



Patrick Mooney says meeting Government ambition on ending homelessness needs more than cash



Reporting on the £6m 'Places for People' social housing scheme completed in Salford by Watson Homes



Why developers are being urged to "prepare for a green Brexit" by law firm Ward Hadaway

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THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

STEMMING THE PLASTIC TIDE

As the construction sector looks to reduce its carbon emissions, there is one aspect that is often overlooked – plastic waste. Jack Wooler spoke to Phil Sutton, founder of Econpro, on the reasons why plastic has a key role in construction, and explores how it can also become part of a circular economy.



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James Parker

FROM THE EDITOR

The dawning of a new decade brings with it inevitable feelings of renewal and change, and speculation as to what this 'new' period will bring, and this time round there are no shortage of challenges.

Looming even larger than Brexit in the national consciousness, after the combination of a conclusive General Election result – leading many to give up on any hope of 'remaining' – and the terrible fires in Australia, is climate change. It's on all major companies' lips, firms left right and centre are putting out their long-term climate goal statements (e.g. Microsoft now pledging to be 'climate-negative' in 10 years), but on the ground, in housebuilding, things are changing very slowly.

At *Housebuilder and Developer*, we have devoted a regular monthly section to reviewing where the industry is both facing and addressing challenges from the perspective of this industry. 'The Climate Challenge' is gathering opinion across various relevant sector segments and strata of professionals involved each month, which we hope is providing a realistic digest of how the industry is responding.

This month, the target is possibly the biggest climate 'elephant in the room' of all for our sector, plastic. It wouldn't surprise me if, of the millions of construction-related products on sale, most were made from a polymer of some kind, and Phil Sutton, a specialist in recycling polymers at Econpro, gives a no-nonsense assessment of why the material remains a highly beneficial solution for the UK construction supply chain. However, he also says that poor management of the waste side, both in terms of packaging and end of life, is offsetting the benefits.

It is sensible, dispassionate assessments of the challenges and needs of each industry which are what's needed in order to further the changes that must happen for the UK to move towards our daunting 2050 net zero goal. The headline activities of media favourites like Greta Thunberg are essential to provide the pull at the top level – including with UK consumers who need to provide the demand for sustainability that housebuilders will meet.

But the 'push' to make the industry do better, and fast, needs to take into account the challenges as well as opportunities that companies face as well as housebuilders, when it comes to 'closing the loop' on recycling for example. As ever, if the Government wants to see its ambitions (which on this mirror that of society) reached, it really needs to think about intervening and supporting the industry.

And it's the 'messy' side where this may need to happen. The Future Homes Standard is one thing, but what about looking at a top-down national plastic waste management programme, co-ordinated with councils and housebuilders, as well as perhaps strong incentives for manufacturers to make 100 per cent recycled plastic? Unfashionably like state involvement, but maybe essential to drive real change.

James Parker

HOUSEBUILDER & DEVELOPER

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The High Street Group's ambitious scheme for Gateshead's quayside will deliver 262 apartments and transform a former industrial landscape into a 'thriving cultural destination'

Brett Wharf,
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Government pledges to “restore fairness and honesty” in housing



Plans for a “revolutionary new deal for renters” were announced as part of the Queen’s speech, intended to “restore fairness, honesty and transparency at the heart of the housing market.”

Among proposals for renters, local first time buyers, and reforms to the leasehold market, the Government revealed some of its upcoming legislative plans for the housing sector.

One such plan is to ensure any new housing is accompanied by essential infrastructure, with a White Paper to be published on reforming the planning system to ensure it “works better” for the public and small builders.

In what it has stated to be the “biggest change to building safety laws for 40 years,” the Government will also action recommendations from the Hackitt review. These changes are intended to provide clearer accountability for, and stronger duties on, those responsible for the safety of high-rise buildings; “give residents a stronger voice in the system”; and strengthen enforcement and sanctions to deter non-compliance with the new regime in order to “hold the right people to account.”

As part of these changes, the Government has also pledged to take

“swift action” to introduce legalisation to implement the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry Phase 2 report through changes to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) order 2005.

Under the remaining proposals, plans for a lifetime deposit scheme were released, which would see deposits follow renters from property to property.

Plans to abolish no-fault evictions have also been confirmed, meaning landlords would no longer be able to remove tenants from their homes at short notice and with no “good” reason. This will reportedly be matched with new powers to strengthen the rights of landlords to gain possession of their property through the courts when they have “clearly valid reason to do so.”

The Government also announced plans to launch its First Home scheme, set to make homes available at a discount for local first-time buyers. Councils will be able to use housing developers’ contributions to discount homes by 30 per cent for people who cannot otherwise afford to buy in their area. The Affordable Homes Programme will reportedly still be renewed.

Alongside these plans, it was revealed that new legislation is to be set in place to “bring an end to the unscrupulous practice of unnecessary leaseholds,” introducing laws to ban new houses being sold on a leasehold basis, and reducing ground rents for new leases to zero.

Start preparing for Biodiversity Net Gain now, says legal planning team

Developers should start preparing now for the Government’s proposed ‘Green Brexit,’ says legal firm Ward Hadaway’s planning team, after the Conservative’s decisive win last month.

Although the Environment Bill is still a while off becoming law, the firm believes that developers up and down the country should already be thinking about the implications the proposed mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 10 per cent will have on future developments.

This advice follows the Government’s announcement it will make BNG manda-

tory for every site – and currently every type of planning permission – to incentivise the enhancement of habitats onsite or locally. Although the proposals require a 10 per cent BNG, the Government has talked about introducing some exemptions for permitted developments and householder applications, as well as an exemption for certain brownfield and small sites. However, those exemptions will reportedly be included in the secondary legislation that is not yet available. The Government has stated that BNG will not apply in the same way to nationally significant infrastructure projects, although other proposals for net gain are being explored.

Long-term protection of habitats is encouraged, says Ward Hadaway, as any works a developer proposes to undertake to increase biodiversity value “may only be taken into account if maintenance for a minimum of 30 years has been secured.” If 10 per cent BNG can’t be achieved by on-site improvements, there are opportunities for off-site improvements through financial contributions in a section 106 Agreement or the purchasing of ‘biodiversity credits.’

As is the current position, changes to biodiversity will continue to be measured by The Defra Biodiversity Metric, which considers habitat type, condition and size of habitat, strategic significance, and connectivity, and is translated by the metric into a number of biodiversity units. Interpretation of the updated Biodiversity Metric is likely to require the involvement of a specialist ecologist.

For most, the concept of BNG will not be new, however its application has generally been confined to sites with high biodiversity value. According to Ward Hadaway, implications for developers are more so for those sites with marginal viability, while the impact for landowners may be greater as they are likely to receive a diminished land value due to increased planning/section 106 costs.

There are also resource implications for local planning authorities as Section 88 and schedule 15 of the draft Bill states that development “may not begin” unless the developer has submitted a biodiversity gain plan and the local planning authority has approved the plan.



Affordable housing provision “collapses” across London

The building of affordable housing in London has collapsed by as much as 62 per cent in some London boroughs this decade, analysis by developer Southern Grove has revealed.

Half of all the capital's boroughs have seen rates of new building tumble, with six London local authorities, including the City of London, seeing new supply of affordable homes fall by more than a third when compared with the 2000s.

Hammersmith & Fulham and Redbridge were the worst performing boroughs, with the number of new affordable homes created between 2010/11 and 2018/19 falling 61.6 per cent on a like-for-like basis. In Sutton, the drop has been 45.4 per cent, Richmond upon Thames saw a 39.5 per cent decline, and Haringey has fallen 34.9 per cent.

The City of London saw the steepest fall in new affordable homes of any London local authority, recording a 64.1 per cent drop.

As the 2010s drew to a close, the overall supply of new affordable housing hasn't improved at all across the capital this decade. In fact, it has fallen by 1.2

per cent on a like for like basis, according to the latest government figures released by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Consistency remains a problem for London, with a third of areas failing to maintain the same rate of building last year that they had achieved in the previous 12 months.

Analysis of the latest figures shows that last year Merton was the only authority where the supply of new affordable homes fell by more than 50 per cent in 12 months. The borough created 60.8 per cent fewer affordable homes in 2018/19 year on year, while in Enfield the fall was 46.3 per cent, and in Haringey the decline was 42.3 per cent.

The latest figures for 2018/19 show that the 9,205 affordable homes created were only just over half of the 18,120 created at the capital's peak in 2014/15.

Additionally, according to the London Assembly there have never been enough affordable homes built in the capital. It estimates that 43,000 new affordable homes are needed each year up to 2041 to meet the demand.

Andrew Southern, chairman of developer Southern Grove, commented: “Years of abysmal house building rates have left London with an enormous black hole in its provision of affordable homes.

“There is the political will to build more affordable homes but, as these figures show, this is still not translating into enough completed properties for people to live in.

“In London, the only way to generate the affordable housing stock required is to build higher. This can still truly involve excellent design at key locations over the capital's transport nodes, but planners need to meet developers half way to ensure there can be some real action.”



Data reveals highest price rises across UK this decade

The largest increases in UK house prices in the last 10 years have been seen in Thurrock, Essex, according to analysis of Land Registry data by modular developer Project Etopia.

The analysis showed that the comparison between the average house prices at the start and end of the 2010s showed increases in value of up to 76.2 per cent over the last 10 years, and that on average, prices have risen by 38.8 per cent in the UK, excluding London.

Thurrock was revealed to have recorded the greatest rise in prices, increasing by 76.2 per cent from £156,741 to £276,164. Three Rivers and Watford, Hertfordshire, were not far behind with 75.2 per cent and 74.3 per cent rises respectively.

Only three parts of the country, all in the north of England, saw prices decrease, falling by 7.8 per cent in Hartlepool, 1 per cent in Redcar and Cleveland, and 0.4 per cent in Blackpool.

Joseph Daniels, CEO of Project Etopia, commented: “Healthy appreciation will be welcomed by many homeowners, but for the wider country this is a totally unsustainable situation.

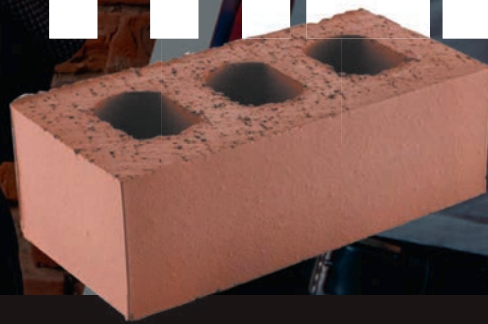
“The UK must accelerate housebuilding to increase supply over the next decade and temper Britain's affordability problems. Only Modern Methods of Construction can deliver new homes fast enough to meet the demand and ensure ordinary hard-working people can afford to buy property right across the UK.”



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Transaction levels are predicted to flatline in 2020

The outlook for the number of house transactions is looking to be flat for the year ahead, according to the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), despite the general election outcome.

In its RICS Housing Forecast 2020, the institute has argued that the Government needs to prioritise housing policy this year in order to “inject activity in the market,” and address the housing crisis.

In 2019, the RICS said its survey data “consistently showed there was a shortage of stock,” with average stock levels on estate agents’ books reportedly hitting a new all-time low in June. This, coupled with a continued decline in new properties being listed for sale – as respondents cited sellers’ caution during the Brexit uncertainty – and “stretched” affordability in parts of the country meant the chance of a “material pick-up” in activity during 2020 seems small.

The RICS believes this lack of impetus in sales activity suggests house price growth will rise modestly throughout the year, with the forecast predicting a 2 per cent rise.

Rents are also expected by the institute to rise in 2020, and at a faster pace. As the sector continues to struggle with a lack of supply, the RICS survey data suggests rents will rise by 2.5 per cent. In

fact, the number of new landlord instructions has been stuck in negative territory for 14 successive quarters, which is the longest run since 1999. In London, rents are expected to rise at an even faster pace of 3 per cent.

Tarrant Parsons, RICS Economist, commented: “Momentum across the UK housing market has remained relatively subdued, with new buyer demand showing little impetus going into the New Year. That said, with the Conservative party winning a clear majority, the Withdrawal Agreement will very likely be ratified in the coming weeks. This could see some confidence returning, at least for a brief spell, meaning activity may see some uplift.

“Challenges around affordability and low stock levels will continue to drag on the market, and Brexit uncertainty could resurface as the next deadline draws closer. As such, we expect house prices to rise by just 2 per cent next year, with the outlook for overall sales volumes broadly flat.”

Removal of Woodstock site from Local Plan a “huge lost opportunity”



Dominic Hare, CEO Blenheim Estate

The decision to remove a development site in South East Woodstock from Cherwell District Council’s Local Plan has been branded as a “huge lost opportunity” by the developer Blenheim Estates.



According to the firm, the site known as PR10 has not been included “even though more homes will now be added to Green Belt sites which have been allocated,” despite this reportedly being against national policy. PR10 is thought to be the only site among the Cherwell allocations that is not located in the Green Belt.

The developer had included 205 affordable homes in its 410-home plan for the site – at what it calls a “pioneering” 40 per cent discount on market rents.

The company said that as in its other PR10 would incorporate the principles of ‘Landowner Legacy’ which “recognises local landowners have a social, economic and moral responsibility to deliver developments of which its local community can be proud.”

Cherwell District Council had previously supported the inclusion of the SE Woodstock site in the Local Plan, “only to change its mind following the advice of the Planning Inspector,” said Blenheim.

The developer has argued that the decision not to allocate the site overlooks a “significant public benefit,” in terms of it being a £45m investment endowment to protect the World Heritage Site of Blenheim Palace.

Historic England and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) have reportedly said they are happy with the proposed site, with Historic England supportive of the direct investment that would have benefited the World Heritage Site.

Blenheim Estate has also disputed the Inspector’s view that the PR10 homes would have “limited access to Oxford jobs via sustainable transport” as the site is adjacent to a proposed new Park & Ride facility.

The developer has subsequently submitted representations highlighting its objections to the removal of PR10 to Cherwell District Council as part of the Local Plan consultation process.

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Size matters, concludes property survey



The size of a property is the single most important consideration among UK house buyers, while community and culture ranks as the least significant, according to new research by Market Financial Solutions (MFS).

The survey of more than 1,000 UK homeowners was intended to discover what factors matter the most to them when hunting for a new home.

A property's square footage was revealed to be the most important consideration, with 90 per cent saying this was "important" or "very important" to them.

Outdoor space (89 per cent), the property's finish (88 per cent), its distance to the nearest town (87 per cent), and the availability of a garage or off-street parking (86 per cent) completed the top five.

Conversely, the culture of the local community (67 per cent), the potential to extend the property (71 per cent), and the age of the property (74 per cent), were seen to be the least important factors.

Elsewhere, broadband and mobile connectivity was deemed marginally more important than local amenities and the proximity of parks or good schools among the UK's house hunters.

Paresh Raja, CEO of MFS, commented: "The old adage that property investment

is all about 'location, location, location' still holds true, but this extends beyond local amenities or schools. Homebuyers are prioritising size and infrastructure; and crucially, this does not just include transport links but also digital connectivity.

"Moreover, it's surprising that the potential to extend a property is so low

down on the list of priorities for house hunters." He added: "Extensions and conversions are effective ways to bolster the value of a property – and with square footage the most important factor for UK homebuyers, it's vital they remember that they can always increase the size of a house or flat through outward or upward extensions."

HOUSE BUYERS' PRIORITIES (ACCORDING TO MFS SURVEY):

- Square footage (90 per cent said this was "important" or "very important" to them when they bought their most recent residential property)
- Garden and/or outdoor space (89 per cent)
- Quality and finish (88 per cent)
- Distance to nearest city or town (87 per cent)
- Garage or off-street parking (86 per cent)
- How built-up the local area is (83 per cent)
- Transport links (83 per cent)
- Broadband and mobile connectivity (82 per cent)
- Whether it was a detached, semi-detached or terraced property (81 per cent)
- Local shops, cafés, bars and restaurants (81 per cent)
- Proximity of public spaces and parks (79 per cent)
- Proximity to good schools (77 per cent)
- Age of the property (74 per cent)
- Potential for extensions and conversions (71 per cent)
- Culture of the community and proximity of cultural sites (67 per cent)

(Size of property, inclusion of outdoor space and overall quality of finish were the three most important factors accorded to respondent)



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Raising Standards. Protecting Homeowners



CALA Homes launches initiative designed to make purchases smoother

An initiative has been launched to take personal service in housebuilding “to the next level,” and make purchasing a new home as smooth and tailored as possible.

Available across 11 developments in the East of Scotland, ‘Perfect Match’ will see CALA Homes (East) help buyers ensure a move can be achieved by removing hurdles with tailor-made incentives.

The developer said this could include everything from the firm offering LBT (Land and Buildings Transaction Tax) contributions, to a part-exchange service, a guaranteed buyer for an owner’s current home, or helping with legal or moving fees through CALA Homes’

assisted move services.

Philip Hogg, sales and marketing director at CALA Homes (East), said: “We want to reflect that buying a home is a monumental, deeply personal transaction. Every move is unique – and we all are looking for different things or face different hurdles and challenges in securing that dream home.

“That’s why we have created the Perfect Match to provide buyers with a tailor-made package to make sure the move brings excitement and not stress.”

The Perfect Match is applicable across a range of developments and house styles. Each of the 11 developments included in the promotion also offer a variety of options.

CALA HOMES’ FEATURED “PERFECT MATCH” DEVELOPMENTS:

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- Chapel Lawns – Roslin
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- Fentoun Green – Gullane
- Castle Bay – Dunbar
- Letham Views – Haddington
- Law Gardens – North Berwick
- The Crescent – Edinburgh
- Waterfront Plaza – Edinburgh
- Kingfisher Park – Balerno
- Ravelrig Heights – Balerno

Housing provider donates £5k to Derby charity



Housing provider Derwent Living has given a £5,000 grant to local charity Doorways Derby, who provide help to homeless and vulnerable people.

The funding has been secured from Places for People social impact charity Places Foundation, who provide financial support to initiatives which improve the quality of life for people and communities.

The grant will be used to cover running costs, the purchasing of sleeping bags and supplies, and will help to finance the running costs of a new vehicle – essential in providing a mobile street kitchen service.

Derwent Living has previously supported the charity with clothing donations, food collections and staff volunteers, but the grant – one of the largest the organisation has ever secured – has reportedly added vital financial stability to the charity.

Group head of social value at Places Foundation, Jamie Dickinson commented: “Homelessness is a growing challenge across the UK with over 300,000 homeless people living on the streets, in temporary accommodation or ‘sofa surfing’ with family and friends.

“Last year the Places for People Group helped over 5,300 homeless people, so it’s great that the Places Foundation can continue to contribute and support work with Derwent Living and Doorways Derby. This funding is going to make a huge difference to some of the most vulnerable people in Derby and we look forward to developing this partnership further in the future.”



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Lovell Homes celebrates '200 years of staff service' across the firm



A number of milestone achievements are being celebrated by Lovell Homes, including a 20th anniversary and the welcome return of an experienced team member after a 12 year absence.

Lee Parry, managing quantity surveyor, is celebrating his 20th year at Lovell Homes in November. This is in addition to 20 other team members who are celebrating work anniversaries of four to 30 years, equalling a total service length of over two centuries.

The firm is also celebrating the return of sales advisor Irene Phillips, after leaving 12 years ago to pursue other opportunities in the property world.

Irene said: "I'm really happy to be back at Lovell as I always regretted leaving. I was with the company for seven years so I knew it was a great place to work but I'd forgotten quite how much I enjoyed it."

"I'm very lucky to have Shawbrook Manor in Leyland as the first development I'm on site and assisting buyers with – it's a really lovely scheme in a great location. The two, three, four and five bed homes and two-bedroom bungalows are perfect for families, professionals and anyone looking to upgrade from a smaller property. They reflect the 'Lovell Homes difference' in terms of the quality of finish, and reinforce why I'm proud to be

back on the team."

Lee Sale, managing director at Lovell Homes North West, added: "We're delighted to be celebrating the fantastic service record of our team as it not only highlights their dedication to our customers but also that Lovell Homes North West is a great place to work."

"As well as supporting the development and career of our existing employees, we're committed to encouraging new skills into the industry with our established apprenticeship scheme and training."



Local artworks announced for Meridian Water



Local youths are set to create artworks for hoardings around the first phase of the £6bn Meridian Water project.

Enfield residents and artists Karen Rubins, Duncan James and Adam David will work with a range of schools and youth organisations to create the works, which feature themes of the past, present and future of Upper Edmonton, north London, and the Meridian Water regeneration scheme.

The scheme itself is seeking to provide 10,000 homes and 6,000 jobs and to create 8.2 hectares of parkland in Lea Valley over the coming 25 years.

Enfield Council is delivering the scheme, and hopes to ensure that local people are the principal beneficiaries. Thousands of affordable homes and quality jobs are planned for the project in Enfield, as well new schools, community and health services, nurseries, shops and youth and leisure facilities.

Enfield Council's leader, Cllr Nesil Caliskan, said: "These fantastic artworks will provide a colourful frontage surrounding our rapidly developing Meridian Water project and demonstrate that we are making progress in our aim of delivering thousands of homes and jobs at this flagship scheme."

"The art produced by these young people will be seen by thousands of people every day and will plot the journey this development has taken from its inception while showing a glimpse of its glittering future."

The art project will start in early 2020 with the winning local artists, who were selected after a competitive tender process, working with Meridian Angels Primary School, Northside Youth and Community Connexions and West Lea School to get their design on the hoardings around Meridian Water Station. The artwork will be unveiled in the spring.

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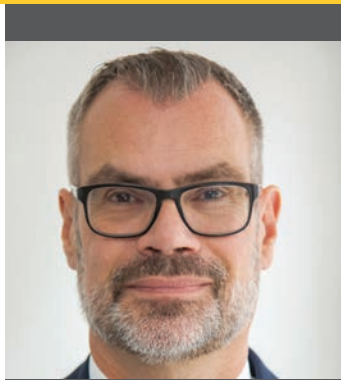
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Brian Berry, chief executive of the Federation of Master Builders

THE INDUSTRY ADVOCATE

IT'S TIME TO CUT VAT ON HOME IMPROVEMENT

Brian Berry of the FMB discusses why the upcoming Budget provides the perfect opportunity to cut VAT on home improvements and give a boost to small builders.

With a majority of 80 MPs, this Government has the opportunity to put forward some radical policies that previous governments may have been too cautious to consider.

When the UK has left the EU, the Government will have more control over certain policy areas such as VAT. The Government should seize this opportunity at the Budget on 11 March and support the campaign of more than 20 organisations from the property and built environment sectors to cut VAT on all home repair, maintenance, and management from 20 per cent to 5 per cent.

This would incentivise homeowners across the country to upgrade their properties, giving a much-needed post-Brexit boost to local builders, but also helping to reduce carbon emissions and restore our heritage.

CUTTING VAT WILL HELP REACH NET ZERO

The UK was the first country in the world to legislate a commitment to having net zero carbon emissions by 2050. To achieve this

will require many sectors of the economy to change the way they operate. A big contributor is the built environment with housing alone contributing to 20 per cent of the UK's total carbon emissions.

While recent focus from the Government has been on new builds through the Future Homes Standard, it should not ignore the millions of existing homes. The UK has some of the leakiest housing stock in Europe – which will need radically upgrading if we are to meet agreed energy efficiency targets. There are eight million lofts that need insulating; five million uninsulated cavity walls; and 20 million uninsulated floors. To incentivise homeowners the Government should cut VAT on all repair and maintenance so that tax doesn't act as hindrance to them undertaking this work.

CUTTING VAT WILL HELP US RESTORE OUR HERITAGE

As well as being good for the environment, a cut to VAT on repair and maintenance would give a much needed boost our heritage sector.

THE UK HAS SOME OF THE LEAKIEST HOUSING STOCK IN EUROPE – WHICH WILL NEED RADICALLY UPGRADING



The recent interim report from the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission, highlighted the vital importance that the repair and maintenance sector plays in sustaining our existing buildings and heritage.

The Commission point to the absurdity of the tax difference between new builds which are zero rated for VAT and repair and maintenance which is charged at 20 per cent, and calls for harmonisation. The Government should heed this advice.

CUTTING VAT WILL HELP BOOST THE ECONOMY

Finally, cutting VAT on repair and maintenance work would give a much needed boost to the economy. In 2015 the Federation of Master Builders commissioned Experian to look at the economic impact of reducing VAT to 5 per cent on repair and maintenance work. They found that over the five year period 2015-20 this could have created an economic stimulus of over £15bn, created 42,000 extra full time construction jobs and 53,000 extra jobs in the wider economy.

More recently, the Home Owners and Alliance and Resi found that almost a quarter of people have been put off undertaking home improvement work



because of the cost, and almost a third have admitted not paying VAT in order to afford the project. A reduction would therefore not only motivate home owners to improve their homes, but would also help increase standards by removing the competitive advantage of the cash-in-hand economy.

The upcoming Budget on 11 March, expected to be focused on the environment, provides the perfect opportunity to cut VAT on repair, maintenance and maintenance, and by doing so will help the UK reach net zero, restore our heritage and give a much needed boost to SME builders.

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Patrick Mooney, editor of
Housing, Management &
Maintenance

THE SOCIAL NETWORK

ENDING HOMELESSNESS NEEDS MORE THAN CASH

Patrick Mooney discusses whether expanded homelessness programmes will help to deliver the Government's new target for the ending of rough sleeping.

Unexpectedly the Government has brought forward its target for ending rough sleeping on the streets of Britain by three years to 2024.

The original target was already considered to be 'ambitious' and a tough one to achieve, but the New Year was only a few days old when Prime Minister Johnson announced increased allocations of £263m in funding for councils to beef up their work on tackling and preventing homelessness. The Government's homelessness programmes are now worth £1.2bn in total.

More money is always welcome, particularly in a sector which has seen its resources put under enormous strain. But it will take more than money to deliver the extra social housing and changes in public policies that will be required to meet the 'nil rough sleeping' target, according to campaigning groups like Shelter and Crisis.

This is particularly true when the early evidence is showing us that many councils across the country, but particularly in London, are struggling to deliver the laudable outcomes envisaged in the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Surely it was no coincidence that the extra funding announcement coincided with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman publishing its finding that the London Borough of Tower Hamlets had badly let down a young pregnant woman, who had approached the council for help after her father threw her out of the family home in early 2019.

As a result of misinterpreting its legal responsibilities, not doing what it should have done and failing to cope with staff

shortages, the council left the woman sleeping on the floor of a privately rented flat for three months.

The Ombudsman decided to publicise the case as it felt other councils had lessons to learn from the mishandling of the woman's homelessness application. Clearly staff at Tower Hamlets council are not alone in struggling to deliver their new responsibilities towards those threatened with homelessness.

So are the announcements on changing the rough sleeping target and the extra money any more than window dressing when compared to the scale of the problem?

INCREASE IN NUMBERS SEEKING HELP

Research carried out last year by LSE London on behalf of London Councils and the London Housing Directors' Group shows that implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act since April 2018 has substantially increased the number of people seeking help from the boroughs, and demands on the resources required for public services.

THE COUNCIL
LEFT THE
WOMAN
SLEEPING ON
THE FLOOR
OF A FLAT
FOR THREE
MONTHS



'The Cost of Homelessness Services in London' report revealed that due to the chronic lack of affordable housing and record number of homeless households, the homelessness cost burden has fallen disproportionately on London councils.

The cost of handling a homelessness case in London is at least double the cost for England, while the cost of preventing a homelessness case (either helping a household to stay in their current accommodation or find a new place to live prior to becoming homeless) in London is almost four times the England average.

Councils across the country, particularly those in large metropolitan areas like Bristol, Birmingham and Brighton have claimed the 'new burdens' grant funding to support implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act has not taken into account their higher costs.

Costs and service pressures are undoubtedly higher in the capital, with London's councils spending over £919m on homelessness services in 2017/18. This is projected to rise to over £1bn a year by 2021/22. If funding arrangements do not change, the cost to London boroughs' general funds (which arguably should be used for other council services) is estimated to rise to £237m by 2022/23.

This suggests the Governments of Theresa May and Boris Johnson both underestimated the financial impact of implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act. Councils also point out that additional administrative requirements take their staff away from doing frontline prevention work.

SOCIAL POLICY CHANGES REQUIRED

Councillors and officers regularly tell me that more affordable housing and targeted support needs to be made available to the homeless, while various policy changes are required across Government to avoid people ending up on the streets in the first place.

Policies in the benefits, care, health and immigration sectors are regularly referred to as 'problems,' as well as family law and the (mis)handling of domestic violence cases by various agencies.

However, one social policy area decision that was warmly welcomed over the holiday period, was the decision to extend support for the Troubled Families programme by £165m. This will allow the programme to continue for an extra year through to the end of March 2021. It is unclear what happens after that.

Since the current programme began in 2015, almost 298,000 families have made improvements with the problems that led to them joining the programme in the first place. The main focus has been on providing early and on-going intensive



support to vulnerable families. It follows an 'invest to save' principle, that says money spent on helping people early on will save far more in the long run.

In some ways this shares many of the characteristics of the Housing First programme, which aims to support vulnerable rough sleepers and homeless people into settled and secure accommodation. Specialist caseworkers help people to maintain their tenancy while also tackling the issues that led to them becoming homeless in the first place.

The latest evaluation of the Troubled Families programme shows that, compared to families with similar characteristics who have not been on the programme, 19-24 months after starting to receive support:

- The proportion of children on the programme going into care has reduced by a third
- The proportion of adults on the programme going to prison has reduced by a quarter and juvenile convictions reduced by 15 per cent
- More people on the programme are back in work, with 10 per cent fewer people claiming Jobseekers Allowance.

GREATER INTEGRATION OF SERVICES

More of this problem-solving and targeted support is required, but it was reassuring to hear both Boris Johnson and his Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick speak about their hopes and ambitions, as well as their determination to end rough sleeping.

Speaking at a rough sleeping shelter in London, Johnson said: "It cannot be right in the 21st century that people are homeless or having to sleep on our streets, and this Government will work tirelessly to bring this to an end."

"This new funding is going to help councils provide better support to

homeless people and, importantly, prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place. But we have got to do even more, and we're committed to expanding rough sleeping and homelessness programmes and ensuring more integrated working between our local health and housing services."

Mr Jenrick spent the evening of Christmas Day volunteering at Birmingham's Christmas Shelter. He later said: "I will put tackling homelessness and rough sleeping right at the heart of this Government. We are committed to putting an end to rough sleeping by the end of this Parliament."

"Last year the number of people sleeping rough fell for the first time in several years, and while the Government's interventions are working, there is a great deal more work to do."

A TOUGH TASK

The scale of the task was revealed in figures released by the charity Shelter, shortly before Christmas. These showed the number of people who are homeless in England has hit 280,000 – 23,000 more than three years ago.

Official figures showed that across England one in every 200 people are without a home. In parts of London that figure is far higher, with Newham, in east London, recording one in 24 people as homeless, while in Kensington and Chelsea, the number is one in 29. The London average is one in 50.

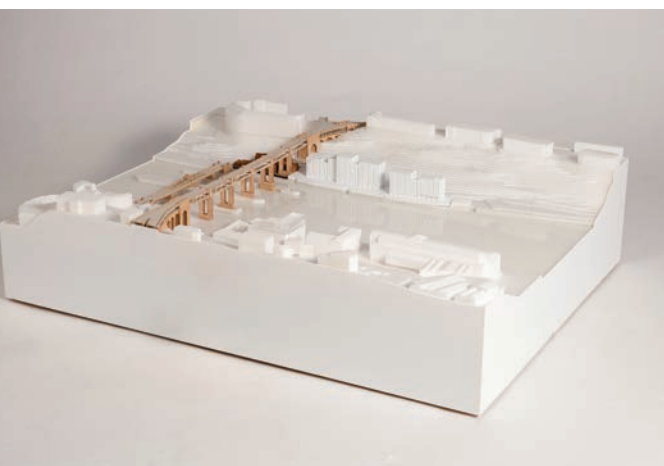
Outside of the capital, Birmingham has one person in 66 who is homeless, in Brighton and Hove the figure is one in 75, while in Manchester one in every 102 people is without somewhere to live.

For the first time, Shelter's review has also exposed that close to 220,000 people in England were threatened with homelessness in the past year.

Shelter say that despite its report being the most comprehensive overview of homelessness, the true level of homelessness is likely to be even higher.

Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter, said: "Homelessness blights lives and leaves a lasting imprint of trauma, and yet 280,000 people in England were without a home this Christmas. And many are only days away from joining them. This is the grim truth our new Government must confront and do something radical to change."

This will be a tough ask to deliver, when so much attention will be focused on delivering Brexit and the Prime Minister's other high profile promises made during the recent election. Shelter, Crisis and London Councils clearly believe they need more resources and a greater focus on ending homelessness.



NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Brett Wharf scheme set to transform Gateshead quayside

Planning approval has been awarded to Gateshead Council for a £35m residential-led development on the South bank of the River Tyne.

Known as Brett Wharf, the proposals have been designed by FaulknerBrowns Architects on behalf of The High Street Group. They represent a major phase in the development of the wider Gateshead Quayside – which is intended to transform a former industrial landscape into a thriving cultural destination.

The mixed-use development will comprise up to 262 residential apartments for the private rented sector, as well as offices, retail, cafés and restaurants, all within view of the city's landmark bridges.

According to its architects, the evolution of Brett Wharf as a development site is underpinned by a heavily industrialised past: "The 0.52 hectare site, most recently occupied by the Brett Oils company, is characterised by derelict manufacturing buildings and obsolete storage



tanks. Located in the Bridges Conservation Area, the condition of this highly isolated site does little to complement the neighbouring heritage assets including the Grade I listed High Level Bridge, built in 1845-9 by Robert Stephenson.”

The aim is that Brett Wharf will integrate the site back into the fabric of the Gateshead Quayside, “creating vistas, visual links and dwelling spaces which have been missing for decades.” The position, scale and massing of the redevelopment has been designed to “respect the lower pedestrian deck of the High Level Bridge at its closest point. Split over two buildings, the forms rise and then fall as they move away from the listed structure.”

The “broken form and stepped roof lines are echoed in plan,” said the architects, “the structure stepping back from the water’s edge as it approaches the heritage asset, revealing it in “a sympathetic manner,” added FaulknerBrowns.

An active roof with broken out corners is intended to “aid in the erosion of the solid form,” breaking down the mass, and increasing visibility through the site to the landscape behind.

The architects believed the single most important aspect of the regeneration is the “activation of the ground plane across the site,” which for a long time has been inaccessible to the public. The development “activates a new collection of public terraces with sought-after views of the River Tyne and the Tyne Valley, interspersed with public art installations immortalising the site’s story.”

Niall Durney, senior associate at FaulknerBrowns, said: “We are delighted to have received the backing to progress our proposals for this prominent piece of the iconic Gateshead Quayside. We look forward to transforming this inaccessible, derelict industrial into an attractive and diverse destination for the public to enjoy, day and night.”

THE EVOLUTION OF BRETT WHARF AS A DEVELOPMENT SITE IS UNDERPINNED BY A HEAVILY INDUSTRIALISED PAST



Diamond in the Wharf

A 14 storey residential tower has been completed in Battersea, London. Named Diamond Wharf, the finished building hosts over 30 residential apartments and three levels of commercial space – all in the grounds of a former two-storey commercial property.

Intended to form a new local landmark for the area, its top floors extend far above the neighbouring buildings, and its scarlet brise-soleil is visible from a considerable distance.

PLANNING

Wimshurst Pelleriti, acting as both architect and joint venture developer, worked closely with Tibbalds Planning team to achieve this project, which wasn't without its challenges.

For instance, the team reportedly had to ensure a high level of design quality and environmental credentials in order to justify a building that rises nine stories above the local plan's recommended height.

According to Wimshurst Pelleriti, this was established through a series of diagrams and analysis of the surrounding context. As a result of these, the scheme then gained "immediate support" from the planners, said the firm.

The team added that it won support of local councillors and parks authorities through consultation and discussions, and engaged in numerous public consultations with local residents and societies. In the end, the firm gained permission for the exact scheme that was submitted.

THE FINISHED BUILDING

Now complete, Diamond Wharf – located overlooking a garden square – has a double height reception and three levels of commercial space across the basement, ground and first floor mezzanine. It provides a total of 33 residential apartments across 12 further floors, including 11 affordable units, with two large penthouses on the 14th floor with extensive views of London and the Thames.

The architects explained that the building is "a natural landmark due to its axial position at the northern end of Harroway Gardens." Wimshurst Pelleriti, taking the site context into account, created "a calm front and rear elevation emboldened by strategically placed red solar shading panels."

Once entered via a double-height reception area, the building organisation is intended to be very clear, with a flexible floor plan allowing dual aspect flats with the core on one side. By setting the core to the side of the tower, Wimshurst Pelleriti's design was able to "open up" the ground floor, maximise the use of the facade for the apartments, and enable oblique views. This design feature also provides environmental benefits, in that it allows the core to be naturally lit and ventilated.

Within the apartments, floor to ceiling glazing leads onto 'thermally broken' balconies with glass balustrades, intended to make the most of the views of the green spaces that surround the site on two sides.

COMPANY STRATEGY

Before the development process, the company itself was actually in the process of forming.

The directors of what is now Wimshurst Pelleriti – formerly RSH-P – met the owners of the site and identified the opportunity for a tower in 2013, which led directly to the formation of the company in order to deliver the development.

Will Wimshurst, director and co-founder, explained: "We felt we had the skill, the appetite and the opportunity to design and develop our own projects; architects often shy away from taking such risks but in many ways as industry we are in a unique position to understand such risks – particularly during the planning process.

"We are particularly focussed on developing awkward sites that need design innovation to unlock a viable solution. At the same time, we have considerable planning experience and enjoy the challenge of steering a radical solution through the system."

DESIGNED FOR CHALLENGING GROUND CONDITIONS

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Powering Japan's 'City of the Future'

Plans for a prototype “city of the future” at the base of Mount Fuji, Japan, have been revealed by Toyota.

Announced at the technology show CES 2020, the 175-acre Woven City is intended to be a “fully connected ecosystem,” which will be powered by hydrogen fuel cells.

Envisioned as a “living laboratory,” the city will be home to full-time residents and researchers who will be able to live and develop technologies such as autonomy, robotics, personal mobility, smart homes and artificial intelligence in a real-world environment.

Toyota has commissioned Danish architect Bjarke Ingels, CEO of Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), to design the new city. His team has designed many high-profile projects, from 2 World Trade Center in New York and Lego House in Denmark, to Google’s Mountain View and London headquarters.

DESIGN OF THE CITY

Under the city’s masterplan, street use has three designations: for faster vehicles only; for a mix of lower-speed vehicles, personal mobility and pedestrians; and for pedestrians only (a park-like promenade). These three street types aim to “weave together in an organic grid pattern to help accelerate the testing of autonomous transport.”

The city is planned to be fully sustainable, with buildings made mostly of wood using traditional Japanese joinery and “robotised” production methods, to minimise the carbon footprint. The roofs will be covered in photo-voltaic panels to generate solar power, complementing the energy produced by hydrogen fuel cells. Toyota also plans to incorporate the natural world throughout the city, with native vegetation and hydroponics.

Residential buildings will be equipped with the latest “human support technologies,” such as in-home robotics to assist with daily living. Homes will use sensor-based AI to check the occupants’ health, take care of basic needs and enhance daily life.

Only fully autonomous, zero-emission vehicles will be allowed on the main thoroughfares to move residents around.

Throughout the city, autonomous Toyota e-Palette vehicles will be used for transport and deliveries, and as changeable mobile retail units.

Neighbourhood parks, a large central recreation area and a central plaza for social gatherings will be designed to bring the community together. Toyota believes that encouraging human connection will be an equally important aspect of the Woven City experience.

The company plans to populate Woven City with employees and their families, retired couples, retailers, visiting scientists and industry partners. The plan is to start with 2,000 people and increase the number as the city evolves.

FROM THE GROUND UP

Akio Toyoda, Toyota Motor Corporation President, commented on the scheme: “Building a complete city from the ground up, even on a small scale like this, is a unique opportunity to develop future technologies, including a digital operating system for the infrastructure. With people, buildings and vehicles all connected and communicating with each other through data and sensors, we will be able to test connected AI technology, in both the virtual and physical realms, maximising its potential.”

Toyota has reported that it will extend an open invitation to collaborate to other commercial and academic partners, and invite interested scientists and researchers from around the world to come and work on their projects in this “one-of-a-kind, real-world incubator.”

“We welcome all those inspired to improve the way we live in the future to take advantage of his unique research ecosystem and join us in our quest to create an ever-better way of life and mobility for all,” continued Akio Toyoda.

Ground-breaking for the site is scheduled for early 2021.



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British designed and manufactured, Powermatic controlled, concealed door closers are gaining increasing popularity for use on fire doors in high-rise flats, apartments and HMOs. The door closers carry the CE mark and have been independently tested and proved to meet the requirements for FD60 and FD30 fire doors under BS EN 1634-1. Totally concealed when the door is closed, Powermatic door closers are less susceptible to damage from vandalism or tampering. This gives them a significant advantage over surface mounted door closers when it comes to reliability of the fire door and maintenance costs, making them the right choice for both tenants and social landlords. Unlike other jamb-mounted devices, Powermatic door closers facilitate a door's compliance with the accessibility requirements of Approved Document M, are the only Certifire jamb-mounted door closer and do not have to be removed from the door to be adjusted. Visit the **Samuel Heath** website for more information.

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Mapei's high-demand training dates revealed for 2020



Mapei has unveiled its extensive list of training dates for 2020, as part of plans to continually utilise its impressive training facility based in Halesowen, West Midlands. Following a successful first year of training courses at the facility situated at Mapei Academy, a total of 51 days have been dedicated to training, covering Ceramic Tiling, Resilient Flooring, EWI, Resin, Ultratop Loft, Concrete Repair and Basement Structural Waterproofing.

There will be 12 dates dedicated for each of the Ceramic Tiling and Resilient Flooring training courses, six dates for both EWI and Resin Flooring, and five dates each for Ultratop Loft, Concrete Repair, and Basement Structural Waterproofing. A team made up of Chris

Myatt, Adrian Jennings, Neal Perryman, Adrian Jones and Jeremy Mann, as well as relevant product line experts, will be on hand to provide information and expertise at each tailored training course.

Bookings from distributors, contractors, designers and engineers are welcomed, and can be tailored to specific needs and requirements. All training delegates will receive presentation notes, refreshments, a buffet lunch, a factory tour and Mapei goodies.

THE DATES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Ceramic: January 7, February 4, March 3, April 7, May 5, June 2, July 7, August 4, September 8, October 6, November 3, December 1

Resilient: January 9, February 6, March 5, April 9,

May 7, June 4, July 9, August 6, September 10, October 8, November 5, December 3

EWI: January 23, March 26, May 28, July 30, September 24, November 26

Resin: February 25, April 28, June 30, July 28, September 29, November 24

Ultratop Loft: January 21, March 24, June 23, August 25, October 27

Concrete Repair: March 17, May 12, July 2, September 15, November 10

Basement Structural Waterproofing: February 27, April 2, June 11, September 17, November 19

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CASE STUDY



More than just homes

A new £6m 'social community' for housing association Places for People has been completed in Salford, Greater Manchester. The team behind the Melody Gardens project explain to Jack Wooler how it puts placemaking for residents before maximising profit.

5 8 new affordable homes have been completed in Salford, Greater Manchester, delivering quality social housing from brownfield land.

Developed by Investar Property Group and built by Watson Homes, the project will be managed by Places for People, and has been constructed to all the standards that comes with such a partnership – including a reduction in the number of units from the original plan to ensure that the placemaking was the best it could be.

Investar purchased the land for this project in August 2016 for £300,000 without planning. Situated at the corner of Liverpool Street and Weaste Lane, the land was once home to All Souls Roman Catholic Church, which closed in 2010 before its demolition in 2011.

The 0.4 hectare site then remained undeveloped until Salford City Council granted Investar permission to deliver an



affordable housing scheme on the site – though as touched upon earlier, its provision would later be altered by the housing association partner.

The developer originally acquired the land with the intention of bringing affordable housing to the area – which was reportedly much-needed. But, rather than developing the homes for private rent or sale, Investar sought to partner with a housing association and a main contractor who both shared its vision for placemaking – each party moulding the project to enable this.

PLACEMAKING

In 2017, working with architecture practice TADW, Investar drew up plans to transform the site into affordable homes – initially 82 properties with 11 townhouses and 71 apartments, which, according to Michael Dong, CEO of Investar Property Group, “gained favourable feedback from Salford Council.”

Dong continued: “Key to Investar’s plans for the site however was the need to work alongside partners that could enable a new sense of community in this location, with placemaking at its heart.”

Investar therefore leveraged its existing relationship with Salford-based house-builder Watson Homes in order to approach the housing association, Places for People.

“Forging a relationship with the new partners meant Investar chose to redesign the scheme to fit the client’s tight criteria,” said Dong. This new vision for Melody Gardens was based on the need to meet Places for People’s delivery model and standards for quality housing.”

Investar originally designed Melody Gardens as a mix of apartments and houses totalling 82 units for open market sale, with 70 per cent parking provision. However, as Mike Watson, CEO of

Watson Homes explained, “On partnering with Places for People, the scheme was completely redesigned to meet the client’s requirements: building fewer units, with less profit, to work as an affordable rent model.”

To enact this new joint vision, Investar worked closely with the housing association to produce a less dense development that was in line with Places for People’s commitment to placemaking. The resulting redesign consists of a mixed-tenure scheme of 58 homes, comprising 17 one-bedroom apartments, 31 two-bedroom apartments, one two-bedroom bungalow, and nine two-storey houses. All 58 of these are to be allocated by the local authority Places for People to residents who are in housing need.

SITE ISSUES

Even with such partners, when moving onto the actual land intended for the homes, obstacles arose.

Watson explained his thoughts upon first visiting the site: “It was a good flat site when Watson Homes first started on construction, but the biggest challenge was in the ground.”

He continued: “Initially, it was believed all the slabs and foundations from the former buildings had been removed; however, that was not the case.”

The foundations were at a considerable depth, which meant additional works, and that this element of the scheme had to be extended by several weeks. “Thankfully,” Watson added, “we were able to gain this time back throughout the rest of the build.”

Alongside the foundations, said Watson, water management in the homes was a key focus on the early stages of the scheme: “We set out to achieve a maximum of 110 litres of water per person per day, and had to consider how

(L-R) Karen Baldwin, development project officer, Places for People, Michael Dong, CEO Investar Property Group, Mike Watson, director, Watson Homes

**RATHER THAN
DEVELOPING THE HOMES
FOR PRIVATE RENT OR
SALE, INVESTAR SOUGHT
TO PARTNER WITH A
HOUSING ASSOCIATION
AND A MAIN CONTRACTOR
WHO BOTH SHARED ITS
VISION FOR PLACEMAKING**



**THE SCHEME PROVIDES
ENOUGH DENSITY TO MAKE
THE AFFORDABLE
HOUSING MODEL WORK,
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best to achieve that goal.”

To do so, the contractor introduced measures such as the installation of surface water storage tanks stacked underground, and later in the process, taps that restrict the flow of water and baths that hold slightly less.

The former measure in particular is key for the scheme, as in the event of heavy rainfall, water doesn’t discharge straight into the existing drainage, potentially causing flooding further down the system. Instead it backs up into the storage tanks, and enters the system at a time when it is not as full.

“Overall,” said Watson, “this makes the development more sustainable, and lessens the impact on the current infrastructure in the area.”

Once past the foundation stage, Melody Gardens was then constructed using a traditional brick and block method.

The floors are a pre-cast concrete slab, and each floor is a direct repeat of the one below. The internal fit-out was completed using metal stud walls with traditional plasterboard and plastered walls, and the roofs have been constructed using engineered trusses, with a single ply rubber membrane installed to act as the roof covering.

Watson added: “In all, this created a high quality finish, meeting the exacting standards for new-build affordable homes.”

DESIGN

When discussing the designs behind these affordable homes, Dong explained the process necessary to address the different types of housing requirements – which range from family homes, to smaller, one-bedroom apartments “that are ideal for the ageing population.”

“The houses were all designed to fit in

with the neighbouring community and the local environment,” he said, “and the site comes with a strong provision of green space and onsite amenities to aid this, as well as electric car charging points.”

In terms of the distribution of these house types, the scheme has been laid out in a way that provides enough density to make the affordable housing model work, without sacrificing on 100 per cent parking provision and recreational spaces for residents.

This thoughtful design carried through into the placemaking aspects of the build, according to Dong, placing a priority on engendering a sense of community into the development: “Places for People says that ‘places only truly succeed when they work for everyone, and when everyone is included’ – this ethos is shared by both Investar and Watson Homes, and Melody Gardens therefore needed to be built in order to deliver social value in the local community.”

He continued: “Creating a community of houses, bungalows and apartments means that Melody Gardens will foster a real sense of intergenerational living – bringing together people from all walks of life in one residential development, where they can thrive.”

It’s important to recognise the high level of sustainability specified in the designs, which according to Dong, was achieved largely through a fabric-first approach. “This meant that every construction element was scrutinised to enhance the energy performance and reduce the overall running costs of each home.”

A WELCOME RECEPTION

All 58 of these homes have now been given over to Places for People to allocate



via its 'choice-based' lettings system. This system is intended to allow residents in housing need who are registered with Places for People to bid for properties that the council advertises – whether it is someone looking for their first housing association home, or a family wishing to move.

“In all,” explained Dong, “a choice-based lettings system puts the customer first, as it empowers people to bid for the homes they want to live in.”

The first tenants have already moved in to their properties. This appears to have been a success, with Dong telling that the project has been “extremely well received” so far across its users, the local community, and Places for People.

“Feedback from Places for People’s tenants has been great. As of December 2019, the scheme is almost fully rented, with new residents moving in on the same day of the handover,” he said. “The scheme has been well received by the media too for its contribution to increasing the number of high quality, affordable homes in Salford.”

He believes that this is in part due to the collaborative process: “During the construction phases, Investar held quarterly Neighbourhood Community Group meetings attended by both Places for People and Watson Homes, which kept local residents fully updated on progress.”

These updates included how the scheme is benefitting the area socially by improving social rent provision, and feedback from these sessions was reportedly “overwhelmingly positive.” It is perhaps however mostly due to the flexibility of the developer, and its decision to listen to its well-chosen partners, that it achieved success. Looking past just profitability – which of course remains an essential part of any

development process – placemaking was placed at the heart of the scheme, and as such Melody Gardens offers those in need more than just homes; it offers them a community.

MELODY GARDENS SUPPLIERS:

- Site setup / Temporaries: MMW
- Groundworks & PJS Groundworks
- Ground works / Demolition: PJS Groundworks
- Site scaffolding: Crest Scaffolding Ltd
- Hoarding: Watson Homes
- Ground work & drainage: PJS Groundworks
- Brick & Block work: OGC Brickwork
- Timber Frame: Frame-Tech Structures
- Concrete floors & stairs: ACP Concrete
- Windows: Jade Windows
- M&E: MRES & MWA
- Roofing works: Houses - Ross Roofing / Apartments - Carevalue for roof structure / Roof coverings - Enviro-ply
- External doors: House front doors: Jade windows
- Apartment communal entrance doors: D&M Windows
- Apartment individual entrance doors: MCT Joinery
- Joinery: MCT joinery
- Floor screeds: Genius Screeds
- Kitchens: Howdens
- Internal staircases: Staircraft
- Floor coverings: CRT Flooring
- Tiling: Diamond Tiling
- Plastering: Supreme Plastering
- Decorating: Cre8ive-decor
- Mastix sealants: North West Sealants
- Garden sheds: Watson Homes
- Gardens / Landscaping: Beech Landscapes
- Fencing: GBJ Environmental
- Metal railings: GBJ Environmental

The scheme changed from 82 units for open market sale, to 58 homes of mixed tenure for the Places for People housing association

Stemming the plastic tide

As the construction sector looks to reduce its carbon emissions, there is one aspect that is often overlooked – plastic waste. Jack Wooler spoke to Phil Sutton, founder of Econpro, on the reasons why plastic still has a place in construction, and how it can become part of a circular economy.

The construction industry, as all other sectors, is undergoing a rising tide of plastic waste.

In the UK, we go through 5 million tonnes of plastic every year, with construction accounting for 23 per cent of this.

Unfortunately, this over-reliance on plastic has begun to take its toll on the environment. With the material often taking up to 1000 years to decompose – degrading and contaminating soils and oceans, and releasing greenhouse gases as it does so – many industry experts are pushing for change.

“Boosted by the Attenborough effect,” as one such expert – Phil Sutton, founder of plastic recycling specialist Econpro – puts it, “the detrimental impact

of plastic waste on our environment and within our oceans is devastatingly evident.”

Because of this, he argues that managing such waste is “of absolute importance,” and that the industry must ensure “our diverse ecology is maintained by keeping plastic waste out of the open environment.”

WHY USE PLASTIC?

With such negative connotations, it can seem as though plastic should never be used in the first place, but Phil says its benefits are still clear: “Plastic is an undeniably ideal material, and its impressive properties make it so attractive.”

According to Econpro’s founder, the dominance of plastic is largely due to the nature of the material, it being “incredibly durable, versatile and reliable.”

As just a few more examples of its benefits, he says it’s easy to process, lightweight, cost-effective, great for insulation and as an acoustic barrier, it doesn’t rot, need painting or produce carcinogenic dust, and requires less skilled labour – “the list really does go on.”

He argues however that it’s not the use of plastic itself that’s the problem: “Plastic is used for all the right reasons, but unfortunately too often it isn’t managed properly at end of life which leads to high levels of polluting waste.”

Being such a beneficial material for so many different building projects, what causes issues, says Phil, is the tonnes of discarded plastic packaging and the unnecessary waste associated with it.

He describes how this is particularly embedded in the construction industry: “Poor management of plastics is often seen in construction – there is a high prevalence of plastics that are difficult to recycle, such as polyurethane insulation boards, or packaging film which is used for the majority of pallet wrapping.”

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

One of the most under-utilised aspects of plastic, Phil explained, is that vast amounts of plastic waste are in fact recyclable, and therefore there is no need for them to adversely impact the world around us.

“But to ensure this,” he said, “we need to enable both the consumer and the recycler to have better control of the process.”

Historically, the UK, the US, and most European nations have been heavily reliant on other countries – particularly in Asia – to ‘offshore’ their waste.

“This is something we must cease doing,” he insists.

According to Phil, some countries are already pushing back, with the Dutch Government having announced plans

earlier this year to implement a €32-per-tonne tax on the import of foreign waste.

He explains: “An integrated waste-management system on our own turf is of utmost importance, as well as only designing and producing products that have the ability to be recycled again at the end of their first life.

“It’s critical that we control our own domestic waste stream, not just so we’re less reliant on any offshore systems, but also so that we can use fewer virgin materials and non-renewable fuels.”

There are many useful products or fuels that can be produced from such waste. All sorts of plastic waste, including that from housebuilding, is suitable for recycling into building materials as they tend to have a large thermoplastic polymer content.

In terms of fuel, plastics can be converted into a Solid Recovered Fuel (SRF). SRFs utilised within a cement kiln would be classed as R1, meaning recovery and the ash content produced during this ‘co-combustion’ process is recovered and ends up within the cement product.

“However,” said Phil, “when looking at where this method sits in the waste hierarchy, it’s much less favourable than recycling as it only has one additional life.”

He continued: “Choosing products which can be completely recycled again at the end of their lifetime is the only way we can truly move towards a circular economy in the construction industry.”

Additionally, Phil believes there needs to be further incentivisation for product manufacturers themselves, in order to make sure what they are producing is 100 per cent recyclable, and that they provide clear instructions on how to recycle responsibly.

Another issue he raises here is how long it takes for new recycled products to get approved specification: “Operationally, the benefits are clear, but if it’s not officially specified then it’s unlikely to be widely adopted across the board.”

WHAT NEXT?

With the continuation of widespread plastic use looking likely for some time to come, and the ability to vastly reduce its waste being available already, it is currently up to councils, housebuilders and the rest of the sector to take action to address this issue.

While the carbon footprint of housebuilding is something that will be closely monitored in the form of BREEAM points, the construction industry at present reportedly doesn’t have genuine real plastic waste reduction targets.

“This is something we are seeing make waves in the packaging industry, in the case



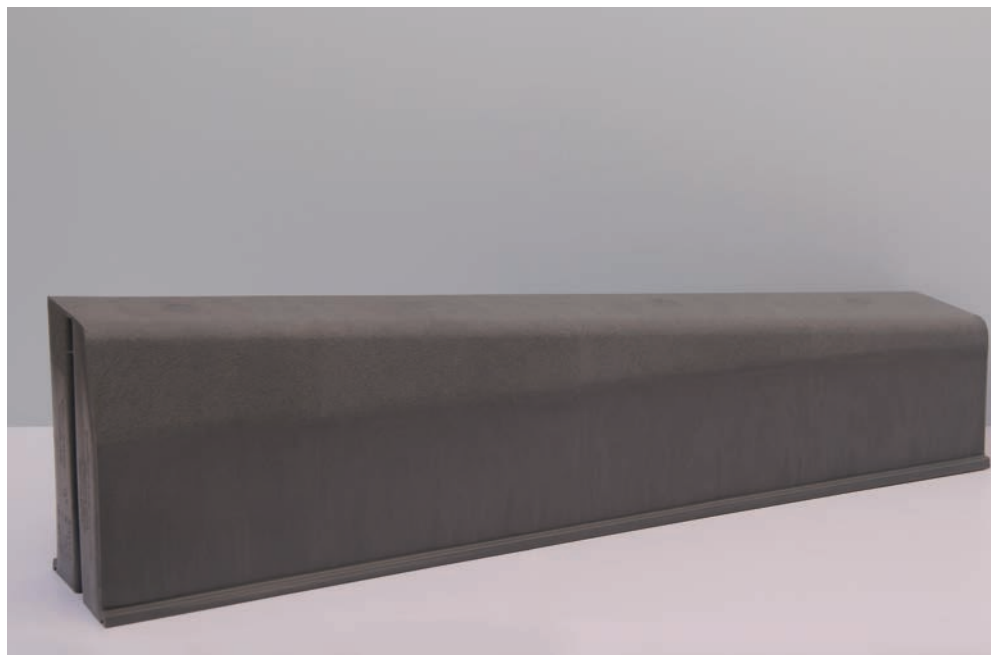
of FMCG brands,” says Phil, by contrast. “There is undoubtedly an opportunity for the construction and housebuilding industry to follow suit in the near future, and we would welcome these goals.”

Despite the lack of waste reduction targets, councils have begun to declare “climate emergencies,” which inevitably address plastic waste in many cases. Hampshire County Council, for example, has recently taken such a step, having announced that its highway maintenance contractor, Skanska, is trialling Econpro’s plastic kerbs as part of its movement to reduce carbon emissions.

For councils, “and indeed the wider industry,” Phil Sutton continues, there are two clear issues: the first being plastic waste in the open environment, “which is troublesome but can be managed,” and the second being carbon emissions. “This is something we need to tackle with great and immediate effect.”

Phil adds however that this shouldn’t put councils off using recycled plastic, as it is ultimately better than using virgin materials. “Holistic carbon footprint lifecycle analysis will become vital for council house construction,” he added.

There are all sorts of new products that we as an industry should be using,



according to Econpro’s founder – from kerbing to asphalt: “Generally speaking, by using light weight products, you reduce the carbon footprint, and the most obvious material to achieve this is plastic; we shouldn’t be afraid to use plastic as a means of making infrastructure more sustainable, it is a very valuable resource with a huge

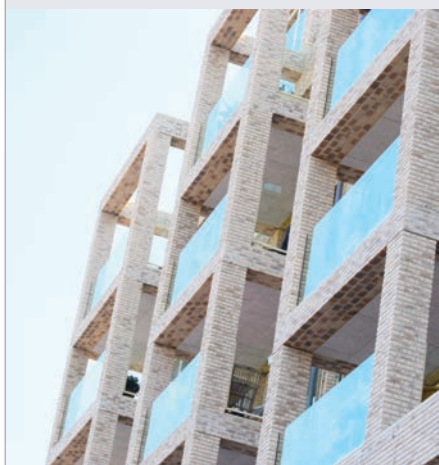
number of benefits, it just needs to be managed in the right way.”

“There are so many products out there that could really change the construction and housebuilding industry,” he concludes. “It’s getting better, but the change isn’t happening fast enough.”



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Promotion for interiors division



The UK's largest flooring contractor, **Designer Contracts**, has announced a senior promotion within its 16-strong interior design division. Joining the business three years ago, and with almost a decade of experience in interior design, Faye Armstrong entered the showhome division as design sales consultant and has now been promoted to design sales manager. Said

Faye: "I'm pleased to be part of such a fantastic team of talented designers. A show home is a key selling tool for developers, which is why ensuring a scheme is tailored towards the builder's target audience is essential."

Continued Designer Contracts md, Peter Kelsey: "Faye has worked hard during her time with us and her promotion is very well deserved."

01246 854577 www.designercontracts.com

Vent-Axia welcomes 'Indoor Air Quality at Home'



Ventilation manufacturer **Vent-Axia** has welcomed the publication of guidance on 'Indoor Air Quality at Home' from the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence. The document provides detailed information and advice on how to reduce exposure to indoor pollutants and so help protect health. To help protect health in the home, Vent-Axia has been working hard to provide ventilation solutions to improve IAQ for

households. For new build homes, Vent-Axia's Sentinel Kinetic mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) system boasts an impressive 94 per cent heat recovery. Meanwhile, Vent-Axia's Lo-Carbon Sentinel Kinetic Cooker Hood combines a cooker hood with MVHR unit in one.

0844 856 0590 www.vent-axia.com



Technal's systems selected for home in Jersey

The project team responsible for a striking residential property in the Channel Islands have used **Technal's** Dualframe 75 windows and the Elegance 52 curtain wall system, supplied by Pallot Glass & Windows, to match the property's modernist styling, as well as to provide outstanding weather performance in a very exposed situation. Island based Pallot Glass & Windows, a long-time user of the systems, was awarded the contract by main contractor, Hacquoil & Cook Ltd, to supply and fit all of the glazing for the two-storey, five-bedroom Jersey home which has earned wide acclaim and been short-listed for several awards. A Director of Pallot Glass & Windows, Paul Bourke, commented: "Our firm has been supplying aluminium systems since the seventies and have always enjoyed good support from Technal, while the technical rep for Jersey is very successful at getting the systems on specifications with architects and developers here." The Dualframe 75 Si suite of profiles represents a new generation in window and facade products, utilising advanced polyamide thermal break technology within the frame.

01684 853 500 www.technal.com/en/uk

Profile 22 selected for affordable development



A development of 82 new build houses to the north of Glasgow benefit from Optima casement windows and French doors from **Profile 22**. Optima is the market leader in the commercial sector thanks to its ability to meet the most demanding

specifications at a cost-effective price point. Optima is the award-winning 70mm system for Profile 22. Its casement windows are available in sculptured and chamfered variations. Aesthetically, Optima casement windows offer improved sightlines and a higher glass-to-frame ratio. The system comes with the widest range of ancillaries in the industry while the choice of 28 colours means the system can compete with aluminium alternatives.

www.profile22.co.uk

Superhero fun at Norbord, Inverness



Norbord recently celebrated the launch of their new safety campaign with a superhero-themed fun day for employees and their families at their Inverness site. The Stronger Together campaign highlights the company's ongoing dedication to the maintenance of a safe and enjoyable working environment. Norbord holds the belief that this is integral to the performance and efficiency of the company. Employees and their families enjoyed

the day of activities, suitably clad in their superhero costume finery. A healthy dose of competition was encouraged as adults and children alike fought it out for a chance of walking away with a best dressed award.

www.norbord.co.uk



VEKA UK is on same page as installers, fabricators and specifiers

VEKA UK has launched a brand new specification guide providing manufacturers, installers and specifiers with comprehensive information on all the products within the VEKA UK portfolio. For a brand that is world renowned for both its heritage and its commitment to innovation, the timing of the launch is particularly apt; it coincides with the global VEKA Group's 50th anniversary, and a cutting edge new website. Marketing Director Dawn Stockell explains: "The guide is over 100 pages and contains everything you need to know about all systems and products within the VEKA, Halo and Imagine brand ranges. From in-depth technical data, technical drawings, and performance results, to information about our technical support services. "And, for those that prefer a 'pick and mix' approach, individual pages can be downloaded by product through the new veka.co.uk site, so customers can effectively put together a bespoke reference guide for their most-used systems."

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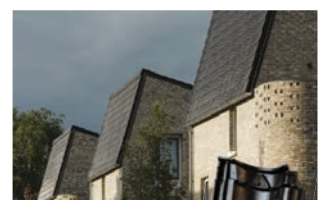
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THE BREXIT FACTOR

Ben Lloyd of Pure Commercial Finance gives his views on how Brexit is impacting property developers.



for some clients when it comes to making decisions on proceeding or not with a purchase, sale or project.

That being said, the sector is still seeing a consistent level of clients proceeding across investment property, land acquisition, property development and consumer house purchases, and continued reporting that house prices are either growing or remaining steady in large parts of the UK is positively counterbalancing consumer confidence. If we can maintain a reasonable level of consumer confidence, then you will see house prices and deal flow remain fairly steady across the UK.

The countrywide fall of house prices will likely be less severe than the BoE has predicted. Regardless of the outcome of Brexit, the UK remains a highly sought-after property destination and a general housing shortage should appropriately mitigate any sharp or significant drop in prices. The continued uncertainty both pre- and post-exit will however continue to affect market confidence and probably prices, just not to the extent of the BoE's predictions.

As for the point of view of funders, anecdotal evidence shows that the majority share this same or similar view. Many believe that prices will generally remain consistent, with some moderate dips expected in particular locations or asset classes, but lending decisions and risk mitigations are of course being factored into most deals when they are being underwritten.

It's safe to say that most lending decisions have had the "Brexit factor" taken into account when looking at value, loan to value exposure, asset class or marketability of the assets being proposed for funding. This is to protect both the client and lender.

As a result of this, and with some client uncertainty, a few less deals are being done at the moment. However, with that, it is important to note that more considered deals are being done – which is to the benefit of both the lender, borrower and market sentiment in the long-run.

WORKING BETTER WITH LENDERS

Developers' profit margins and viability are coming under greater scrutiny in lenders' due diligence. Two main reasons for this are the risk of values dropping by the time the units come on sale, and the risk of any increase in construction and labour costs.

If end values are at risk of decreasing or the build cost rising or worse, both together, the viability or motivation and focus of the developer to see the project through could become a serious concern to a funder, particularly if these factors

The ever-present debate over Brexit has continued to plague public and market sentiment, and it was particularly heated in the last 24 months with the growing uncertainty around how and when we leave the EU and the current political situation.

The level of impact leaving the EU will have on the UK property market has been heavily speculated on. From the fear of rises in the cost of labour and construction that could cause viability issues, right up to completed property prices dropping.

In September 2018, the Bank of

England (BoE) stated that we could expect to see a drop as low as 35 per cent in a no deal situation. I almost feel that the BoE reporting on such statistics is economic self-harm, as the reality is that the sensitivity of our housing market is based on consumer confidence, and reporting on hypothetical statistics in such a way is a sure-fire way of creating poor consumer confidence, panic, and a negative buy and sell environment.

From the front lines, hearing statistics like this and waiting for greater political clarity are a direct cause of uncertainty



mean there is now no profit left in the project for the developer.

It is absolutely essential in today's market that both the developer and lender heavily stress test the financials of a proposed project to ensure the project is viable and profitable in the event adverse factors occur.

Some simple ways of doing this are as follows:

- Commission an independent build cost report from cost consultants and take into account how these would look against a range of adverse market projections.
- Commission a 'redbook' valuation on the residual price that is being/had been paid for the site/building and what the projected end value(s) of the completed development will be.
- Obtain a few local agents' opinions on the end value and demand, so local knowledge has been factored in not just via the redbook.
- Stress test the financial appraisals to allow for a flexing of both a decrease in value and rise in costs, individually or together, to assess viability in adverse conditions.

Ben Lloyd is managing director at Pure Commercial Finance



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Vortice launches new heat recovery unit



Vortice has launched a version of its popular Vort Avel heat recovery unit which is thermal efficient and accredited under the German Passivhaus standard, the Vort Avel 450 D. Suitable for vertical wall installation, it has a high efficiency counter cross flow heat exchanger and automatically activated anti-freeze protection. The front panel gives direct access to the main internal components and allows for easy change of filters. The Vort Avel 450 D has four operational speeds and a 100 per cent mechanical by-pass and its design allows for virtually maintenance free operation. For more information about the Vort Avel 450 D and all other Vortice products visit their website.


sales@vortice.ltd.uk www.vortice.ltd.uk

Study shows soffit savings with Kingspan



New research from quantity surveyors, Rider Levett Bucknall, has shown that the physical properties, specifically the enhanced thermal performance of **Kingspan** Kooltherm K110 FM Soffit Board can allow installers to fit an additional 5.25m² of insulation every thirty minutes when compared with the closest competitor, rock mineral fibre. The analysis showed that the thermal conductivity of Kingspan Kooltherm K110 FM Soffit Board (0.018 W/mK) was the lowest on the market, 11 per cent better than the next best material and 89 per cent better than rock mineral fibre. The study further showed that Kingspan Kooltherm K110 FM Soffit Board was the only material assessed that could provide details of certification as an 'excellent' product under the standard – BES 6001.

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PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE HOMES STANDARD

The construction industry is facing a number of significant regulation changes over the coming years, including the recently completed consultation to Part L which will introduce significant energy efficiency challenges. James Hulbert of Knauf Insulation looks at how housebuilders should respond to the new agenda.

The Approved Document L (ADL 2020) consultation proposes two options to uplift energy efficiency standards and requirements in preparation for the Future Homes Standard – which is planned to be fully implemented by 2025.

Option one requires a 20 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions compared to the current standard for an average home. It is suggested this will be achievable through fabric improvements alone, and effectively represents the Future Homes Standard fabric.

Option two, the Government's preferred choice, requires a 31 per cent reduction in

carbon emissions compared to the current standard. This will be achieved through carbon-saving technology such as photovoltaic panels, low and zero carbon technologies and better fabric standards, albeit not as high as in option one.

At first glance, Regulation 25B within the Consultation – 'Where a building is erected, it must be a nearly zero-energy building' – may seem alarming. However, both options in the consultation will meet the definition of 'nearly zero-energy building.'

The consultation includes four key metrics:

- Primary energy: incorporating the latest

evidence on primary energy and CO₂ emissions of fuels, and removing fuel factors in the calculation for high-carbon fossil fuels and electricity

- CO₂ – the metric remains the same
- Affordability: while electricity becomes ever greener, wholesale adoption now would result in higher energy bills for occupants
- Minimum fabric standards: the fabric energy efficiency standard will be removed, instead the consultation lowers the limiting 'backstop' area weighted values for each [thermal] element.

So, between the close of the consultation





WHERE CONSTRUCTION HAS STARTED, IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT REGULATIONS AT THAT TIME WILL APPLY. WHERE WORK HAS NOT YET COMMENCED, THE 2020 REGULATIONS WILL APPLY REGARDLESS OF WHEN THE PLANNING/BUILDING NOTICE WAS SUBMITTED

and implementation of the changes to ADL in the second half of 2020, how can housebuilders prepare?

The first option is to do nothing and react at the point of implementation, when software has been finalised and early 'recipes to compliance' are more fully formed. This doesn't represent the most strategic policy however, and is likely to hinder land acquisition and planning in the interim.

A second option would be to leap in headfirst, and default to the proposed

Appendix R reference values in SAP version 10.1 for the notional dwelling. Ahead of the final published version of SAP, this approach mitigates the risks of 'wait and see,' however it does potentially go well beyond the most cost-effective routes to compliance. It's worth noting that the 'notional dwelling' in the current iteration of ADL uses an external wall U-value of 0.18 W/m²K too, as does option two within the consultation document.

The third, most practical option, sits between these approaches. That is for housebuilders and developers to speak to their suppliers and manufacturers to understand how existing solutions can deliver cost-effective compliance in line with the proposed changes.

The efficacy of the building fabric remains in the front line, and it is critical that the changes implemented assist in one of the consultation's additional aims – namely reducing the performance gap. Systems that are and can be delivered by approved technicians, monitored and traced, therefore have an important role to play in achieving this goal.

One thing that is clear is that the transi-

tional arrangements to ADL 2020 will be far shorter than previous documents, ensuring more occupiers benefit from the current energy efficiency standards sooner. Where construction has started, it is anticipated that regulations at that time will apply. Where work has not yet commenced, the 2020 regulations will apply regardless of when the planning/building notice was submitted. With different regulations likely to be applied on the same site, common construction details between ADL 2013 and 2020 offer the best route to smooth the transition and ensure quality.

Ultimately, by building effective partnerships with their supply chain, developers and housebuilders can update and evolve existing specifications to meet the new standards without redesign, helping to minimise additional costs. This means the houses built will perform closer to design values, achieve cost-effective compliance, and place the industry on a sustainable path to the Future Homes Standard too.

James Hulbert is head of housing at Knauf Insulation

Adapt to the needs of 'generation rent'



A Parliamentary report is maintaining that landlords need to adapt, to take a share of the growing 'Generation Rent' sector. The adapting applies to their properties, creating environments that enable older tenants to live independently. Potentially they can do so

free of charge, using the Disabled Facilities Grant. **Closomat**, Britain's leading provider of toilet & bathroom solutions for independent living, has developed innovative packages to assist landlords in equipping for the future. Closomat's Palma Life has been specifically developed for landlords- social and in the PRS. It combines supply and commissioning of a Palma Vita wash & dry (smart) toilet with a total 10 years' service & maintenance support, in one.

0161 969 1199 www.closomat.co.uk

Multi award-winning Nexsys from Kaldewei



The multi award-winning **Kaldewei Nexsys** shower surface, an innovative four-in-one complete installation ready system, is available in 17 colours and 20 dimensions, with three surface finishes and five stylish design covers, offering around 5,000 possible combinations for individual bathroom design. It combines the best of two worlds – all the advantages of an enamelled shower surface with the modern design of a shower channel. As

well as brushed stainless steel, the high-end design cover is available in polished stainless steel, polished gold, brushed rose gold and alpine white. All Kaldewei steel enamel bathroom solutions are 100 per cent recyclable and are supplied with a 30-year guarantee.

01480 498 053 www.kaldewei.co.uk

Happy D.2 Plus from Duravit



Happy D.2 Plus, is a unique collaboration between Sieger Design and **Duravit**, the bathroom series takes inspiration from the archetypal open oval format of the original Happy D design classic. The new series includes; bath tubs, curvaceous above the counter wash bowls, consoles and match-

ing cabinets in a variety of colours and striking surfaces. Circular mirrors add a chic energy to the washing area, combined with the new colour variants the Happy D.2 Plus brings a vibrant energy to the bathroom.

01908 286680 www.duravit.co.uk

Launch of Vechi traditional-style hot tap



Reginox has launched Vechi, a three in one instant boiling hot water tap. Part of the Amanzi collection, Vechi adds both style and modern convenience to the more classically designed kitchen, and offers the perfect partner to any ceramic sink. Both standard hot and cold water are dispensed through an

elegant 360° swivel mixer spout. Boiling hot water, which has an adjustable temperature of between 75 and 98°C, is instantly dispensed via the child-safe spring locked handle and runs independently through the centre of the spout, ensuring the tap is always cool to the touch.

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CCL Wetrooms launch Tlesure

CCL Wetrooms have launched Tlesure, a new Butyl Waterproofing and Decoupling Membrane, suitable for waterproofing wetroom floors on timber and solid floors. Tlesure is an evolution of the market leading RIW Tilesafe bitumen-based membrane. Tlesure is a 1.4mm self-adhesive membrane containing a copolymer layer and polypropylene top fleece. The new membrane has superior decoupling properties of up to 12mm, ensuring that any movement in the floor substrate is accommodated, preventing the grout and floor tiles from cracking. Thanks to butyl's durability and greater temperature tolerances, Tlesure can be installed simply and easily on-site at all temperatures. Tlesure is quick and easy to apply and once installed, is ready to be tiled upon immediately. Tlesure is compatible with silicone sealants and creates a secure waterproof barrier that is guaranteed to remain waterproof for the life of the wetroom tiles. To view the installation of Tlesure Waterproofing & Decoupling Membrane, why not take a look at the latest short animation from CCL Wetrooms, which brings the process to life. Simply scan the QR code.

0844 327 6002 www.ccl-wetrooms.co.uk

BATHROOM STYLE STATEMENTS

John Brooks of Lecico discusses changing bathroom design trends, and the impact that TV and other influences have had on consumers' demands.

At the end of a busy day, many people are keen to get home, kick off their shoes and relax with their loved ones. For some, that means watching a lot of 'property porn,' namely all of the programmes relating to buying or renovating houses. The UK simply can't get enough of them.

Presenters like Kevin McCloud and Alistair Appleton are virtually constant TV companions for many viewers. In fact, it was Martin Roberts, the normally cheerful presenter of *Homes under the Hammer* that provided the spark for this article, when in a recent edition he dismissively mentioned that a property had the "ubiquitous white toilet suite." This led to thoughts around how the bathroom has changed over the decades, and indeed where it might be in five to 10 years from now.

Readers of *Housebuilder & Developer* don't need to be told which is the most important/influential room in a new or renovated house, but after the kitchen, probably few would argue that the bathroom isn't the second most important room for potential buyers. However, sad as it is to admit, despite all of the effort that gets put into product design and functionality within the bathroom, sanitaryware isn't necessarily the most important aspect for the buying public!

In truth, the colour and style of the tiles, flooring, lighting, furniture, bathing/showering and brassware will all come before choosing the "ubiquitous white suite" (perhaps that's true of the housebuilder buyers too?).

Like the kitchen, a bathroom has become more than it used to be – no longer just "the lav," the modern bathroom has become a design statement that adds genuine value to a home, and can be a make or break point for a house sale. In recent research carried out on behalf of the BMA (Bathroom Manufacturers Association), the bathroom was seen as a place for peace, tranquillity and escape, with most users

enjoying quality time in the bathroom. For those that chose to have a bath, they would spend over 30 minutes soaking using the time to read books, listen to music, watch TV programmes, and even have a quiet drink! Crucial aspects for people was the need for clever space creation with the essential parts of the bathroom (i.e. the loo), taking as little space as possible, optimising the storage space with furniture, and giving the overall appearance of a beautifully designed space – even in a small bathroom.

The bathroom sector is fortunate in the range of exhibitions available to gain inspiration for product designs and potential future influences. Cersaie in Bologna, Italy, is one European favourite, which although relatively small compared to ISH, does provide some very worthwhile style trends.

A number of those exhibitors have presented coloured options for their sanitaryware, mostly matte versions of

fatigue army colours and a few bright red and black alternatives, but over the last four years these have been niche and starting to fade in numbers suggesting that colour will not be a mass-market trend of the near future. For those readers that grew up in the 70s, your childhood bathroom might have been a terrible pale pink colour, a classic avocado suite, or perhaps a 'sophisticated' pale blue. It is amazing how stock managers and factory production teams coped with colour variations across multiple SKUs in those times, but however this was achieved, most of us won't be keen to see these make a return to mass-market manufacture!

One growing trend from such exhibitions – that manufacturers seem to be following suit with – is the move towards 'thin lipped' designs in basins. This started with countertop bowls, but then rolled into the standard bathroom basin design giving them a sharper, smarter more modern appearance. It is great to see this trend pick up pace, and shows how one part of the industry often feeds into another aspect, thereby influencing future trends.

A former MD once said that if you wanted to know what future trends would be in the home, simply take a walk down the lighting aisle in B&Q for design cues in shapes and colours. Looking at how chrome lighting gave way to copper and black a couple of years ago and comparing that to the new product finishes we are seeing in taps and showers, you can see he had a point. Certainly bathroom furniture styling is influenced by what has already happened in kitchens a few years earlier. With early adoption, then comes





mass market acceptability, so what seems edgy and bold in kitchen design this year will probably make its way into our bathrooms in 2022.

Interestingly, similar is true between the commercial sanitaryware world and the

consumer world, with each market feeding the other with new ideas. It was the Doc M of the Building Regulations that gave inspiration and rise to the comfort height WC in the retail bathroom market, and it would be unlikely that you

would find any manufacturer now that doesn't supply a range of options promoting ease of use for the taller user.

Similarly, over the last two or three years we saw the rimless WCs that had previously only ever been of interest in the medical care market slide across into the retail world, promoting the benefits of greater hygiene and easier cleaning.

The simple truth is that the public don't want to buy WCs or basins; they buy the dream of their new bathroom experience, delivered as a complete package of products working in harmony, at a value for money price. White sanitaryware allows consumers and designers to make their colour statements using the furniture, the tiles, the flooring and the brassware.

While there's always a role for high-end, niche and stretching designs and colour, they are niche for a reason, and most of us work in a mass-market world where general market acceptance, affordability and mainstream design is what keeps the bathroom industry moving. So apologies to Martin Roberts, but white is ubiquitous for a good reason – it's what people want.

John Brooks is head of product and supply chain for Lecico

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Blind Studio from Designer Contracts



Designer Contracts, the UK's largest flooring contractor – and renowned for its curtain and blind offering to the new build sector – has launched Blind Studio. Introduced to showcase the variety of blind designs and styles that the company can produce for new home buyers, Blind Studio is packed with

fabric swatches and ideas for venetian, roller, vertical and perfect fit options – all housed in one concise sample book. In a selection of aluminium, wood or faux wood, its venetian blinds are all available in variety of colours and finishes. Roller and vertical blinds feature 11 shades – with the choice of a blackout fabric – ideal for children's bedrooms.

01246 854577 www.DesignerContracts.com

On the level with Norcros Adhesives



Norcros Adhesives is adding a new leveller to its already comprehensive range. Norcros Pro AF Low Prep Self Smoothing Levelling Compound is an ammonia and latex-free, two-part levelling compound. It is suitable for use on most substrates without the need for priming. Norcros Pro AF Leveller has been specially formulated for use over old adhesive residues including bitumen, historically a problematic material to bond to. There is no need to prime

or remove firmly bonded residues. This greatly reduces the time usually required for preparation of the substrate to be levelled.

01782 524140 www.norcros-adhesives.com

Revive interior joinery with Osmo UK



Osmo UK, the eco-friendly wood and finishes specialist, has introduced a new finish to its Door-Oil range – 3033 Raw Matt – which is designed to protect and enhance light coloured wood, without leaving behind a wet-look appearance. Developed from natural oils and waxes, Osmo Door-Oil Raw has been specially formulated to protect interior wooden doors and joinery. The finish works by penetrating the wooden surface – which remains microporous –

to leave a high-quality, durable finish that does not crack, flake, peel or blister. The long-lasting finish also works to prevent shrinkage and swelling, by stopping the wood's fibres from becoming dry and brittle.

www.osmouk.com

Stelrad launches 3D augmented reality app



Stelrad Radiator Group has released a new augmented reality radiator App - Stelrad 3D - to help those choosing Stelrad radiators to envisage them in a real-life setting. The AR Radiator App is free and can be downloaded from the App Store for Apple and Google PlayStore for Android phones by searching for Stelrad 3D. The range of radiators available from Stelrad is growing and its helpful to be able to see these new options via the App actually

against a real wall in a project or placed in a room in a new development for example. It's also a great tool to show to an end customer if they are having an input to the design of the radiators being utilised in a project.

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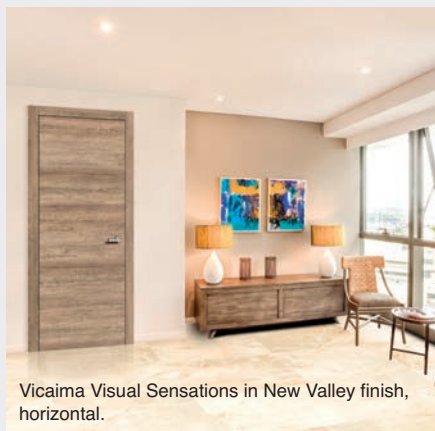
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Fresh ideas for Interior Doors in 2020

As a new decade commences, professionals everywhere are seeking fresh inspiration for interiors, whether for commercial spaces or residential living. This desire for innovative performance and trend-setting designs is most notable when it comes to interior doors, whose influence upon a room can have a marked effect on the surrounding décor, lifting and invigorating adjacent space. Bringing clarity to this process is Vicaima, who have just launched their 2020 Interior Door Selector. Packed with ideas this brochure is an essential tool for every specifier.



Vicaima Visual Sensations in New Valley finish, horizontal.

Now an annual and eagerly anticipated event, the 2020 edition of the Vicaima Interior Door Selector has over 100 pages filled with doors and doorsets that suit a multitude of applications, tastes and budgets. Its simple to navigate layout has been designed to make the selection process straightforward, with at a glance guides to form, function and fire, or indeed other desired performance criteria. Every range also shows a simply Price Indicator, allowing easy comparison between potential options for that perfect specification.

New for 2020, Vicaima have introduced some pioneering products that are certain to gain wide appeal. These include: Primed 2 Go, a revolutionary, polymer faced door for painting that requires no surface sanding or priming, saving time and money on site. Deep Textured Finish, creating the authentic touch of an open grain in a matt finish that can be applied to a selection of veneered and stained veneered doors.

An extension to the Visual Sensation foil door range, introducing four new matt finishes and new horizontal grain options in both the Naturdor Stained and Dekordor SD Foil ranges.

Naturally, at Vicaima it's not just about great design and trend setting aesthetics. As specialists in performance products, Vicaima



Vicaima 2020 Interior Door Selector

set the benchmark for fire certification, coupled with security and acoustic solutions. With a growing market awareness of the needs of providing peace of mind when it comes to fire safety, specifiers gain confidence from a supplier like Vicaima, who achieved 54 minutes during recent MHCLG testing of their 30-minute door assemblies. This coupled with Secure By Design approval and FSC environmental certification, makes Vicaima the obvious choice for demanding locations.

Download a copy of the 2020 Interior Door Selector today by visiting the Vicaima website.

01793 532333
www.vicaima.com

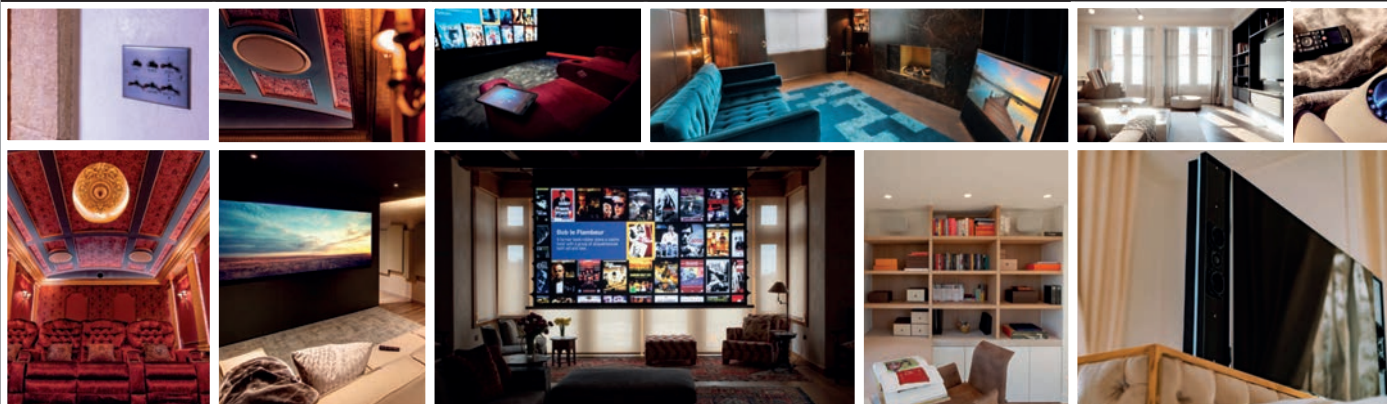
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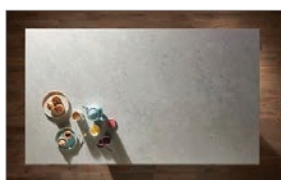


London-based **BLANCO** retailer, Moiety Kitchens, specialises in floating islands and Kosher kitchen designs, ensuring cabinetry and appliances are installed so that meat and dairy products are completely separated throughout the kitchen.

All of the kitchens are open to personalisation and creativity. Moiety Kitchens has been specifying BLANCO appliances for the spectacular designs since the showroom opened in 2015. The Managing Director of Moiety Kitchens, Manish Hirani commented: "We have been working with BLANCO UK since we opened. We currently have a BLANCO tap and the STEELART sink on display and are looking to add new innovative BLANCO products to our showroom displays."

www.blanco.co.uk

Dine in style with a Königstone worktop



When homeowners have spent money making their house into a home, it makes sense to make the most of it.

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are incredibly easy to clean, creating the perfect surface in the home for baking. There is also a handy go-to customer care guide on Königstone's website which tells homeowners everything they need to know about taking care of a König Quartz or König Naturals surface to keep it in tip-top shape for food preparation.

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Permitted Paving

Although a requirement for most new developments, other – often forgotten – planning measures encouraging sustainable drainage (or SuDS) also apply to new or replacement paving around existing properties. They are explained in brand new editions of Interpave’s ‘Permitted Paving’ and other guidelines, which are now available to download via www.paving.org.uk.

Originating from the government-backed Pitt Review, various requirements for SuDS affecting retrofitted new and replacement paving were put in place through changes to planning rules in England, Scotland and Wales some time ago. But the growing awareness of the importance of SuDS and permeable paving in the fight against flooding means increasingly robust enforcement by local authorities today.

Before these changes, paving anywhere in a garden related to a ‘dwellinghouse’ or within various non-residential properties, using any materials, was considered to be ‘permitted development’ – effectively, an automatic planning permission without needing a planning application. But these rights no longer apply to new or replacement drives or other paving between a house and the street, or within industrial, warehouse, office and shop premises – unless it is permeable paving or



drains water onto a permeable area within the property.
Otherwise planning permission will be needed but – with the latest national and local planning policies encouraging or requiring SuDS – unlikely to be granted. For example, the Greater London Authority includes a strong presumption against impermeable paving in its

proposed planning policies.
For more information, download the brand-new edition of Interpave’s ‘Permitted Paving’ and other guidelines from the Permeable Paving & SuDS section of www.paving.org.uk.
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info@snickersworkwear.co.uk

New Aico product selector arrives



Aico has launched Issue 10 of its highly popular Product Selector. The new version features the same ring bound format as the previous edition, for ease of use, and all the key features that customers value, with the added enhancement of tabs to help customers find what they are looking for with greater ease. As you would expect, Aico's extensive product range and ever-growing list of

sophisticated, ground-breaking features, are covered in the new Product Guide, along with an easy reference product list including descriptions. Features and technology include next generation Radio Frequency Wireless Interconnection (SmartLINK), Real-time facts, real-time action (AudioLINK) and Aico's dust compensation mechanism.

www.aico.co.uk/technical-support/guides-publications/#navigation

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CONCRETE AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Chris Stanley of the Concrete Block Association explains where concrete can fit into a circular economy, and help to boost sustainable housebuilding.

AFTER THEIR INITIAL LIFESPAN HAS EXPIRED, CONCRETE BLOCKS CAN FIND A SECOND LIFE IN GROUNDWORKS, PILING MATS AND LANDSCAPING

Talk of the circular economy has penetrated every part of the construction industry recently, and rightly so. The phrase is perhaps not used widely enough, but the concept is essential to transforming our methods and practices.

Taking environmental concerns into account is no longer optional – they are as important as capital costs in propelling the housebuilding industry forward. Whether new build or renovation, flexibility is key, as we should be building to allow room for future retrofit, not future demolition.

Particularly for manufacturers of building products, the circular economic model is a proven way to achieve greater sustainability. Reducing, reusing, recycling, and recovering energy from products at end-of-life and beyond is now central to the business strategies of our members at the Concrete Block Association (CBA).

Masonry structures are well-known to be robust – a fundamental property for whole-life performance. Yet, masonry also possesses unique attributes which minimise CO₂ emissions. Concrete blocks can considerably minimise embodied CO₂



when specified correctly, for example. Operational emissions from heating and cooling a building can also be notably reduced due to the materials' thermal mass qualities, and without compromising on comfort.

This is merely one example of how concrete blocks can aid the transition towards a greener, environmentally friendly built environment. There are however more direct actions being taken within the building products sector in order to ensure best practice and a better future.

THE FACT OF THE MATTER

In the past decade, the industry has made considerable headway in significantly lowering emissions resulting from the production of concrete blocks. We've achieved a reduction of 13 per cent carbon intensity since 2008 for example, facilitated by improvements to the manufacturing process itself.

The impact of emissions through the transportation of goods is equally low in relation to other building products, due to the fact blocks rarely need to travel far. A wide variety of concrete blocks are produced in the UK, made in local production facilities from constituents delivered locally, thus minimising their environmental footprint.

There's no denying that cement accounts for much of a concrete block's

impact. While it remains an indispensable part of the composition, it can now be blended with lower impact cementitious materials to reduce the overall embodied CO₂. In the UK, this is now standard practice, with two of the most commonly used substances, fly ash and ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBS), being industry by-products finding a new purpose.

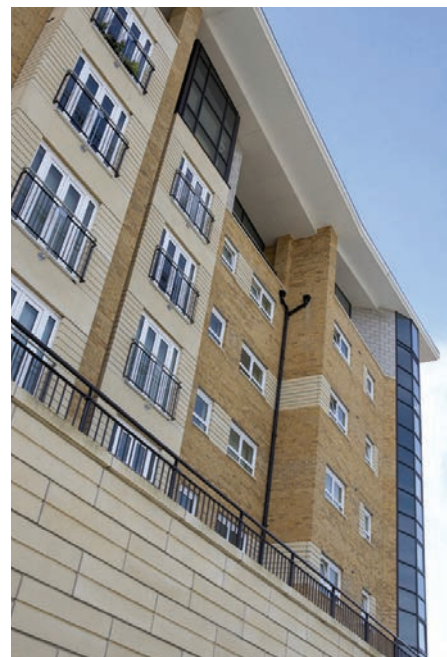
CRITICAL MASS

Adapting to the inconvenient truth of climate change, we need to double our efforts to ensure the homes we build are comfortable and energy efficient. The core materials used are vastly influential in this regard. Providing inertia against temperature fluctuations is key, as it will help homeowners by potentially reducing energy bills through improved energy efficiency.

One of the most important ways the whole-life performance of a building can be improved is through taking advantage of a concrete block's thermal mass. The material absorbs and stores heat during the day, which is then removed overnight, passively through ventilation. This gives the structure a natural, alternative method to control temperature. When heat is released gradually, the need to resort to air conditioning or central heating is minimised. This also reduces the overheating risk.

SECOND NATURE

Of course, fundamental to the concept of the circular economy is casting our eyes beyond end of life and finding ways to reuse and recycle products. After their initial lifespan, concrete blocks can find a second life in groundworks, piling mats and landscaping. Crushed, they can be



used as recycled aggregate. In fact, CBA members have publicly committed to only manufacturing blocks that are fully recyclable.

Further CO₂ is released in deconstruction and waste processing at the end of a building's life, therefore improving how building products are manufactured and specified is everyone's responsibility.

It is vitally important that producers introduce measures to reduce energy consumption, focusing on the elimination of waste and the adoption of environmental and sustainable management systems that go further than what is legally required.

LEAN & FLEXIBLE DESIGN

The wider housebuilding and architectural industries need to also be fully invested in order for the circular economy concept to be effective. Everybody needs to be on board with the message of material efficiency and lean design, whereby we use less resources and use them in a smarter way.

Luckily, our technologies have been swiftly improving, and innovation is helping us to achieve this. Calculating the optimal build-up of structures needed for best energy efficiency is now possible.

For a building to be able to assume new uses, incorporating new technologies and the changing climate, flexibility must be built in from the outset. We have not yet arrived at a point where construction and manufacturing are truly 'circular,' but we have taken leaps towards it. Maintaining the momentum is key, even through these economically uncertain times.

Chris Stanley is housing manager at the Concrete Block Association

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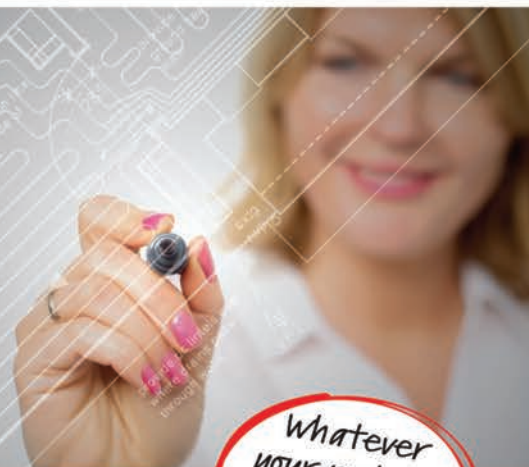
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