

PLANNING

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| INTERIORS

# selfbuilder + homemaker

MAR/APR 2019

## *Clear routes to happiness*

Glass balustrades – reasons to install, the practicalities of installing, and a great case study in Fife, Scotland

### **The building blocks of success**

What you need to know when block paving a driveway

### **The ups & downs of garage doors**

An expert answers all self-builders' key questions

### **ADDING A BIT OF BATHROOM DRAMA**

Bathroom interior design trends have taken a dark twist; our designer offers tips on how to create a really dramatic colour scheme





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EDITOR'S LETTER



Building your own home has to be one of the most satisfying, yet also the most daunting things you can take on. I'd imagine that for many new to the task, there is a further challenge in not wanting to ask any 'stupid questions.'

However it might be a useful thing to remember that there 'are no stupid questions' – asking those in the know could be the only way to avoid falling into very costly traps. Whether that's an expert in self-build at a regional Homebuilding & Renovating show, a representative at one of the major kit building firms, the local builders merchant, or a combination of all of them, it

could later prove invaluable that you ask whatever burning question you have, as soon as you can. Ideally meet face to face to get things clear, and take notes.

A range of assembled experts confirm, in our piece on page 8, that asking questions early on in a project is the way to happiness. For example, if you finalise design decisions before getting your finances straight, it might mean your list of mortgage options is severely limited. In the same way, making sure a project manager's expectations are aligned with yours is essential, and the only way to ensure this is to talk to them. The same goes for the builder.

Last but not least, don't assume you will be able to get the products you need, exactly when you need them. Give your supplier – as soon as you can – the dates you will need your materials; this info will enable them to help you as their customer. Don't expect them to come to you with information.

JAMES PARKER

DIARY

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# Architects get first self-build approval under new design-first policy

A Shrewsbury firm of architects has secured the first approval for an “exceptional” self-build home made under a specialist planning policy introduced by a council in Shropshire.

The property, designed by Base Architecture & Design, was given planning permission by Telford & Wrekin Council under its HO10 policy, which allows new homes to be built in rural settings if they meet specific criteria, which include promoting “exceptional and innovative design.”

The plans are for a five-bedroom home with a bespoke workshop, plus a two-bedroom annex to be used by a disabled family member, which will be built on land next to the owner’s home. The design of the house draws on the agricultural heritage of the area, and the property will be carbon neutral thanks to a sustainable heating and cooling system which includes a ground source heat pump and solar panels.

The council’s HO10 policy mirrors a paragraph in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – namely Paragraph 79, under which councils only grant a handful of planning permissions every year.

The architects’ design had to undergo two reviews by MADE, an independent body of professionals, which commended the scheme as a “cohesive and well developed and high quality piece of architecture, and one that responded well to this site.”

Commenting on the decision, Base director Carl Huntley said: “We are absolutely delighted to become the first ever firm of architects to be granted permission under the council’s HO10 policy. The independent MADE panel said that our proposal raised the standard of rural design in the area, and gave a bespoke and sensitive response to this particular site as well as enhancing the surroundings.”

He continued: “Importantly it will fulfil a need for our client and their family and their specific business and personal needs. We are proud to have set the bar for this policy, and look forward to seeing the vision become a reality.”



## Standard planning application form amended to include self- and custom-build

The Planning Portal (the “home of planning and building regulations information and the national planning application service”) has updated its 1APP standard planning application form to include self- and custom-build homes.

The form now includes self-build in relation to its sections covering gain, loss or change of residential use. According to the National Custom & Self Build Association (NaCSBA) this will “provide local authorities with a key tool to track the volume of custom- and self-build delivery taking place locally”.

The Right to Build legislation has put a responsibility on councils to grant enough planning permission to meet local demand. The new form provides councils with a better means of tracking the number of permissions they’ve granted, says NaCSBA.

## Self-builder’s CIL exemption overturned after judge decides an email is not a valid notice

A High Court judge has overturned a planning inspector’s decision to back a self-builder in a dispute over the payment of a hefty Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) fee.

The inspector had decided Lee Jones should be exempted on the basis of having submitted an email to Shropshire Council as a commencement notice. He received planning permission from the council for his detached house in Ellesmere, before sending an email to them in July 2015 informing them that clearance work would begin onsite later that month.

Jones then received a demand notice from the council in August, requesting an “immediate payment” of £36,861.43 plus a surcharge of £2,500. This was on the basis that a “valid” commencement notice – required under CIL Regulation 67 – had not been submitted and he was therefore not exempt from the fee.

Despite Jones successfully appealing the decision, Shropshire Council then challenged the planning inspector’s conclusion in the High Court. The judge agreed that the email did not comply with requirements of Regulation 67 and that Jones had therefore lost his right to the exemption. Commenting on the inspector’s decision, Judge Ockelton said: “It was plainly absurd to regard the email as a commencement notice within the meaning of the regulations.”

The decision follows the news that another self-builder Graham Evans is facing a £48,800 CIL fee after also failing to submit a commencement notice.

# National Custom and Self Build Week to feature McCloud talks and expert advice at ExCel

The National Custom & Self Build Association (NaCSBA) is linking with Grand Designs Live to host National Custom and Self Build Week from 6-12 May.

The week will consist of a variety of talks, headed up by Kevin McCloud, as well as one-to-one expert advice, taking place on weekdays at Grand Designs Live at the ExCeL, London.

The focus will be on ‘Busting the myths that self-build is challenging’ and will see a NaCSBA specialist on the main stage each day, offering tips and advice on self-building. Those searching for a plot will also have the chance to sign up to their local Right to Build Register at the event. There will also be a NaCSBA representative based in the show’s Ask the Expert area.

As well as the public activities taking place at the show, NaCSBA and Grand Designs Live will be holding a parliamentary reception on 7 May at The Houses of Parliament. The invitation-only event will be hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Self-Build, Custom & Community Housebuilding & Placemaking and will be attended by Housing Minister Kit Malthouse, Richard Bacon MP and Kevin McCloud. Self-builders will be able to submit questions to the panel through Grand Designs Live’s social media channels.



## REVEALED: THE LONDON BOROUGHS WITH THE MOST APPROVED PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Research conducted by Sellhousefast.uk has shown which London boroughs have seen the most and least approved planning applications in recent years.

The research was conducted by collating data from the London Data Store, analysing and grouping all live and completed approved planning permissions from 2006 to December 2018.

Property website Sellhousefast.uk decided to conduct the research following Hiscox’s findings that 15 per cent of homeowners are choosing to “improve instead of move,” including more than one in four “millennials.”

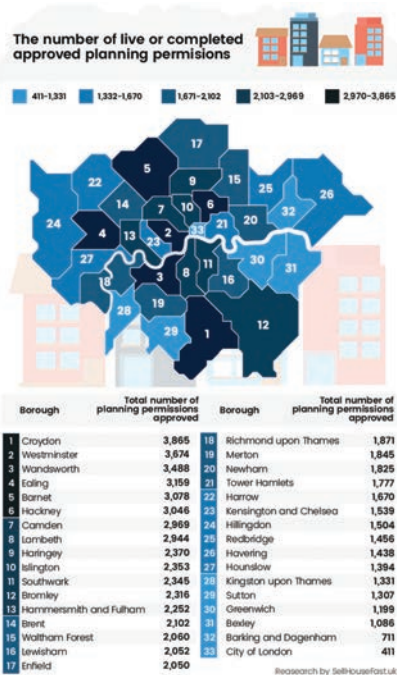
The research showed that the six boroughs with the highest number of live or completed approved planning permission applications are:

- Croydon (3,865)
- Westminster (3,674)
- Wandsworth (3,488)
- Ealing (3,159)
- Barnet (3,078)
- Hackney (3,064).

The boroughs with the least number of live or completed approved planning permission applications are:

- Kingston upon Thames (1,331)
- Sutton (1,307)
- Greenwich (1,199)
- Bexley (1,086)
- Barking and Dagenham (711)
- City of London (411).

The latest statistics from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government show that of a total 118,100 applications submitted in England between April and June 2018, 94,300 (88 per cent) were approved.



## Self-builder Code of Practice will offer ‘security’ to consumers

The National Custom & Self Build Association (NaCSBA) has launched a Code of Practice in order to offer security to self-builders buying from its members.

The Code covers NaCSBA members who sell to consumers and has been designed to provide assurance to those buying from them that they are “dealing with a company who is committed to the custom-/self-build sector and has committed to treat consumers fairly.”

As well as assuring consumers that companies are providing “truthful” and “fair” information and contracts, the Code provides an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process via NaCSBA for any problems that arise. The association has appointed The Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) to assist in this.

Commenting on the new code, NaCSBA membership and development representative Calum Taylor said: “NaCSBA’s Code of Practice evolves our services to our members and carries on our tradition of working to improve the process for anyone wanting to have a hand in building their own home.”



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# Expert tips on avoiding self-build pitfalls



There's a steep learning curve to navigate when you're building your own house, or carrying out a large renovation. Following the recent National Homebuilding & Renovating Show, experts in attendance give their advice on avoiding the most common mistakes made by self-builders

As Tom McSherry, national relationship manager at Buildstore, says, "With any homebuilding project there's never a day without bills – and if the right funds aren't available at the right stage of the build, delays are inevitable (and often expensive). It's important to clearly understand your budget and borrowing options early on.

He advises: "Discuss your plans with a mortgage advisor as soon as possible – if you choose certain design elements before agreeing your finances you may limit your choice of lenders and products. Before you get carried away, find out if your plans are affordable, and mortgageable. You'll need to allow around eight to 12 weeks to arrange a mortgage.

McSherry concludes: "By consulting a specialist mortgage adviser you'll have access to a wide range of lenders and products. They can recommend the mortgage best suited to your individual circumstances and project requirements. If you approach a lender directly, they'll only offer a very limited product range. You're building a bespoke home and there's no one-size-fits-all funding solution."

David Hilton, director at Heat & Energy, believes "it's all about the preparation. Getting the spec right between the homeowners and the tradespeople is absolutely crucial to avoid costly mistakes later. Make sure that the project manager fully understands your expectations and delivers on them. If clients don't clarify exactly what they want, they can become part of the problem, as they might change their mind halfway through the project. If your builder starts work and then you realise that something is different than expected, more time will be needed to adjust the plan and source new materials,

and delays cost both time and money.

"Go over the specifics and define the expectations in detail. For smooth communications, meet in person or discuss on the phone, but make sure you write down what the final agreement is. Changing your mind halfway through often happens when people liaise directly with a sales team to buy products or services that they're not sure they might need. That's why the process should start with establishing expectations, reviewing the options and then obtaining quotes."

Jo Dyson, renovator and partner at Mae House Design, says: "I recommend people really invest enough time and thought in the design before any work is done onsite. Think about how you currently live, but also consider how you want to live in the future. It's also important to assess how you make use of all spaces within your home – the best way to do this is by spending time living in a property before working on it. Look at the finer details of your space; like noticing where the sun rises and sets, what rooms you enjoy currently spending time in.

"It's also helpful to delve into the specifics. For example, if you're planning a loft conversion, you need to specify every room in detail – where the stairs will be located, the electric and lighting plan, the positioning of the furniture.

"We'd also recommend creating a schedule of works. One of the biggest mistakes is making large-scale changes once the renovation is underway. Taking time to plan detailed design is crucial, as you will use the plans to tender for contractors. You don't want to be stuck with something that's not suitable to live in after investing significant time and money."

Andy Stevens, managing director of

*If clients don't clarify exactly what they want, they become part of the problem*

Eclipse Property Solutions, says: "Check every material you might need is in stock. For everything to run smoothly, make sure that you can find required stock in advance, and get your supplier to reserve it for you. Delays at this end will add more time to your completion date and might cost you money. If you have tradespeople lined up, they will charge for time wasted if supplies are delayed. To check the status of the building materials, phone your local supplier and tell them what you need by what date and they will put everything aside for you. In many situations, online stock isn't updated enough and you risk someone going in store and buying what you require.

"Another costly mistake is to not be aware of the materials' year on year price rises. Most suppliers won't inform you, so it's worth making sure that you won't be affected negatively by a price fluctuation. You might find some materials have gone up by as much as 15-18 per cent, costing you thousands of pounds down the line."

To get more insights about your particular self-build subjects or issues, experts are on hand at the regional Homebuilding & Renovating Shows which are taking place throughout the year.

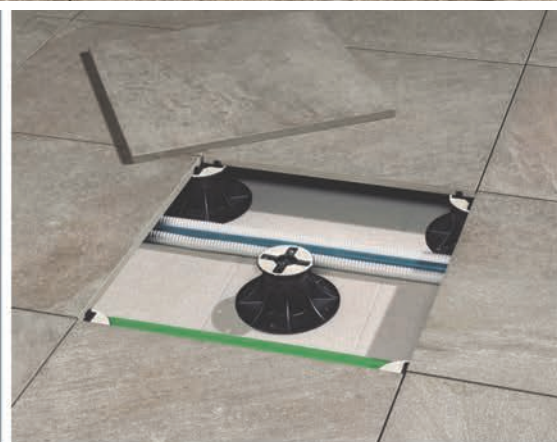




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## DESIGNER BUILDS



## 'HOUSE AS POWER STATION' LARK RISE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

An all-electric home that produces twice the energy it consumes, Lark Rise in the Chilterns won the Project of the Year – Residential category at this year's CIBSE Building Performance Awards.

Designed by bere architects, the Passivhaus has a 12 kW rooftop solar PV array which enables it to import 97 per cent less energy from the electrical grid than the average UK house, and it exports 10 times as much as it takes. The judges said this scheme delivered "outstanding measured building performance, energy efficiency and reduced carbon emissions."

Run by the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers, the

Building Performance Awards win shows that "with two years' close monitoring, Lark Rise can demonstrate that the design principles work in practice," said CIBSE.

Lark Rise has been designed to show how the 'Smart Energy Revolution' has the potential to enable the UK to be fuelled entirely by renewable energy. This 'building as power station' concept is intended to help the UK to be self-sufficient in cheap renewable energy, increasing energy security.

This north-facing, all-electric building has a negative final energy demand of -6.16 MWh. This converts to -35 kWh per square metre per year, so it can be regarded as a 'mini power station' for

the National Grid. The building's designers suggest that the home is the most advanced, high performance house in the UK.

The CIBSE Building Performance Awards recognise the people, products and projects that demonstrate engineering excellence in the built environment. They focus on "actual, measured performance outcomes, not just design intent or performance specifications," said the organisation. Entries are open to anyone responsible for design, commissioning, construction, installation and operation of low energy buildings as well as manufacturers working towards efficient energy consumption.



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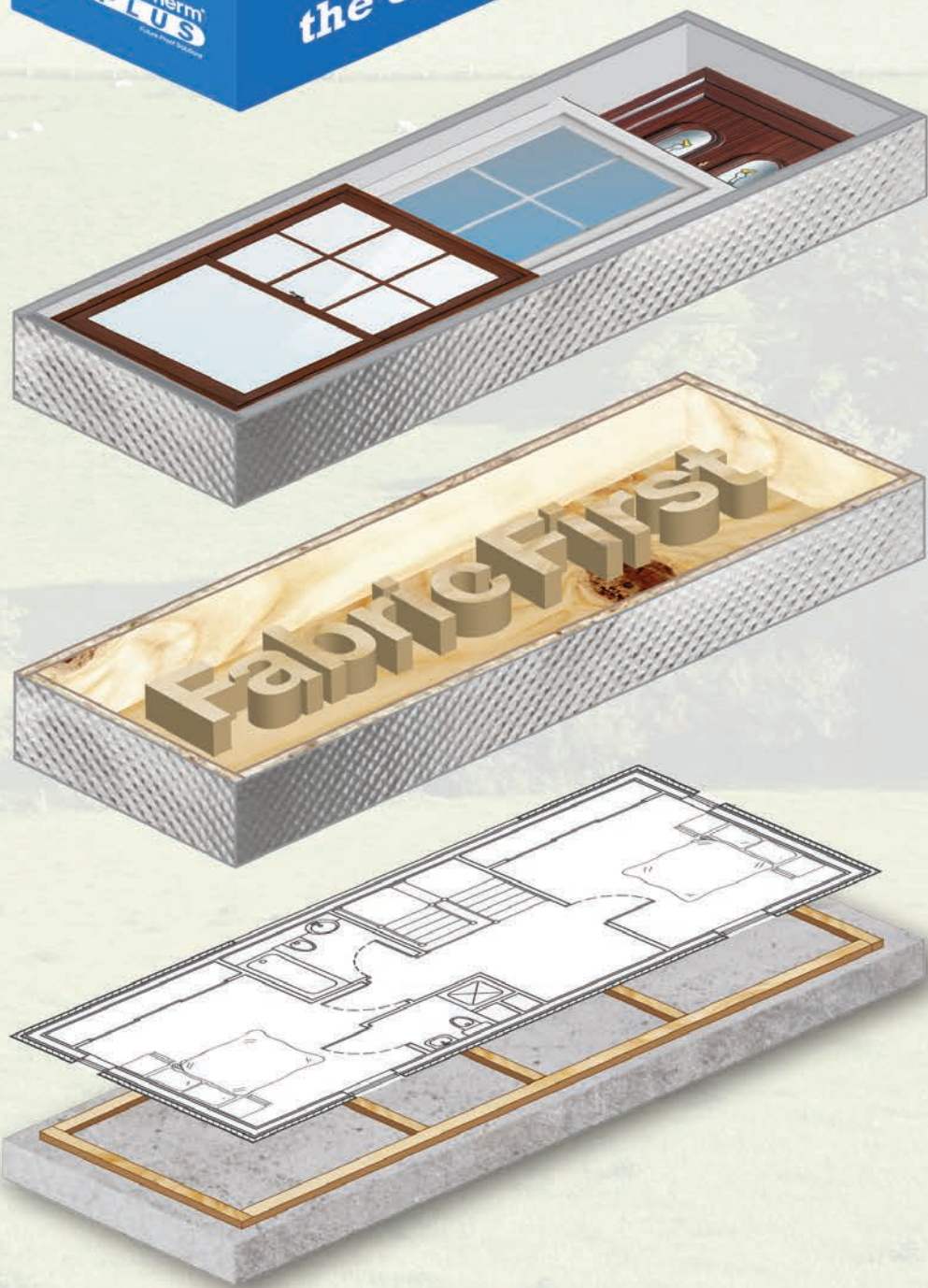
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# A guide to garage doors



When transforming your property the garage door probably isn't the first thing you consider, but it can make a huge difference to the appearance of your home. David O'Mara of Hörmann

UK answers your questions on the options available to self-builders

**T**he importance of getting your home's exterior look right cannot be underestimated. While it's easy to focus your efforts on the interior, it is important to remember that the exterior of your property is what everyone, from visitors through to potential buyers, will see first.

Whether you choose an up-and-over, sectional or roller door to make a

statement, the choices are endless. However, it is important to select one which is suitable for the space you have available and also lets you use the garage as you desire.

## IS A TRADITIONAL UP-AND-OVER OPENING THE BEST OPTION?

If driveway space isn't an issue, a traditional up-and-over door may be the best option. These types of garage doors open upwards, but swing out so do require the extra driveway space. They can be combined with a mechanical operator to offer maximum convenience.

I would suggest using this door if the garage roof space is not a consideration in terms of lighting or storage. It is also worth bearing in mind that the insulation levels for up-and-over doors can be low, so if your garage needs to serve another purpose, such as a workspace, another style might be preferable.

## WHAT ABOUT A ROLLER DOOR?

If space is limited, an alternative option might be a roller door. Roller garage doors open vertically and are designed to offer maximum space inside. For those who also want to use the garage for storage, a roller door is ideal, as the door curtain compactly winds up behind the lintel of the door opening, so the ceiling remains free.

Offering a further solution to areas with limited space or low headroom, doors such as the Hörmann RollMatic are available as external roller garage

doors. For narrow areas there are also doors that have a slim design for low ceilings and have a lintel of only 60 mm, allowing for fitting in very tight spaces.

## AND HOW ABOUT A SECTIONAL DOOR OPTION?

Like roller doors, sectional doors open vertically and are made up of separate sections rather than a single panel. They can be fitted in any garage opening and offer more passage width than up-and-over doors, making them appropriate for wider vehicles, such as 4x4s.

Sectional doors are often the most thermally efficient and often provide the most security for the home. When the Hörmann sectional door is closed, the anti-lift kit automatically engages and locks immediately, which secures the door against forced opening, even in a power cut. This is also the case for any automated garage door.

## ARE THERE ANY OTHER OPENING OPTIONS I SHOULD CONSIDER?

If you like the simplicity of a sectional door but don't want to lose ceiling space, a side sliding-garage door is the perfect option. In contrast to the other designs mentioned, these doors open sideways instead of upward.

These type of doors are particularly advantageous if the garage ceiling has to remain free to store items, or the door leaf cannot be stowed underneath the ceiling due to construction reasons, for example a garage with a sloped roof.

## WHAT GARAGE DOOR MATERIAL SHOULD I GO FOR?

Once you have chosen the preferred style of your garage door the next thing to consider is what it is made from. The most common and popular materials for garage doors are timber and steel.

While real timber garage doors require more maintenance, and can be more costly, they can be a great feature especially when combined with matching side doors. Solid timber doors are available in a range of timber options and can be stained in various colours to match your home.

Steel garage doors are heavy-duty and durable plus – depending on the type – they tend to be well insulated; an important consideration especially as garage doors cover a large surface area and are often attached to the home.

However, a well-insulated garage







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door can help regulate the temperature in the rooms above and to the side of the garage, and remove any worries of damp or mould forming in the space.

For example, with the Hörmann ThermoFrame fitted to a sectional garage door you can significantly improve the already high insulation values, by as much as 15 per cent, as it offers a thermal break between the frame and brickwork.

### WHAT OTHER OPTIONS ARE THERE FOR CUSTOMISATION?

With the style and material chosen, the final thing is to pick the colour of your garage door. Solid timber doors are available in a range of timber options and can be glazed in various colours to match the rest of your home. In contrast, metal garage doors are available in a wide variety of styles and surface finishes to suit all types of homes. Aside from the colour, you might also want to give consideration to choosing glazing and look at options for matching side and front doors.

Garage doors make up a large part of your home's visual impact, and an out-



dated or scruffy garage door will instantly affect the look of your property.

Nowadays there is so much choice on offer that a one size fits all approach is no longer needed, instead homeowners can

select a door which is bespoke to them and exactly matches their style.

*David O'Mara is marketing manager at Hörmann UK*



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## CASE STUDY

# WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

The Browns had never considered building their own home, but the chance to create a 'Glasshouse' with views of the Forth Bridge and Edinburgh Castle was too good to miss. Roseanne Field reports





Alan and Lucy Brown had been looking to move for some time, but after viewing over 50 properties, still hadn't found their dream home. It was while walking their dog in their beloved home town of Dalgety Bay in Fife, Scotland – overlooking the Firth of Forth and Forth Bridge – that their luck changed.

They were walking past an empty plot of land and spotted a For Sale sign. Alan and Lucy had lived in Dalgety Bay for most of their lives, and the couple, who have twin daughters, wanted to stay in the area. Alan did some research and found out they only had three days to put in a sealed bid.

Despite the fact the land had no planning permission, they decided to go for it. A few years earlier Alan suffered the double setback of a brain haemorrhage and stroke, forcing him to

take early retirement from his job as duty manager at a hotel. However it also made him grab the chance to get this rare site. "Life's too short," he says. "When I see an opportunity I go for it. We took a punt on it."

The fact the land had no planning meant they were able to secure it for a bargain price. They put in a bid of £31,313.13, a figure concocted by Alan based on the couple's unlikely lucky number of 13, and later found out they'd been successful.

The next task was to try and get planning permission, and Alan and Lucy set about contacting an architect friend. Unfortunately, now living in Dubai, he was unable to help. He gave them details of another architect he knew, Andrew Black, and after speaking to a few practices they decided to go with him. "It was





kind of a tender process. We got four or five architects out to site," Alan explains. "It was interesting to find out what their view was. That was before getting planning permission, to see if they felt they could get it."

Their decision to go with Andrew was based largely on the fact he'd obtained planning for some houses in the in-demand town of St Andrews, a few miles up the coast. "It's really difficult to get planning there, so I thought if he can get it in St Andrews, he can get it in Dalgety Bay!" Alan says. "He ticked all the boxes."

They decided it was essential to show the planners that they were serious, so they went in with a full set of detailed designs. The tactic worked – they were granted planning straight away, for a two and a half storey house.

However, having concentrated so much on designing the interior, neither Alan nor Lucy, a teacher, had paid a huge amount of attention to the exterior. "We decided that we actually hated the look of the house and couldn't build it!" Alan says, explaining further that "we'd never been through this process before."

At this point, they actually considered selling the land on, as being granted planning meant its value had increased significantly. It was the architect Andrew who convinced them they would regret it which Alan admits he "definitely would have."

Because they'd now been through the process and had a much better idea of how it worked, they "took the lead" when redesigning the house. They came up with the new design – a two-storey house with a detached double garage (including additional living space above) – and once again received planning with no

hitches. "They were tremendous," Alan says of the planners. "They were happy for us to do something different to the rest of the street."

#### STARTING ONSITE

The day before work was due to begin onsite Alan and Lucy's project got somewhat more interesting. It was at this point that designer and TV presenter Charlie Luxton arrived to offer his thoughts on the couple's designs, as their project was to feature on an episode of *Building the Dream*. Although for the most part he was on board with their plans, he also wanted them to reconsider a few elements, such as extending the balcony.

Work began onsite the next day, but it wasn't long before things ground to a halt while the design changes were made, which meant going back to the structural engineers and planners for a third time. Alan estimates this cost them roughly £15,000, and nearly six months of time.

Despite the hold up, they persevered, and the builders eventually returned to the site. The main contractor, Marc Hendry, was a good friend of Alan's. "It was him from day one," he says. Marc attended meetings with the architect and had input into the design. "The architect would come up with ideas – curved walls for instance – and Marc would say 'that's costly for what you're getting,'" Alan explains.

With Marc's help, Alan project managed the build himself. A few months in, the couple sold their house and moved in with Lucy's parents just a 10-minute walk away, so he was able to be onsite everyday. He also bought a caravan to sit onsite as his office. Despite being there most of the time, he wasn't hands-on. "I'm useless at

The house was built using a timber kit frame, completely assembled onsite

#### LOW POINT

"When the build finished! (For me, not for the family!)" – Alan Brown

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anything to do with DIY!" he admits. "But whenever major decisions had to be made I was always onsite to make them, and make sure it was done right."

The house was built using a timber kit frame, completely assembled onsite, but it allowed last minute changes. "If something wasn't in the right place I could move it, before it was constructed," Alan says. For example, the position of the Velux rooflights was shifted slightly, as were some windows in the girls' bedrooms, in order to provide a view straight out onto the courtyard. "Everything was tweaked onsite as we went along – we even moved doorways that didn't sit right before it was built," he says. "It was just pieces of wood when it arrived."

Organising sub-contractors was a responsibility Alan shared with Marc. Many were people Marc had used in the past, while Alan took care of organising the areas he hadn't had previous experience with. For example, he wanted a special sprayed guttering that was colour matched to the house. "I sourced the companies and negotiated prices. I like to get a bargain, and I could use the fact it was on TV to my advantage!"

## DESIGN

With the house's enviable location, it was designed very much with the view in mind. "We told the architect we wanted every room to have a view," says Alan.

The house is finished with a mix of white render and slate cladding. There are large amounts of glass, hence the 'Glasshouse' name – floor to ceiling windows stretch all the way along the south elevation at the first floor, providing

*"I'm useless at anything to do with DIY, but whenever major decisions had to be made I was always on site to make them"*

panoramic views out over the Firth of Forth. There are also several rooflights, frameless glass balustrades around the balcony and stairs, and even a two metre by two metre glass floor above the entrance hallway. Entering the house, you can see right up to the pitched roof.

The glass floor proved controversial throughout the project. Lucy wasn't keen on the basis they would lose the floor space upstairs, and Luxton tried to convince Alan to leave it open and put a red, metal balustrade around it to echo the Forth Bridge – a suggestion he firmly resisted.

The house has an 'upside down' layout – the four bedrooms are on the ground floor with the living areas upstairs, in order to maximise the views. The master bedroom includes an ensuite and dressing room and the twins each have their own room, sharing a 'Jack and Jill' bathroom. There's also a guest bedroom, also with ensuite.

Upstairs is one large open plan space – one of Alan and Lucy's requirements. The bespoke

There are several rooflights in the property

## HIGH POINT

"Just living here with the family. That was the dream." – Alan Brown

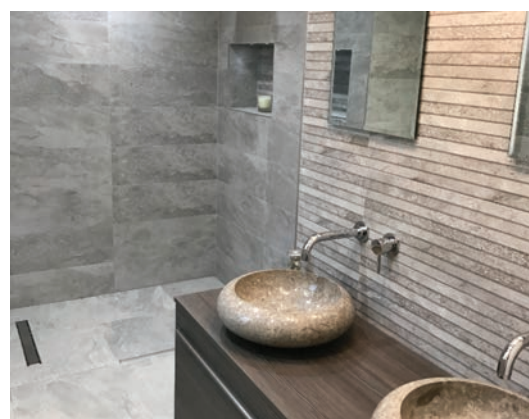
There is a 2 m<sup>2</sup> glass floor above the entrance hallway

#### BELOW

The master bedroom has an ensuite and the couple's twin daughters share a 'Jack and Jill' bathroom

### ALAN'S ADVICE

"Just enjoy it! You can always get over the hurdles – don't think you've hit a brick wall because there's always a way. It's important to watch your finances, but also try and stretch yourself as much as you can to get exactly what you want. You're only going to do it once"



timber stairs lead up to the kitchen/living area, and to the left is a more formal dining and lounge area. The kitchen units are dark grey gloss and the whole house is painted white, with the only notes of colour brought in by various accessories. "We just wanted something clean and minimal," Alan explains. "Something simple."

This decision was inspired in part by Alan's self-confessed "OCD with cleanliness". The kitchen company also installed matching units throughout the house, such as the TV unit, all of which are wall hung in order to allow for easy cleaning underneath.

Alan worked with another friend, electrician Johnny Cassells, on designing eye-catching lighting. The house has colour-changing LED lighting throughout – including around the edge of the glass floor – which they can control from phone apps. Adding this feature meant their original projected spend on electrical fittings tripled from £12,000 to £35,000. "That cost a bit more than we expected," he admits.

Despite this overspend, and breaking the budget in other areas such as landscaping,

Alan's glad he went for it and didn't compromise. "My goal was to not scrimp on anything," he says. "Overall, Alan estimates they went approximately £140,000 over their original budget.

#### THE WEE GLASSHOUSE

When they made the decision to redesign and reduce the main house from two and a half storeys to two, Alan and Lucy decided that, rather than lose the additional space, they would relocate it by including a room above the detached garage.

Although originally earmarked as a potential play space for the twins, halfway through the build they came up with another idea. "With my hospitality background, we thought maybe it's something we can use for holidaymakers to enjoy the view," explains Alan. And in allowing others to share the joys of the location, renting out the space also of course provides additional income for the family.

The name comes from the fact the extra building is "literally a mini version of Glasshouse," says Alan. "It's even got the same





The 'Wee Glasshouse' is a mini-version of the main house, constructed over the garage as a holiday rental [www.theweeglasshouse.com](http://www.theweeglasshouse.com)



kitchen." The couple let it through Airbnb and HomeAway, and so far have had rave reviews. "Everyone absolutely loves it," Alan says. "They treat it with respect, and it keeps me busy, with me being retired."

### LIVING IN A GLASSHOUSE

Alan and Lucy eventually moved into Glasshouse in December 2016, four years after first stumbling across the plot. However, completing the work was bittersweet for Alan. "I loved it, I didn't want it to end!"

During the build, the site was a friendly place, with several familiar faces working on the project. They encountered no major issues, and Alan says he'd "do it again tomorrow" if he could, his confidence aided by having tackled his serious health worries. "Because of what's happened to me medically, I just see that everything can be overcome."

The couple installed underfloor heating throughout, but having been living in the house for a while, they have rarely had to turn it on, thanks to the insulation, airtightness, and copious amounts of triple-glazed glass. "It

literally is like a greenhouse," Alan says. He adds that, while it retains the heat, "Obviously you have to manage that." The automatic rooflights, together with an MVHR system, provide good ventilation to help mitigate overheating.

Despite his perhaps surprising disappointment about the build coming to an end, Alan and his family are extremely happy with the finished house, so much so that he can't pinpoint a favourite feature. "It's the whole thing, just everything!" he says. "Of course I wish I hadn't spent as much money on it, but I can't say it's not been worth it."

Since moving in, they've had the house valued at £1m, a figure much higher than they estimated beforehand. However, as much as Alan would like to do another project, selling is not a likely prospect at the moment. Alan and Lucy feel very lucky to have got the plot they did – although he jokes about the possibility of knocking the house down and building on it again! "It would have been brilliant to have sold it and used the money to do another project, but I can't," he says. "It was designed for our family, for our kids. I love this house." ■

## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

### ARCHITECT

**Andrew Black Design**  
[www.andrewblackdesign.com](http://www.andrewblackdesign.com)

### MAIN CONTRACTOR

**Dalgety Joiners**  
(Marc Hendry)  
01383 824388

### ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR

**Johnny Cassells**  
07720 444298

### WINDOWS

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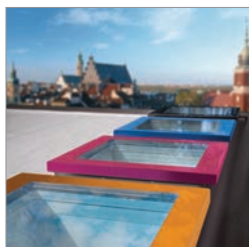
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## Tudor wins award for the second time



**Tudor Roof Tiles Co Ltd** has received a 2018 'Build It Award' for its range of 'Bespoke Handmade Clay Roof Tiles'. This is the second time the company has claimed the prize for 'Best Roofing Product' in these prestigious awards, which recognise the best products, services, projects and innovations available to self-builders and renovators. This achievement for the bespoke tile making abilities follows the company's previous success in 2014 as category winner for its authentic standard

range of peg and plain tiles. Tudor's capability to produce traditional looking roof tiles in bespoke and non-standard sizes is vitally important when it comes to restoring historic roofs.

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# The show for grand plans



Grand Designs Live returns to London's ExCeL from 4–12 May, offering visitors a range of expert advice, product launches and specialist exhibitors

Whether you are starting out on your first renovation, building a new home, redecorating a room, installing a new kitchen or simply looking for ideas, Grand Designs Live remains the 'must-visit' event for anyone wanting to learn about the world of interiors, design and self-build.

This year, National Custom and Self-Build Week will link with Grand Designs Live and will see a variety of talks headed up by Kevin McCloud, along with one to one expert advice focusing on self-build taking place throughout the show on weekdays, including topics themed around 'Busting the myths of Self-Build'.

Both the National Custom & Self-Build Association (NaCSBA) and Grand Designs Live feel strongly that supporting this initiative in a cohesive way is important to help encourage the increase in UK self-building, as it currently falls well behind other European countries. The self-build sector accounts for seven to 10 per cent of completions in the UK, while in Austria it accounts for around 80 per cent.

Evidence suggests that 53 per cent of people in the UK would consider building their own home, given the opportunity.

National Custom and Self-Build Week will include a series of events to assist aspiring self-builders with a simplified step-by-step process, and advice on the best route to achieve their dream home. Visitors will have access to a variety of services and specialist advice on aspects of self-building from sourcing the right architect for their project, to Passivhaus designs, and sympathetic renovation, all under one roof.

The show is split into six project zones: Build, Gardens, Interiors, Kitchens & Bathrooms, Technology, and Design Arcade where you can find all you need to know about grand designs. There's also the Grand Theatre, as well as lots more to keep you busy throughout your visit.

The Build zone promises amazing products to help your project run without a hitch. With a huge selection of self-build suppliers all under one roof, you'll find the latest developments in

sustainability and eco-technology, as well as free expert advice. There will also be an area at the show for National Custom and Self-Build Week.

The Gardens section of the show offers contemporary garden products, from hot tubs and swim spas to barbecues and outdoor furniture, to turn your garden into the best it can be. There is also a champagne bar located right in the heart of the Garden area.

The Interiors zone of the show is where you can find beautiful products from individual designers and hundreds of items that are not available on the high street. There are also some room sets where you can get inspiration for your own rooms. This year Grand Designs Live will be launching the 'Under the Stairs' project, which will see six interior designers showcase bespoke installations using a commonly neglected area in the home – the space under the stairs – giving visitors the opportunity to browse and pick up inspirations for their own mini-grand designs.

The Kitchens & Bathrooms section is where you can find cutting-edge appliances, well-known brands, expert advice and some of the sleekest designs for your home. There are also kitchens and bathrooms set up for you to collect some ideas for your own home.

The Technology zone brings together the top names in the industry to help you keep up to date with the latest trends and developments. There are hundreds of products on show, from the latest home entertainment systems to smart technology, conceptual lighting and much more.

The Design Arcade offers new and established pieces made by British craftsmen, often at exclusive discounted prices. There you'll find artwork, quirky decorative pieces, and bespoke designer furniture.

Also returning to Grand Designs Live is one of the most popular features from





previous years – Kevin's Green Heroes. This sees Kevin personally select his top eco-heroes who will showcase some of the most groundbreaking eco-friendly products on the market.

The popular Ask an Expert area will also return, alongside a host of inspiring and informative seminars at the Grand Theatre, offering visitors ideas, inspiration and expert advice. Visitors can listen to specialists across a range of home-improvement areas

from finance to architecture, and much more.

The TV series *Grand Designs* turns 20 in April and the show will be celebrating with some fun and exciting features focused around past and present houses and their owners.

For all the latest information on National Custom and Self Build Week visit the event website: [nationalandcustomselfbuildweek.com](http://nationalandcustomselfbuildweek.com) or follow #selfbuildweek on Twitter.

## WHEN & WHERE

**Grand Designs Live** takes place at the **ExCeL**, London from **4 – 12 May**. For more details and to book tickets visit **[granddesignslive.com](http://granddesignslive.com)**

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Also on display is Centor's flagship 205 Integrated Folding Door. The winner of numerous global awards, this premium door combines a solid wood interior with thermally-improved aluminium exterior. Its built-in screens and shades enable homeowners to enjoy inside-outside living without compromising on insects, sunlight or privacy. Cleverly concealed hardware removes all visual distractions, perfectly framing views to the outside.

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# DARK INTENTIONS

Adam Chard, bathroom expert at VictoriaPlum.com looks at one of the latest trends to hit bathroom interiors – ‘dark and dramatic’ – and offers practical advice, hints and tips on how to achieve it

Chances are that in most bathroom projects, most self-builders will be looking to order white tiles and include plenty of neutral colours like beige, cream or light brown. If they are trying to be a little more on-trend, it may be a monochrome colour scheme with blacks, whites and greys mixed in. Pretty unadventurous, if you think about it.

On the whole, modern bathrooms tend to have a simple, pale colour scheme. In fact, these days, you won't find many, if any, coloured bathroom suites, like the salmon pink or avocado travesties of the 1970s and 80s!

Colour is a big decision when choosing a bathroom, and it might even dictate the elements you incorporate into the design. For example, furniture with a certain wood finish or colour may be more appropriate for a certain colour palette.

It can often be one of the last things you'd think about – after all you're not an artist! But being bolder and braver, while it might seem risky, can pay off – as shown by one of the latest trends hitting bathrooms.

## WHAT IS THE TREND?

Put simply, one of the latest trends in bathroom design is the use of darker colours to create a more theatrical, dramatic setting. If you take a look around you the next time you're in a fashionable clothing shop, hotel or bar, you'll start to realise where this trend has come from.

Before you start thinking that all sounds a bit depressing, it is worth stressing: dark doesn't have to be gloomy. On the contrary, with darker colours, reflective finishes and intriguing textures, you can

add real character to bathroom interiors.

There are many ways you can approach this, either by using a monochrome colour scheme, which relies more heavily on the darker elements (e.g. black and dark grey) or you could look at richer, darker colours. Burgundy, teal and purple have all been favourites in recent years.

## SOME TIPS AND TRICKS TO HELP WITH COLOUR

One of the top tips for using colour within your bathroom is the 60:30:10 ratio. This involves using three main colours, with around 60 per cent of surfaces in your main chosen colour (in this case, a dark hue), 30 per cent in your secondary colour, and finally 10 per cent as an accent colour (usually picked out in accessories).

Of course, as previously mentioned, the overwhelming majority of bathroom suites these days are white, following homeowners' tastes. However, there are clever ways to introduce darker elements, for example a black bath surround, black framed shower enclosures, dark shower trays and even black brassware in the form of taps, showers and valves.

You needn't just stick to black. A great way to add an on-trend edge to your design is to incorporate a specific metallic finish. Copper, silver, gold and rose gold are all popular choices for modern bathrooms, where chrome is a bit old hat. You can even add matching accessories like basin traps, wastes and shelving.

A statement wall or floor is another great way to incorporate a darker theme. Patterned floor tiles draw the eye immediately, whilst a darker wall can be easily achieved by using decorative brick tiles or wall panels which can be fitted



directly on top of tiles, helping to save on your costs.

When it comes to choosing furniture, darker wood finishes like walnut or dark oak can be a great choice, especially if you're after a more natural look. As an alternative to wood or stone flooring, keep an eye out for modern vinyl or laminate alternatives. They are much easier to install, offer an incredibly hardwearing surface, plus they are nice and easy to clean, so you'll thank yourself in the long run!

## USING LIGHT TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Of course, with all these dark surfaces and textures, you don't want your bathroom design to feel oppressive or



gloomy. This is where a couple of neat tricks can come into play.

Take a look at the layout of the room. Is there a good natural light source? If so, position mirrors to take advantage of this, helping to bounce light around, and make things feel light and airy.

If you want one, a walk in shower enclosure will do a much better job than, say a sliding door enclosure, at helping to keep that open plan feel.

LED lighting is an excellent modern choice for bathrooms these days, and in a darker setting, it will certainly pay to have more than one lighting option at your disposal.

LED mirrors offer superb task lighting, and can play a supporting role to central

lighting fixtures, especially when they come with infrared, hands-free switches and demisters. LED strip lighting is energy-efficient and could save you plenty on your bills.

Try to choose surfaces that reflect or play with light. Tiles with relief patterns or wall panels with silver flecks will all produce an intriguing effect when used in a dark setting.

#### **FURTHER ADVICE ON ACHIEVING A DARKER BATHROOM SETTING**

To summarise, here are some key bits of advice for achieving a darker bathroom interior:

- Don't feel restricted to blacks or greys—there are plenty of other dark

and moody colours which can be used

- Try to keep accessories to a minimum to maintain a feeling of space
- Large expanses of colour will make the room feel more spacious
- Always think about the balance between form and function—it is a bathroom after all!
- This is a contemporary trend so it will work better with modern products, rather than ornate, traditional elements
- Choose lighting carefully and add extra task lighting, where appropriate.

By following this simple advice, self-builders can quickly and easily achieve a bathroom interior look that is dark, dramatic, and on-trend.



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version is ideal for accurate vertical measuring. Both new models look great and, added to all the other products in the Hultafors' range, there's something to suit every conceivable levelling requirement.

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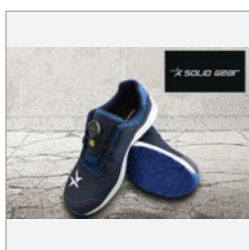


JDP's Technical Support team specify expert drainage scheme for self-build property in Brampton, Cumbria, resulting in significant cost and labour savings. The team were able to offer a value engineered re-design of the drainage system which reduced the number of products used, in turn reducing expenditure and labour time. JDP's RAINBOX 3S® crates were identified as the ideal product to provide the soakaway system servicing this site. The RAINBOX 3S® system offers real benefits for a project of

this size due to the ease of installation and the reduced installation time on site compared to traditional methods. JDP's technical support services are available to JDP account customers, free of charge.

0800 195 1212 [www.jdpipes.co.uk](http://www.jdpipes.co.uk)

## Precision safety and comfort

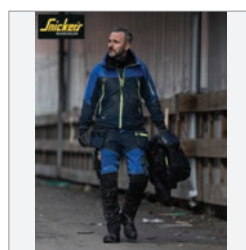


**Solid Gear** continues to modernise PPE footwear with a safety shoe that looks and feels more like a trainer. The new OCEAN safety shoe is ideal for workers who are constantly on the move. The shoe's midsole is made of a poured PU rather than a traditional injected PU to give a more cushioned feel underfoot, while the thick rubber outsole provides a high level of anti-slip protection and durability. The shoe's BOA comfort fastening delivers a better overall fit making it easy to take the

shoe on and off. Added to which, the shoe's fibreglass toecap and ballistic midsole combine with the other protection features and anti-static properties to deliver S3 protection.

[www.solidgearfootwear.com](http://www.solidgearfootwear.com)

## New Street-Smart Stretch Trousers



These NEW slim-fit stretch trousers deliver extreme working comfort. Hi-tech fabrics and body-mapping designs in the NEW FlexiWork SoftShell Trousers from **Snickers Workwear** ensure maximum working mobility wherever you are. The brand new four-way stretch comfort fabrics integrated into these Work Trousers deliver enhanced freedom of movement as well as improved ventilation and overall comfort. With great fit and superb value for money, they also have a slimmer tailored fit for better all-

round looks and protection against snagging, plus Armortex Kevlar reinforced stretch fabric in the KneeGuard Pro System for greater flexibility, comfort and durability.

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## Window from Schueco UK is latest in range



New from **Schueco UK** is the AWS 75 PD.SI Panorama window. Aimed primarily at the residential market, the new window is designed for the construction of ribbon windows and for use as an insert in a Schueco mullion/transom facade system such as the Schueco FWS 35 PD. The Schueco AWS 75 PD.SI window features reduced internal and external face-widths as low as 55 mm that enable it to deliver a whole new level of transparency, yet the window is still able to achieve an

excellent  $U_w$  value of 0.87 W/m<sup>2</sup>K. The Schueco AWS 75 PD.SI can accommodate vent sizes up to 2.5 m and glass weights up to 160 kg, with watertightness up to 600 Pa and burglar resistance up to RC2.

mkinfo@schueco.com www.schueco.com

## New Viessmann Vitocell 300-V



**Viessmann** has introduced the only domestic hot water cylinders on the market with an A+ rating. The two new floorstanding Vitocell 300-V DHW cylinders are twice as energy efficient in terms of standby losses as the industry norm. Both new versions of the Vitocell 300-V replace the previous A rated models, and both are suitable for domestic installations with boiler outputs up to 80 kW. Higher DHW demands can be accommodated by combining several Vitocell 300-V cylinders into cylinder

banks with common headers. The 300-V's exceptional heat retention is made possible by using a highly effective vacuum panel insulation as well as the very efficient Polyurethane hard foam.

info-uk@viessmann.com

## Advanced collated screw system just got even better!

**Simpson Strong-Tie's** Quik Drive auto-feed system is a significantly faster way to install screws. With a multitude of modular fittings and screws for a huge range of purposes, there is a Quik Drive kit to suit just about every application – from drywall installation to mezzanine floor construction. A perfect alternative to traditional nailing and screwing. The ergonomic design allows the installation of screws into walls, floors and ceilings without the need for bending, stretching or crouching. Which means not only can the system operate for several hours at a time – so can you. The Quik Drive system fits onto all leading dry wall drivers with just a click. The patented screw strips are designed to avoid jamming, and unlike many collated screw strips, a partially used one can be saved for reuse later – so it's cost effective too.

Sales Manager, Phil Chambers, explains: "The Quik Drive system has been on my radar for some time, it's not just fast, it's really (really) simple to use. It's great to see the lights go on in peoples mind when they give it a try."

In addition to Phil conducting Quik Drive demonstrations throughout the UK, an all-new catalogue now features additional Quik Drive equipment and collated screws, including some tools that can be used to install construction connectors.

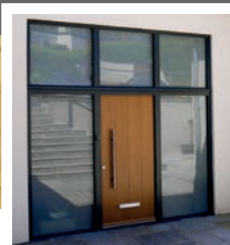
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## Omnie UFH warms Cotswold stone homes



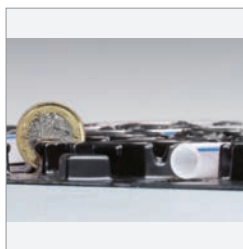
A development of six new five-bedroom detached properties, close to Cirencester town centre, whose construction features the area's distinctive natural Cotswold Limestone, is making full use of the benefits to the ClipPlate system and other products form the range of **OMNIE** Limited.

ClipPlate is amongst the most popular options to OMNIE's LayFast brands: being compact and suitable for in-screed applications. Pipe runs are simply pressed into the profiles without the need for joints

and resist being disturbed as the screed is laid. OMNIE offers a full range of solutions for rapid completion and restricted construction depths, as well as its TileOver range.

01392 363605 [www.omnie.co.uk](http://www.omnie.co.uk)

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01923 927000 [www.uponor.co.uk](http://www.uponor.co.uk)

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# The beauty of a Schueco sliding door is what you don't see

For instance, you won't have your view interrupted by intrusive framing because the frames are so slim you hardly notice them. And then there's the unbeatable insulation (up to Passive House standard) – you won't see that either, but you'll feel it. Likewise the excellent soundproofing and the superb watertightness (even with the flush threshold option) and the reassuring rigidity of the doors as they glide effortlessly into place.

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**For more information and your nearest Schueco Partner installers, visit [www.schueco.co.uk](http://www.schueco.co.uk)**

**SCHÜCO**



# Putting coarse British wool to good use

With an ever greater choice of insulation on the market and a growing awareness of the many roles insulation plays, it's worth considering the most effective option for your application. The use of natural fibre insulation is growing rapidly. With this in mind here are some reasons why you should consider products such as Thermafleece.

Sheep's wool is a great material. It's a natural insulator, locally grown, sustainable, and breathable; it dampens sound and is fire safe. That's why we use it to make Thermafleece. Thermafleece is manufactured in the UK and combines British wool with recycled polyester fibres to create effective, safe and sustainable insulation.

Not only does Thermafleece act like other insulation in preventing heat loss by limiting air movement, it also prevents heat gain during peak summer

months. Its relatively high heat capacity allows the insulation to absorb and store heat and release it much later in the day as temperature cools.

Breathability is an important and often overlooked property of insulation. Sheep's wool is breathable which means it can regulate the humidity of air around it. This helps protect structural timber from moisture, preventing the accumulation of harmful water and providing a stable fabric.

Breathability is very important in older properties. But using sheep's wool insulation isn't just limited to historic properties. You can use Thermafleece almost anywhere. It can be used alone or in combination with many types of insulation to improve thermal mass, breathability or acoustics.

The acoustic properties of natural fibre insulation are often overlooked. Because of their irregular surface, shape and



density, sheep's wool is very effective at disrupting sound. That's one of the reasons why Thermafleece can provide acoustic performance comparable to the best mineral fibre products.

How materials react to fire is an increasingly important consideration. Sheep's wool has a high ignition temperature and reacts to fire by charring. To improve these characteristics, the wool in Thermafleece is treated with a low level of borax in order to ensure our insulation is fire safe.

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# Looking beneath the surface

David Sherry from Dreadnought Tiles explains the importance of looking beyond the marketing when choosing traditional clay plain tiles

The use of traditional building materials is widely recognised as a vital part of preserving the unique character of our old buildings and the integrity of our conservation areas.

However, in today's marketing-driven society, things aren't always quite what they seem, making it difficult for self-builders and home renovators – or even building conservation officers! – to discern what is in fact an authentic English plain tile, and what is an imitation.

Loaded words such as 'traditional', 'heritage' and 'conservation,' widely used to describe clay plain tiles, may refer to genuinely handmade or handcrafted products with an idiosyncratic look, or alternatively more uniform looking, volume produced machine-made, or even large format versions.

Similarly, the term 'natural colours' is often used, regardless of whether the colouring has been generated solely by skilful temperature control in the kiln, or through the use of artificial pigments.

These days, even the names of roof tiles can be potentially misleading. Just because a brand of roof tiles sounds old fashioned and quintessentially English, it doesn't necessarily mean that they have actually been manufactured on these shores. They may, in fact, have been imported from Poland or Turkey, or even as far away as Vietnam.

In order to identify what is genuinely authentic, it is important that self-builders and home renovators look behind all the marketing and understand something of the history of clay roof tile making in the UK and how it has changed today.

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF NATURAL CLAYS

The starting point for identifying authentic clay roof tiles is always the origin and quality of the raw clay.

The UK has a range of different clay deposits across the country, each with their own distinct characteristics and properties. These have lent themselves to the manufacture of the different types of



roof tiles found in different areas and have helped form the basis of our varied regional architecture.

For example, Alluvial clay from the Humber and Bridgwater, which has a low shrinkage during drying and firing, is particularly suitable for producing large clay units such as interlocking pantiles. Weald clay from the south east of the country is associated with red, brown and orange clay tiles – often handmade and sand-faced – which is a characteristic in the south of England. Etruria Marl, found in central UK and the Midlands, has a high shrinkage rate in the manufacturing process, which lends itself to the production of very dense, strong smooth faced or sand faced plain tiles. With its high iron content, this material can be fired to produce a wide spectrum of colour from reds and browns through to Staffordshire Blue.

Plain clay roof tiles manufactured from native English clays are not only a sustainable option, but their natural characteristics are the most suited to our

*Just because a brand of roof tiles sounds quintessentially English, it doesn't mean they have been manufactured on these shores*

regional architecture.

## TRADITIONAL PRODUCTION OF NATURAL COLOURS

Originally, plain tiles were made individually by hand, resulting in their characteristic variation of shape, camber





and tone, with more regular shaped machine-made versions starting to appear in the early 19th century.

Integral to both methods of production were the natural clay colours which were created purely by the temperature in the kiln. Over the centuries, different tileries developed their own kiln-firing techniques. For instance, in the Midlands, with the rapid development of the coal fields and the abundance of Etruria marl in the 1900s, manufacturers started to place the tiles on their edge in the kiln, instead of

stacking them one on top of each other, or firing them face to face which they did elsewhere in the country. This new method allowed the kiln's atmosphere to come into contact with the exposed surface of the tile, causing a chemical reaction with the iron in the clay, producing natural 'brindle' colours from red to buff to brown to purple and ultimately Staffordshire Blue.

This technique was adopted by the Broseley works in Shropshire, Hawkins and Rosemary in Cannock, Ruabon in North Wales and Dreadnought in Brierley Hill and, with the growth of the railways, canal and river network, became used far beyond these localities.

#### THE DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL TILE MAKING

Sadly, the UK clay roof tile industry went into decline after the Second World War, and the majority of the surviving companies were bought by multi-national organisations, which often retained the old brand names, but moved production into new factories dedicated to providing manufacturing efficiencies.

Traditional firing techniques that had generated natural clay tones for centuries were largely replaced by the application of surface stains and coloured sands, which do not produce

the same subtle colour variation associated with historic clay roofs. As a result, many of the ancient tile names associated with historic colours, such as 'light' and 'dark' brindle now bear little resemblance to the originals.

More recently, we have also seen an influx of low cost imported tiles bearing the names of old English towns and the introduction of larger format single lap interlocking tiles describing themselves as 'plain tiles'. Although their exposed faces can be made to resemble the appearance of two plain tiles laid side by side, they essentially perform as 'single lap' and do not make a good substitute for authentic heritage roofing.

#### THE CHALLENGE FOR HOMEOWNERS

For self-builders and renovators, researching the suitability of so called 'traditional', 'heritage', or 'conservation' clay plain tiles for a traditional looking home or restoration, our advice is to look beyond the manufacturer's marketing.

Work closely with your local planner or Building Conservation Officer and find out how and where the tiles were actually made in order to determine how genuinely traditional they really are.

*David Sherry is sales manager at Dreadnought Tiles*



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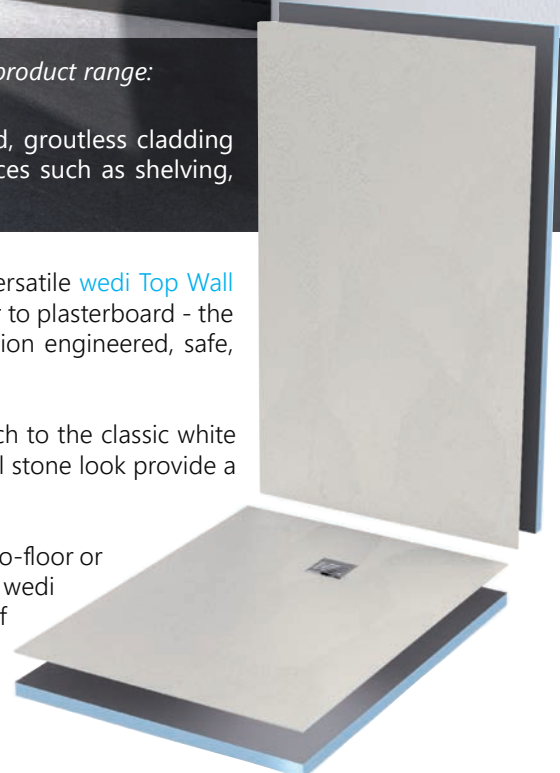
*wedi's core values have risen to the surface in perfect unison with its first 'visible' product range: functionality, practicality and longevity meet a simple, yet timeless elegance.*

The ready-to-use surfaces of the **wedi Top series** provide a colour-coordinated, groutless cladding throughout the bathroom - from shower floors to walls and other even surfaces such as shelving, washstands or bath-cladding.

Whether we talk about **Fundo Top surfaces** in linear and point design or about versatile **wedi Top Wall elements** that are suitable to use on all common surfaces from tiles through plaster to plasterboard - the new product range carries the same principles that wedi is renowned for: precision engineered, safe, 100% waterproof, straightforward and practical without compromising on quality.

The homogenous white mineral surface option for shower floors is a perfect match to the classic white porcelain look whilst grey and anthracite black colours with their appealing natural stone look provide a contemporary cladding for both shower floors and walls.

A shower element complete with a Fundo Top surface can be installed either flush-to-floor or raised up-to the required height with the aid of matching cladding/skirting strips. wedi Top Wall elements are easily cut into desired shapes and with the arrangement of different colours individual characteristic patterns can be achieved in a blink of an eye. *Design with confidence, use wedi.*



# The lap of luxury

Paul Bailey of Grohe UK offers tips to self-builders on how to add a luxurious feel to your bathroom, whether you're working to a tight budget, or you are ready to 'splash some cash'

The term 'luxury bathroom' is no longer just a bathroom that offers premium fittings and expensive taste, but has become a trend in itself. Typically, the luxury bathrooms of today have evolved to become personal sanctuaries and havens of wellness, taking inspiration from extravagant hotels and spas. Often utilising materials synonymous with decadence such as marble and gold, a luxury bathroom is about much more than the aesthetic but also the ambience and environment that the space creates for the owner.

In recent years, lifestyle changes such as greater demands from our jobs and an imbalanced work life routine, plus the omnipresence of social media causing an inability to fully 'switch off' has seen the bathroom become much more than just a functional space we visit in order to keep clean. Therefore, when planning your main bathroom, be sure to take into consideration what you want back in return from your newly designed space.

The focus for luxury bathrooms is very much integrated into the concept of wellness and personal care, but it is important to tailor this to your individual needs and lifestyle to make sure you get the right fit. Is a roll top bath a must-have feature or does your lifestyle require something as indulgent but a lot quicker? Do you want to recreate your own at-home spa, or is it more important to have a visually calming space you can retreat to when you need five minutes' peace?

While there is a premium attached to specifying luxury high performance fittings such as toilets and showers in your new bathroom, even those working to financial limitations can create a 'luxury' aesthetic. Here are our top tips on how you can do so, no matter how big or small your budget.

## LUXURY BATHROOMS ON A SHOESTRING

Luxury bathrooms aren't out of reach if you're working to a small budget; it simply requires you to be more creative in order to achieve the look you want. If the finances aren't there to support the luxury



bathroom of your dreams just yet, focus on the aesthetic as the fittings can always be upgraded at a later date if you wish. Seeing is believing, so getting the ambience right is a crucial thing you need to spend time on in terms of planning.

Colour scheme is key; the aim should be to create a calming, neutral space that you can supplement with touches of colour in your accessories. Don't just settle for white, but consider greys, warm neutrals and pastels too.

To complement your bathroom landscape, consider an alternative to chrome when it comes to specifying brassware. Metallic finishes such as brass and copper are a great way of adding colour in a subtle way, and will add warmth to the space too – important when creating a luxury space. If you're working to a more industrial or monochromatic colour scheme throughout your home, explore graphite options or nickel for something a little more understated.

You can now find brands on the market who offer such finishes across the entire range of brassware; from taps and bath fillers through to showers, flush plates and accessories. This will create a look of consistency and a quality finish to your

space. However, if you are committed to the timeless aesthetic of chrome, then be sure to shop around and buy from a premium brand that will deliver a higher quality of material, guaranteeing years of endless sparkle and shine.

## OPULENCE WITH YOUR FUTURE IN MIND

The idea of future-proofing your home is an appealing concept for most, and a digital bathroom will provide more convenience and comfort both now and in future years, when you or your family members might be older and less mobile.

Shower toilets are the perfect investment for instilling a sense of luxury and future-proofing in your new bathroom. They are now the norm in Asia, and there is an increasing demand for these hygienic toilet systems in Europe too. Shower toilets feature an integrated bidet system and use advanced technology to deliver ultimate hygiene and personalised comfort for washing, through a gentle and natural cleansing process. Shower toilet systems offer excellent eco-credentials with the added benefit that the need for toilet paper is eliminated, so they provide a great solution for those working on sustainable projects too.





The real luxurious element of these systems is their smart technology offering, which enables users to personalise their cleaning routine, allowing them to adjust the water

pressure and position of the spray, as well as choosing their preferred spray pattern, cleansing cycle and temperature for both water and air. In some models, the individual settings can even be controlled and stored via an app on your phone.

An added benefit to some of the more premium models of shower toilet is their practically self-cleaning function, meaning minimal maintenance and manual cleaning is required. Digital products such as shower toilets can also really help create value on your property, which is worth bearing in mind if you have plans in the future to put your house on the market.

#### GOING FOR INDULGENCE

For that once in a lifetime dream bathroom where you can afford to 'splash the cash,' it is worth investing in a state-of-the-art shower system that will create the centrepiece of your new space. These shower systems typically feature oversized 'statement' shower heads which are installed into the ceiling and can often be accompanied by body jets fitted into the walls, making them perfect for a walk-in shower enclosure set up.

In addition to delivering full body coverage from directly overhead, designed to emulate the sensation of showering in a natural waterfall, you

## *Lifestyle changes have seen the bathroom become much more than just a functional space*

will also have multiple choices of spray patterns, from invigorating to soothing, depending on your mood. Some products even offer oscillating patterns, bringing you a unique head and shoulder massage!

You'll also experience the benefits of Bluetooth-operated sound, lighting and steam features, creating your very own personalised and private at-home spa that will provide the perfect escape from the outside world. If a spa-inspired shower is top of your priority list for your new bathroom, don't forget to leave space for a seat or bench within the enclosure, and make sure to add this into your project plan!

*Paul Bailey is senior category manager at Grohe UK*

## Expanding range of sliding barn door style hardware

**P C Henderson** has this month introduced a number of new additions to its range of Rustic sliding barn door hardware – including a new top mounted version and a new 'antique rust effect' finish. The new Rustic Top Mount offers a stylish, contemporary twist on the company's classic Rustic 80 system with its matt black hangers being mounted to the top of the door. The company has also introduced a new 'antique rust effect' finish to its classic Rustic 80 system to further complement the range. The company has also recently launched its new Rustic Soft Stop system – an extremely easy to fit accessory which can be installed onto new or existing applications. The sophisticated system catches the door in its final moments of travel and pulls it gently into its final position, preventing slamming and adding to the overall longevity of the product. Ideal for barn and warehouse conversions, period properties or simply for a distinctive feature in the home, the system caters for interior wooden doors weighing up to 80kg and is available in 2000mm and 3000mm track lengths. Tested to over 100,000 cycles, the system guarantees a smooth and quiet system which will withstand the test of time. The classic Rustic 80 system is available in matt black, stainless steel or the newly added antique rust effect and the Rustic Top Mount available in matt black. The new range of hardware is out now and can be viewed at P C Henderson's website.

[www.pchenderson.com](http://www.pchenderson.com)



## New Range of Pocket Door Hardware from P C Henderson

Sliding and folding door hardware manufacturer, **P C Henderson**, is pleased to announce the launch of its new Pocket Door Pro range of sliding door hardware. Available in standard, soft close, self-close, fire rated and automated variants – the new system is set to be one of the most flexible and versatile pocket door hardware systems on the market. The new 120kg capacity system has been designed using a high quality, robust aluminium frame making it ideal for new builds and areas of heavy use such as educational buildings, hospitals, hotels, office blocks and disability access areas. Designed with ease and speed of installation at the forefront of the product development process, the product comes with pre-assembled components and a push together frame. Pocket Door Pro Fire Rated is also part of the new range which is a fully certified pocket door system to FD30 or FD60 standards. The kit contains all the benefits of the standard system with the addition of a specially adapted FSC Redwood liner kit complete and intumescent seals. The process of finger jointing reduces any issues with twist, bow and cupping, making it ideal for this type of application. The system is available in seven different kit variants (catering for doors up to 2315mm x 930mm), 120mm or 125mm finished wall thickness as well as a variety of functionality options – including soft close, self-close and automated.

[www.pchenderson.com](http://www.pchenderson.com)



## The Opus Trio Scala gas stove



An easy to use and cosy alternative to a wood burning stove, the Opus Trio Scala gas stove from **Firepower** is both stylish and realistic.

Continuing the Opus tradition of highly contemporary, clean lined design, the Scala brings the latest Scandinavian look into your home.

The stove can be lit, turned up or down and switched off from the remote control

handset. With a wide curved glass at the front as well as two side windows, the Trio Scala will fill the room with firelight, bringing with it the very essence of Danish 'hygge'.

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

## Staggering number of new Talasey products



**Talasey Group** has introduced a plethora of new products and services to their 2019 brochure. The company has spent the past year further diversifying its product portfolio and launching its bespoke training facility, Talasey Training Academy (TTA). Talasey Group's 2019 brochure, is a testament to their core values and commitment to the landscaping industry, offering more landscaping materials, colours, styles and sizes, which satisfy customer demands. The Italian porcelain paving range, Vitripiazza

has seen the most change, due to the recent demand for the material. Recognising this demand, Talasey Group decided to expand its product offering, with 12 new Vitripiazza ranges, a whopping 48 new SKU's!

0330 333 8030 [www.talasey.co.uk](http://www.talasey.co.uk)



## Sika FastFix All Weather - Always straight to the point

**Sika® FastFix All Weather** is a new self-setting paving jointing compound from Sika Everbuild, providing the ideal solution to perfect pointing on paving, paths and patios.

With a unique formula containing Active Resin Technology for advanced durability, Sika FastFix is supplied ready to use with no mixing required, is easy to apply in all weather conditions; even in the rain and won't shrink or crack over time.

Suitable for use on all joints from just 20mm deep, Sika FastFix can be used for a range of applications including footpaths, stone setts, cobbles and Indian sandstone paving slabs and once opened can be stored in water and reused to reduce waste.

For straight to the point information about Sika FastFix All Weather visit [Everbuild.co.uk/FastFix](http://Everbuild.co.uk/FastFix) or see your local stockist.

0113 240 3456 [www.everbuild.co.uk](http://www.everbuild.co.uk)



Image provided by Kingston Landscape Group

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## For those looking for ambience



With PM (particulate matter) pollution grabbing national headlines, **Specflue** is pioneering an alternative heating method for those looking for the ambience of a flickering fire in their living room that offers enhanced eco credentials.

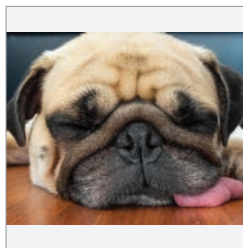
Pellet stoves, such as those manufactured by MCZ, burn compressed wood pellets and boast an impressive efficiency of 90 per cent+. They can also achieve a two thirds reduction in PM 2.5 and PM10

emissions compared to even the latest wood burners.

Visit the Specflue website for more information.

0333 999 7974 [www.specflue.com](http://www.specflue.com)

## Let sleeping dogs lie with Norbord's flooring



**Norbord's** CaberFloor P5 has been upgraded to produce a high performance floor with reduced impact and airborne noise transmission. Called CaberAcoustic, the new product comprises 18mm or 22mm CaberFloor P5 chipboard with a 10mm acoustic felt layer permanently bonded to the underside. Designed as a floating floor laid over an existing deck in either new-build or refurbishment applications, CaberAcoustic is installed with the tongue-and-groove joints glued with CaberFix D3 adhesive and all perimeters of the panel sealed with acoustic flanking strips. Norbord CaberAcoustic boards are 2,400mm long x 600mm wide and are available in 28mm and 32mm thicknesses.

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

## Mendip looks to the future with a stylish collection of stoves

There has been a lot of talk in the media recently about emissions, either from diesel or woodburning stoves, and also open fires. So now it's time to make sure your new stove is Ecodesign Ready.

Designed to reduce PM (particle matter) emissions by burning wood more efficiently and completely, Mendip's Ecodesign Ready models are future-proof and eco-friendly, already meeting the emissions and efficiency criteria for Ecodesign which comes into effect in 2022.

"Our stoves have all been tested by an independent test laboratory, and will emit approximately 80 per cent fewer particles than a stove manufactured 20 years ago, and approximately 90 per cent fewer than an open fire. That not only helps save the environment, but also helps your pocket!" Explains the MD of **Mendip Stoves**, Chris Baines. "Whatever style of stove you're looking for, it makes sense to move to an Ecodesign Ready model now," says Chris. "Air quality will be improved as wood is burned more efficiently, which in turn gives homeowners the cleanest, cosiest environment in which to spend time with family and friends. We are proud to do our part in helping consumers reduce emissions whilst burning a carbon neutral fuel."

Mendip Stoves is also proud to work in collaboration with the Woodland Trust. For every stove sold, Mendip will donate £10 to the UK's leading conservation charity, enough to plant three native trees.

01934 750500 [www.mendipstoves.co.uk](http://www.mendipstoves.co.uk)



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[www.specflue.com](http://www.specflue.com) // [f](https://www.facebook.com/specflue) [i](https://www.instagram.com/specflue) [@specflue](https://www.twitter.com/specflue)

## Fondis Hearth is the solution



There's a conundrum facing all of us when planning our new house – we want it well insulated and airtight but what's a home without a real fire at its heart?

The solution is the new Fondis Hearth, a guillotine door insert stove set into a beautiful fire surround. The combustion air comes straight from outside, so it's fully airtight and no draughts. All the pleasure of a real fire but controllable, safe and a joy to watch.

And for that guilty pleasure, slide the glass door up and away with the lift of a finger, and enjoy the radiant warmth of a genuine open fire.

For more information, please visit the **Stoves Online** website.

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

## The Klover Smart 120 kitchen range



The traditional kitchen range has undergone a transformation with the elegant Klover Smart 120. Burning carbon-neutral wood pellets, and easily capable of powering all the central heating and hot water for a family house, the Smart 120 is the epitome of highly efficient, environmentally friendly heating. Fully automated, the Smart lights itself when there is a demand for heat and goes off when the house is warm. It has both a large hotplate and an oven, perfect for cooking the Sunday roast. Easy to install

and eligible for the generous Renewable Heating Incentive grant, it turns the kitchen into the heart of the home. Visit the **Firepower** website for more information.

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

# The building blocks of driveway success

Lee Dunderdale of Bradstone spells out everything you need to know about block paving a drive, from planning, design and excavation through to the key aspects of installation, and finishing touches

For those who have embarked upon a self-build or renovation project, your focus will naturally centre on the house itself, and landscaping may fall low on the list of considerations at the early planning stages. But when the time does come to address landscaping, especially considering the time, energy and funds you will no doubt have invested into your project, you will assuredly want the approach you take to do full justice to the completed project.

The driveway is one of the most important parts of a house in terms of design. Get it wrong and the whole image of the front of a property becomes unbalanced. It's important to opt for a driveway solution that is striking while complementing the existing architecture of the property. Block paving represents an extremely practical and durable solution that can also offer a multitude of design possibilities for homeowners to personalise their space.

Your driveway should be a perfect blend of flair and function, of desirability and durability, and ultimately create that perfect first impression for your home. And if you have reached this stage on your self-build/renovation journey, we've got all the hints and tips you'll need to get you started.

## PLANNING

You will need to draw up a plan that suits your own particular requirements. You will either be replacing your driveway, extending it, or potentially starting it from scratch. Consider whether you wish to completely landscape the front of your house for a low-maintenance outdoor space, or whether you wish to allocate zones for planting or turf.

When it comes to designing a driveway that requires a drainage solution, a fully permeable system should be installed to ensure any rain that lands on it simply drains away between the blocks, stopping surface water from collecting.

Importantly, this satisfies all the stringent legislation regarding front driveways. Once all these decisions have been made, you can decide on the type and colour of block you wish to use.

## DESIGN

Both traditional and contemporary designs remain popular. For contemporary, there is an appetite for sleek lines, uniform sizes and smooth surfaces with sharp edges and modern touches such as LED light strips on the outer edge.

Colour is important – you do not want the driveway to clash with the house bricks. As a rule, we'd recommend opting for a complementary tone, as opposed to something that is either a perfect match for your brick, or a dramatic contrast. For example, pick out accents from your home exterior and implement that colour into your driveway, e.g. the window frames, a garage door or the roof tiles.

Dark, natural and muted colours are popular nowadays, particularly grey, which is an increasingly popular tone in interior and exterior design. Colour choice is driven by the look, style and age of the house itself as well as the surrounding landscape. The grey colourings bring a contemporary feel to outdoor spaces, creating a visual edge to your driveway.

With traditional paving, there is a preference towards textured surfaces with a 'riven' or weather-worn appearance. This helps to create a sense of real period charm and character. Traditional properties should opt for brown and deep orange hues, to add a rustic flair.

Don't forget those additional design elements such as kerbs, which act as the perfecting finishing touch for block paving. Kerbs are a great way to complete the look of your drive and pathways and prevent vehicular overrun.

## EXCAVATION

Depending on the size of the job, you



may want to use a mini excavator or hire a JCB to excavate the existing driveway, as this will save you time, and a lot of back-breaking work.

Mark out the area that needs to be excavated and dig out to the desired level (which depends on your existing surfaces), while making sure that your proposed finished level is 150 mm below the damp proof course in the brick of any adjoining buildings.

If the excavated area appears to be flat, it will be necessary to create a slight slope to aid the dispersion of standing water. This should be constructed with a 1:40 fall across the width of the drive, and a 1:80 fall along the length.

## EDGE RESTRAINTS

Using a concrete mixer, mix one part cement and six parts ballast to create the concrete foundation, which should be 100 mm deep. The kerb unit or edge restraint will sit on top of this at the required level. This should be done using a string line and spirit level.

Mortar the kerb units or edge restraints to the foundation using a trowel and rubber mallet. Once the kerbs are in





## Get the driveway wrong and the whole image of the front of a property becomes unbalanced

position, haunch the back of the units so that the concrete reaches halfway up the rear of the kerb.

### SUB-BASE

Lay MOT Type 1 Roadstone or Type 1

crushed concrete inside of the edge restraints, rake to the desired level in layers of 50 mm, then level and compact using a vibrating plate. The roadstone should be at least 160 mm thick after compaction. We'd recommend passing the vibrating plate over the area at least seven times to ensure it is thoroughly compacted.

### SCREEDING

Once this has been done, apply a layer of slightly damp sharp sand to a depth of 40 mm and compact with the vibrating plate. A second layer of sharp sand to a level of 20 mm should then follow on top of this. Using the string lines, screeding rails and straight edge, this second layer of sharp sand needs to be levelled to the correct falls.

### PAVING INSTALLATION

Always begin laying block paving from the bottom of a slope, preferably starting from a right angle or a straight edge. Place the blocks on top of the laying course ensuring blocks are around 10-15 mm above the desired finished level.

Continue with your desired pattern while making sure that you are using blocks from between three to five packs at once in order to minimise any colour banding. When all the full blocks have

been laid, you will need to cut a certain amount of blocks to fill the smaller gaps. This can be done by using either a block splitter or a diamond disc saw. A handy tip here is to avoid cutting a block to less than a third of its original size.

### FINISHING TOUCHES

Once all of the blocks have been laid, sweep the drive thoroughly to make sure that there is no debris left on the blocks. Then apply kiln dried sand and sweep across the whole of the drive, making sure that this sand falls down between the joints of the blocks.

Having completed this, the drive needs compacting with the vibrating plate. We recommend a neoprene faced or rubber sole plate on vibrating plate compactors to reduce scuffing. You will then need to sweep more kiln dried sand over the drive and compact again. Keep doing this until all of the joints are full of sand.

Once this final task has been completed, the driveway is ready for use. However, make sure all work on surrounding areas that vehicles will pass over is also ready for use to prevent any staining or material transferring to your new driveway as a result.

*Lee Dunderdale is product manager at Bradstone*



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## Polyflor adds EnCore Rigid Loc to the family



Commercial and residential vinyl flooring specialist, **Polyflor**, is pleased to announce the launch of a brand new product format, the Expona EnCore Rigid Loc collection. This exciting new hybrid product has an expertly engineered premium rigid SPC (Stone Polymer Composite) construction with exceptional stability making it ideal for installation over existing subfloors. Expona EnCore's technically sophisticated specification combines: A premium rigid SPC core; 0.55mm heavy commercial wear

layer; high clarity decoration layer; 1mm IXPE Acoustic Backing Layer; 5G-i locking technology. Expona EnCore Rigid Loc offers a flooring solution that caters for both commercial and residential interiors.

0161 767 1111 [www.polyflor.com](http://www.polyflor.com)

## Clever evolution of tap technology



**BLANCO UK** has launched the clever EVOL-S Volume smart tap, demonstrating another step towards sustainability and smart functionality. This revolutionary smart tap has an integrated measuring function with a precise rotary control to give users the exact amount of water they need. The specific volume is set with the scaling wheel while the measured amount is delivered via the intuitive touch sensor system. The standard mixer tap functions of temperature and flow are controlled by the lever on the

opposite side – the EVOL-S is available handed left or right. Available in stylish Chrome and Stainless Steel UltraResist finishes, the EVOL-S is the perfect addition to any kitchen.

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



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Due to its rigid construction, Expona EnCore Rigid Loc lays beautifully over most even subfloors, this means less subfloor preparation, less disruption in your home and even more time enjoying your new floor.



## Coloured rads from Stelrad



Coloured radiators are growing in popularity, so much so that leading radiator manufacturer **Stelrad** is now producing a number of coloured radiators that are available from stock – for delivery within 72 hours of order.

Many of its radiators are available in up to 36 different colours – ideal for interior decorators and for people looking to match or contrast their radiators with other decor in their new home.

For more information head for the Stelrad website to see what is now available.

0844 543 6200 [www.stelrad.com](http://www.stelrad.com)

## Say hello to healthy air



This clever fan, from **Vent-Axia**, has a pioneering odour sensor that 'smells' the air and when it detects a strong odour the fan speed increases, quickly extracting the smell to help ensure the air always feels fresh. Not only this, it makes the air healthier to breathe too through improving indoor air quality by effectively removing chemicals from the air that we would otherwise breathe in, thus enhancing our living environment. Creating an oasis of calm the Vent-Axia PureAir Sense has whisper quiet

operation meaning you can relax knowing that you'll be breathing in healthy air, undisturbed. Aesthetically it hits the mark too with its minimal styling, clean lines and optional cover that complements any bathroom.

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

## Introducing Königstone: Feel at home



**Königstone** was created in 2005 with the aim of providing quartz products of the highest quality for use as surfaces in kitchens and bathrooms. From experience of fabricating quartz worktops, the founders felt that being tied to one manufacturer was sometimes constrictive so the Königstone brand was created to provide a collection of materials drawing on a variety of different suppliers' key strengths. In 2005, Königstone started with a range of eight colours, supplied to architects and retailers

looking for the best available quality while maintaining competitive prices for their customers. Königstone only supplies approved fabricators and installers to ensure each homeowners' project is in good hands.

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

## National Ventilation new adjustable diffuser



**National Ventilation** has launched the Monsoon UNAV 125, an adjustable diffuser that offers everything installers and households desire in a diffuser. With a single design suitable for all installations, the sleek and unobtrusive Monsoon UNAV 125 has three attractive grille styles enabling small developers and self-builders to select a diffuser to suit an individual project. Designed to make installing and adjusting ventilation as quick and as easy as possible, the Monsoon UNAV 125 diffuser is easy to

fit, clean and maintain and is suitable for both MEV and MVHR ventilation systems. The Monsoon UNAV 125 is easy to install with a quick seal fit for 125mm ducting and airtight connection without the use of mounting aids.

01823 690 290 [www.nationalventilation.co.uk](http://www.nationalventilation.co.uk)

# OPUS SCANDFIRE



The Opus Scandfire is an all-in-one stove, chimney breast and chimney for a fast, safe and straightforward installation - perfect for airtight, low-energy builds.

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How a kitchen can be transformed in one day



Don't start over; makeover. That is the message from **Granite & TREND Transformations**. The new website offers all the homeowner or landlord needs to know about a hassle-free, money-, time- and planet-saving new look in the kitchen or bathroom. Whether it is a new worktop; or appliances; or doors; or sink space; or tiles and splashbacks, Granite & TREND Transformations will make design dreams come true with a wide range of materials, colours and finishes to choose from. For inspiration, the super-slick website houses a gallery showcasing the kitchen and bathroom ranges, and associated products; along with before-and-after shots of real-life transformations.

[granitetransformations.co.uk](http://granitetransformations.co.uk)

Convert to the dark side



Darker shades in kitchens are really popular this year; so ever the pioneer, **Keller**, has launched a new melamine colour, Metal Black, which offers an industrial style to complement the stunning Bolton model so homeowners can stay on trend. This model is perfect for contemporary and traditional homes. The industrial element is reflected through the smart cube-shaped units, reflective of warehouse storage shelving, and dark coloured tin handles (no 672 from Keller's range) which can be matched with aluminium framed display cases (as pictured). The Bolton model is also available in Concrete, Rust and Marble White.

[www.kellerkitchens.com](http://www.kellerkitchens.com)

New Valarte Makes Classic Current

**VitrA** has announced details of a new bathroom range joining its Signature Collection during in March. A perfect complement to the contemporary designs associated with VitrA, Valarte introduces the popular Shaker design which combines simplicity with fine craftsmanship and functionality. Valarte is a modern take on a proven classic style that can be used in a traditional or a modern interior. The design, produced by VitrA's in-house team, takes its inspiration from Shaker and is available in three soft, nostalgic and on trend shades with circular metal ring handles. The comprehensive furniture range includes vanities, a statement towel cupboard and variety of dresser pieces in matte white, matt ivory and matte grey. The washbasin is also available with chrome legs bringing it bang up to date for today's bathroom styles. The vanity basins have an attractive double rim design with an upstand at the back and are available in one and three tap hole formats. The range also includes mirrors and illuminated mirror cabinets. The back-to-wall, wall-hung, and close-coupled WC pans complete the range. "Consumers are looking for timeless designs and for products that combine value for money without compromising on good looks," says Margaret Talbot. "This is exactly what Valarte offers. The choice of furniture styles and sizes and the complementary sanitaryware means that the range can be used for an en-suite, family bathrooms, cloakrooms or guest bathrooms."

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



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01924 420820 [www.safetyplatforms.co.uk](http://www.safetyplatforms.co.uk)

# Clearly beautiful

Tanzeela Yasin of IQ Glass explains the aesthetic benefits of including frameless glass balustrades in your project, but also the safety considerations that you need to take into account

**F**rameless glass balustrades are becoming a popular glazing feature across many architectural projects. The main reason people opt for glass balustrades is because they are extremely versatile and provide a safety barrier, while still allowing natural light to pass through without any obstacles in the way.

There are many elements that need to be considered to ensure the balustrade specified is strong, provides high levels of safety, and meets all the required regulations.

## THE BENEFITS

Glass balustrades can be installed anywhere in the home where the level changes – including staircases, landings, mezzanine floors, external balconies, rooftop spaces, and terraced areas.

Whether you are looking to install inside or outside a property, glass balustrades offer a range of benefits, listed in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, safety – one of the main purposes of a frameless glass balustrade is for added safety, especially for areas such as stairways, balconies and swimming areas.

Second, frameless glass balustrades are clear, and they therefore have the benefit of not blocking any light within a building, and providing unobstructed views. This enhances the sunlight presence, creating an airier and more open feel within the living area. An example of this is Juliet balconies – a stunning design addition to any property which does not require any supporting framework and is solely supported by its own structural integrity. The frameless balcony is fixed to the external masonry of the building to provide full safety.

Frameless glass balustrades need little maintenance. Warm soapy water and a lint-free cloth wiped down on the glass is all you need in order to maintain the

unobstructed view. Even polishing and wiping down scratched glass will restore it to its original beauty.

Glass elements are popular within interior designs because they create the illusion of more space. Frameless glass balustrades can be used to separate internal spaces, but creating an area which can appear as one large space. This of course can only be achieved with glass, as opposed to metal and wood.

Toughened, laminated structural will ensure safety and strength. The glass balustrade is held in place using supports and special channel systems, without the need for large metal supports and fixings, to provide a completely frameless glass panel. The glass should be toughened in accordance with EN12600 regulations. It would take an extremely high line load to break balustrades as they are as strong as steel. Where high loading requirements are needed, glass balustrades require a toughened glass panel with a thickness of at least 15 mm. However, if the glass was to break, the shards of glass would not be sharp, making it suitable for any area, even with children present.

Glass will maintain its quality and strength for years to come, unlike wood, which is prone to deterioration over time when exposed. Glass balconies are one of the most durable types available, known for their ability to withstand against all weather conditions.

Finally on aesthetics, glass balustrades add elegance and sophistication to any property. Frameless glass balustrades can be designed as minimal, aesthetically-neat glass barriers between levels without any viable fixings.

## WHERE TO INCLUDE

You can integrate a glass balustrade anywhere you wish in your design, but of course one of the most obvious places is anywhere where a safety barrier is



*Clear glass balustrades can be installed anywhere in the home where the level changes*

required due to a floor level change. In a residential dwelling this is where the floor change is greater than 600 mm.

However, you don't have to be restricted to this – you can include a structural glass balustrade anywhere, as long as it meets Building Regulations.

## HEIGHT REQUIREMENTS

Where a balustrade is installed within a residential building, its minimum height will be detailed in Part K of the Building Regulations. Part K protects people from falling, collision and impact within a building, and dictates the following minimum balustrade height requirements in a private residential building:

- At an opening window – 800 mm
- Within the home (stairs, landings, edges of internal floors) – 900 mm
- Outside the building (external staircase stairs, edges of roofs, balconies) – 1,100 mm





### LOADS

Glass balustrades need to withstand the following three load types:

- Line load: This is measured in kN/m and loading requirements are given in classification in accordance with EN 1991-1-1. This is intended to test the force of an impact against the balustrade.

- Uniformly distributed load (UDL): This is measured in kN/m<sup>2</sup> and is given in classifications in accordance with EN 1991-1-4. This load is horizontal force against the midsection of the balustrade.
- Concentrated load: This is measured in kN and is given in classifications in accordance with EN 1991-1-1. This is



for sudden human impact including any sudden or accidental pressure to the balustrade.

### HANDRAILS

IQ Glass recommends that a handrail should always be used, unless a laminated toughened glass construction is specified that would remain in situ if a panel fails.

In accordance with BS6180:2011 Section 8.5, a continuous handrail is not required if the correct glass specification is used. IQ technical engineers ensure the glass balustrades can withstand all weather conditions and loading requirements. Should a glass panel break, and the glass remains in situ, then a continuous handrail is not required.

*Tanzeela Yasin is marketing assistant at IQ Glass UK*



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### Digital Issue

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