

selfbuilder + homemaker

MAR/APR 2018

6 OF THE BEST TIPS ON ACOUSTICS

Silence is golden, so reduce unwanted noise wherever you can – this month's Ask the Expert gives you the knowhow

How to get the Downton look

Tony Pell and Sarah Latham on why and how to achieve a convincing period finish for your home

Victorian revival

Turning a neglected terrace into an enviable home

A dramatic second act

Working in the film business was nothing compared with the drama of Amber Valentine and Howard Reay's self-build



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CASE STUDY 20

The second act

Howard Reay and Amber Valentine both worked in TV and film, but this didn't prepare them from the drama of their own journey to creating a grand home. Roseanne Field reports

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Swings and roundabouts. While we are seeing more self-build plots coming through and being built on – supported by the Right to Build Task Force – the story opposite regarding Redrow trying to pull the plug on self- and custom-builds on a York site raises wider concerns.

While the developer may be right in saying that most self-builders might not choose a large new housing estate as the ideal place to build, we do not live in an ideal world. This is shown by the fact that while it's tough building your home, often it seems far tougher just getting to the stage of digging the foundations. This is of course in part due to the scramble to get permission on the right sites in our space-constrained country, and the associated administrative hoops to jump through.

If a developer is able to adjudicate that allocations for self-builds can lead to underdevelopment, unwanted diversification of build style, and even “anti-social behaviour,” then this bodes ill for future similar schemes. Let's hope that an open mind is applied here to the possibility that self- and custom-build can enhance the value of such sites, so avoiding the accusation that companies may be trying to maximise profit at any cost to the wider community.

We hope you enjoy this issue, in particular an extraordinary house we visited, on page 20. It demonstrates what you can achieve if you stick to your guns, whatever your build throws at you.

James Parker

DIARY

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Self- and custom-build homes included in draft Welsh Planning Policy

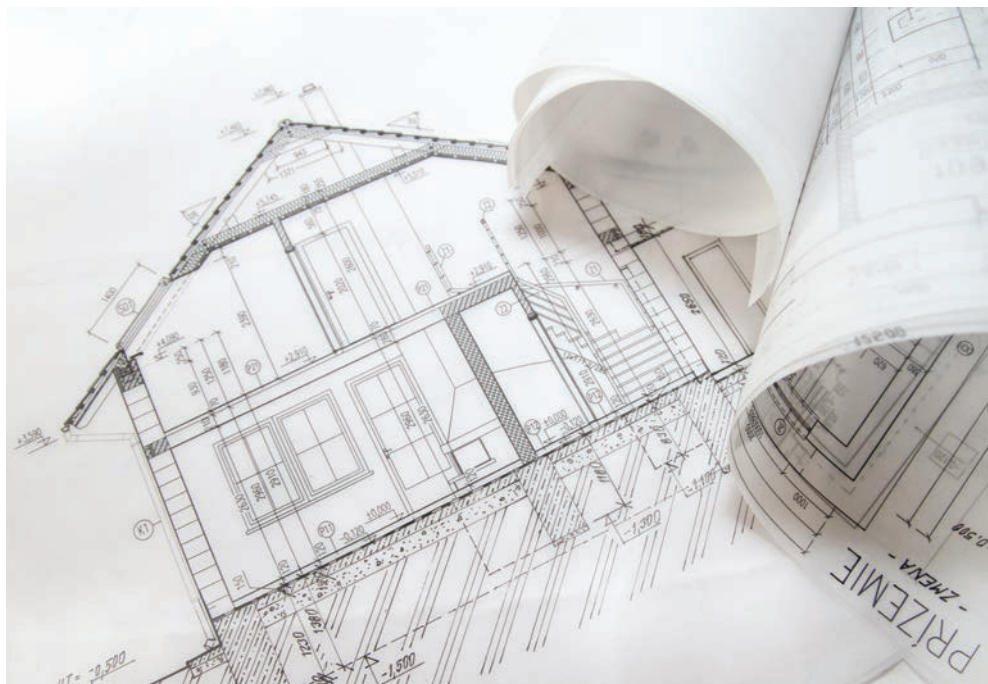
The draft Welsh Planning Policy (Edition 10) has included self- and custom-build, with the Welsh government launching a consultation to allow the public to have their say.

Planning Policy Wales sets out land use planning policies, with supplemented Technical Advice Notes (TANs) providing detailing advice on each specific subject. The new draft states that planning authorities "must also consider the opportunities for self-build and custom-build options to contribute to the delivery of the proposed housing."

To support the proposals, the Welsh government have published a Consultation Document online that asks for feedback on the proposed changes. Any responses must be submitted by 18 May.

Both the National Custom & Self Build Association (NaCSBA) and the Right to Build Task Force have held meetings with the Welsh government to highlight the importance of diversifying housing delivery.

Wales currently has one of the lowest levels of self- and custom-build in the UK, with the Right to Build legislation not in force and no current plans to bring it in. The Consultation Document and how to respond can be found online at the following URL: beta.gov.wales/planning-policy-wales-edition-10



Developer Redrow objects to self- and custom-build homes at York site

Redrow Homes (Yorkshire) has objected to the inclusion of self- and custom-build plots in its application to the City of York Council for 970 homes.

The 146-acre site had already been allocated for housing in the draft Local Plan. The Planning Case Report for the site by Johnson Mowat says the scheme is "not suitable" for self-build, despite local draft policy advising that at least 5 per cent of plots should be allocated to self and custom-build or small developers.

The Planning Case Report cited a number of reasons why Redrow felt it wouldn't be appropriate to allocate the suggested 49 plots to self- and custom-build. These included:

- Self- and custom-build plots are "likely to prevent comprehensive development and result in plots remaining undeveloped". Redrow believes such underdevelopment could lead to "anti-social behaviour"
- Self- and custom-build housing would differ from the design theme of the rest of the development, and if design consistency requirements were imposed "it is unlikely this would be attractive to self- or custom-builders"
- The "estate" nature of the development wouldn't be attractive to self- and custom-builders
- There would be "complications" relating to having various contractors onsite, other than Redrow's main contractor, "increasing risk/liabilities and reducing efficiency"
- It would be "inefficient" for Redrow to have to build on the allocated plots should they not be developed for self- or custom-build within 12 months.

The National Custom & Self Build Association commented that Redrow's concerns showed "a misunderstanding of how self-build operates" and that "design and time restrictions" can be implemented to combat the reasons given.

Redrow spokesman Matt Grayson told *Custom Build Strategy* that Redrow "recognise that homes of all kinds are needed to help solve the housing crisis and get more homes built. As far as self-and custom-build is concerned our approach is to consider each site on its merits and we have already committed to three custom-built homes within a pilot project at one of our developments."

Grayson also explained that plans for this site follow a "garden village" style and that a development of this scale will be better managed as a whole by Redrow.

Right to Build Task Force advises on new potential plots in Hampshire

The Right to Build Task Force has started working with Fareham Borough Council to consider opportunities to include a range of custom- and self-build housing plots as part of the planned 6,000 home Welborne Garden Village.

The Task Force's Richard Bacon MP and Mario Wolf, director of the Task Force, met the leader of the council, chief executive, local councillors and senior council officers to discuss opportunities at the site on the edge of the Hampshire town. The advice given will inform the planning application for the development by the promoters, Buckland Development.

Commenting on the meeting, Richard Bacon MP said: "It was a pleasure to meet with Fareham Borough Council today to discuss self-building opportunities at Welborne Garden Village. Developments such as this offer huge scope for bringing forward a range of well-designed housing options and are therefore a logical choice to help meet local demand for people who want to build their own homes."

Councillor Seán Woodward, leader of Fareham Borough Council said: "I was delighted to host Richard Bacon MP and his colleagues from the Right to Build Task Force. We are working with them to deliver more affordable housing and offer home ownership options which will suit a variety of modern needs. This includes offering space at Welborne Garden Village where people can design and build their own homes."

Director of the Right to Build Task Force Mario Wolf commented: "I am pleased that Fareham Borough Council has approached the Task Force for advice. Garden villages such as Welborne are well placed to include an ambitious and diverse custom- and self-build housing offer to local communities. We look forward to working with the team at Fareham."

NEW ARRIVAL

As well as assisting Fareham Borough Council, the Task Force has appointed a new deputy ambassador. Councillor Richard Lewis of Leeds City Council is executive board member responsible for regeneration, transport and planning and comes to the Task Force with considerable experience, having championed Leeds' Housing Growth Strategy and community-led self-build housing opportunities in the city.

Richard Bacon MP said of the appointment: "I am delighted that Councillor Lewis is joining the Task Force and will be promoting its work across the country, helping to champion the Right to Build to our local communities."

Since its launch the Right to Build Task Force has received 150 enquiries for support. One of its biggest successes to date is assisting in securing a resolution to grant planning permission (subject to a Section 106 agreement) for 165 self- and custom-build plots at Aylesbury Woodlands, part of Aylesbury Garden Village.

AN AMERICAN-INSPIRED EXTENSION IN BELSIZE PARK

A timber extension has been completed by architecture and design practice Studio Carver in Belsize Park, north west London. The extension was designed for an Anglo-American family and inspired by the traditional timber conservatories of mid-west America.

The extension, which utilises sustainable oak, poured concrete and zinc cladding, is an addition to the family's Edwardian house and was built on a plot measuring 10 m². Studio Carver worked with carpentry company Emanuel Hendry to push the limits of timber frame construction. The extension was tested offsite and then reassembled at the home.

A large strip skylight connects the new extension to the old house and, along with the two metre high windows, floods the area with natural light. In addition a built-in internal oak bench was also incorporated into the design.

Commenting on the project Studio Carver founder Keith Carver said: "As a fellow ex-pat myself it was a fantastic experience to bring a slice of American-inspired architecture to London. The small site was a challenge but we created something unique, bright and private within a heavily overlooked site."

The extension was shortlisted in the AJ Small Projects Awards 2017 and the Camden Design Awards 2017.



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Doubt over legitimacy of 'trusted trader' websites after BBC investigation

A BBC *Inside Out* investigation has cast doubts over the credibility of 'trusted trader' websites after it was found that fake profiles could be readily created on two such websites.

Although many of these types of sites have screening processes in place, a BBC reporter managed to set up a handyman profile on both Rated People and MyBuilder, while also submitting fake positive feedback and five star ratings on his own listing.

The reporter also found that with the help of friends, he could post and win bogus jobs, making the profile look even more legitimate.

Commenting on the revelations, the Chartered Institute of Plumbing & Heating Engineering (CIPHE)'s CEO Kevin Wellman said: "While there is no doubt these type of online tools have their place, it is also implied that all tradespeople have been pre-vetted for competence, experience and professionalism, but this is simply not always the case."

In light of the investigation causing confusion for consumers over where to find honest tradespeople, Wellman said: "Whether you're using a trustworthy trader website, word of mouth recommendation or searching for a tradesperson via local adverts, we always advise that consumers get at least three quotes for work." He also advises verifying their credentials, getting quotes in writing, asking for references and asking questions.

The CIPHE has an online Find a Plumber tool which provides a list of plumbers who abide by a six point Code of Professional Standards and hold industry-recognised qualifications.



New book explores the potential of self-build

UCL Press has published a new book, 'Self-Build Homes: Social Discourse, Experiences and Directions' a collection of essays that explore self-build's potential for creating "homes that are more stylised, affordable and appropriate for the specific needs of households".

In particular, the book identifies that self-builds contribute homes to communities and not just houses. The book uses research into the self-build sector and combines it with commentary and insights from experts in the self-build and wider housing industry as well as self-builders themselves.

The book looks at what motivates self-builders to build their own home, and also includes the views of local residents, planners, policy managers and scholars. It also explores the potential self-build has for creating communities, particularly when it is in the form of a wider co-housing scheme.

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR DEVON CUSTOM-BUILD SITE

20 custom-build plots have been granted consent on a site in Highweek near Newton Abbot, South Devon.

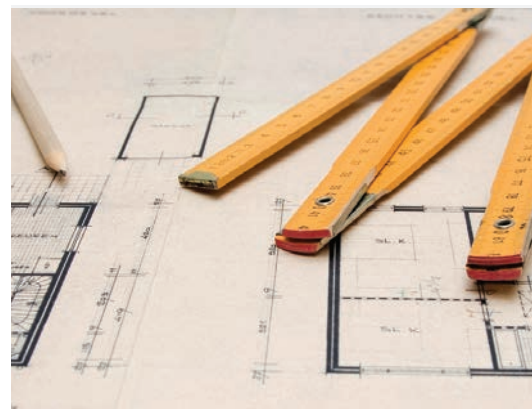
Teignbridge District Council worked with Devon County Council on the planning application. The site became available after a planned new link road was rerouted and its shape has dictated the type of housing suitable – a series of terraced and semi-detached units.

The council's plan for the site is to enlist a developer from whom people will be able to buy a build package, although as its self-build officer Charles Acland explained, it would still like to maintain some involvement. "We're keen to capture learning from this site as it's a first for Teignbridge and offers scope to create a showcase development," he explained. "It offers the opportunity for it to be a design exemplar to establish what can be achieved with custom-build, so that we can show future potential buyers and developers what custom-build can look like."

Funding from Homes England enabled the negotiation for the rerouting of the road and consequently the freeing up of the land.

Teignbridge District Council already has strong ties to self- and custom-build, being an early adopter of it and the first authority to implement a percentage plan that sees 5 per cent of "large sites" allocated for custom- and self-build. Known as the 'Teignbridge Rule', it's become a model for the allocation of land for this type of housing. Council leader Jeremy Christophers is also an ambassador for the National Custom and Self Build Association (NaCSBA)'s Right to Build Task Force.

The 20 plot custom-build site is an additional part of a 1,000 home development in the wider area, which under the Teignbridge Rule will also result in a further 50 serviced custom-build plots.





Facit Homes finds UK appetite for self-build is soaring

Facit Homes has reported that enthusiasm for self-build is growing rapidly in the UK as the offsite home builder reported a 30 per cent increase in new enquiries in the 12 months leading up to February.

The company is finding that a "large proportion" of self-builders are opting for a turnkey approach and appointing a specialist company to handle the design and build of their home.

Facit Homes attributes this growing interest to the increased legislative support from Government and the launch of the UK's first custom-build development at Graven Hill in Bicester, both of which are making it a serious option for consumers.

American couple Marc and Laura Marsdale, who were living in London, had always been fascinated with the idea of designing a

home and watching it come to life, but were deterred by the challenges of a traditional self-build. Marc commented: "Despite our long-held desire to build our own home, the traditional process for doing so in the UK made it seem too daunting. The effort of finding a suitable plot and battling through planning with all the associated risks and unknowns was just not something we wanted to take on."

It was for this reason they decided custom-build could be the route to go down. They purchased a plot at Graven Hill and have commissioned Facit Homes to build their home. "As well as the advantages of purchasing a serviced plot, we were attracted by the kind of community it creates, being mostly made up of people like us who have decided to build their own home," Marc said. "We get to be a part of the team during the design stage but can then leave it to the professionals to crack on and build our home, so it's the best of both worlds."

The Government has recently committed to increase the number of custom- and self-build homes built per year to 20,000 by 2020. Councils are also required to make serviced plots available to meet demand within three years at the end of each 12 month period. Bruce Bell, founder and MD of Facit Homes commented: "It's taken a huge amount of effort to galvanise the Government and local authorities to support those who wish to build their own home but the self- and custom-build tide is finally turning in the UK. Self-build is a great way to create more interesting and appropriate housing which meets the needs and desires of customers, rather than a 'one size fits all' approach."

Government introduces guide to improve consumer product safety recalls

The Government's new Office for Product Safety and Standards has teamed up with BSI, the UK's National Standards Body, to launch the first Government-backed Code of Practice (PAS 7100) for product safety recall in the UK.

The Code of Practice includes details on how a business can monitor the safety of products and plan for a recall, and how Market Surveillance Authorities such as Trading Standards can support businesses in their monitoring of incidents and implementation of corrective action.

It is the first major initiative for the new Office which was launched in January by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. It follows a recommendation by the Working Group on Products Recalls and Safety to introduce a Code to further strengthen the UK's tough product safety regime.

The Code of Practice comes in two parts. The first is focused on non-food consumer products and is intended for use by manufacturers, importers and distributors. It provides details on: how a business can plan for a recall; managing a possible safety-related product recall; establishing mechanisms to monitor the safety of products; investigating any potential product safety issues; and reviewing corrective action programmes to ensure product safety responsibilities continue to be met.

The second part is aimed at regulators. It details how they can carry out their role in ensuring businesses meet their responsibilities in respect of consumer product safety.

Commenting on the new Code, Consumer Minister Andrew Griffiths said: "This new Code of Practice will support businesses in dealing with product safety issues swiftly and effectively, ensuring people can continue to buy secure in the knowledge there is an effective system in place if products need to be repaired or replaced."

Director of Standards at BSI Scott Steedman said: "Public interest in product safety is higher than it has ever been and while consumer products generally perform without problems, there are times when products can become faulty and require a repair or recall. The Code of Practice was created to ensure that corrective action by manufacturers is taken in a safe and systematic way. The launch of this guidance is an important step in ensuring even higher levels of product safety in the future."

The Code was created with the assistance of leading retailers, consumer interest groups and industry bodies. These include Tesco, Samsung Electronics, British Retail Consortium, Royal Society for the prevention of Accidents and the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers.



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VELUX® launches MyDaylight

MyDaylight is a powerful new app by **VELUX** that enables homeowners to design their own room or renovation project by easily selecting parameters such as floor dimensions, roof height and ceiling pitch. They can then customise further by adding windows, floor and wall finishes, the room's location, and more. After approximately ten minutes, they receive a digital simulation which can be viewed in 360° or virtual reality, and gives a life-like recreation of the room and the changing effects of daylight inside. The app bridges a gap, leading homeowners from imagination to implementation: "Many people who are looking to reshape their home find it difficult moving from imagination to concrete proposals. The app brings homeowners one step closer to the home they have envisioned, as the 3600 and virtual reality visualisations make it both tangible and achievable," says Grant Sneddon, Daylight Expert, VELUX. The app is a unique opportunity for homeowners to experiment with different renovation options, and a mobile application means the service is available anywhere, anytime – thereby meeting the growing consumer trend for online customisation, browsing and shopping. For the first time ever, homeowners have the benefit of the most cutting-edge technology in order to experience daylight in an environment matching the specific characteristics of their own home. The MyDaylight app is free of charge and available in the Apple and Google Play Stores.

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INTERIOR INSPIRATION: HOME GYM

Being fit and healthy is a trend that's ever-growing, but going to the gym can feel like a chore. Incorporating a home gym into your self-build will take away that hassle and provide you with your own tailor-made exercise space. *Selfbuilder + Homemaker* rounds up some of the latest offerings in workout equipment



1



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4. Havsport solid wood sports flooring from **Havwoods** is a 22 mm thick solid hardwood flooring ideal for your home gym. Coming in a choice of timbers (pictured are White Oak and Hevea), the floor is stable and moisture-resistant and sealed with an anti-scratch lacquer. A variety of batten systems and sub-structure systems are available to suit various sub-floors and uses.

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3

3. The Vectra 1450 Online Home Gym is "the latest in the exciting evolution of weight machines", with an aircraft-quality heavy duty welded steel construction and powder coated finish. It can be custom-fit to ceiling height and/or user height. The Press Arm offers 18 positions and patented release lever functions for easy adjustment. It is designed to operate with a "natural arc motion".

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5

5. The MAX Trainer M7 is the top-of-the range trainer from **Bowflex**, with LCD/LED displays, "sport performance" stainless steel pedals, aerobar grips, and burn rate and resistance level adjustments. Website Fitness Superstore says that it is the firm's most feature-rich model and is "jam-packed with exciting training options to keep your workout engaging". It combines an elliptical cross-trainer with a stepper in a smooth, low-impact motion.

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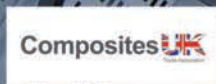
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INDUSTRY PARTNERS



The sound of silence

You want your home to be a relaxing and peaceful haven – and it's easier to accomplish than you might think, as British Gypsum's sound solutions expert Sarah White explains



The hustle and bustle of everyday life can be deafening, particularly when you just want a bit of peace and quiet in your own home. The good news is that self-builders don't have to settle for standard performance levels and can easily achieve superior acoustic performance in their projects.

WHAT DO THE BUILDING REGULATIONS SAY ABOUT ACOUSTICS?

In England and Wales, acoustic performance in residential properties is governed by Approved Document Part E – Resistance to the Passage of Sound. This document is split into two further sections: E1 and E2. The first section is

concerned with noise from adjoining buildings such as flats, terraces and semi-detached houses, while the second deals with sound transmission within the home itself. Generally speaking, this is the most relevant to self-builders, who are normally designing detached properties.

However, the requirements for internal walls and floors in E2 are actually quite minimal – most standard constructions will meet the 40 dB (decibels) of sound reduction necessary. The question, therefore, should not be whether the proposed plans satisfy Building Regulations but rather do they satisfy your expectations in your dream home?

Self-building provides a unique opportunity to design a home that's tailored to your individual lifestyle –

which includes turning the TV up to full volume if you want to or shutting out the kids' noise for some relaxation time. Taking this into consideration right at the initial design phase will allow you to create an enhanced acoustic design that meets your exact needs, while beating Building Regulation requirements.

HOW CAN I MAXIMISE ROOM LAYOUTS FOR SOUND PERFORMANCE?

The simplest way to reduce sound disturbance within a home is to avoid creating acoustic conflicts in the first place, through good room layout. For example, try to avoid locating studies, nurseries, bedrooms or other 'quiet' spaces next to noise sources such as bathrooms, TVs and household appliances.

Where this is not possible, upgrading the building fabric is the best solution and can achieve significant improvements for homeowners. Some typical areas where such a measure would be effective might be: ensuite bathrooms, adjacent bedrooms or utility rooms that connect directly onto living spaces.

A simple way to enhance internal walls is to upgrade to a 70 mm metal stud and use a double layer of heavy acoustic SoundBloc plasterboards and acoustic insulation, which is worth considering in any of the above situations. It's also important to consider the location and performance of doors, as well as flanking paths and electrical sockets, as these can all amplify sound transmission.

WHAT ABOUT OPEN PLAN SPACES?

Modern design trends certainly lean towards open plan living, and many self-builders will be looking to achieve the sense of light and space this style of layout offers. However, there's no denying that open plan designs come with their own unique set of acoustic challenges. Large rooms can look amazing, but they also run the risk of becoming echo-riddled caverns, particularly given the popularity of hard flooring surfaces.

To counter this, it's useful to incorporate sound-absorbing materials into the design to reduce reverberation. Certainly, soft furnishings such as rugs and carpets will have an effect, but a more efficient way to do this is to use sound-absorbing panels built into the walls – however, these can be obtrusive so choosing the right solution for your





home will depend very much on the desired aesthetic.

HOW DO I REDUCE NOISE FROM ABOVE?

Unless you live on your own, chances are you will be disturbed by noisy feet in the rooms above at some point – particularly if you have boisterous kids, whose rough and tumble play can be heard throughout the house. What's more, noise from living rooms and kitchens can easily seep through to bedrooms on the next floor.

Taking an acoustic approach to internal floors is the best way to minimise this disturbance and can be achieved relatively easily. For timber floors, simply adding a resiliently mounted ceiling with acoustic plasterboards and acoustic insulation can result in a 15 dB improvement over the Building Regulations, which is a significant jump in performance levels.

WHAT IF I WANT A HOME CINEMA?

As mentioned, part of the beauty of self-building a home is that you get to design a space that exactly meets your needs. So if you want a home cinema – or indeed a music room or a quiet space for study, work or meditation – that's what you should have! Designing sound solutions into your plan is one way to achieve this without disturbing the rest of the family.

Essentially, this can be created by compartmentalising spaces within the home using enhanced acoustic specifications for the walls, ceiling and floor. This is a very effective means of containing sound within the space or preventing external noise from seeping in.

HOW MUCH SPACE WILL THE IDEAL ACOUSTIC SOLUTION TAKE UP?

Although this question is most pertinent to homeowners looking to retrofit sound solutions into an existing property, it is relevant to self-builders too. The answer depends very much on the chosen system but wall lining upgrades and wall solutions are typically between 50 mm and 130 mm thick. However, the very small sacrifice that is made in space can pay huge dividends in the comfort and enjoyment you will reap from a well-planned acoustic design.

The important thing is to ensure your architect knows that you wish to use enhanced acoustic specifications, so that they can be accommodated in the plans right from the outset. It's much better to plan for good acoustic performance in the early stages, as new build solutions are far less disruptive than having to retrofit a solution when you find you have a problem further down the line.

Sarah White is residential sector manager at British Gypsum



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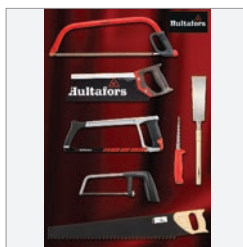
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THE SECOND ACT

Howard Reay and Amber Valentine both worked in TV and film, but this didn't prepare them for the drama of their own journey to creating a grand home in Buckinghamshire. Roseanne Field reports



THIS PAGE

The entrance features 6.5 metre high glass

FACING PAGE

The bespoke kitchen leads out to a pond, which reflects light into the room

LOW POINT

The flooding of the lower level only a week after moving in

Tucked away up a steep lane in the Buckinghamshire village of Hedsor, just north of Maidenhead, is Amber Valentine and Howard Reay's strikingly modern, three-storey home.

Having worked in the TV and film business, they have since made successful second careers in property and interiors. They couldn't be happier with their appropriately 'designer' desres, but the story of how they got here is straight out of a drama.

Amber and Howard own and run two businesses – Amber Valentine Interiors sells luxury bespoke furniture, while for their other venture, Zodiac Design, they design, build and furnish new build houses.

Their combined skills make them the perfect team when it comes to getting projects just right – Amber is an interior designer, while Howard undertakes the building design.

He says he has often found himself having to revise architect's drawings where they were lacking in information. "I found I'd done so many corrections I'd think I should just start again," he says. "I knew what I wanted to do and my father's an architect so I thought, 'let's just do it from scratch.'"

Despite the substantial nature of the design they were pleasantly surprised to encounter no snags gaining planning permission

He took a month out and taught himself how to use CAD. "I'd sit there for 10 hours a day just working out how to do one thing, but then eventually it started to slot into place," he says.

A TEAR-JERKER OF AN OPENING

Unfortunately, no matter how good your team, things don't always go to plan. The story began with Amber and Howard deciding to harness their abilities and build a home for them and their three daughters. "We built a forever home," says Howard. "It was exactly what we wanted."

Around the same time, they had built another



house to sell on for their business. However, the unstable political and economic climate in the UK in the mid 2010s meant they were struggling to find a buyer. "It just would not sell," Howard explains. Under increasing pressure to pay back the money they'd borrowed, it dawned on them they were going to have to do the unthinkable and sell their beloved new home.

"We thought 'we have no choice.' It was really awful," Howard recalls. "It was very painful because it was just the best site," adds Amber.

They accepted an offer, which meant moving into a rented home. "It was horrendous," Howard says. In a cruel twist of

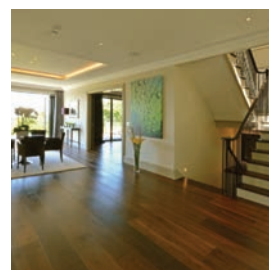
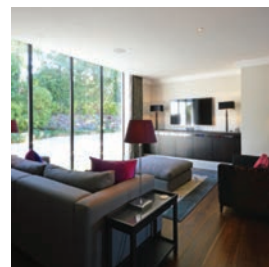
fate, the project they were struggling to sell then sold "almost immediately" after.

Despite the heartbreak, they were determined not to wallow in self-pity. They began looking for somewhere to live and were exploring the area where their new home is when their attention was captured by the house that now sits next door. Situated high up with uninterrupted 10-mile westerly views, this large, contemporary home inspired them. "Amber said, 'what we need is something with a view, something spectacular,'" says Howard. "We thought – we could build something like that."

They took a chance and knocked on the door of a house on the adjacent plot and



The house features both a living room (left) and TV room (below)



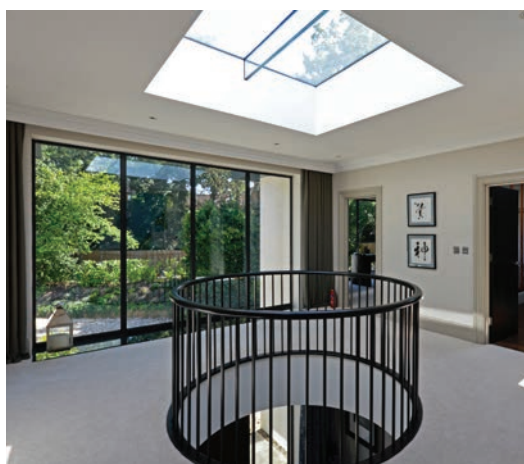
asked the owner whether they'd be interested in selling. As luck would have it, a previous sale had fallen through, so as Amber explains, they "negotiated on the front porch, and bought it within two weeks, in cash."

ROUND TWO

Howard drew up plans for the site which were something of a contrast to the modest house they would be demolishing. The couple like to challenge themselves with each project they take on, and this would be no exception. The three-storey, 10,000 ft² house includes a semi-basement level – the sloping site means at the back this leads out to the garden – and a "staggered" design. "It was really technically challenging to do," Howard explains.

Despite the substantial nature of the design and the fact no previous planning applications had ever been submitted for the site, they were pleasantly surprised to encounter no snags gaining planning permission. "It was actually a delightful process," remarks Howard. Having never worked with Wycombe Council before, they weren't sure how their contemporary, terraced and flat-roofed design would be received. "The planning officer came, had a walk around, then said 'I absolutely love it!' and it went straight through."

However, the smooth progress was short-



lived. "There was a high voltage cable running straight across our site, and we worked out we would be able to put our hand up and hold it once the house was built," explains Amber. So it needed to be removed and a new one installed underground before the build could proceed.

However because it served 200 people in the village, every house involved had to be sent a letter informing them the power would be off while the installation took place. When the day finally arrived, the cable brought by the utility company was a metre short – meaning the

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The three-storey house has a terraced design in response to the sloping site

HIGH POINT

Sitting out on a balcony watching the sunset

whole process had to be repeated. "There was a huge amount of money, plus months spent," says Amber. "It really screwed up our schedule."

Because of the slope, they had to excavate and insert a retaining wall. "It's 12 ft high, a huge piece of engineering," Howard explains. "For six weeks we built nothing but the wall, leaving us with a big flat site."

Although these factors meant the project suffered a small hiatus after the demolition of the old house, once building work began everything accelerated. In fact, the build of the house itself took 10 months.

CASTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

The couple assigned themselves strictly defined roles. "We've worked together for the last 10 years full-time and we have to have set roles," says Amber. "I'm project manager, I deal with all the budgets and I deal with all the trades – hiring them, organising where they work and getting all materials, but I'm not allowed to discuss detail!" This type of role suits her, she says – she worked as a location manager in the film industry before launching into business; Howard was a director in TV.

Amber would designate a floor of the house to a particular trade, allowing them to sometimes have 15 people working onsite on a given day – significantly contributing to the

"My obsession is sightlines. You'll find that the centre of a window is exactly in line with the centre of a doorway"

speed at which the project was completed.

Their experience in previous projects was key, as they could apply lessons learned. "Something I'm particularly keen on is that it doesn't change from the drawing," says Howard. "There has to be a really good reason to deviate, because in my experience it always goes wrong." He explains further: "When a decision is made onsite in 10 minutes with people making noise, you can't really know what the implications are." Aside from a few additional light fittings, Amber and Howard's house is identical to the initial drawings he prepared.

THE TEMPEST

Unfortunately, one last bit of drama stood in their way before their big finale. The couple had to move in slightly earlier than they had hoped,



The master bedroom has 10 mile balcony views



as their rental had come to an end. "The house wasn't quite finished – the classic story," Howard explains. "There were no lights working downstairs, so it was still a building site on the lower floor – it was piled high with materials and nothing was really finished."

The roofer also hadn't quite completed his work, but told the couple that despite some small details to finish it was 'kind of watertight'. However one 'detail' he hadn't finished was "opening up the holes to the downpipes," says Howard. They discovered this during a big storm when their daughter awoke to find water coming into her bedroom. "I was up on the roof in the storm trying to work out what had gone wrong. I couldn't see because it was dark but it was definitely filling with water," says Howard.

They put towels down and tried to sleep, but after continued alarm from the cat, Amber followed him down to the lower floor. "I found

water coming through every single light fitting," she says. The house had been painted by this point, but there was "four inches of water covering the whole of the ground floor."

They spent the rest of the night trying to push as much water out the doors as they could, including Amber's parents coming to the rescue with mops and buckets. Despite everyone's best efforts, they were convinced the floor would be ruined. "I was just thinking that's it, that's £15,000 worth of floor that's definitely destroyed," grimaces Howard.

However, they decided to hold off on replacing it and see how it went. Even though the floor had bowed, "it basically dried out and it's fine, it's still down there now!" Howard says. Incredibly, the only repair work that had to be done was repainting the 11 ceilings that had been damaged.

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Howard's design for the house was actually largely based on a concept he had dreamed up eight years earlier. "I'd always had this idea of doing this tiered house with glass and balconies," he says. A lot of the house's features can be found across others they have built, such as extensive use of glass. "My obsession is sightlines. You'll find that the centre of a window is exactly in line with the centre of a doorway and so on," says Howard. "He's never designed a house where you can't open the front door and see straight through into the garden," adds Amber.

AMBER & HOWARD'S TOP TIPS

- * Make sure you have everything designed and planned before you start. "When you're building it, you just don't have the time," says Amber. "The process is only stressful if you haven't done the work beforehand."
- * Give yourself time to process the designs. "Let it settle," says Howard. "After four or five weeks you'll either love it or you'll think 'what was I thinking?'"



The master ensuite with freestanding bath and dual sinks



The house is entered through a grand double front door at the middle level, with double height glass surrounding the entrance and reaching up 6.5 metres. The stairs and living room are on one side of the hallway and the large kitchen, dining and living space on the other. Upstairs are the bedrooms and bathrooms – all of which feature the same crema grey honed marble from Oman that Amber and Howard use in every project. The landing features an interesting circular cut-out in the floor below a skylight, allowing light to flood right down into the entrance hall. The lower floor is home to a large open area with a guest bedroom and ensuite on either side. This space also opens out to the garden and swimming pool.

To the side of the house, next to the bespoke kitchen, is a large pond featuring a tree which appears to 'float' on the water, which Howard included in order to bounce light and warmth into the room. The house also benefits from solar gain from the large windows, doors and rooflights, and has solar panels on the flat roof. The house is heated by underfloor heating throughout, and there are also two fireplaces. The house has a Rako lighting system, which can be controlled via their phones, as can the Sonos sound system. The house is ventilated with an MVHR (mechanical ventilation with heat recovery) system.

Despite the modern exterior, Amber and Howard approached the interior design slightly differently. Amber explains: "Modernist houses

"When you've built as many houses as we have you know what works and what doesn't, and you refine, refine, refine"

are normally tiled, echoey, don't have any detailing, but we've actually done ours in quite a traditional way." They've installed traditional skirting boards and architraves, wooden floors and curtains. "The kitchen/dining area is a massive space but it's comfortable and warm. You don't feel lost."

Their work both building houses and designing interiors and furniture means they've honed their skills to provide a highly tailored result to suit each house. "Most things here are bespoke, designed by both of us, including the paint colours. We find a formula and we work with it," says Amber. "When you've built as many houses as we have you know what works and what doesn't, and you refine, refine, refine," adds Howard.

Their hard work and determination has paid off – Amber and Howard say there's nothing about the house they would change. "We absolutely love living here," she smiles. ■

Victorian revival

When solicitors Hayley and Angus Mitchinson moved in to their Victorian terraced house in east London, they decided to revitalise it by adding an smart extension – now it's the envy of the street

Reflecting on the beginnings of his now greatly enhanced home in Mile End, east London, Angus Mitchinson jokes: "We bought the house knowing it would be a 'project' but perhaps underestimated the amount of work that needed to be done." Angus, along and wife Hayley are the proud owners of a Victorian terraced house built around the year 1890. Sitting in a quiet road, the property is full of history and character. Though they loved its antiquated style, the couple recognised straight away that it was crying out for a revamp.

"We spent our first eight months redecorating and refurbishing the front half of the house, which didn't require any structural improvements," explains Angus. When it came to the back half however, the couple knew something far more extensive had to be done. It was in poor condition, and to make the most of the home's potential, the Mitchinsons were looking to design and build something completely fresh and contemporary.

PLANNING

With an extension design in hand, the Mitchinsons' first step towards building their dream home was securing planning approval from their local authority; however, the process didn't turn out to be as simple as they first thought. "Our initial planning application, and subsequent appeal, were rejected," explains Angus. Realising that they needed some additional help, the couple enlisted Architect Your Home, a UK network of expert domestic architects, who drew up some comprehensive plans, gathered together the most important information and made sure their application was approved. After 15 months of rejections, the couple finally got the green light and could start to properly plan for their home renovation.

Their new design, nurtured by both the Mitchinsons and their architect, Tom

Gresford, ticked all the boxes in their brief. The couple were adamant that the design needed to be sympathetic to the existing Victorian part of the house and assist in retaining all its unique personality. Angus and Hayley also preferred minimalist design, and it was Architect Your Home who introduced them to the idea of utilising unusual materials to achieve a neutral, stylish look. Approval in hand, the Mitchinsons were finally able to search for the right builders and begin their project in earnest.

Angus adds, "We're so glad we teamed up with Architect Your Home; their design had far greater architectural value than what we originally proposed, and their vision and attention to detail gave the extension much more character than we would have been able to alone."

DESIGN & BUILD

When construction began, the Mitchinsons underestimated the effect it would have on them and their street. Once their original rear extension was demolished, the stand-out feature of its

replacement – namely the cross-laminated timber that covers the rear inside and out – had to be carried over and positioned carefully onto the house using a crane.

This required road closures – and was something the couple hadn't anticipated. Despite this small surprise, this part of the project ran extremely smoothly – "the extension structure was completed in a single week," comments Angus.

The couple fell in love with the look of cross-laminated timber (CLT), an environmentally-friendly building product, prefabricated in Austria, and were impressed by its unique aesthetic and excellent insulation properties. Complementing the Victorian character of the front of the property, the CLT panels offer a modern twist to a home, adding a great deal of spirit.

The entire extension covers two floors across the rear of the property; with so much space and potential, the addition has provided the Mitchinsons with a state-of-the-art new kitchen, a stunning bathroom and an essential spare bedroom.

CLT panels can offer a modern twist to a home extension

FINISHING TOUCHES

Unsurprisingly, Angus and Hayley's interior design style is as en vogue as their taste in domestic architecture. "We did spend a great deal of time on Pinterest deciding what we did (and didn't) like," says Angus. The final result



features several fashionable elements that make their home completely unique, and effortlessly chic.

The new, open-plan kitchen speaks for itself. Abundant in space and character, the cabinetry is painted in the kitchen colour of the moment – an opulent navy blue. With brushed steel handles and knobs, the room also has exposed shelving, creating a homely feel and displaying the couple's best crockery and drinkware. Accessorising the room is a minimalist black round table, matching white wooden chairs and a floral table display. Perhaps the most innovative element of the room is the disc-shaped glazing in the ceiling, allowing natural light to flood in, not to mention the focal window seat looking out over the couple's garden through a single, large fixed pane. Spotlights illuminate the room, coming in especially handy when the Mitchinsons cook and entertain.

The front reception room is accessed by a small flight of stairs leading up from the kitchen. A small glass ceiling also joins the two rooms and innovatively brightens the back of the lounge, which might have otherwise been quite a dim area. Funky furniture, a copper lighting



fixture and a contrasting, inviting armchair ensure the lounge is as on-trend as it is comfortable.

The additional bathroom, situated on the first floor, boasts dividers with a difference. "We now have beautiful internal timber detailing on the ceiling and first floor walls," notes Angus, commenting on the CLT panels that match the exterior of the building and adorn the inside walls of the room. The sink area is embellished with a vintage

storage cabinet, as well as contemporary copper lights above the mirror.

The Mitchinsons show no signs of stopping here. "We're hoping to start another project relatively soon (a loft extension), which we're aiming to complete before the summer," enthuses Angus. It seems they have the bug for renovation and who could blame them? Their home has gone from drab to fab, with more exciting additions and features to look forward to in future.



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Schueco's new panoramic sliding door



One of the leading sustainable building envelope specialist **Schueco UK** has just launched a new version of its highly successful ASS 77 PD panoramic door system. Designated the Schueco ASE 67 PD, the new door provides the same minimal sightlines with an outer frame that remains concealed in the building structure, resulting in a huge panoramic area of clear glass. It offers a number of additional benefits. The door can now be configured in a variety of opening combinations utilising two, three or four leaves, each up to 3.2 metres wide and 3.5 metres high. The Schueco ASE 67 PD door is available in two options with different outer frames. For more information contact Schueco.

01908 282111 www.schueco.co.uk

Designer selects steel entrance screen



Architects – and TV shows! – talk about using large scale glazing "to let the outside connect with the inside" of a property, but one design professional has specified a high-performance, triple glazed composite screen from a member of the **Steel Window Association** to ensure the heat inside does not escape to the outside. And similarly, the stylish assembly was chosen to keep extraneous noise out of her beautifully refurbished and extended North London home. The screen, which comprised five

separate elements, was produced using W40 sections with the proportions being optimised in terms of appearance and the physical limits imposed by incorporating triple glazing.

www.steel-window-association.co.uk

Specialist service eases building process

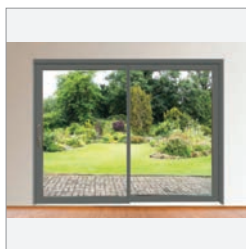


Builders and homeowners looking to include a conservatory as part of a project can now take advantage of a new consultancy service launched by a structural engineering practice. **Rhodes & Partners** have introduced the service, which eases the process of conservatory construction by allowing customers to access the considerable expertise which the practice has in this area. Rhodes & Partners' Technical Director, Peter Graham explains: "Our new service will help builders and

homeowners overcome those challenges by examining such areas as the suitability of the framing members and overall design from a structural point of view".

0161 427 8388 www.rhodesandpartners.co.uk

New design edition lift-and-slide door



Schueco UK, has just introduced the ASS 70.HI DE, a new, even more versatile version of the top-of-the-range, lift-and-slide door that Schueco originally introduced into the UK in 2010. This new Schueco system retains the basic profile depth of 70mm but offers an ultra-slimline configuration with central meeting stiles that measure just 48mm. The result is that the fully glazed doors deliver the clearest possible views with minimal visual interruptions, while still maintaining the maximum door height of

3m. Other improvements include vent weights of up to 300kg with a maximum glass thickness of 48mm. A new, easy-access threshold of just 25mm means that the danger of tripping is all but eliminated.

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Garador's range of Georgian style up and over garage doors are some of Britain's most popular garage doors. Constructed from high-grade galvanised steel and available in a large selection of standard and purpose-made sizes, they are excellent for almost any build.

The Georgian steel up and over door range includes Georgian, Beaumont and Cathedral designs, each with crisp and elegant panel pressings. They can be supplied with either canopy, retractable or retractable plus gearing, the latter of which provides extra drive through width.

These impressive doors are available in a choice of 17 colours in long lasting vibrant paints.

To find out more about Garador's Georgian Steel Up and Over garage door, call or visit the website.

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Get on top of the issue

Despite British Standards regarding slating and tiling being updated, sadly practice is still lagging behind, resulting in voided warranties and significant roof failures. Dr Kevin Ley of Redland explains

The first iteration of BS 5534, the 'Code of Practice for Slating and Tiling in the UK' was CP 142, published in September 1942. It set the standards for recommended best practice for slating and tiling, covering all aspects of pitched roofing above the rafters. It was first codified as a British Standard in 1978 and variously updated since.

Most recently revised in August 2014, changes included the introduction of mechanical fixing of all hips and ridge tiles, new wind uplift resistance requirements for underlays, and a considerable increase in the tile fixings particularly for interlocking tiles which are the most widely used. This increase has been brought about by a simultaneous increase in the minimum tile fixings required for tile security and safety along with increased design wind loads, by up to 100 per cent in some cases. Consequently, all single lapped, interlocking tiles on a roof now need to be nailed, clipped or both depending on exposure.

BS 5534:2014 applies to all pitched roofing, whether new build, re-roofing or repair work, and came into full force in March 2015. Although not legally mandatory, compliance with BS 5534:2014 is considered not only best practice, but also provides the best defence in the event of failures or disputes. In the self- and new build sector, the NHBC is especially vigilant in respect of the standard and, since July 2015, all new projects, regardless of size or phase; must comply with BS 5534:2014 to qualify for its 10-year Buildmark Warranty.

Despite the new code of practice being three years old, many new roofs are being installed that do not conform to the standard. For those designing, commissioning or installing pitched roofs, there is a need to be aware of the main provisions to ensure specifications are being met.

MECHANICAL FIXING

The revised code of practice states that the use of mortar alone can no longer be



relied on as a method of fixing as it has been deemed to provide no reliable adhesion. Mortar can still be used but only if accompanied by mechanical fixings. This means if mortar is used then additional materials are needed including a ridge/hip batten with fixings to rafters, and mechanical fixings for securing the ridge/hip tiles to the ridge/hip batten.

While the above measure secures the ridge/hip tiles it does not eliminate the risk of mortar failure, resulting in roof leakage and subsequent repair work as the mortar can still crack and drop out of the mortar bed. A simple way of avoiding all the hassle associated with mortar is to use the alternative of modern dry-fix ridge/hip solutions instead.

TILE FIXINGS

When the wind blows over a roof, uplift forces act on both the underlay and the tiles. The revised code of practice introduces new design wind load calculations based upon Eurocodes, resulting in greatly increased design wind loads – up to 100 per cent in some cases – which means a greater requirement for tile clips in

manufacturers' fixing specifications.

Since fixing specifications – the location, number and type of nails and clips required – vary so greatly and are based on many factors, including geographical location and type of building, it is even more important that every roof is fixed in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations, ideally with a site-specific fixing specification. Historic experience should not be relied upon!

UNDERLAYS

The issue of wind uplift resistance of roofing underlays, or resistance to 'ballooning' as it is sometimes called, and its consequences for underlays is addressed in the new standard. The primary purpose of a roofing underlay is to reduce the wind load acting on the roof tiles by taking a significant proportion of the wind load itself. To do this successfully, it must not stretch to the point where it can touch the underside of the roof tiles when subjected to wind pressure.

If a roofing underlay does stretch, or 'balloon', so that it touches the back of

the roof tiles, then it ceases to perform this primary function, as the wind load taken by the underlay is transferred onto the roof tiles. The tile manufacturers' fixing specifications do not allow for this additional load and roof tiles can subsequently be blown off the roof during a storm even if they are fixed in accordance with the tile manufacturer's fixing specification.

A related problem concerns the bursting open of unsealed underlay laps when subjected to wind pressure which can also cause the removal of roof tiles. Both the old and new code of practice recommend that a timber batten be installed over the horizontal lap between courses of underlay to prevent the risk of this happening. In practice this can be achieved either by increasing the horizontal lap of the underlay to coincide with an existing tiling batten, or installing an additional batten also known as a "fly" batten over the horizontal lap.

Many roofing contractors do not like installing these additional battens as they can cause a trip hazard when working on the roof. The preferred alternative is to increase the underlay lap which has the disadvantage of increasing the amount of underlay required as well as requiring more care during setting out of the roof.



The 2014 version of BS 5534 introduced a new single test that measures the ability of an underlay to resist stretching when exposed to wind pressure. These test results are then used to establish which types of underlay are suitable for the various regions around the UK.

Before commissioning or undertaking any work, it would be prudent to ensure

that any preferred underlay has the necessary checks and testing in place to ensure it is fit for use for the project in question. These changes are a significant step forward from what has been the baseline standard for roofing practice in the UK.

Dr Kevin Ley is technical manager at Redland

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The combination of internal delivery vehicle fleet and external logistic partners, supported by the company's collection and distribution depot in Glasgow gives complete nationwide coverage and enhanced lead times.

BLM British Lead supply a full range of ancillary products to provide their clients with everything required to complete a vast range of applications from basic flashings to the most complex Leadwork detail.

A new brand launched to the market in 2018 is BLM Roofing Tools, a unique collaboration between BLM British Lead



and Monument Tools, specialising in high quality leadwork & roofing tools.

BLM Roofing Tools offer a comprehensive range including lead dressers, shaping sticks, bossing mallets, chase wedges and many more. The range of tools is ideal for all applications from basic flashings through to the most complex Leadwork detail.

All BLM Roofing Tools products are made in Britain, have been tried, tested and approved by the Lead Sheet Association and come with a lifetime material defects warranty.

Russ Taylor, Sales Development Manager at BLM, said: "With continued product development a priority, the range will become more diverse and specialised in its nature allowing us to meet the uncompromising requirements of lead installers."

BLM strengthened support to users and installers of its products in 2017 with the launch of their Get Lead! App, which provides an extensive reference guide for users at all levels of skill and experience, with features including a stockist locator, calculators and step by step video guides covering the installation of common Leadwork applications as well as the installation of BLM's key ancillary products.

The stockist locator enables users to search for their nearest BLM British Lead outlet by current location or postcode. Search results are listed by closest proximity, with additional contact information and the ability to call or email the stockist directly from the app.



The GetLead! app provides detailed information on the wide range of Rolled Lead Sheet and Lead ancillary products offered by BLM; their features and appropriate applications. It also covers the technical aspects of Rolled Lead Sheet, such as quality, weight, sizing and correct use.

Basic Fitting Guides designed to assist with the installation of Lead Sheet in a range of applications including flashings, valleys, gutters and flat roofing are available to view, download and share from the app.

In addition, some really handy tools are included; a piece weight calculator to assist with costs and estimating and a roof pitch calculator allowing users to find the minimum lap required for certain applications.

Recommended H&S tips for storing, handling, installing or disposing of Lead, as well as safety data sheets are also available, providing users with full product safety information.

"The BLM Get Lead! app is the first of its kind for the Lead industry. We gave the features and content considerable thought to ensure it offers a one stop solution for anyone using BLM's products," added Russ Taylor.

The app is available to download free of charge for both Apple and Android devices.

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The roofers best kept secret is finally out – Aquaseal Liquid Roof from **Everbuild – A Sika Company** is a new, one-component, easy to use, all weather roofing system, ideal for waterproofing flat and pitched roofs.

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Suitable for use on a variety of substrates including concrete, mortar, brick and stone, Liquid Roof can be used on new roofs as well as refurbishing old.

Available in slate grey or black in 7kg and 21kg tins, Liquid Roof will leave you with a professional looking, fully waterproof roof in just five easy steps.

For further information on Aquaseal Liquid Roof or any other products from the Everbuild or Sika ranges, contact your local representative, call the sales office or visit the website.

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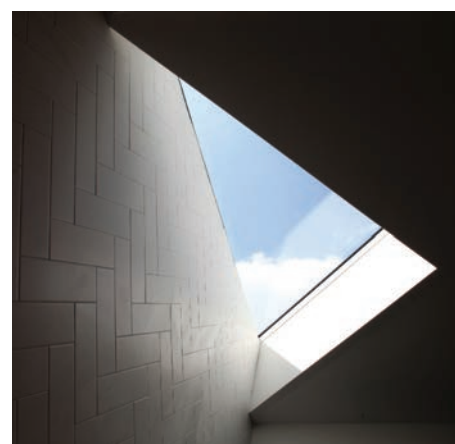
Located in a West London conservation area, the existing property required updating by remodelling the kitchen and dining room that suffered poor connection to the rear garden. North facing, these rooms received little daylight from the modest sized windows. It was a dark and dingy space.

Architect Simon Feneley's response at Feneley Studio, was to reconfigure the ground floor providing a utility and cloakroom off the entrance hall with a formal sitting room at the front of the property. A full height sliding pocket door reveals a newly extended family room with a panoramic view of the garden.

The roof of the extension is asymmetrical about the axis from the front door, providing increased floor to ceiling height and avoiding a long continuous corridor. Custom made East and West facing rooflights by **Lonsdale** provide generous amounts of natural light and are a focal point of the extension with dramatic results as the sun moves from early morning until dusk.

Ever changing forms of sunlight fall upon the polished concrete flooring which runs throughout the ground floor, with daylight washing down the full height herringbone wall tiling in the contemporary kitchen.

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Framework Directive for energy-related products

In October 2009, the European Commission published a framework Directive for energy-related products, thereby extending the scope of application to products that use, generate, transfer and measure energy. The energy-related products directive has already been implemented for a number of products and the new regulations will be applying to warm air heaters from January 2018. To enable the heaters to be placed on the market they must be fully compliant with the regulation. Appliances in the supply chain after the implementation date, can still be sold but they must be covered by an order, written or verbal. Orders would need placing for the non-condensing ranges of warm air heaters, the Hi-Spec and Economaire, by the end of December 2017 to comply with the new regulation. Providing these orders are in place, Johnson & Starley are able to sell these two models of heaters up until 26th September 2018. Naturally, Housing Associations and Social Housing who currently own, or are looking to upgrade their stock will wonder what the availability of spare parts will be. There is need to worry. **Johnson and Starley** has always been committed to keeping spare parts for heaters available for as long as possible and will not be making exceptions for these or any of our model ranges. Parts will be available for a minimum of 10 years after production of these two models of heaters has ceased.

01604 762881 www.johnsonandstarley.co.uk



Create your 'ideal home' with X-Wood cladding

Freefoam Building Products are delighted to announce another collaboration with the Ideal Home Show and Off Site Factory Homes. Working with the designers of this year's show, Freefoam X-Wood Urban cladding has been used to a stunning effect on the prestigious show home – the focal point of the whole show. Always keen to push the boundaries of design, the show promoters have created a house that features an unusual combination of old and new. The front features a traditional 'Victorian' red brick faced facade with sash windows and the rear aspect showcases a contemporary modern extension including an innovative elevated cantilever section. X-Wood Urban Cladding in soft white has been used to form the outer envelope of the extension contrasting with the grey doors and windows. X-Wood Urban will be part of Freefoam's X-Wood PVC cladding range when released later in the year. X-Wood™ is a premium grade 16mm thick cladding range developed as a highly durable board from a composite of three different layers, each with its own high-performance properties. A heavy duty plastic foam core, a durable solid plastic skin and a choice of two superior outer coatings – woodgrain Renolit colour film or subtle embossed wood effect PVC, both available in a variety of colours to suit all designs. For more information please call or visit the Freefoam website.

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Inspiration and ideas at Grand Designs Live



New and returning brands, innovative product launches and a host of seminars set to inspire as Grand Designs Live returns to London's ExCeL exhibition centre in May

Grand Designs Live, proudly sponsored by Anglian Home Improvements, will return to London's ExCeL from 5 - 13 May. Whether starting out on your first renovation, building a new home, redecorating a room, installing a new kitchen or simply looking for inspiration, Grand Designs Live is the must-visit event for anyone looking to learn about the world of interiors, design and self-build.

The show will offer visitors the chance to explore the very latest in technology developments, discover current trends and preview unseen products. Based on the Channel 4 TV series, and presented by design guru Kevin McCloud, the event will be packed with over 400 exhibitors, across five different sections covering Build, Kitchens, Bathrooms, Gardens and Interiors, plus a Technology Trail.

The Grand Build Hall will showcase products to help with any and every project, from adding an extension or renovating a historical property, to building a new home from the ground up. A wide selection of self-build suppliers including Internorm, Polypipe, Culmax and Airflow, as well as inspiring designs from a variety of architects, will offer innovative ideas for builds ranging from construction to finishing touches.

Those interested in environmentally friendly power and incredible design can stop by to see Tesla. Pinar will display their award-winning luxury security doors, while new exhibitor nHouse will showcase their varied range of sheet laminated timber modular homes. Visitors can also discover Kloeber's new ranges of doors,



as well as Fineline's high-end glazing and SWS UK's array of leading garage doors.

Grand Interiors will offer sophisticated and unique ways to furnish and complete a home. Browse hundreds of items and brands not readily available on the high street including Long Island Shutters, Lightstyle, Fantasia Ceiling Fans as well as top fire and bio-ethanol company, Planika.

Joined + Jointed will be launching four

new products at the show in addition to showcasing the Trident seating series.

Artistic partnership Miller James Artists will debut a brand-new collection at the show while Adventures In Furniture will be introducing four new sofas and two new dining tables. Fraser Besant Lighting will also show new designs, alongside their existing collection of handmade lighting.

Grand Kitchens will include some of the

WHEN & WHERE

Grand Designs Live takes place at the **ExCeL, London** from **5 - 13 May**. For more details and to buy your ticket visit www.granddesignslive.com

most cutting-edge kitchens and appliances on the market from the likes of Bora, Tomas Kitchen Living, Laz Furniture and Koivu. From fitted to free standing, design to storage, visitors will find solutions to help get the most of their space; along with the finishing touches that are essential to any kitchen.

Grand Bathrooms will showcase products from brands such as Motionspot who produce aesthetically-led accessible bathroom designs for the home, alongside other exciting brands such as Boutique Design & Build, who will be showing Crosswater's latest release, Union.

Those with a particular interest in the outdoors will relish the Grand Gardens section, with a selection of brands

spanning a variety of areas from outdoor cooking, swimming pools, garden buildings, hot tubs, landscaping and much more.

Nissen Huts, initially invented during WWI for military use, are now being converted into beautiful and versatile rooms for the garden. Zenpod garden buildings are built from state of the art components and materials. iHus produce low-carbon annexes which combine the latest technological advances and materials to set a new standard in independent structure, and Playways will showcase the latest launch in kids' playhouses.

After browsing the halls, visitors can enjoy the range of informative features at the show. Ask An Expert is one popular service, which has been so at every show. It returns this year offering visitors the opportunity to consult with specialists across a range of home-improvement areas, from finance to self-build and everything in-between.

The Grand Theatre, sponsored by Airflow, will see Kevin McCloud and a whole host of industry experts, along with some Grand Designers from the latest series of *Grand Designs*, provide a wide-reaching range of informative seminars on everything from architecture to building and beyond.

Returning by popular demand Kevin's Green Heroes will showcase the most revolutionary and useful eco-friendly gadgets and products on the market. This year visitors can get first-hand experience through live demonstrations of current and past 'heroes.'

The theme of 'Designed By You' will be brought to life by pioneering interior designers in this year's inspirational Grand Room Sets, sponsored by AXA Insurance. These innovative rooms will showcase products which are accessible to visitors and are from British retailers, manufacturers and designers.

New this year, the Salvage Yard will offer high-end, one off, unique pieces of architectural salvage while the Kitchen Design Stage will explore ways to enhance the most important room in the home; hear from kitchen design experts on the latest trends, gadgets and technologies. Discover brilliant bathroom decoration for the tiniest spaces as The Lavatory Project will see a selection of downstairs toilets designed to make a statement. This new feature will include mock-ups from six interior designers who will let their imaginations run wild to create unique and striking rooms, perfect for adding a touch of fun to every home!

Improve indoor air quality with Airflow



Airflow Developments, will exhibit at Grand Designs Live. Airflow provides a wide range of high performance, energy efficient and award winning ventilation solutions, assistance with bespoke designs and technical support throughout a project's duration. The Airflow stand will showcase the benefits of effective ventilation solutions for kitchens, bathrooms or toilets. Visitors to the stand can also gain a clear understanding from the Airflow team of why best practice installation is just as important

as high quality products to achieve the required performance. Airflow's team will educating the public on the importance of indoor air quality by providing Ask the Expert slots throughout the exhibition.

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Selfbuilders incorporating Phantom Screens



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The Biodigester range is backed over 45 years experience and full details may be obtained from Burnham Environmental Services Ltd.

www.biodigester.com

The Oak Designs Company

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www.oak-designs.co.uk



Mitsubishi Electric

Mitsubishi Electric has launched a new fan-assisted radiator that works superbly with either traditional or renewable heating systems and delivers a faster heat up time and lower running costs than the equivalent output double panel, double convactor radiator. The i-LIFE 2Slim is available in 1kW and 2kW models and offers a high heat output from 50 per cent less wall space (based on 45°C flow). Paired with a renewable heating system such as an Ecodan heat pump, and choosing lower design temperatures, the i-LIFE 2Slim can also potentially increase the payments homeowners can receive from the Renewable Heat Incentive.

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10
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Creating a smart spa

GROHE UK's Michael Gray discusses the growing trend for including smart technology to help create a spa-like haven in the bathroom, and the types of solutions available

Smart technology should be considered in any new bathroom design, particularly as more and more homeowners and designers are now looking to use the space as a personal haven to unwind and relax. Many smart products are now available in the bathroom from shower toilets, to spa-like showers controlled by Bluetooth technology, helping to create the perfect home spa bathroom.

This trend is driven by increasingly busy lifestyles, and the desire for not only an optimised user experience, but one that is personalised to an individual's preferences. As well as creating personal, luxuriously tailored experiences for the user, the smart home will be able to make resource management really efficient – saving water and energy without impacting on product performance and enjoyment.

SHOWER TOILETS

Shower toilets are the norm in Asia and now there is an increasing demand for these hygienic toilet systems in Europe, in both hotels and homes. Shower toilets feature an integrated bidet system and are designed to harness the gentle and effective cleansing benefits of water to help deliver optimum hygiene levels in the bathroom, and often come with a host of advanced features. Thanks to the gentle and natural cleansing process, the need for toilet paper is eliminated, thus the systems can offer excellent eco-credentials.

Certain shower toilets offer smart technology, including extensive options that allow users to create a personalised cleansing routine, including adjusting the water pressure and position of the spray arm, to the preferred temperature, spray pattern and cleansing cycle. The individual settings can be controlled intuitively using either the remote control or via an app which allows users to store all their favourite settings on a digital device. Some brands have also taken into consideration common issues for users, such as having to go to the toilet at night, and have



combated this by designing toilets with incorporated LED lighting.

TAPS

Already a well-known feature in public and commercial washrooms, touchless taps are now gaining popularity in residential bathrooms due to their unique combination of comfort and hygiene thanks to hands-free activation.

Through the touchless, sensor activated control, the taps minimise the spread of bacteria to contribute to a healthy bathroom. This also helps to keep the tap sparkling clean for longer, reducing maintenance and maximising product life. They also often come with a timer which automatically stops the water flow after a desired length of time to reduce wastage.

SHOWERS

Many people planning a bathroom today also want to take their future needs and requirements into account without compromising on contemporary, stylish design. Driven by demographic change, demand for "multi-generational bathrooms" continues to increase.

Wet rooms are a popular feature in the modern bathroom as they are spacious

and provide easy access for all users.

There is also a growing need for thermostatic shower control to ensure precise and safe user comfort. Look out for manufacturers that offer thermostatic technology to deliver maximum safety levels in the bathroom. This can include technology that balances out fluctuations in water temperature and pressure, and technology that ensures the outer surface of the shower remains cool to eliminate the risk of scalding.

Luxury hotel bathrooms often make a statement using products that encourage wellbeing and promote a space of relaxation, and homeowners are being inspired to emulate this in their own homes. As a result, there is a huge array of wellness products now available, including showers with mood lighting, steam functions and music controlled by Bluetooth. Oversized 'statement' showerheads are also available, alongside products that offer a range of spray patterns designed to suit the user's needs, with side shower sprays offering the opportunity for a massaging showering experience.

For smaller budgets, showering products are available that offer multiple



spray patterns from an intense jet to a relaxing massage spray. This adds a simple but indulgent addition to your showering experience, offering you the choice to tailor the water flow to suit your mood.

SMART SAVINGS

Water saving in the home is becoming more relevant than ever before, as people are increasingly aware that the products they use can have a significant impact on the environment. Many homeowners are now looking for

appliances and gadgets that help conserve precious resources, use less energy, and are kind to the pocket.

About two thirds of water consumption in private households is accounted for in the bathroom and as much as a third of a building's water is flushed down the toilet. In the UK alone, there are around 45 million toilets, equating to flushing approximately 2 billion litres of water every day! This can be reduced by installing a dual flush toilet system, which will only typically use four to six litres of water opposed to the old style flush


systems which use 13 litres per flush.


Another easy tip to save water in the bathroom is by choosing a water efficient showerhead. The Energy Saving Trust says that a family of four taking just under 20 showers a week can save around £80 a year on gas for water heating, as well as £120 on water bills if they change their showerhead. By choosing a low flow showerhead, you can reduce the amount of water you use in the shower as these clever showerheads, consume less water but still perform to the same standard as a regular head.


THE FUTURE OF THE SMART BATHROOM


Bluetooth, infrared and wireless technologies are all areas that will see further development as the smart home sector continues to thrive. Meanwhile, products with advanced user recognition features will become more common, such as those seen in other parts of the home with sensors that know when we are home and voice activation abilities. With advanced sensing there will be a time when you'll no longer have to set your preferred settings – such as water temperature and flow strength – for each use.

Michael Gray is product manager at GROHE UK


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Ten top tips from Lustrolite



The new **Abacus** video *10 Top Tips for working with Lustrolite Glass Effect Acrylic Panels*, is broken down into ten sections to provide helpful advice for the installer who loves this amazing surface kitchen and bathroom product. The sections consist of: cutting; drilling; sanding; fixing; wall substrate; measuring and dry-fit; kitchens; expansion; joining and cleaning. Lustrolite is an advanced multi-layer acrylic panel that looks like glass and is ideal for heavy-duty vertical applications. The product is quick

and easy to install and with its gloss finish, ultra-hygienic, hard-coated non-stick surface, does not harbour mould or calcium. The video is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuZD_HKjRsA.

www.abacus-bathrooms.com

Seamless design and leak free installation



Designed to make wetrooms even sleeker and cleaner, the Infinity single-fall shower tray by **Abacus Elements** is the only product of its kind on the market today where the slopes of the tray former and drain are fully integrated and sealed. This allows for straightforward installation and provides a truly unified, leak free and secure wetroom. The Infinity single-fall shower tray by Abacus Elements helps achieve a subtle style statement and a minimalist look as the tiles fall seamlessly into the wall. The

cleverly conceived tray eliminates the need for fiddly floor tile cuts and grout lines, with their potential to look unsightly and trap dirt, while also avoiding the problem of damaging leaks.

www.abacus-bathrooms.co.uk

Design Full Circle



Roman Limited, has launched their stunning Victoriana glass design collection. Victoriana styled Bathrooms have strongly come back into fashion and Roman is delighted to launch their Victoriana glass design. This stylish period design coordinates beautifully with classic sanitaryware and tiles. The print is a white etch colour fired into the glass during the toughening process. This is launched on key Hinged Door, Wetroom Panel and Bath Screen products within Roman's Decem

range for the premium market and adds a sophisticated finishing touch to any period bathroom design. The Victoriana is a very British design but is not only well-known and popular in the UK but also internationally.

01325 311318 www.roman-showers.com

Black to the Future



International shower designer and manufacturer, **Roman**, has launched their new Black Grid Pattern Wetroom Panel. The Black Grid Design Wetroom Panel has been introduced to the Liber8 Range with 10mm thick glass and a height of 2000mm. It features a matt black profile and a choice of square back to wall or ceiling bracing. The Black Grid Design printed glass leads the industrial look trend that is very current in bathroom design. The print is a black etch colour fired into the glass

during the toughening process. There is also the option of clear glass with the matt black profile, which can be coordinated with brassware across the bathroom.

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Treatex Hardwax Oils

Produced on a base of natural, sustainable raw materials, Treatex Clear Hardwax Oils are designed to protect and enhance the appearance of all interior wooden surfaces.

Protect outdoor surfaces with TeknosPro



TeknosPro's Siloksan range of paints and primers include Siloksan Facade and Siloksan Gel. Perfect for reinforcing and protecting outdoor spaces, CE approved Siloksan Facade is manufactured for use on concrete, plaster, lime-sand brick and mineral boards. The waterborne, full matt silicone emulsion paint is permeable, both UV light and heat resistant and features water-repellent technology which prevents corrosion from acid gases. Siloksan Facade does not require a separate priming

coat when used in conjunction with Siloksan Gel for the first coat. A waterborne gel containing polysiloxane, Siloksan Gel improves the water-repellent qualities of Siloksan Facade.

www.teknos.co.uk

Resiscape: A brand launch from Talasey Group



The Talasey Group, formerly known as Natural Paving Products (UK) is delighted to announce the release of the latest landscaping product to its portfolio with the launch of a new resin bound aggregate system, Resiscape. The Resiscape system can be used in a number of applications on both commercial and domestic projects and is quick and easy to install. The Resiscape aggregates come in pre-measured bags and are available in a range of six standard colours – Dorset Gold, Black

Basalt, Brittany Bronze, Danish Quartz, Red Granite and Silver Blue – giving users many options for matching it to complement other aspects of a property. Other colours are available on special order.

0330 333 8030 www.resiscape.co.uk

Mapei launch LVT adhesive: Ultrabond Eco MS 4 LVT

Mapei UK has launched a new one-component silylated polymer based adhesive for installing LVT floor coverings: Mapei Ultrabond Eco MS 4 LVT. This product is designed for use on interior floors for LVT floor coverings and as a universal adhesive for all types of textile and resilient flooring coverings, including vinyl. Mapei Ultrabond Eco MS 4 LVT is suitable for use with under-floor heating systems and in extreme environments. John Monaghan, Resilient Product Manager commented: "The versatility of the adhesive is immense and will enable fitters to complete jobs in areas where historically two part adhesives would be required. Installation times are also be reduced as Mapei Ultrabond Eco MS 4 LVT requires no mixing. Ultrabond Eco MS 4 LVT is suitable for use in domestic, commercial and industrial locations, for example hospitals, shopping centers and airports. Tough and highly resistant to shear loads, Ultrabond Eco MS 4 LVT is particularly suitable for floors exposed to direct sunlight, intense mechanical stress and areas which are constantly exposed to water such as communal kitchens, showers and wetrooms. Solvent free EMICODE rated EC1 R Plus, Ultrabond Eco MS 4 LVT is rated very low emissions and is suitable for installers who are sensitive to epoxy and epoxy/PU products, proving harmless to the health of the installer and end user. For more information contact Mapei by calling or visit their website.

0121 508 6970 www.mapei.co.uk



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Everedge Classic lawn edging is the ideal steel edging product for use around lawns and flowerbeds.

Flexible enough to be formed to virtually any shape and painted in a variety of colours, EverEdge Classic is the perfect maintenance free option for gardens.

In this example, the 100mm high option in brown has been chosen to create a defined border between lawn and flowerbed.

The edging is unobtrusive, bent easily around the design and will last a lifetime. For more information please contact Everedge.

01630 417120 www.everedge.co.uk/shop/view//1-Classic

Meet the kitchen specialists' choice



You may already know **Keller Kitchens** for high quality, Dutch fitted kitchens. In the Netherlands, where the company produces around 2,500 kitchens every week, the 80-year old company is big news. Big as in '559.741 sq feet of state-of-the-art production space' big, earning Keller a place in the top ten biggest European manufacturers. That's huge. Here in the UK, the brand has been building its profile and reputation with leading independent kitchen specialists. Preferring to sell via skilled

kitchen professionals, who know their audience and area, Keller Kitchens has a growing network of UK stockists tuned into the company's Dutch-built quality and expertise.

www.kellerkitchens.com

Innovative design with COLLECTIS 6-S sink



The generous sized functional sink has a central sorting bin to make it convenient for the user when organising and preparing food. The sorting bin comes with a lid to cover the bin when not in use and is integrated with a sorting compartment which is fitted with a space-saving waste pipe to collect the waste cuttings. The COLLECTIS 6-S can be combined with **BLANCO** SELECT to make the ideal waste disposal system. With an elegant look and practical outflow, the COLLECTIS 6-S is

available in White, Tartufo, Pearl Grey, Nutmeg, Rock Grey, Jasmine, Coffee, Champagne, Anthracite and alumetallic. The large range of colours offers the user multiple choices to suit their kitchen style.

www.blanco.co.uk

Polyflor launches Polysafe Quattro PUR



Polyflor, has just announced the launch of their new Polysafe Quattro collection. This innovative safety flooring range offers barefoot and shod sustainable wet slip resistance with a stud-free finish for enhanced comfort underfoot. Polysafe Quattro has been specifically designed to provide a high degree of slip resistance in continually wet areas such as standard and adapted bathrooms, walk-in showers and wet rooms in the housing sector.

As the potential for slips is higher in wet environments, it is important to choose a HSE compliant safety flooring such as Polysafe Quattro which offers sustainable slip resistance, assured throughout the product's guaranteed life.

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GET THE DOWNTON LOOK

Tony Pell of the Wood Window Alliance and Sarah Latham, founder of interior design agency Etons of Bath, look at the resurgent trend for period features in homes, and the key importance of windows

With our fixation on the future and our need to always be at the cutting edge and seek the latest innovation, it is perhaps easy to lose sight of our past. Our heritage can seem immaterial to some, but in fact our history is a key factor that helps to provide our buildings' identity.

Thanks to a myriad of factors, both cultural and economic, properties with period features are experiencing a resurgence in sales. But while this trend for 'period' is undoubtedly positive, it brings to the fore the challenge of how to rectify the commonly-held misconception that you must compromise aesthetics or historical accuracy for practical functionality.

Nowhere is this more relevant than windows. Inextricably linked to the architectural style of a house, windows define character. But too often, a misplaced and outdated fear of draughty wood windows, soaring energy bills and high maintenance requirements has left elegant properties scarred with starkly out of place windows.

In a time of uncertainty, people tend to look to the past for familiar comfort, a sense of belonging and a solid foundation, and nowhere is this more tangible than in period architecture. According to Savills, period features make historic houses some of the most sought-after on the market. With the rise of period TV dramas such as

Downton Abbey and a flourishing trend for vintage, heritage clearly has both economic and emotional value.

PRESERVING THE PAST IN THE FACE OF THE FUTURE

The heritage movement is emerging from a volatile political world. A lot has changed in the last year and that's feeding into the trend for vintage and period features – within properties, people are looking back to the past. Whether they're lusting over the fabrics and fireplaces in *Downton Abbey* or are inspired by projects on *The Restoration Man*, period homes and interiors are being championed. They have a stamp of individuality, often the result of the touch of a local craftsman, or locally-sourced materials.

People are looking for a 'project', whether that's taking on the renovation of an old property or installing period features, seeking out homes and products in order to cherish and preserve the history that comes with them. This ongoing gentrification, known as 'Heritage Gain', will see the ripping out of features once considered to be 'improvements' and the reinstatement of traditional features such as old fireplaces, timber framed windows, original floorboards and ornate corning.

PROTECTING THE 'PERIOD PREMIUM'

Of course while the majority of self-builders are building their home to live in themselves, its value is still an



important factor. Period architecture not only boosts the value of a house but makes it easier to sell, too. The desire for heritage means that people are willing to pay an average 11 per cent more for a house with well-maintained period features.

The 'period premium' suggests that, in the eyes of a buyer, heritage trumps all other practical considerations. Some years ago, English Heritage warned of a "plague of plastic on England's houses" and said that unsympathetic windows and doors were the single biggest threat to property values.

Many homeowners still compromise aesthetics for functionality, often unaware of the technological advances in timber window frames which make this compromise redundant. Wood windows are far more energy efficient than people realise, as they can now be double or triple glazed. Switch the more modern PVCu windows for more authentic looking alternatives full of character. Think reclaimed or replica wood casements,



Georgian sash windows and elegant, vintage frames that embrace period authenticity such as narrow mouldings and sightlines.

PUTTING THE HISTORY INTO MODERN HOMES

Heritage in the home no longer means adhering to one period style – 62 per cent of homeowners believe that period homes can have some modern elements and 49 per cent like mixing modern and period styles. For many, it's more intriguing to blend elements of the past and the future.

The most important features for bringing heritage to a new home are fireplaces, doors and windows, with three in four homeowners citing these. Doors and windows are some of the most conspicuous elements of the facade and the interior of any home. They're worth investing in, and because the wood can be painted in a range of colours they can be easily incorporated into any design scheme.

Another way to celebrate the heritage of a property is to use special

period-effect glass or even leaded or stain glass. Forget the feature wall – this is all about the feature window, and the inclusion of a piece of stained glass that throws multi-coloured light across a room is a bold and increasingly popular interior trend.

Mixing elements of the past and future allows for more creative freedom. Be it an open-plan kitchen diner, underfloor heating, or smart home devices, there are some modern luxuries we just aren't willing to give up. Research by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) found that Brits believe the 'feel' of a home to be more important than functionality. Mixing old and new in design and decor allows you to achieve this all-important character.

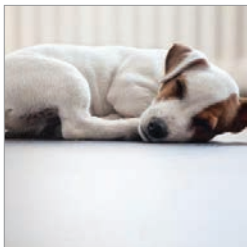
If adding an extension to an older property, don't be tempted to try and replicate original features. Some of the best extensions to period properties are the ones that really mark themselves as being new. There's juxtaposition between the new and the old, avoiding

pastiche. Creating something modern and contemporary can fit alongside and connect with the original building. When it comes to windows, a Georgian sash window has the history that goes with it, and beautiful proportions.

Upcycling is an effective way of bringing character into your home, finding unique items of furniture over generic items from big-name stores. And for those who don't want to take the full leap into vintage and heritage, there are small details you can include that hint at the past. Exposed floorboards in the living room and timber frames painted to match the interior decor can provide a glimpse into the past.

This year we are seeing an increased focus on craftsmanship and detailing. Find something that is elegant and fitting but doesn't look too fussy. Even basic necessities such as plug sockets and light switches can blend into a period aesthetic. The key message is that architectural detailing is one of the most powerful ways to bring character into a home.

Norbord's new flooring is very hush-hush!



Designed for both domestic and non-domestic applications, CaberAcoustic from **Norbord** comprises 28mm and 32mm variants of tongue-and-grooved particleboard panels with a 10mm sound-reducing layer bonded to the underside. This specially-designed layer, made in the UK from recycled felt, reduces impact noise transmission by up to 19dB. It also helps reduce airborne noise when used as part of the appropriate flooring system. The board's tongue-and-grooved edge profile

gives a tight, easily-fitting joint and maximum strength when fixed using Norbord's CaberFix D3 adhesive. CaberAcoustic gives the best sound reducing performance when installed with a perimeter flanking strip.

www.norbord.co.uk

Ultra-matt wood flooring collections



Kährs have launched two contemporary new ultra-matt wood flooring collections, Lux and Lumen. Recently winning Gold for 'Best Flooring' at the 2017 House Beautiful Awards, Kährs' Lux collection includes nine one-strip plank format designs in an array of natural colours, which are mirrored in Lumen's three-strip designs. The new surface treatment applied to the designs is non reflective; enhancing the colour and beauty of real wood, whilst giving a silky, yet strong shield against wear and tear. All

floors feature Kährs' multi-layered construction, with a surface layer of oak or ash. This engineered format is eco-friendly, whilst also making the floors more stable, and ideal for use with underfloor heating systems.

www.kahrs.com

Mapei launches Keraquick XL Fibrelite adhesive for ceramic

Keraquick XL Fibrelite is the latest lightweight flooring adhesive from **Mapei**. Fibre reinforced, Keraquick XL Fibrelite has the properties to fix sizes of large format tiles up to 1500mm x 1500mm in both residential and commercial installations. With a high yield, the deformable cement-based adhesive is suitable for installing porcelain, ceramic and non-moisture sensitive natural stone materials to floors, including those with electrical underfloor heating systems. When hardened the adhesive is frost and water resistant which means it is suitable for both interior and exterior applications. Jason Brunt, Ceramic Product Manager at Mapei UK commented: "Mapei have developed Keraquick XL Fibrelite to help the tile installer achieve 100 per cent contact with the popular larger format floor tiles we see today, with less effort. Mapei's new adhesive mixes to the ideal semi pourable consistency contacting the tile fully to the substrate with ease." Keraquick XL Fibrelite is a powder adhesive manufactured at Mapei's UK factory in the West Midlands. Composed of a mixture of special cements, selectively graded aggregates, synthetic resins, fibres and setting accelerators, Keraquick XL Fibrelite develops a high bond strength after only 90 minutes, allowing for installations to be completed very quickly with general foot traffic after 12 hours. For more information about using Keraquick XL Fibrelite in your project, contact Mapei by calling or visiting the website.

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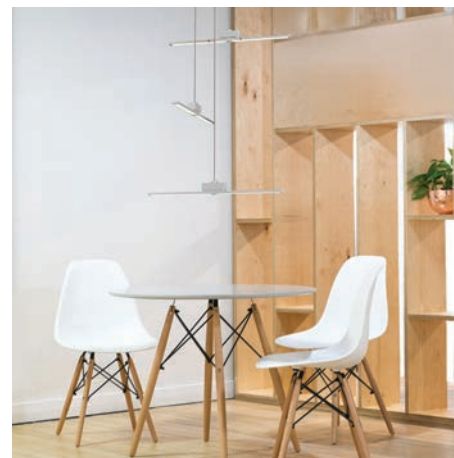
Mapei launches Dursilite Gloss

Mapei introduces Dursilite Gloss to the popular range of Dursilite water based paints for interiors. Dursilite Gloss is an internal enamel wall paint based on special acrylic and polyurethane resins and has a smooth, semi-gloss finish that enhances the brightness of colours. Dursilite Gloss allows you to create a high-end finish, is durable and resistant to yellowing and thanks to its polyurethane resin content, is highly resistant to staining and can cope with the most rigorous cleaning regimes and comes with a Class 1 wet scrub resistance, that conforms to EN ISO 11998. Dursilite Gloss bonds perfectly to all types of wall, plaster, skim coats and old paintwork that are sound and wellbonded; it also has good hiding power and is easy to apply. An elegant, high quality finish is achieved when using Dursilite Gloss in residential or commercial environments. Due to its hard wearing protection, excellent cleanability and low dirt pick up, Dursilite Gloss is recommended for use in areas that are used by the general public that are particularly exposed to high wear and dirt. Dursilite Gloss, along with all products within the Dursilite product family, can be tinted using the ColorMap automatic tinting machine. Other products within the Dursilite Gloss family include Dursilite Plus, Dursilite Matt.

0121 508 6970 www.mapei.co.uk

Getting the light just right

Shaun Davis of LED lighting specialists tp24 explains why it is essential to plan early to ensure the perfect lighting scheme



A good lighting scheme can really define a house and its interior design. Getting it right is all about planning at the early stages of a project – not leaving it as an afterthought.

Lighting is a versatile and important design tool that's often overlooked until the decorating phase. All too often self-builders and renovators make rushed and therefore poor decisions because the electrician is due on site the next day. Inevitably, they end up with regimented rows of recessed ceiling spots and pendants in the centre of every room with little thought to accenting, highlighting or controlling the lighting ambience.

The installation of low-energy light sources in new build homes is now a must – and with the rapid development of LEDs, you can enjoy energy efficient lighting that is functional, durable and stylish.

SCHEME DESIGN

You should ideally begin planning and making provision for your lighting scheme at the same time as the plumbing. Make a start by 'walking through' your plans, or house in the case of a renovation, and in each room ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the space going to be used for? Consider all possible uses
- Will there be furniture, architectural features or artwork that you want to accent/highlight?
- Who will be using this room? Someone of 60+ years generally needs 15 times more light than a 10-year-old
- At what times of day will the room be used the most?
- What direction does natural light enter?

Next, draw a plan of the room to help you determine the best points to situate lights. Mark permanent fixtures, such as windows and doors, alcoves, fireplaces and other heat sources. Then indicate the direction in which occupants are likely to spend most time facing. Mark where light switches will be best placed. Finally, have

a think about where you plan to site major items of furniture.

ROOM BY ROOM

Living rooms are where a really flexible design is required, to fit in with the multiple ways in they are used. It is no longer likely that background lighting will be provided by a central pendant. Increasingly, people are choosing to provide background lighting through a combination of downlights and table or floor lamps, to provide a cosy ambience.

Others may want a central focus, such as a striking chandelier, even if it mainly for decoration. In terms of accent lighting, consider uplights beneath fireplaces, downlights in alcoves, picture lights and concealed lighting behind cabinets. For reading, consider task lighting.

The key requirements in the bedroom are bright in the morning and restful at night. In addition to a soft background light, best achieved by table and floor lamps, accent lighting can draw attention to a stylish headboard. It is also useful and practical to have light switches at either side of the bed.

With bathroom materials usually reflective, lighting can have exciting results. Good lighting can make a tiny bathroom appear bigger, and a large bathroom more intimate. You will need to pay some attention to the various zones when it comes to bathroom lighting and to the IP rating of fittings. Zone 0 is the area inside the bath or shower, for example. The IP rating denotes a fitting's resistance to water and what is needed will depend on which zone the light is to be fitted in.

Recessed downlights work well in bathrooms as background lighting. Task lighting, above mirrors for example, can be provided through an illuminated mirror or by lights that run the width of the mirror, or that sit either side of it. It is best to avoid a single downlight above the mirror, as this will be unflattering.

Halls, corridors and landings are generally last to be considered, and consequently are often left with a bare bulb or bleak looking lampshade. They are tricky to tackle as their proportions are often compromised, but they are actually a great area to play around with lighting.

A row of central recessed spotlights is best avoided, and as with other larger spaces, variety is all-important. Use a mix of low level floor washer, wall lights, table lamps and perhaps the occasional spot to access an object.

You can also create a focal point with a large pendant or chandelier with a dimmer, but combine it with other light sources. In corridor-like hallways, spotlights may be a less clumsy alternative than a pendant.

Arguably the most important room in which to get the balance right is the kitchen, which needs to function efficiently throughout the day. You ideally need at least three varieties: background lighting, task lighting and feature pendant/accent lighting.

Background is key to providing all day general light, and best achieved with recessed downlighting spots. Avoid arranging this in a grid where all the light is cast on walkways. Use the spotlights more thoughtfully in dark pockets, over your workspaces, in entrances. Look at your kitchen plan and relate the lighting to this. Try not to place spots where they shine uncomfortably or create a shadow.

Move them to where they cast light on the work surface and wash wall hung units with light. A directional recessed spot directed towards a feature bank of units can also be very effective. It's best to have recessed spotlights on a dimmer switch.

The key area for task lighting is under wall cabinets using rope lighting or a variety of warmer fluorescent bulbs. Over a central island is also a good area to mix downlighting with feature pendants.

Shaun Davis is managing director of tp24

Dynamic ceramics

Ceramique Internationale's Peter Vann discusses the tiling trends that are currently influencing the market and the options available to self-builders

According to recent statistics, planning applications for major renovations and conversions have soared by more than 25 per cent over the past five years, as homeowners seek ways to create their dream home, with loft conversions, kitchen expansions and bathroom redevelopments.

While maximising space can help create the perfect home, it's often the finishing touches, such as the tiles, which can really make the difference, adding a sense of style, luxury and individuality.

Of course, choosing and laying tiles is not something you do as regularly as perhaps painting a wall or hanging wallpaper, so it is important to choose carefully. Over recent years, the growth in technical improvements, such as the use of inkjet printing which can perfectly replicate materials such as wood, marble and natural stone, has proved advantageous to both interior designers and more importantly, the homeowner. As well as offering a perfect replica of natural materials, the tiles provide a host of other advantages – such as ease of installation, durability, cleanliness, reduced maintenance and the conservation of natural products. This enables homeowners to introduce their preferred look – whether that is statuario marble, French limestone or aged oak – into the home without the associated costs and hassle.

When it comes to textures and effects, wood tiles have truly dominated the market in recent years, but many manufacturers are now branching out and introducing products that replicate textile and fabric finishes. Several manufacturers have launched collections that are reminiscent of hessian, although with a softer milder texture and designed for use on both walls and floors.

That's not to say wood-effect tiles are losing their popularity, in fact, there are now more options available than ever before. One manufacturer has recently released a collection of small format wood-effect tiles, but instead



of natural oak and ash tones, the tiles are available in a rainbow of colours.

Consumers are also becoming bolder in their selection as they strive to create standout features and focal points. Tiles are becoming so much more than a wall or floor covering – they can be used to generate the illusion of space in smaller rooms, to create flow from indoor to outdoor areas, and even to help fashion seats and pedestals within bathrooms.

In the bathroom especially, consumer confidence is having an impact on room design with homeowners renovating and investing to create standout spa-like or hotel-style environments. With the help of tiles and associated products bathrooms are now able to be much more than functional rooms and are becoming areas of escape and luxury.

Sleek, minimalist wetrooms have been popular for a number of years but new products on the market now allow for them to be more easily installed. Construction kits that can be used to create in-shower furniture, floating pedestals and ensure functional, but disguised, drainage are now easily accessible and are often customised with mosaics. Coupled with products such as underfloor heating systems to offer extended luxury, tiles really are a key part of these very popular household renovations.

The trend for large format tiles has been growing in recent years, but the latest development has seen the launch of extra-large tile sheets. Many of the European factories – particularly in Italy – have been investing in new technology,

which enables them to produce these huge – and very thin – tiles, sized up to 120 x 260 cm and just 6.5 mm thick. Many of the new collections were showcased at last autumn's Cersaie event – an interior trade show hosted in Bologna, Italy – and, while this size won't suit all homes, especially more compact UK houses, it is set to have a big impact.

In general, the use of large format tiles has proved to be popular for a number of reasons. Firstly, as a way of creating an illusion of space in smaller rooms – especially bathrooms. The bigger tiles mean there are less joins and grout lines, therefore the finish is more seamless. In addition, the reduction in grout lines means less cleaning and maintenance.

Another tiling option, which has been traditionally seen as a high-end product, is about to see its popularity broadened across a much wider market. Natural marble is often linked with lavish homes, but it has recently enjoyed a new lease of life thanks to the advances of inkjet printing, with its detailing and veining being perfectly reproduced on ceramic tiles. This was also showcased at the Cersaie 2017 event, many stands featured a new generation of marble-effect tiles, often in a statuario design, which features a white background and



sparse dark grey or gold veining.

Geometric patterns and effects have been big news in recent years and now we're reaching the next stage with more unusually shaped tile shapes – such as rhomboid and triangular – becoming more prevalent and we expect to see even more of this coming through. In terms of shape, 2017 saw a huge rise in chevron tiles for floors, and so it was no

surprise to see chevron wall tiles also emerging late last year.

Ultimately, new advancements in the production of tiles are presenting interior designers and homeowners with more choice than ever before, offering the ability to create a truly standout design.

Peter Vann is director of Ceramique Internationale

The latest addition to the Ultralite® family



Announcing the latest addition to the Ultralite® family: Ultralite® D2 from Mapei is a ready-mixed, lightweight and brilliant white adhesive for ceramic wall tiles, ideal for areas such as residential and commercial showers and wetrooms. Ultralite® D2 is a ready to use paste and has excellent initial grab. The viscosity of the paste enables easy trowelling on to vertical surfaces, providing excellent coverage when fixing larger tiles. Ultralite® D2 can be used for installing porous bodied ceramic tiles and

mosaics onto internal walls and highly deformable substrates in both commercial and domestic areas, fixing tiles to plasterboard, plaster walls and tile backer boards, as well as painted surfaces or existing tile surfaces.

0121 508 6970 www.mapei.com

CRL Stone launches Ceralsio tiles



Ceralsio tiles from CRL Stone are made from porcelain, a hardwearing, nonporous material that makes the ideal floor surface for all areas of the home, including the kitchen and bathroom. Flooring in the bathroom needs to be water-proof, easy to clean and hard wearing. Ceralsio from CRL Stone is a porcelain surface that meets all these requirements. Durable and non-porous, Ceralsio is the ideal material for use in the bathroom, available in two

thicknesses – 6mm for wall cladding and 10mm for floor tiling – and a large choice of tile sizes from 30 x 30cm to 150 x 300cm. Available in 25 colours, Ceralsio tiles tap into the latest trends in interior design.

ceralsio@crlstone.co.uk

British Ceramic Tile looks ahead

The trends for 2018 are a tale of two stories according to British Ceramic Tile's in house design team. On one side you have faded grandeur; interiors that have aged over time revealing an inner beauty. Surfaces are worn and distressed revealing layers of visual interest for a textural, natural look within an organic colour palette. As a complete contrast, metals and mirrored effects continue to play a key role within design schemes, bringing opulence and decoration. Strong lines and grids are also a key focus, alongside deep dark shades of matt black to amplify the monochrome trend. The trends influencing interior spaces and surfaces in 2018 are; Texture in abundance – Walls appear as though they are crumbling, revealing layers of interest. Paint-effects such as ombre and dip-dyes deliver rustic charm while natural stone effects continue to bring renewed textural interest. Sumptuous surfaces – Following on from the structured look seen last year, surfaces have developed becoming three-dimensional with raised surfaces bringing shadow and depth to interior spaces. Mirrored-effects and metallics – Reflective surfaces will be in demand in 2018, with mirrored accents and antiqued glass transforming interior spaces. Brass is back – Art Deco influences have given rise to a new metallic that is set to mesmerise interiors – brass. A warm, refined metal, brass changes gradually over time to reveal new depths.

www.britishceramictile.com



Lighting the way

Richard McLane of Bisca Staircases discusses various lighting options to bear in mind when designing a feature staircase, and why you should consult a specialist lighting designer as well as an architect to get it right

A staircase is the central spine of your home, linking spaces and people together. It should be functional, and fit perfectly in its environment. Even the best and most beautiful designs, showcased in a poorly lit space, can become featureless.

Light is key to how a space looks and feels, when designed and executed carefully artificial lighting creates an ambience but done badly, it can be stark, gloomy and unwelcoming.

Today's open plan living has rendered single room lighting schemes redundant to a degree. Contemporary properties with double or triple height spaces and large glazed areas really benefit from the experience of a professional lighting designer who can create schemes based on focal points, sight lines, features and functions.

Lighting on a staircase can dramatically change the aesthetics not only of a staircase itself, but also of the area surrounding the staircase. It is worth exploring all options and ensuring it works with the overall lighting scheme in a property before fully committing.

The main question to ask when considering the options is what are you trying to achieve with light? Your answer will most likely fall into one or more of the following categories.

AREA LIGHT

Area light should blend in with light levels in the surrounding area and provide safe, 'navigable' lighting levels on the staircase itself. This will also enable the staircase to be visible when its surroundings are dark – something to consider if the property is open plan.

Area light can be achieved using halogen or LED lights, either on or in the walls, ceiling or soffit above to illuminate the entire stairwell. A large number of small units give a more even light and allows the light fittings themselves to be unobtrusively recessed, emphasising the light rather than its



source. Artificial light can make a big difference even in an area with an abundance of natural light.

Where light is limited in the stairwell artificial light is even more important and can totally change the look and feel of the hallway.

FEATURE & MOOD LIGHTING

Feature lighting can be in the form of a chandelier or stylish drop pendant light, which looks fantastic hung down the centre of the stairwell. This can create a 'wow' factor as well as illuminating the whole area.

You can create or continue a mood with washes of colour to complement the decor or the ambient light. Use small lamps set into the walls beside the treads, LED strips set into the undersides of the tread noses or even use of bold colours to make a statement.

GLASS STAIRCASES

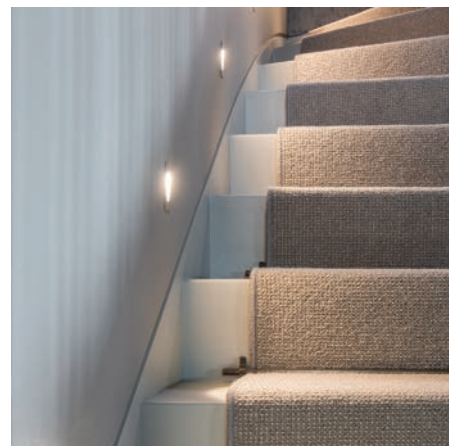
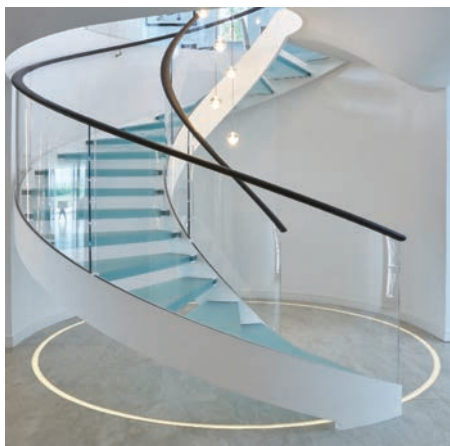
To light a glass staircase, LED strips can be set under glass treads or fibre optics

can be positioned from the side. Treads themselves can be grit-blasted or acid-etched so that they scatter and diffuse the light and take on an overall glow. Colour-changing LEDs are available, with adjustable light intensity to achieve the desired effect.

Small lights can also be set into the wall beside glass treads, shining into and through the glass, and being reflected around the inside to make the entire tread shine.

DIFFUSED LIGHT

It's a good idea to use recessed LED strip lights if timber or stone treads are hard up to a wall, or cantilevered from it. The LED strips can be recessed into the wall to emphasise the line of the steps and diffuse light across the treads and risers. However, a note of caution: this type of LED strip should not take the place of area lighting as the effects are not spread evenly across the treads and will not enable the user to see what they need to for safe navigation.



INDIVIDUAL TREADS

Spotlights can be recessed into the wall or stringer alongside the stair to highlight individual treads. This effect is often more about the light itself than about illuminating the staircase. This option must be considered carefully, as any light that uses a reflector can dazzle people walking up the stairs or passing by with the light at eye level.

WALL LIGHTS & HANDRAILS

As well as being decorative wall lights can add warmth and a welcoming touch to a hallway, for a more dramatic impact create a series of niches and sit miniature lights within.

Embedding LED lighting in a recessed handrail provides a feature both upstairs and down.

UNDER THE STAIRS

The underside of stairs can be a dark forgotten space, so it's advisable to focus on adding lighting here too. Uplighters can create interesting shapes and patterns on the walls.

Maintenance should also be considered as part of the design. Today's LEDs, in the main, are durable and long lasting; however, it's worth thinking about access to how bulbs/units will be changed if and when they fail. If incorrectly designed and wrongly specified, then the whole

staircase can become live when units fail.

Glare and angle of light are important to consider as if they are too bright lights can become a safety hazard.

Also don't forget about utilising as much natural light as is available. Specifying open treads, glass balustrades and even setting a staircase slightly away from the wall all help to facilitate the maximum flow of light throughout the stairwell. Done properly and safely, staircase lighting can be extremely effective and like staircases – it's always better to enlist the advice of a specialist.

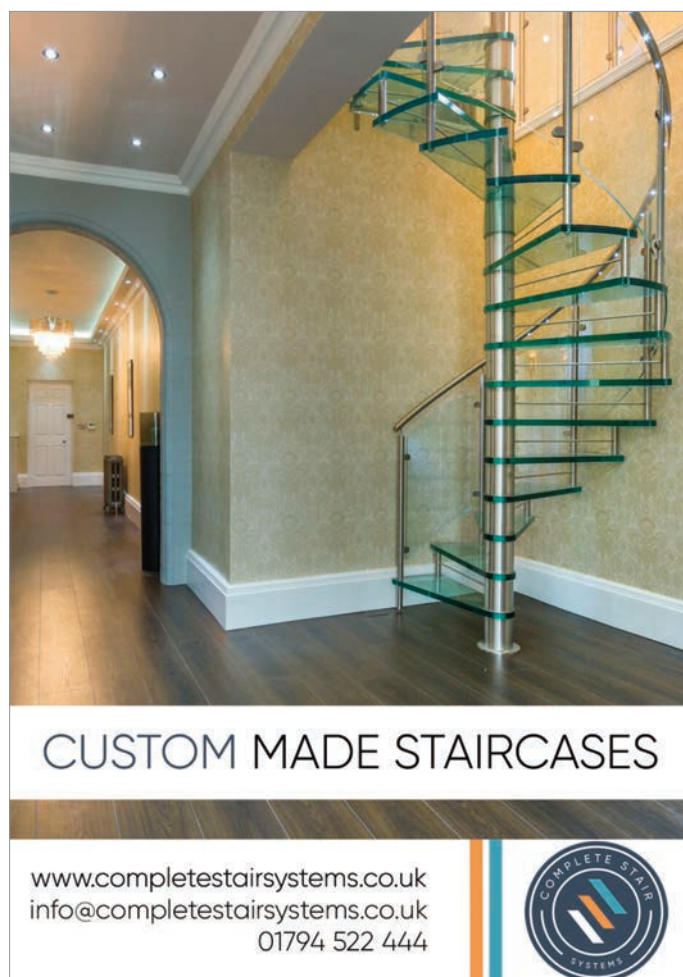
Richard McLane is design director of Bisca Staircases



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Seeing the wood for the trees

When installing a woodburner it's important to consider what you're going to burn in it, especially given the Government's increased determination to clamp down on the use of 'unsuitable' fuel. Stephen Talbot of Logs Direct explains further

According to research conducted by Logs Direct, 79 per cent of Brits believe there's "nothing like a real fire to come home to," and this shows why including a woodburner, a multi-fuel appliance, or an open fire in your self-build is a massively popular option. Experts even suggest that a woodburner adds 5 per cent to the value of a home. But what do you need to know, if you want to live a lifestyle that includes curling up in front of real flames with a glass of red or a good book?

One of the key things to note, as of last autumn, is that politicians are closely monitoring the environmental impacts of woodburners. This may seem strange when a woodburner, burning sustainably sourced wood, is considered an environmentally friendly appliance – providing heat from a carbon-neutral fuel. Woodburners and multi-fuel appliances are also around 80 per cent efficient, so where does the problem lie?

The answer to that is often, lack of knowledge. Those fitting or inheriting woodburning appliances do not always understand how to operate them correctly. Logs Direct's survey found 77 per cent of people admit to having "no idea how to light a fire in a woodburning stove." While the practicalities often fox homeowners, buying the wrong wood also leads them astray.

There has been too much temptation to buy 'dry logs', 'seasoned logs' and 'cheap logs' from farm gates and local stores, not to mention using wood chopped up in our own gardens. The terminology surrounding logs has been too vague and confusing, resulting in many homes burning the wrong sort of wood – wood that is freshly cut, not fully 'seasoned' and wet.

Burning moisture-laden logs leads to many problems, including the 'smog' that Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has

highlighted. A seasoned log should have spent at least one summer and a spring, or much longer for hardwood, drying out, off the ground and facing the prevailing wind. Few buyers can have the peace of mind of knowing this has been the case. Many of those burning freshly-cut wood are using logs with a moisture content of 80-90 per cent.

The result is an inefficient burn, spitting, acrid smoke and the release of tar vapour into the flue or chimney, where it condenses and forms highly combustible creosote deposits, or causes acidic corrosion on stainless steel flue liners. Harmful emissions, chimney fires and the invalidation of appliance warranties can be the hard lessons to be learned by those not burning kiln-dried wood, in which the moisture content is a safe 20-25 per cent, or less.

It also means more logs having to be bought. The heat output of an 'unseasoned' log is only a third of that of a kiln-dried alternative, emitting 1 kWh per kilogram of heat, rather than 4.5 kWh. Buying unseasoned wood is a false economy, and it also increases the storage space required.

NEW CERTIFICATION

The Government has tackled the wet wood issue, after consultation with experts like Logs Direct, HETAS and the Stove Industry Alliance. A new certification mark – Woodsure – has been launched, and new 'ready to burn' terminology introduced, to quickly direct consumers to the correct wood to buy. Wood suppliers using the new Woodsure mark have their wood regularly tested and audited and homeowners should focus hard on checking for this mark, as Environmental Health Officers will now be keenly monitoring emissions.

Burning wood ripped out from a property under renovation could also land



The heat output of an 'unseasoned' log is only a third of that of a kiln-dried alternative

you in hot water. Much of the wood used in properties built before 2004 is painted and varnished MDF, treated with Chromated Copper Arsenic (CCA) preservative, which releases harmful pollutants when burnt. Again, this can damage your appliance and could result in you incurring a big fine.

At the safety level, having a chimney swept by a member of the National Association of Chimney Sweeps, or the Guild of Master Chimney Sweeps, is a good idea, and you can make their life easier by burning a chimney-sweeping log first. This product cleans your chimney as it burns, making any creosote deposits more brittle and easier to remove.

If installing a woodburner, multi-fuel appliance or open fire in your property, make sure you check whether your home is in a smoke control zone. While using Woodsure ready-to-burn wood will keep you on the right side of environmental legislation, your choice of other solid fuel needs to be equally well-informed. Smokeless coal options are available for both multi-fuel appliances and open fires.

But choosing fuel isn't all about staying safe, keeping your warranty intact and caring about the environment; you can also choose some products to suit your lifestyle. For instance, if you have no time to light a fire in your thermostat-controlled appliance in the morning, use a smokeless fuel such as Blaze and leave it to slumber overnight, so you are nice and warm when you get up.

Similarly, decide what suits you most – a woodburner or a multi-fuel appliance. Woodburners have no grate, so you have



to empty the firebox manually, leaving a layer of ash on which the wood can sit, to help it burn better. In a multi-fuel appliance, there is an ashpan to pull out and empty, which you could find less messy.

Exciting alternatives to wood are also available, such as eco-friendly Brackenburn 'brackettes', formed from harvested dead bracken and emitting an autumnal aroma when burnt, and bio-bean coffee logs, created from recycled coffee grounds, collected from offices and cafes.

Logs are not all about burning however, with many homeowners now using kiln-dried, clean decorative logs to create talking points, or feature walls, while also benefitting from the amazing scent that alder emits, or the stunning sight of split or whole silver birch. If what you're seeking is the romance of flickering flames, rather than a bright glow, silver birch logs will keep you mesmerised for hours.

Stephen Talbot is sales director of wood and coal fuel specialist Logs Direct

Get the designer look from Eurostove



When you want something completely different from your wood burner yet you still want all the features and functions, look no further than the ECK from Hergom at **Eurostove**. This sleek, chic fireplace has a one-piece L-shaped window and is specially designed to be installed in a corner for your all-round viewing pleasure. Perfect for large, open-plan interiors as well as compact living rooms, the ECK wood burner allows for an optimum view from the front and side, creating a truly distinctive look that's sure to

add a striking centrepiece to any scheme. Contemporary and clean-lined, the ECK comes with an integral jacket for convection and is available as a left or right-hand corner design, making it suitable for any space.

01934 750500 www.eurostove.co.uk

Take advantage of the wood burning boom



Tyne & Wear based, **Schiedel Chimney Systems**, has launched a new wood burning stove and solid fuel heating course providing an opportunity for candidates in the North East to take advantage of the growing interest in wood burning appliances. Phil Lowe, Key Account Manager for Schiedel: We're delighted to offer this new course as it provides everything a would-be solid fuel heat installer needs to meet the requirements of HETAS registration, in order to trade safely

and legally as a competent engineer. The Introduction to Solid Fuel +Plus course, accredited by HETAS, takes five days and is ideal for candidates with practical skills and experience in any related area.

0191 4161150 www.schiedel.com/uk/training

A hot and efficient open gas fire



The best just got better! The much-loved Paragon One gas fire has been a firm favourite for over a decade now. The team at **Charlton & Jenrick** have recently been working on a round of updates for the fire and are pleased to announce the launch of the new improved, hotter and more efficient Paragon One Evolution Natural Gas fire. The Evolution offers a toe warming 4.4kW output from its advanced technology firebox at a substantial net efficiency of 63 per cent.

The fire is being launched in Manual, Slide and Remote for full versatility and is designed to work with the majority of trims, fascia's and frets in the range. Like its predecessor, the Evolution has a wide full depth fuel bed, realistic flames and a bright glowing heart.

www.charltonandjenrick.co.uk

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What's more, the UK designed Christon is also Ecodesign Ready, in line with the new European-wide programme to lower emissions and improve air quality, which comes into effect by 2022.

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