a comfortable environment is created for future residents, and that the acoustic performance of a property exceeds the Building Regulation standards.

## WHEN IT COMES TO INTERNAL WALLS, THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO COMBAT THE TRANSFER OF NOISE IS TO BUILD A LIGHTWEIGHT PARTITION

In England and Wales, acoustic performance is covered by Approved Document Part E of the Building Regulations, which stipulates the minimum standards for sound reduction and absorption qualities in homes and schools. For example, the minimum requirement for separating walls within a new dwelling is to reduce airborne sound by 45 dB. With this level of sound insulation people would strain to hear loud speech in the neighbouring property. However, there are products available on the market which can help to exceed these standards.

# SOUND INSULATION

Jol Berg of Isover looks at the insulation solutions available for separating walls, internal walls and internal floors, and how glass mineral wool can offer the best all-round solution.





#### GLASS MINERAL WOOL

Despite glass mineral wool insulation often being viewed as a material that solely affects the thermal performance of a property, it can in fact help to significantly improve the acoustics of a building. If the correct product is specified, it can even contribute to the surpassing of Building Regulation standards as well as greatly improving levels of acoustic comfort.

Of all the insulation materials available on the market, glass mineral wool likely offers the greatest benefits. It is lightweight, easy to install, non-combustible, sustainable, provides effective thermal performance and most importantly for its acoustic performance, its porous and elastic structure allows it to absorb sound and drastically reduce the transfer of noise. What's more, thanks to its

### OF ALL THE INSULATION MATERIALS AVAILABLE ON THE MARKET, GLASS MINERAL WOOL IS LIKELY TO OFFER THE GREATEST SET OF BENEFITS

versatility, it can also be manufactured to meet a wide range of requirements from external and separating walls to internal walls and floors, roofs and loft spaces.

For separating walls it is recommended that glass mineral wool roll be specified, which is usually compliant with many of the generic Robust Detail specifications. The Robust Details scheme was developed as an alternative to pre-completion testing for demonstrating compliance with Part E of Building Regulations, and is seen by many as a cost effective, low risk way to comply.

When it comes to internal walls, the most effective way to combat the transfer of noise is to build a lightweight partition (either timber or metal stud), consisting of two sheets of plasterboard with a layer of acoustic insulation sandwiched in between. Although the Building Regulations state that a requirement of 40 dB is mandatory,

by using a mass-spring-mass partition construction it is easy for housebuilders and developers to increase it to 45 dB or even 50 dB (where loud speech cannot be heard between walls). Achieving these high levels of sound reduction will positively impact how the end users will use the home in the future, allowing them to do the things they want to do without disturbing others.

For internal floors, a mineral wool insulation is also recommended to enhance sound absorption within the floor/ceiling void in order to achieve the minimum airborne sound insulation performance (40 dB) required by Part E. Currently, there is no regulation for impact sound for internal floors, but for enhancing the acoustic comfort within homes, housebuilders are encouraged to consider ways to maximise both the airborne and impact noise performance of internal floors as well.

To ensure that future residents can go about their daily activities without disturbing people in other rooms or adjoining properties – and vice versa – it is recommended that housebuilders incorporate glass mineral wool insulation, which has high acoustic performance, during the specification stage. It is also recommended that housebuilders partner with a reputable manufacturer to receive guidance on regulations and the solutions available to them.

Jol Berg is head of technical from Isover

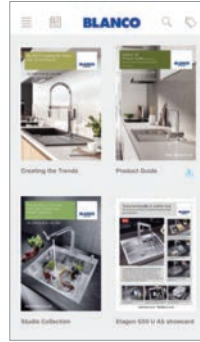
## BLANCO announces discount



**BLANCO UK** is offering retailers a 75 per cent discount on any BLANCO ETAGON sink and/or PANERA-S stainless steel tap when purchased for displays until 31 January 2018. The PANERA-S features a pull-out spray with an innovative control button at the top of the handle for convenience. The ETAGON sink range is designed for optimum functionality by adding a further level to the sink centre; the "one bowl – three levels" sinks demand no extra space. The unique ETAGON saucepan rails, along with the chopping board and bowl, offer the user three levels to work with. It is available in three models: IF, IF/A and Undermount, stainless steel or undermount Silgranit®.

[www.blanco.co.uk](http://www.blanco.co.uk)

## Brochure app innovation from BLANCO



A new app from **BLANCO UK** makes downloading and sharing the company's kitchen sink, tap and appliances brochures easy. The free, simple-to-use app gives the trade instant access to BLANCO's extensive range of kitchen taps, kitchen sinks, induction hobs, extractor hoods and accessories. Once downloaded within the app, the product brochures provide detailed up-to-date information, specifications and inspiration, allowing additions to be made to customers' kitchens based on the latest innovations and cutting-edge design.

[info@blanco.co.uk](mailto:info@blanco.co.uk)

## Hat trick for Reginox at luxurious developments



Sinks from **Reginox** have been installed at three Jones Homes luxury developments across the North West. Nebraska sinks from Reginox's Elegance range have been undermounted into striking white granite worksurfaces at Backford Park and Bollin Park, where the sink beautifully juxtaposes the linear design of pale grey kitchens. At Kingsfield

Park, Reginox's Le Mans sink from the company's Comfort range has been inset within wood effect worksurfaces that perfectly complement the development's high gloss white kitchens. Both Nebraska and Le Mans are manufactured from high-grade stainless steel and feature a 1.5 bowl design, allowing plenty of room for washing up larger items.

01260 280 033 [www.reginox.co.uk](http://www.reginox.co.uk)

## Wienerberger expands its range of clay pavers



**Wienerberger**, a provider of wall, roof and landscaping solutions, has expanded its range of clay pavers with the addition of a brand new KK80 clay paver. The KK80 has been developed from its existing Dutch range. The new paver will help Wienerberger to meet the increasing demand for durable pavers that are suitable for all commercial applications.

The KK80 clay paver is available in six natural colours including Bruno, Mastiek, Nero, Padova, Paviona and Siena. These pavers are colour fast, contributing to the fundamental resilience and long-term performance of the product – as well as making them a cost-effective solution suitable for a range of markets.

0161 491 8200 [www.wienerberger.co.uk](http://www.wienerberger.co.uk)



## CRL Quartz: a hard-wearing, beautiful surface for any kitchen

A kitchen work surface needs to be beautiful to look at and functional to keep it looking as good as the day it was fitted for years to come. CRL Quartz offers the best of both worlds, as a highly durable surface that can be chosen in one of 39 beautiful colours for a versatile finish in any style of kitchen. Choose a style that emulates the latest trends in design, from the CRL Quartz Marble, White, Natural and Rock collections, with the assurance that it will lend the kitchen a timeless elegance with a level of resistance to scratching and stains that means it will last the test of time. New for spring 2018 is the Renaissance Collection, featuring new colours plus five of the most popular colours in 2017. From quartz which is the whitest of whites, to a surface that has all the beauty of natural materials like marble or concrete but with none of the inconsistencies and with no requirement for sealing, CRL Quartz by **CRL Stone** is the ideal surface choice for any kitchen.

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# MAXIMISING KITCHEN SPACE

With appliances often taking up the majority of floor space in a traditional kitchen, Bob Andrew of Elfin Kitchens explains how the right use of products can help to maximise kitchen space in rented accommodation.

A report earlier this year revealed that the private rented sector in the UK is set to grow 24 per cent by 2021, which will mean that one in four of the population will be renters rather than owner-occupiers. This reflects a general trend during the last 10 years, which has seen the sector double in size due to conditions in the housing and labour markets. Younger workers in particular are attracted by the flexibility of renting, while the chronic shortage of affordable housing is reducing home ownership.

Interestingly, the trend for rental properties is consistent across the housing spectrum. Large scale, professionally managed high-end rental accommodation is proving just as popular as houses of

multiple occupancies (HMOs), which are often at the more economic end of the market.

Regardless of the rental cost of a property, there is usually one aspect of development that connects them all. This is maximising space to offer flexible living areas, ensuring a studio or apartment feels modern and comfortable, while also providing a good level of practicality and open space. Achieving this balance requires careful planning by a housebuilder or developer, with the specification of products, fixtures and fittings considered at the earliest design stages.

Unsurprisingly, there are a couple of key areas that create challenges, including the bathroom and kitchen. For the bathroom,

the industry has seen significant growth in pod designs, which allow a complete room to be 'dropped' into an apartment and simply connected to services. These designs are an excellent option for larger builds, but it is important to ensure the durability of components.

The challenge of long term durability in kitchens is common, where there is arguably a greater need for robustness than in the rest of the house. For this reason, it is no surprise that developers are looking for kitchens that not only offer a combination of style, flexibility and practicality, but are also able to last longer than the term of a tenancy. For this reason, traditional kitchen cabinetry is often an unattractive option. The main restriction



## THE BENEFITS OF PRE-BUILT KITCHENS ARE WIDESPREAD. THEY CAN BE DELIVERED TO A SITE IN ONE PIECE AND INSTALLED IN A PROPERTY QUICKLY, AS THERE ARE VERY FEW ONSITE REQUIREMENTS

with this type of kitchen is the level of adjustment required to ensure fixed sized cabinets fill a space correctly. This can quickly translate into spending more time designing and developing each property which, essentially, layers additional cost to the overall budget. Consequently, housebuilders and developers are looking more frequently to pre-built compact kitchens.

The benefits of pre-built kitchens are widespread. They can be delivered to a site in one piece and installed in a property quickly, as there are very few onsite requirements, other than connecting up the electricity supply, water and drainage. They truly are 'plug and play' products.

Furthermore, the durability of well-made pre-built kitchens is unrivalled, certainly when they are manufactured from powder coated steel. This allows housebuilders and developers to install units that have been specifically designed to last and withstand even the toughest environments. Such a specification is especially important in properties that have a high turnover of tenants and need to look attractive to prospective renters all the time.

Of course, a pre-built kitchen is only as good as the practicality it affords the tenants. After all, a kitchen should be capable of storing, preparing and cooking food, so a compact unit needs to offer all of these facilities in a restricted floor space. In order to do so, it requires a well-conceived design. It is this aspect that separates quality manufacturers from the competition, the more established of which are able to offer a wealth of options, not only in the size of a unit but also the configuration of appliances. Whether it is extra cabinets for storage, larger worktops for food preparation or a choice of cooking appliances, these are all options available to developers.



For larger properties, a pre-built kitchen could comprise a built-in combination microwave oven and grill, ceramic hob, dishwasher, sink and integrated fridge. Alternatively, in a smaller studio space, a

pre-built kitchen could simply consist of a sink, hob and fridge. The most important consideration is for the final kitchen to suit the target audience and available space, while remaining proportionate to the expected rental yield from a property.

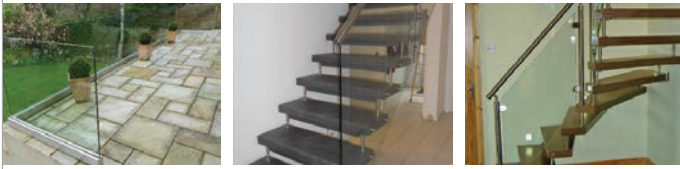
A final note on compact living relates to design. Just because a property is small doesn't mean it can't be stylish. A simple way to achieve a more impressive finish is to integrate colour into a scheme. By opting for vibrant colourways, or even an RAL finish, housebuilders and developers can easily create a focal point to a living environment and offer a more contemporary feel overall.

For a developer building properties designed for multiple occupancies, there are a number of challenges. Maximising space is always key to a successful project, especially when it comes to the kitchen areas. Consequently, it is worth considering the wider options available, especially the pre-built compact kitchen. After all, they offer flexibility in design, high levels of practicality and, crucially, superb durability. When faced with such a compelling combination, it is hard to argue against them.

Bob Andrew is managing director at Elfin Kitchens

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**W**hen it comes to selecting the most suitable interiors for a new development, the main focus for housebuilders is usually the bathroom and kitchen décor. However, one way to really make a statement in a new build, and one that is often overlooked, is the addition of stylish and design-conscious stairparts.

Selecting an appropriate style of stairparts for a project can really help to create an instant 'wow-factor' in a hallway, even encouraging an increase in the overall perceived value of a property. As the hallway is the first part of the home that any potential house buyers will see, choosing to install stylish and high quality stairparts is a much more cost-effective option than you might think, providing a safe yet design-conscious alternative to the standard styles that are on the market.

Although the hallway may not be an initial focus for developers, it's vital not to forget the importance of this part of the home, as making poor design choices in the hallway can devalue the rest of the property dramatically.

By scoping out the range of styles and design options available, developers can select a style to suit the overall look and feel of the project, providing an effortless look from start to finish.

With such a wide variety of styles to choose from, selecting a stairparts style to suit the development is a surefire way of achieving added value. By scoping out the initial characteristics of the project and getting in touch with a specialist stairparts design team, they will be able to help you make the best decisions when it comes to selecting appropriate parts.

## MAKING POOR DESIGN CHOICES IN THE HALLWAY CAN DEVALUE THE REST OF THE PROPERTY DRAMATICALLY

### MINIMAL SPACE, MAXIMUM STYLE

When planning for a project in a smaller property with minimal space, a main consideration should be to install stairparts that make the area feel light, bright and spacious. The traditional white oak spindles that are commonplace in many homes, albeit stunning for a traditionally-designed project, will be quite over-bearing and take up a considerable amount of space for a small, contemporary home. Slim-line spindles are a perfect solution for this.

Alternatively, if you want to achieve an

# STEPPING UP

Zara Prescott of Richard Burbidge advises on how developers can create a lasting impression by selecting the most appropriate stairparts.



instant wow-factor, then another option is to consider installing contemporary glass balustrades. The addition of glass balustrades not only adds a sense of style to a minimal design scheme, but interior designers have noticed the benefits of using glass in hallways due to its light-inducing properties, creating the feeling of space in more modest surroundings.

Alternatively, if you are in the process of designing a new build with a traditional look, it may be worth considering a luxurious white oak spindle design. Oak spindles often become the main feature of a hallway, so it's vital to make sure that the hallway in question can handle the statuesque look of a grand and striking design. If the project needs an attention-grabbing look, white oak spindle designs offer exceptional detailing and a perfect finish for a look that's in proportion to the scale of the hallway.

#### STEP UP THE SAFETY

As much as style is a major priority for homeowners, a main concern should also be the safety and security of this potentially dangerous part of the home, as recent statistics from the British Woodworking Federation Stair Scheme have revealed that 33 per cent of people have had an incident on the stairs in the last 12 months.

Making sure to adhere to the most up to date Building Regulations is vital to provide the most secure stairpart solutions. The main regulation to be aware of is Part K of the Building Regulations, which covers Government guidelines in relation to protection against falling, collision, and impact in residential buildings. This states that guarding, such as a balustrade, must be fitted to stairs or a landing when there is a drop of 60 mm or more, to ensure the utmost safety when using the stairs.

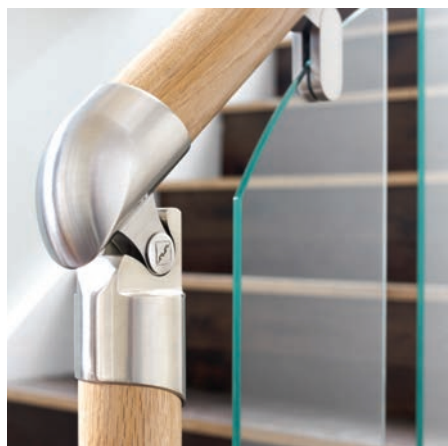
Another main consideration to make when planning the design of a staircase is whether to add a handrail to provide additional safety. The addition of a handrail reinforces the safety of the staircase by creating additional points of contact at all times, ensuring good balance and safety. Not only is a handrail a practical and secure solution, a stylish handrail can also enhance the look of a hallway, with minimal mess and disruption to the home.

#### TIME AND MONEY

When considering the installation of design-focused stairparts, it's important to consider the time and restraints involved for such a project. Often a common misconception is that installing stairparts takes considerable time and effort, but in fact, there are many options available that mean the stairparts arrive pre-painted and varnished, so no work has to stop waiting for varnish to dry. A range of

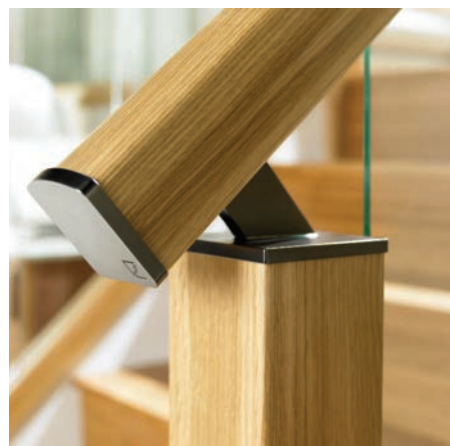


**AS MUCH AS STYLE IS A MAJOR PRIORITY FOR HOMEOWNERS, A MAIN CONCERN SHOULD ALSO BE THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF THIS POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS PART OF THE HOME**



designs now also come with a pre-drilled handrail, baserail and spindles, so many of the designs can be installed in less than 24 hours.

Being such an easy and simple solution to create added value to a project, it's



worth investing in designer stairparts to help cast a stunning finish on the entrance of a home.

Zara Prescott is communications executive at Richard Burbidge

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