

# selfbuilder + homemaker

ISSUE 01 2020

## *Winning an uphill battle*

Roseanne Field reports on an oak build that made the most of a difficult sloping site in Wales

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## **SIMPLE TIPS ON SLIDING DOORS**

Our expert gives you a simple run-down of the things you need to know when specifying sliding doors

## **It's open season in the kitchen**

Looks for creating your dream open plan kitchen

## **Curves that help the climate**

Super low emissions, super curvaceous looks in Wiltshire



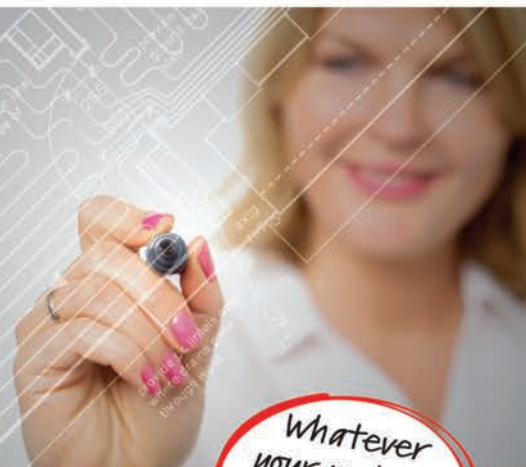




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# FROM THE EDITOR...

It's hard enough to get a self-build off the ground, even when you have the land, the design and the money to push ahead with your dream. So why are local authorities making it harder for people?

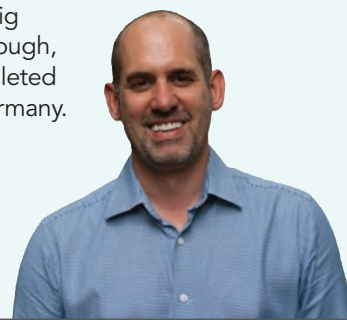
According to the National Custom & Self Build Association's latest delve into how Right to Build is being rolled out (or not) across the UK, a variety of perhaps dubious measures are being used to try and keep registers of those looking to build as short as possible. This cannot be verified – obviously the NaCSBA has a campaigning agenda to get as many people self-building as possible, but there's no smoke without fire.

The organisation accuses local councils of "imposing unreasonable constraints," counting plots which will be taken by larger developers as suitable for self-build, and even removing the names of people who have joined via a couple of administrative tricks. The NaCSBA reckons that 8,000 people have been "wrongfully" taken off the registers, which if true is a scandal as it artificially reduces the demand and lessens the national case for freeing up plots.

What have the authorities got to gain in doing this? Obviously the estimated 55,000 people on registers currently represents a big admin challenge for them in putting planning permissions through, but surely this is what they should be doing, despite their depleted numbers? And the numbers are nothing if you look at say, Germany.

The Government needs to intervene fast if it wants the self-build revolution to happen as intended.

JAMES PARKER



# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

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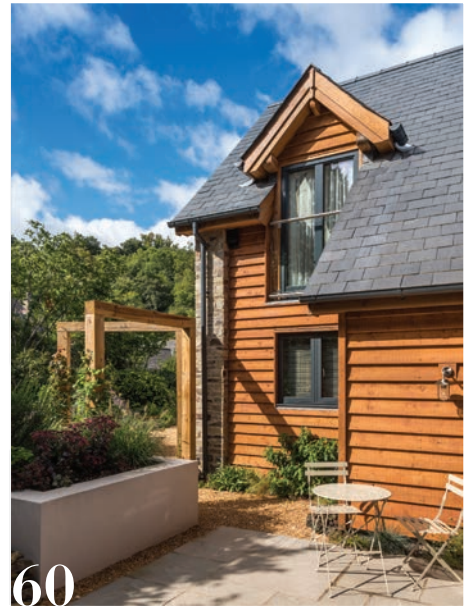
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## A SERIES OF EVENTS TO CELEBRATE HOMEBUILDING & RENOVATING

Future has announced a programme of new events taking place this year to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the *Homebuilding & Renovating* brand.

Four new events will have been planned, starting at the National Homebuilding & Renovating Show in March. The Homebuilding & Renovating Awards will "honour the UK self-build industry," while the Custom Build Summit will "help builders, developers and architects unlock growth in the market."

A third launch event will follow in September when the Homebuilding & Renovating Roadshow debuts at Chester Racecourse. The single day event will bring the main show concept to the north west for the first time.

The fourth and final launch will take place at the London show in September, where The Future Home Show will run alongside the main event, aiming to showcase the best products on the market and help consumers integrate them into their homes.

## GRAND DESIGNS LIVE TO LAUNCH 'THE GREAT BRITISH BOX ROOM'

According to Grand Designs Live, box rooms are being left "unused, forgotten or used as a dumping ground for the things that don't fit anywhere else."

The Great British Box Room Competition, a new series of six installations, each imagined by a different interior designer, will be on display at Grand Designs Live, from 2 - 10 May 2020. This new feature will "inspire visitors and encourage them to take home new ideas, information and supplier contacts," said the organisers.

The show is inviting British stylists from all over the UK to submit their designs to transform tiny spaces into useful and beautiful rooms for any home. Designers will dress the rooms with products, which are easily accessible to exhibition visitors and are either in stock or online from current retailers, manufacturers and designers.

From the six finalists chosen from the entries submitted, the winner of the competition will be announced on the Grand Theatre at the show, with judges including Kevin McCloud and Jenny Gibbs of the KLC School of Design.

# Survey shows owners are keeping up with the Joneses

With the housing market being increasingly volatile, many people are making the most of renovation over relocation, and according to a recent survey there are many 'copycat' neighbours in the UK, with 66 per cent admitting they have imitated aspects of a neighbour's house.

My Job Quote surveyed 2,113 UK homeowners and others with the aim of investigating whether people are copying their neighbour's renovations.

Homeowners were also asked to specify which aspects they had copied, revealing the most commonly copied feature of British homes, as follows:

- Indoor furniture/items (72 per cent)
- Colour schemes (57 per cent)
- Outdoor furniture/items (53 per cent)
- External house design (45 per cent)
- Indoor accessories (41 per cent)
- Garden design (34 per cent)
- House architecture (29 per cent)
- Room design (23 per cent)

- Floor plans (9 per cent).

The survey also discovered that people have mixed opinions upon finding out a neighbour has copied them. It's primarily met with discomfort (67 per cent), however sometimes neighbours can be flattered (5 per cent). Other reactions include:

- Challenged/competitive (49 per cent)
- Violated (42 per cent)
- Angry/annoyed (31 per cent)
- Happy/pleased (24 per cent)
- Anxious (20 per cent)
- Inspired (18 per cent)
- Pressured (13 per cent)
- Sad (10 per cent)
- Impressed (8 per cent).

When asked how pressured they feel to compete with surrounding properties, the most common answer was "somewhat" (35 per cent). This was, however, followed by "very" (23 per cent), "not very" (19 per cent), "a little" (15 per cent), "not at all" (7 per cent) and just one per cent saying "depends on the renovation."

## Local authorities accused of using 'dirty tricks' to restrict numbers signing up to Right to Build

Despite the number of people wanting to self-build seeing annual growth, The National Custom & Self Build Association (NaCSBA) revealed it has found that a number of local authorities are using what it calls "dirty tricks" to make it more difficult for individuals to sign up and remain on Right to Build registers.

The NaCSBA said its Freedom of Information request revealed an estimated 55,000 people are now signed up to registers. It also believed that the increase in people signing up of 11,400 on the previous year "is not indicative of the actual demand."

NaCSBA identified three "tricks" in particular being used:

- "Imposing unreasonable constraints over joining", such as sign-up fees and denying those living outside the authority
- "Counting plots intended for building on by housing developers as being potentially suitable for self-build"
- "Removing the names of those who have already joined a register," in turn allowing them to justify reducing the number of permissioned plots.

Means of removing names, according to NaCSBA, include "data protection exercises" that remove those who don't reply, introducing fees in order to remain on registers, and restarting registers with a new set of conditions. NaCSBA estimates 8,000 people have been "wrongfully removed" from registers.

The association says that this "works against the spirit of the legislation" and restricts self-build opportunities to those who have the means to build without the support of the legislation anyway.

The NaCSBA's Freedom of Information request followed its first Right to Build Day on 30 October, when local authorities had to demonstrate they had granted permission for enough plots to satisfy demand. Despite this, it says only 45 per cent of local authorities claim to have met their legal duty, and 37 per cent failed to respond at all. Ultimately it says the numbers provided were "too unreliable" to allow for an "accurate assessment of self-build delivery."



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Self-build novice wins date with TV's George Clarke

Mitsubishi Electric has announced the winner of its Self-Build Competition, which offered one keen self-builder the chance to meet with architect and TV presenter George Clarke for an advice session as well as winning a market-leading renewable heating system. The winner, Helen Thomas, from Powys in Wales, entered the competition after purchasing a 3.5-acre plot of land with no prior construction experience, to build a new home for her and her young son. Helen applied for planning permission to develop a new building, and with a budget of £80,000 she has built a three-bedroom bungalow, due to be completed this summer. In February, Helen will spend a day on site with George Clarke, making use of his expertise in designing small, affordable spaces. They will discuss how the building's interior can be as comfortable and functional as possible, and how she can achieve a totally energy efficient home. As part of her design, Helen is already using triple glazed windows and doors, external insulation and rendering and a prefabricated frame with Magnesium Oxide SIPS to improve her home efficiency. Along with the advice session with George Clarke, Helen will also have an Ecodan air source heat pump installed into her home later this year. Ecodan is the market-leading renewable heating alternative to gas or oil and will contribute to a more sustainable, energy efficient home, helping reduce both energy costs and the home's impact on the environment.

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# OPEN TO A FRESH LIFESTYLE

Richard Atkins, design director at DesignSpace London, shares tips on how to create open plan kitchen living for your project

**T**raditionally, kitchens were hidden from view, with meals prepared out of sight and doors firmly shut between the cooking area and other living spaces. These days, this space has become the focal point of modern living and top of the list in our domestic aspirations. The new ideal is an open plan, multi-purpose, ultra-social space combining high function with informal living and entertaining.

Creating this lifestyle is feasible in most homes, but the secret of its success is all in the planning; from the flow and layout of the room to the final finishes. This makes it essential to get good planning advice, whether you are starting from scratch with a brand-new extension, or simply rejigging existing space. Interiors professionals can rationalise the design to make the very most of the available footprint, and – especially with new or larger rooms – there is a long list of important criteria to be taken into account if the ergonomics are going to work.



Start by looking online, and through interiors magazines, to create a mood board of the sort of space and decorative impact you are looking for. List your 'must haves,' and get tips from friends who've already commissioned their dream kitchen to find out what does and doesn't work for them. Whether you are buying from a high street outlet, an independent retailer or a bespoke joinery company, choose your supplier according to your needs and budget. On the high street you might find an off the shelf solution and bargain offers while the independent retailer will generally be able to offer more flexible design solutions from a wider and more diverse product range.

## THE LATEST LOOKS

As the new focal point of our modern lifestyle, an open plan kitchen is by far the most popular solution, flowing seamlessly into adjacent eating/living space. With this in mind, you need to consider the look of the room as a whole, connecting colours and finishes throughout. Kitchen designs have evolved dramatically in recent years with the introduction of cabinetry that can make cooking and storage almost invisible within an open plan scheme or, conversely are bold and dramatic enough to command the space.

The choice is yours to make, but don't be afraid to use colour and texture to define different zones within the open plan area or the latest trend – 'broken plan,' using furniture or bookshelves as informal dividers to create cosier pockets of space. Don't forget the importance of

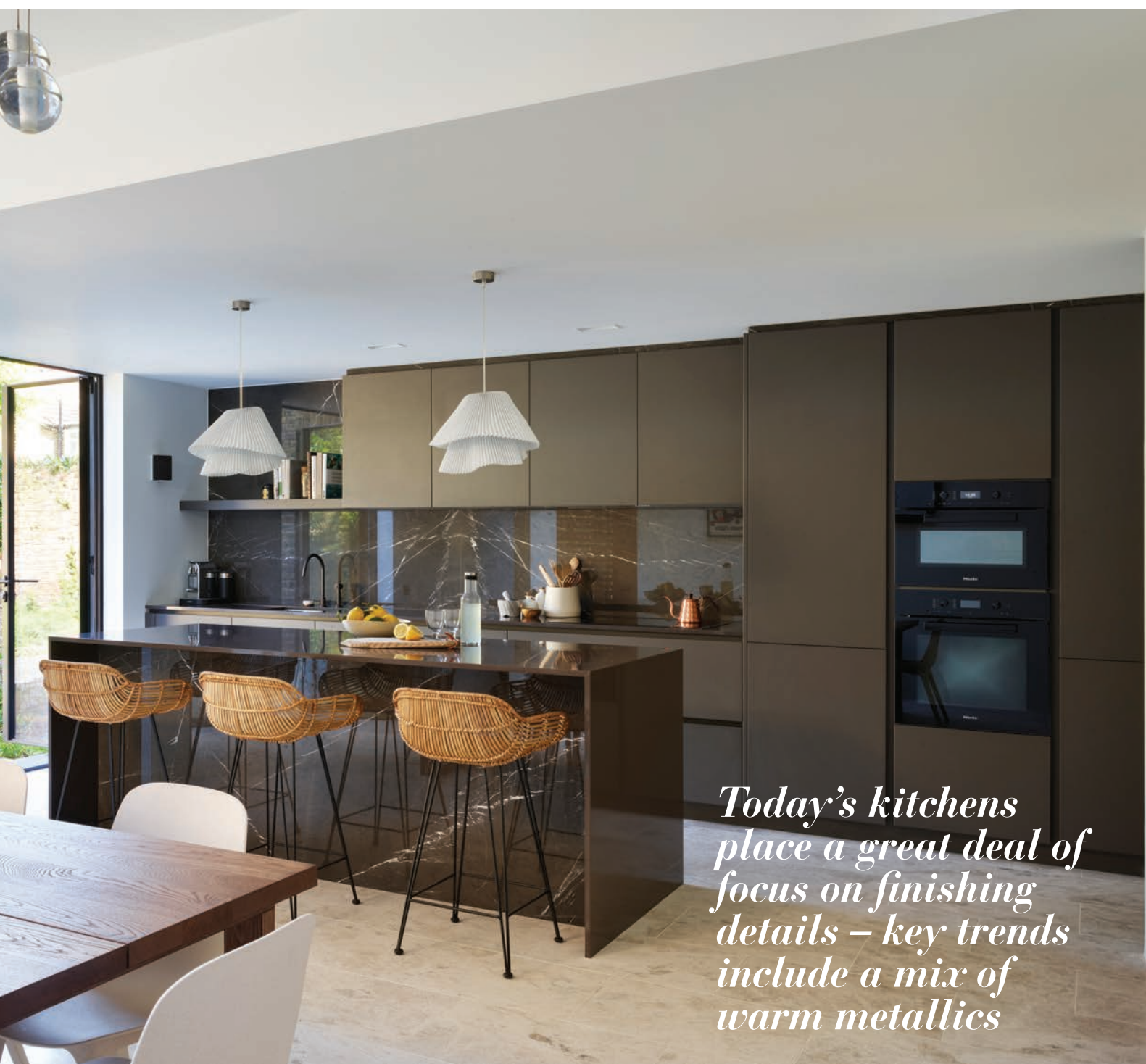
multi-source, adjustable lighting, both across the whole space and in different areas to change their mood as needed.

## STORAGE

With kitchens being incorporated in the complete living space, there is a need for more flexible storage space and for inventive ways of integration. Consider kitchen furniture which incorporates sliding door technologies such as pocket doors or bi-folding systems to conceal appliances and workspaces







*Today's kitchens place a great deal of focus on finishing details – key trends include a mix of warm metallics*

when they are not in use.

The conventional 'patchwork' of doors in varying sizes does not lend itself to modern interior design – taller or wider one-piece doors and cupboards are needed to achieve the right scale. The actual business of cooking and storage can now be largely concealed, coming into play only when needed. The extractor can be hidden away, the hob can be flush with the worktop, the fridge, freezer and dishwasher fully integrated, and large pull-out drawers can hold

everything from glasses and plates to the toaster, food mixers and other small appliances.

#### **BE BOLD WITH COLOUR**

Dark colours and highly textured dark woods are back, no longer just as accents, but in cabinetry and surfaces. This is a bold, visual look and if you are ready to fully embrace the trend you could consider combining dark lacquered cabinetry with black and grey marble.

Today's kitchens place a great deal of

focus on finishing details, with key trends including a mix of warm metallics, introducing elements of bronze, copper or pewter, all of which lend themselves well to layering.

Whether you choose an almost invisible kitchen or one which creates a dramatic statement, the time you invest in careful planning will always pay itself back, creating a welcoming and highly-functional new living space where friends and family will look forward to gathering.



# Planning Permission Granted? What Next?



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For most, securing planning permission is an exciting milestone in a project but it's not the end of the journey and there is a lot to do before work can start on site. Paul Newman, Self Build Director, Potton

## Sense check

Once permission has been granted, take a moment to answer a few key questions:

- Have I got the right permission or do I want to change it?
- Can the project be built (on my budget)?
- Are there any outstanding legal issues to resolve such as ransom strips of land to access the site, that might prevent the project going ahead?

When you're satisfied with the answers, you can move on to the next step.

## Pre-start check list

It's advisable to create a list showing what needs addressing before the groundworks commence. Many of the pre-build tasks highlighted here should run in parallel to reduce the amount of time spent on this stage of the process.

## Discharging planning conditions

Your full planning permission will invariably come with a list of conditions that need to be discharged before work can start on site. Typically, conditions relate to highways, access, building position, height, external materials to be used and landscaping.

## Investigate charges

It's important to now confirm if any planning fees are due, such as planning obligations via Section 106 agreements (self-builders should be exempt). The CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) is a similar charge – with this one you need to fill out the right forms at the right times to accept your liability and claim an exemption.

## Develop the drawings

The design must be developed to meet the Building Regulations to enable construction. Depending on who produced the plans, there may well be significant technical issues to resolve before materials can be supplied to site. You'll need to confirm the build system and agree a full design freeze so manufacturing drawings can be produced. Plan the foundations. We recommend using an engineer to prepare the foundation plan. This route is cost effective and reduces risk. Commission a ground investigation to establish soil types, depths, consistency and ultimately load-bearing capacity. This will allow the engineer to produce a suitable foundation design.

## Choose your build route

Are you planning to manage the project yourself and sub-contract trades, or opt for using the services of a professional project manager or builder? An increasing number of self-builders use a project manager or contractor to deliver the weathertight shell and then manage the fit out themselves.

## Finalise funds

Whatever your budget, prepare it well and stick to it. If you need a mortgage, the lender will probe your cost plan to check it's realistic. You will also need to set some contingency. If you're likely to change your mind as work goes on, costs will rise, so allow for this.

## Health & safety

This won't be complicated if you work with responsible trades who know what they require to work safely. You'll need to appoint a principle designer and principle contractor, create a health and safety file, submit a simple notification form to the Health & Safety Executive and maintain a construction phase plan.

## NEXT STEP

### BOOK ONTO THIS FREE SELF BUILD ACADEMY COURSE

Potton's Self Build Academy course 'Granted Permission – How to get your project moving' explores all of the issues raised in this article and much more. It also provides software tool to help attendees organise their project, budget effectively, build safety and make a success of their build. Courses are held at Potton's Self Build Show Centre in St Neots, Cambridgeshire.

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# Sliding doors, made simple



Steve Bromberg of Express Bi-Folding Doors outlines the essential factors for self-builders who are considering sliding doors – from size limitations to energy efficiency

## OTHER THAN SAVING SPACE, WHAT BENEFITS CAN SLIDING DOORS OFFER OVER BI-FOLDS?

The main benefit of sliding doors over bi-fold alternatives is the overall aesthetic when the doors are closed. Due to the technology of the mechanism, sliding door panels are generally larger, meaning more glass and less frame. This is obviously a benefit for those consumers looking to sliding doors for showcasing their view, as it means that the outside will not be completely obscured by the frame.

Also, because of how sliding doors are manufactured the frames are always a lot

slimmer – another reason why they're increasing in popularity.

## WHAT MATERIALS ARE FRAMES AVAILABLE IN, AND HOW THIN CAN THEY BE?

Materials are available in PVCu and timber, but the real benefits are seen in aluminium. Sightlines vary considerably but frames slimmer than 40 mm are quite standard and some go as slim as 21 mm. Some manufacturers offer a glass sliding door with a completely concealed frame and a visible sightline of just 25 mm – this means you have large pieces of glass literally separated by only 25 mm of

profiles – this is becoming a very popular solution, as it fulfils the needs of consumers, both practically and visually.

## IS THERE A LIMIT ON HOW LARGE I CAN GO?

When it comes to size limitations, it varies entirely on the system. However, as a general rule of thumb we recommend keeping each individual glass panel less than 5 m<sup>2</sup>. The reason for this is because glass within that size can be 6 mm toughened. If 5 m<sup>2</sup> is exceeded then the glass needs to be 8 mm toughened both sides. This is very heavy and expensive, as well as bringing logistic and access issues – it's doable, but at a premium.

## WHAT OTHER DESIGN OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

There is a wide range of top-quality sliding doors available on the market, offering a variety of styles. The designs which boast the slimmest frames are the slim-line bonded sliding doors, while there are also slim-line products available that have been created specifically for patio doors, as well as lift and slide doors.

Doors are generally available with two, three, four, and six panels, so there are plenty of options including a triple track with three panels which allows for a 66 per cent clear opening, or even a quadruple track which allows for four panels and a 75 per cent clear opening – a great solution for really wide openings.

## HOW ENERGY EFFICIENT ARE SLIDING DOORS?

Due to the reduction in framework, sliding doors are generally more thermally efficient than bi-folding doors. With the doors being predominantly made from glass, as long as a high-quality, low emissivity glass is used in the installation, the doors will be very thermally efficient.

## ARE THEY 'USER-FRIENDLY' I.E. NOT TOO HEAVY TO OPEN AND CLOSE?

Panoramic sliding doors can be heavy because the weight of the glass is directly on the rollers – this is another reason why you shouldn't be too ambitious with the size of the panels. Lift and slide doors alleviate this problem as the mechanism lifts the glass slightly, making them much lighter and easier to slide. Lift and slide doors are perfect for





## ASK THE EXPERT

really big doors, and are popular with elderly couples and family homes with young children.

### WHEN IT COMES TO INSTALLATION, WHAT POTENTIAL ONSITE ISSUES ARE THERE AND HOW CAN THESE BE OVERCOME?

The biggest potential issue which arises is access. There is demand for bigger and bigger glass, but this must be placed near the door opening safely, which is difficult on a building site. In terraced houses in London for example, sometimes a crane is the only way to do this.

The tracks on sliding doors are a lot deeper than standard doors, so it's never a simple task to remove existing doors to replace with panoramic sliding doors. The doors need to be installed onto a solid base as they're so heavy you can't have the bottom track floating over a cavity.

These issues can be overcome by dealing with professional companies who are experts in their field, and can offer sound advice at every step. The company installing the doors will carry

out a full site survey to root out the potential issues and find workable solutions.

### HOW LONG WILL INSTALLATION TAKE?

It depends how big the doors are, but generally a sliding door should be installed in a few hours.

### ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONSIDERATIONS TO BEAR IN MIND?

Like any construction job, there are various factors to consider. The number of panels is a big consideration as well as the practicality of the doors. Safety must always be your first consideration, for example, floor to ceiling glass doors look great, but you have to be wary of children playing in and around them.

As well as safety, there are the obvious logistical obstacles to overcome. Things such as considering the level thresholds from inside to out. These are a key requirement, so it is important for clients to pick their door



products early in the project so they can prepare the site properly for their installation.

*Steve Bromberg is managing director at Express Bi-Folding Doors*

# High-demand training dates revealed for 2020

**M**apei 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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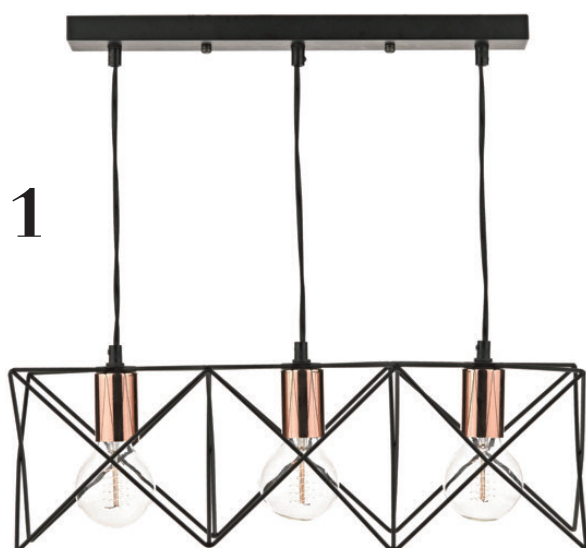
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# INTERIOR INSPIRATION: LIGHTING

Lighting is the not-so-secret key ingredient to the success of any home's interior design, helping to add cosiness and delivering an aesthetic focus in itself. Whether accent or more functional, here's a round up of some luminous luminaires

1. The **Midi 3 Light Bar Pendant** from **dar lighting group** has a matt black finish and polished copper lamp holders, ideal for displaying decorative bulbs over your dining table. The open metal framework makes the fitting suited to both vintage and modern interiors. The fitting is height adjustable to a maximum of 1.3 metres.  
[www.darlighting.co.uk](http://www.darlighting.co.uk)

2. **Industville's Long Arm Cage Wall Light** (pictured in brass variant) is claimed as "the perfect way to create a unique and original style in your interior." The handmade finish means each product has a "diverse" shape and spreads light evenly around the space. The light is also available in a pewter finish.  
[www.industville.co.uk](http://www.industville.co.uk)

**3. Cuckooland's Zuivier Cane Tripod Floor Lamp** incorporates a three-legged, dark walnut veneered base with a contrasting cane shade. Standing at 153 cm and made from using cane-webbing mesh, the lamp has been designed to bring a touch of elegance to your lounge, bedroom or dining room.  
[www.cuckooland.com](http://www.cuckooland.com)

**4. The Kalimanta Small Bamboo Hanging Shade** by **Abode Living** is made from sustainable bamboo and features a black diagonal line woven in to the natural material to create this simple design. Sold as a shade to hang on your existing cable, this contemporary bamboo light will look great over tables and islands or in a hallway.  
[www.abodeliving.co.uk](http://www.abodeliving.co.uk)

**5. The Galliano chandelier** from **DelightFULL** is a mid-century modern light with a shape inspired by a pipe organ. The light can be customised in any shape or dimension: round, oval, square or rectangular. It's handmade in steel and features a nickel plated finish, while the interior of the lamp shades are in white matt.  
[www.delightfull.eu](http://www.delightfull.eu)

**6. The Chloe Black Table Light** from **MY Furniture** has a sleek, chic shape, a contemporary satin paint finish and is finished with chrome details. The lamp has been designed to a size that means it's ideal for use on a desk, sideboard, console, bedside table or dressing table.  
[www.my-furniture.co.uk](http://www.my-furniture.co.uk)







## CASE STUDY

# CURVES IN ALL THE RIGHT PLACES

Not only have Roger and Lucy Southcott achieved their ambition of building a home that's energy self-sufficient with super-low greenhouse gas emissions, they've also created something that's carefully shaped to fit the contours of its Wiltshire location

TEXT JESS UNWIN IMAGES GREEN BUILDING STORE

In one sense, Roger and Lucy Southcott's self-build could be seen as an opportunity for them to practise what they preach. After all, he works in sustainable housing development, while she's an environmental consultant.

It should be no surprise therefore that this project represents the realisation of a long-held ambition to build something for themselves that is self-sufficient in terms of its energy needs, and offers super-low greenhouse gas emissions.

But of course it's also an exciting new chapter in Roger and Lucy's lives – one where they've swapped life in a Victorian mid-terrace property in London's Bermondsey district for a unique and very 21st century home in Wiltshire with views of Salisbury Plain.

Says Roger: "I was getting tired of living in London – it can be aggressive, dirty and noisy. We wanted to try to deliver on what we both believe in terms of sustainability, but we also wanted things like more space to live in, a kitchen garden and a semi-rural location."

*"We wanted to try to deliver on what we both believe in terms of sustainability"*

## LOW POINT

"The legal dispute with the timber frame company – everything stopped for two months. The cost of the frame was £30,000 so there was a lot at stake."

– Roger Southcott





Achieving their self-build ambition took time and wasn't always without challenges. The first task was finding land to build on. The couple set their search zone to the west of the capital and spent several years looking online and driving to a lot of potential plots. Nevertheless, says Roger, the time and the travel is worth it: "Never buy without visiting the site and read between the lines on adverts. If a plot seems cheap, there's a reason."

The site the couple eventually bought was on the edge of the small town of Westbury. Purchased at auction in 2014 for £200,000, it already had a single-storey four-bed bungalow on it. Roger advises: "It's definitely worth considering land with an existing property that

can be demolished, but factor in the cost of demolition and removal of spoil."

The bungalow was rented out for the next 18 months while the final terms of planning permission were negotiated and designs for the new build were drawn up. Roger says: "It is possible to talk to planners before submitting an application and it's well worth it for the advice they can give in terms of what may or may not be acceptable. I'd also recommend engaging with the neighbours early in the process – explain your plans."

As for design, Roger laughs when he thinks back to the first 'drawing' he did himself – on a napkin in a pub. "We took the napkin to our architect, Simon Radclyffe, but asked him to





come up with challenging alternative designs that would encourage us to think about what we really needed from a house and how we would live in it. Overall, the design ethos was for something unique but as sustainable as possible. Of course, the final look of the building was nothing like the napkin sketch!"

One idea that did survive from Roger's original vision was that of a circular hallway. Not only is the hallway – which is rendered beautifully with slipped slate – probably the most striking feature of the building, its curves have also been echoed across the rest of the exterior design of the Southcotts' new home.

Roger says: "The whole building is curved. Our architect felt the house would fit into the sloping site better if it was curved and he was right. What's more, if you stand at one end of house you can't see the other end because it's round the corner. This gives the whole house a more interesting feel – less predictable, and

unique. I do like the idea that there isn't another house the same as it in the world."

While the couple are perfectly content with curves, Roger does add a note of caution: "Curved does mean extra work, and it can add to the cost. There are some smaller practical issues too – standard curtain poles, for example, won't go round a curve!"

#### BUMPS IN THE ROAD

A much bigger headache than curtain poles that presented a very serious problem early in construction was an argument over contractual obligations with the company meant to install the engineered timber frame of their new home. Roger explains: "They threatened to sue, we threatened to countersue and everything stopped onsite for two months. The cost of the timber frame was £30,000 so there was a lot at stake."

The couple eventually settled out of court,

#### INDOOR OUTDOOR LIVING

The bi-fold doors connect the kitchen/dining/living area with the home's outdoor space





## HIGH POINT

"Getting the timber frame completed was both a relief and very exciting. We could walk about inside it and begin to see the size of the rooms and where the doors would be."

– Roger Southcott

## ROGER'S TOP TIP

"Never buy without visiting the site and read between the lines on adverts. If a plot seems cheap, there's a reason."

paying an extra £2,000 to get everything back on track. Reflecting on the row, Roger's not sure the couple could have done much more to avoid it. "We thought we had everything tied down watertight by using a standard JCT (Joint Contracts Tribunal) contract but got involved in an argument over semantics."

Despite this experience, Roger still recommends using this form of contract: "Some companies don't want to work to a JCT because they see it as restrictive, but in most cases it should offer protection both for you and the contractor."

Other delays in the construction process for the Southcotts included dealing with nesting bats at the site, which cost more than £7,000, and an archaeology dig that meant a bill for double that amount. Says Roger: "We had to dig the entire site to a one metre depth. They did apparently find a Romano-Anglo Saxon lime kiln. The experts looked at it and then filled it in again. It was a total pain and took months to do."

### LAYOUT & MATERIALS

These bumps in the road aside, Roger and Lucy are delighted with their self-build, which had the finishing touches to the internal fit out applied during 2019. With a footprint 20 per cent larger than that of the bungalow that preceded it, the new structure responds to the sloping site by



having three storeys on its eastern side, including a basement level that is partially underground, and one storey on its western side. Roger is understandably very pleased with the circular hallway: "It's amazing," he says. Two spiral staircases within the hallway give access to the basement and the first floor, while a feature chandelier is another attention-grabber in this impressive space.

At basement level the house has two bedrooms and a bathroom, the garage, a plant





***“We asked our architect to come up with challenging alternative designs that would encourage us to think about what we really needed from a house”***

room and two store rooms. On the ground floor is the front door and entrance to the hallway, plus a toilet, dining room/kitchen area, a living room, a study and an extended balcony area. Finally, a bedroom, bathroom and dressing room can be found on the first floor, bringing the total floor area to 350 m<sup>2</sup>. Ticking another box in the Southcotts' wish list, both the ground floor and first floor offer views out onto Salisbury Plain from the south-east aspect.

Besides the aforementioned slate, the exteriors are finished in a white render and larch

wood. Roger says: “We wanted a house with some natural features, but also crisp, clean and modern.”

Of interest for other self-builders whose projects also include building underground, the Southcotts' basement uses insulated concrete forms (ICF) with 300 mm Kryton waterproof concrete infill, negating the need for tanking to protect against water ingress.

And for those self-builders who are considering flat or nearly flat roofs, Roger and Lucy decided to opt for a Sarnafil single ply membrane. Says Roger: “It's a material that's much lighter than tiles and can be unrolled and fixed to the roof quickly, speeding up the process of making your home weatherproof. We did look at zinc as an alternative but we couldn't afford the price!”

#### **SUSTAINABILITY**

With Roger and Lucy being keen believers in eco living, sustainability was always going to be a major factor in their self-build. The height of the hallway, for instance, doesn't just make for a grand entrance, but is also a critical component in the passive stack ventilation system the couple have installed.

“We could have installed mechanical ventilation,” says Roger, “but we weren't keen on that kind of intervention to help the house breathe properly – we wanted minimal ‘kit’ so that the house wasn't run by computers.” He explains how the approach they took is long

## **CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS**

### **ARCHITECT**

**Simon Radclyffe, Radclyffe Associates**  
01494 434163

### **PROJECT MANAGER**

**Mike Jacob, Kiss House**  
www.kisshouse.co.uk

### **ELECTRICIAN**

**Bath Electrical Solutions**  
www.bathelectricalsolutions.com

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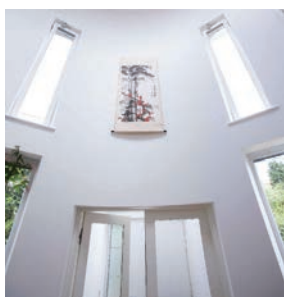
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#### HALLWAY

Roger knew from the word go that he wanted to incorporate a striking circular hallway



established: "Passive stack ventilation, using the prevailing wind to take away hot air from high-level vents, has been used very successfully in other, hotter parts of the world for centuries."

To help achieve the low energy targets for the house, the timber frame of the house was installed with 300 mm Warmcel cellulose insulation, which is made from recycled paper. In addition, the house has a cold roof system, again featuring 300 mm of insulation, while the timber-framed windows are triple glazed.

The roof has been fitted with 32 solar photovoltaic panels with a potential output of 10 kW, providing more electricity than Roger and Lucy need on most days. Overnight, the house runs off surplus energy stored by a Tesla battery. All of these measures mean that while the basement does feature a gas-fired wet heating system with radiators, the only heating above this level is provided by a wood-burning stove.

Another investment in sustainable technology is the 7,500 litre rainwater harvesting tank buried in the garden. A pump takes the water gathered there back into the house, where it is used to flush all the toilets and supply the washing machine. However, the couple do have the option to switch to mains supply in the event of a prolonged drought.

The other sustainable choices the couple have made in their self-build include a porous resin driveway (to counter flooding) and LED lighting throughout. Teak wooden flooring from the bungalow has been relaid in the new property and windows from the bungalow will eventually be used for a new greenhouse. Says Roger: "We're happy with the green credentials of the new house – we're pretty proud of what we've done."

***"Curved does mean extra work, and it can add to the cost"***

#### LEARNING LESSONS

Looking back on their self-build journey now, Roger does think that his professional contacts within the housebuilding sector was an advantage: "I know contractors, what they do, their prices and track record and I was able to use that to get what we wanted."

Nevertheless, he and Lucy did learn some lessons the hard way. He says: "In hindsight we would have been more present throughout the build process. We did hire a project manager and he was very good. However, the devil is in the detail, and many things could have gone more smoothly and snags been caught before they became problems had one of us been onsite."

Besides the costs already mentioned, the bill for professional fees and construction came in at close to £1.2m. The couple used savings, inheritance money and the proceeds from the sale of their London house to fund their self-build, and are now debt-free.

Roger says: "It's a dream come true and the whole project has been a real passion for me. We now have a house built around what we want and which is suited to our lifestyle, rather than something that a construction company thinks we need." ■





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# Be a septic sceptic!

Dave Vincent of Kingspan Klargester breaks down everything that self-builders need to know about the ins and outs of off-mains drainage, from legal issues to the variety of options available

**B**uilding a home in a quiet rural setting offers the owners many benefits; not least peace, beauty and tranquillity! But this type of location also brings additional responsibilities of ownership, not least understanding the impact your new house will have on the landscape and environment around you.

One of the most important considerations is drainage and wastewater management. The starting point here is to look for ways to connect to a main sewer if you can. This is legislated under 2010 Building Regulations and, if need be, you can use a pump station to facilitate the connection. You should arrange a site visit by a suitably qualified engineer – ideally a British Water accredited engineer – to find out if this is possible.

If a connection to the sewer proves impossible then you will need to manage your wastewater (i.e. water drained from baths, toilets, sinks, laundry etc.) safely and securely within the boundaries of your property, using a private drainage product, such as a septic tank or sewage treatment plant.

For many self-builders, for reasons of cost, this means installing a septic tank – a view that is typically backed up in cases where the installer is not a specialist drainage engineer. However, there are hidden dangers in this approach. A very high proportion of septic tank installations are entirely unsuited to the location they are placed in and, as a result, they pose a risk to public health and can cause local pollution. Off-mains drainage is tightly regulated, typically requiring a permit (known as a “permit to discharge”), so choosing the right solution for you requires professional advice from a drainage engineer.

Ultimately, though, the choices we all make should be rooted in a sense of responsibility and stewardship for the land we are living on. When it comes to off-mains drainage, it's easy to think “out of sight, out of mind” – septic tanks are, of course, buried underground. But that would be dangerous for a product that deals with polluting waste. What's also important to emphasise is that



taking expert advice will ensure you aren't on the receiving end of an unpleasant new reality, including overflowing toilets or drains!

## OFF-MAINS DRAINAGE: THE LEGAL BIT

Legal responsibility for disposing of wastewater lies with you, the property's owner. If wastewater from your house becomes the cause of local pollution, both you and your installer are at risk of prosecution under The Public Health Act 1936. The penalties can be a heavy fine and a large clean-up bill.

Clearly, there have been quite a few changes to off-mains legislation in England and Wales in the last 10 years or so. For example, the Environmental Permitting Programme – Second Phase (EPP2) introduced in 2010 in England and Wales tried to make off-mains drainage installation a less bureaucratic process.

Under EPP2, owners of small, domestic sewage tanks or plants could, under certain circumstances, be exempt from requiring a permit to discharge if they comply with various conditions. These include following industry installation guidance, incorporating manufacturers' operational guidance, the British Standard BS6297 regarding soakaway design, and following the advice given by British Water regarding de-sludging and servicing.

You also need to have a product that has been performance-tested and

*When it comes to off-mains drainage, it's easy to think “out of sight, out of mind,” but that would be dangerous for a product that deals with polluting waste*

certificated in line with European Standards (EN12566). Further new and binding rules were released for England in January 2015 but while these are helpful, they are open to interpretation. Our message is simple: while the Government has eased the administrative burden on property owners, this should not be mistaken for permission to act irresponsibly and your personal liability remains unchanged.

You should also be aware that further



legal changes brought in at the beginning of this year (2020) now mean that septic tanks can no longer discharge into surface water. The General Binding Rules state that if you own a septic tank that releases effluent directly into a ditch, stream, canal, river, surface water, or drain, then you either need to connect to the mains sewer, replace the tank with a sewage treatment plant, or create a drainage field that meets the current British Standard BS6297 2007.

OFF-MAINS DRAINAGE: OPTIONS

Sewage treatment systems that deal with wastewater vary hugely in terms of how they work and their efficacy i.e. how effectively they can break down solids.

SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANTS

The one product that works extremely effectively, wherever you live, is a sewage treatment plant (STP). A STP is an underground tank which provides an environment where aerobic bacteria can break down sewage and it is highly efficient, treating more than 90 per cent of the pollutants in wastewater.

Packaged sewage treatment systems that have tertiary treatment such as packaged reed beds are the current ‘gold standard,’ bringing the efficiency rating up to 98 per cent. These produce a clear,



odourless overflow that is environmentally friendly and suitable for discharging even on sensitive sites, including into a watercourse (subject to Environment Agency/Environmental Protection Agency approval).

Contrary to popular belief, STPs don’t cost significantly more than septic tanks, if you compare both products in terms of installation and maintenance.

SEPTIC TANKS

A septic tank, by contrast, does not treat waste. It produces soluble waste from solids, and this is then discharged and filtered through the ground. This wastewater is not benign – it contains harmful bacteria. Indeed, under H2 Building Regulations, septic tank discharges are considered harmful and require a tertiary treatment option, such

as a reed bed, wherever a tank is installed.

Septic tanks can offer a serviceable solution for some homes, but they need both the right ground conditions, plus a reed bed, to work effectively.

If a septic tank is installed in the wrong location then it can pollute groundwater as well as streams, ponds and rivers. Moreover, if the ground conditions don’t allow efficient filtration (for example, if your house is built on clay soil or on an area subject to flooding) then the soluble waste effluent that the septic emits will collect near the surface, and sooner or later you will know about it.

Testing the ground for its suitability to become a drainage field is usually done by a professional drainage engineer using a percolation test – the correct procedure is described in BS 6297:2007. It’s also worth noting that both H2 building regulations and BS 6297 state that the water table must be one metre below the septic tank outlet.

If you are in any doubt as to the suitability of your garden to filter wastewater, then take the prudent course. Protect yourself and your family, by installing a sewage treatment plant.

Dave Vincent is commercial director at Kingspan Klargester





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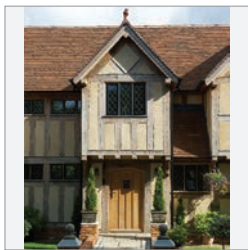


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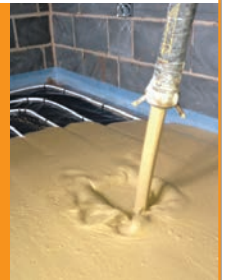
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# Get your cladding quality right

John Russell of Russwood explains why using a premium quality timber cladding, along with the right fixing system, is vital to ensure your cladding looks good for the long term

The popularity of timber as a cladding material is on the rise, with many self-builders choosing to specify it for their project. The environmental and sustainable credentials of timber are proving to be of increasing importance to those who want to minimise the impact of their build on the environment. As a recyclable, renewable resource with low embodied energy and important carbon capture and storage properties, timber is the obvious choice for the environmentally conscious self-builder.

Aesthetically, timber adds warmth and texture to a building and when correctly detailed and fixed, timber is highly durable and easily maintained. If you want your timber cladding to look better and last longer, it's important to consider not only the quality of timber used but the way in which it's fixed. Low quality timber which has been poorly fixed can cause problems down the line which can be costly and inconvenient to resolve.

To avoid such problems, ensure that the timber you select is of premium quality. Siberian larch is a good option for most projects – it's one of the most naturally durable species, and the presence of tannins in the wood create a high resistance to decay and rot, making it one of the toughest and most durable softwoods. Its high density means that it's more difficult for decaying organisms to penetrate the wood.

Siberian larch is extremely versatile, being suitable for most external timber cladding applications. Durability can be combined with a clean, relatively knot free look (for example in Russwood's SILA A/B grade timber), which is ideal for design-led projects. An A+ grade option provides a clean, consistent, almost knot-free look, combined with excellent durability. By contrast, SILA B/C is a

more rustic grade, giving a knottier, less uniform look, without compromising the material's durability properties.

A reputable manufacturer should source all its timber species, including Siberian larch, from sustainable forests. They are then generally imported to the UK in board form and, depending on which mill it came from, will have a variety of surface finishes, such as circular sawn marks, twin arbour lines, paint marks, grease marks or compression marks from steel securing bands. To avoid an unsightly surface finish, skimming the face of each board provides a clean, unblemished and fine-sawn finish.

For an optimal moisture content for external cladding, timber needs to be kiln-dried correctly – for example SILA is kiln-dried to approximately 16-18 per cent (plus or minus 2 per cent). This moisture level is retained until delivery to site and your cladding can then be installed immediately upon delivery.

Cladding arrangement makes a big impact on the aesthetic of your project. We're seeing trends for mixed width boards as well as mixing up horizontal and vertical cladding. Enhanced performance of dimensional stability can be achieved by using narrower widths, for example 120 mm, and 95 mm.

If even weathering is a concern, an open rainscreen profile maximises the chance of consistency – for example a rhomboid shaped profile means air is able to circulate around the whole cladding board, allowing the timber to fully dry out between wetting cycles.

A common pitfall for self-builders is the use of incorrect fixings. While it may seem tempting to try to save on costs here, durable timbers such as Siberian larch are often quite acidic so high-quality stainless-steel fixings should be used. This will avoid corrosion and staining and the appearance of stainless



*It might seem tempting to select a cheaper timber but bear in mind that cheaper, less durable timbers will require treatment and regular maintenance*

steel will remain constant, whereas galvanised and copper nails will change colour over time.

Appropriate fixings will further enhance the durability of your cladding. For example SIHGA's FassadenClip, fixed using precision engineered



these screw threads are designed to allow the best possible anchoring without causing the timber to split. They are also self-drilling so there's no need to pre-drill (unless you're using a dense hardwood).

A compensation strip can be used to aid ventilation, as it creates a gap between the timber elements of the facade, and can be applied to both vertical and horizontal cladding. For horizontal cladding, it is simply fixed to the vertical batten whilst for vertical it should be fixed on the upper edge of the horizontal batten to ensure that a water trap is not created.

Cost is inevitably a factor for self-builders, and can vary hugely between timber species and grades. Premium quality timber cladding is inherently durable, meaning no protective coating will be necessary if detailed and installed correctly so the decision to coat would purely be an aesthetic one. It might seem tempting to select a cheaper timber but bear in mind that cheaper, less durable timbers will require treatment and regular maintenance, which may prove more costly in the long run.

*John Russell is managing director at Russwood*

stainless steel screws, is designed to be an ideal fixing system for rainscreen cladding. This type of 'secret fix' system creates a free flow of air between the back face of the cladding board and the vertical batten, enhancing ventilation and thereby increasing the durability of the timber. The secret fix element means the front face of the facade boards are left fully intact for a clean and contemporary look. We recommend leaving an 8 mm open shadow gap between boards and using a black,

unbranded, UV-resistant breather membrane to avoid the membrane showing through the gaps. This type of fixing system also provides the flexibility of allowing the cladding to be easily removed at the building's end of life or repositioned, for example if you choose to extend.

For a neat way to deal with visible fixings, consider using a stainless steel screw such as SIHGA L-GoFix A2 – precision milled from hardened, A2 grade stainless steel. The sharp flanks of



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## CASE STUDY

# AN ADVENTURE BY THE SEA

Embarking on a self-build sans architect is not for the faint-hearted, but Joey and Charlotte Thomson decided to go the DIY route to creating their perfect coastal home

TEXT & IMAGES EWEN MACDONALD

In 2015 Joey Auger and Charlotte Thomson bought a house sitting on the seafront in Smuggler's Cove, west Cornwall – facing the Atlantic Ocean, but a building that hadn't been lived in for many years.

"It was quite a sad story," explains Charlotte, "the previous owner had passed away while working on building two neighbouring houses. Beach House was to be his next big project," – his home. She adds: "We wanted to do it justice and turn it into the beautiful home that it deserved."

*"Large chunks of driftwood wash up on the beach, so we are often down there dragging up what we can!"*

### COASTAL LIVING

An outdoor shower is a must after a day on the beach





They completely gutted and extended the house, and transformed it into a luxury waterside 'forever' home, while retaining some of the original features of the house. Those features were incorporated into what is a thoroughly modern residence.

Laid out across one level, the finished house is approximately 300 m<sup>2</sup> and technically has four and a half bedrooms – including one small one for the dogs! The open plan living space blends with the outside to create a real sense of interior/exterior living.

The outside now features a modern extension with modern aluminium bifold doors and windows. But the couple kept the classic shape of the building – the original old stone

walls are still there. They wanted to retain the character of the building, while adding a contemporary twist. A real balancing act. "It would be such a shame to rip everything out and disregard so much history in what is such a prominent part of the Cove," adds Charlotte.

The stand-out feature is the frameless aluminium bifold doors from Rhino Aluminium. The six doors along two walls of the living space fold right back, leaving a completely open corner, with no centre column. She admits several structural engineers had told them it couldn't be done. There were a lot of steel beams involved, up to seven metres long, tapered and angled ones, all going in many different directions, but it did the job





and it's now a 'wow' feature of the property.

### GOING DIY

To carry out so much work themselves took some serious confidence – and a bit of experience. The couple had renovated a public toilet in Charlestown several years before and turned it into a holiday home. But there was still plenty to learn along the way.

"Joey taught himself how to draw and do CAD (Computer Aided Design) after stepping on a nail which went through his foot, so he was out of action for over a month. All the designs and ideas were completely his own," she says. "Joey has an incredible vision and can imagine what something will look like just by looking into an empty space! He designed every part of the house himself and drew up all the plans. We didn't instruct an architect, only a structural engineer (John Knevitt) to calculate the drawings for the steel beams."

Because the couple did around 95 per cent of the works themselves, they found it easier to stay within their budget and time frame – and it meant there was money left to for a few luxury extras.

The build itself took around two years and was finally completed in early 2019 after what she describes as "18 months of intense work."

The couple – and their four dogs – lived in the property while the renovations were carried out. "The low points would be the sheer exhaustion," she admits. "If you're not demolishing, scraping, de-nailing, cleaning, burning, or lifting and shifting, you're still thinking, planning what to do next; ordering materials, booking in trades, liaising with building control and the planning department. It

never ends and you have to be so organised otherwise the next steps are delayed.

"The access to our house is very narrow too, so most deliveries couldn't get down our lane. We had to buy a flatbed truck to collect materials from the end of the lane, and take them to the house. This was hard work, especially when trying to load and unload hundreds of granite slabs, boxes and boxes of floor tiles, and furniture! We couldn't even get concrete and cement deliveries so Joey had to collect it from Maen Karn himself and drive it down the road. This added quite a cost to the build, as well as delays.

"We tried to source all of the materials locally, and support as many Cornish businesses as possible," says Charlotte. "I think the only major thing that was shipped down from up country was the granite for the patio. There was over 200 m<sup>2</sup> of it, and unfortunately the Cornish quarries just couldn't compete with the prices from a supplier called Nustone up in Colchester."

"It was difficult for us as we lived in the house during the whole renovation so the dust and dirt was just never ending. We would completely gut one or two rooms at a time, which was not the most straightforward way of doing things as Joey had to constantly think how and where the electrics were going to go, and arrange for it to be replaced bit by bit, rather than in one go.

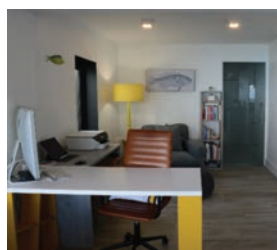
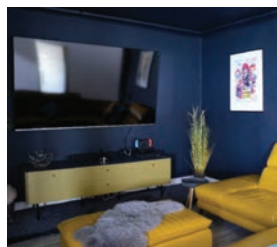
"Luckily for us, we had the hot tub in situ, so that soothed our aches and pains every night."

One of the challenges was getting items delivered – with the property only able to be accessed down a tiny cliff path, many suppliers refused to deliver.

And while the location was the major

### JOEY & CHARLOTTE'S TOP TIPS

- \* Treat yourself – renovations are hard work! Book date nights or a spa day to recharge and get back on track with each other
- \* Check access and delivery arrangements or you could be stuck with materials you can't get to site.
- \* Don't let it take over your life – otherwise you'll end up resenting your home



#### LUXURY TOUCHES

The bath was a lavish addition, and the house also features a cinema room

attraction, it wasn't without its challenges. "We are very limited as to what we can and can't use, because of the damage caused by the sea salt and wind. For example, all our handles and fittings have to be marine grade stainless steel, so we used a local company called The Coastal Group in St Austell, who supplied us with a range called 'Blu' specially designed for such harsh locations."

#### RECLAIMED INTERIORS

Inside there are contemporary, geometric touches in the light fittings and furniture and reminders of the original building. The bathroom is very 'zen', enhanced by original features:

"The old stone wall has been retained, as has its little inset archway that was once the outside boundary wall of the house before it was extended." In one of the bedrooms, the original wooden window seat was retained and restored, "as it's such a special part of the original building."

Joey adds: "We wanted the house to have a coastal style, but were careful not to fill it with typical touristy nautical things – it needed to be classy and chic. And while the house has a clear aesthetic, it is mostly a home."

Inside, his favourite feature is his fish tank. Another of Joey's own designs, it sits between the thick cob wall separating the office and cinema room, where a door once was. Even the fish match the sofa colours!

*They wanted to retain the character of the building, while adding a contemporary twist*

For the interior scheme, the couple sought inspiration from Cornwall's classiest hotels and restaurants: the perfect excuse to visit favourites in St Mawes and Carbis Bay. As a result a lot of the interiors are teal, yellow, and grey, supporting the soft coastal theme running throughout the rooms.

Reclaiming ornaments has become a passion. As well as staring out to sea and enjoying the waves lapping on the shore or the sunset, Joey and Charlotte are often on the look-out for beach debris that they can make use of.

"Over the past couple of years, we have seen huge phone masts, and other large chunks of driftwood wash up on the beach, so we are often down there like crazy people dragging up what we can! We have used some of the driftwood in the garden and patio as feature pieces.

"I wanted to cover the fireplace in pebbles off





## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

### BATH

**Heritage**  
www.heritagebathrooms.com

### BATHROOM UNITS (SHOWERS ETC.)

**Soak**  
soak.com

### FIREPLACE

**Stovax**  
www.stovax.com

### BI-FOLD DOORS

**Rhino Aluminium**  
rhinoaluminium.co.uk

### PATIO GRANITE

**Nustone**  
nustone.co.uk

### EXTERNAL HANDLES & FITTINGS

**The Coastal Group**  
www.coastal-group.com

### KITCHEN

**Howdens**  
www.howdens.com

### APPLIANCES

**Smeg**  
smeguk.com

### DOUBLE WINE FRIDGE

**CDA**  
www.cda.eu

### BASKET LIGHTS

**MADE**  
Made.com

### TEAL SOFA

**Loaf**  
www.loaf.com

### YELLOW SOFA

**Sofology**  
www.sofology.co.uk

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the beach, but there are strict rules now about doing this, so it wasn't worth getting in trouble over! Instead we brought pebble tiles to use as a feature fireplace area and they look wonderful."

Another key find was the cannons that now guard the garden. "They were pulled up from a shipwrecked boat called the Hanover 22 years ago – you can see the rock in the distance where it went down in 1763." The cannons have been restored to their former glory, having been sandblasted and re-coated, with new bespoke carriages made to measure locally by a Cornish joiner. "It was quite an extravagance but they

are so important to the history of the area, we couldn't not do it!"

Although they would advise anyone undertaking their own self build to not to over

*The doors fold right back, leaving a completely open corner*





#### BLURRED BOUNDARIES

Two walls disappear to create an indoor outdoor living space



spend their budget, Joey and Charlotte did invest in a few key pieces. "Because Beach House is our forever home, we did splash out on a few extravagant items but they were worth every penny. We wanted a low maintenance, high-impact designer fire so went for a stunning long and narrow contemporary fire from Stovax which has white pebbles against black granite. It is open fronted so no glass. It's just a real wow factor.

"Our other real 'treat' was our gorgeous copper slipper bath from Heritage. It is so deep and luxurious, and we've designed the bathroom so it has a spa feel, all low lighting

and candles. I often spend hours in there, if the dogs allow me!"

The original plan includes a covered swimming pool building in the garden too which was approved and they hope to add that in 2020.

But after many, many cuts bruises and sore muscles, the end result is worth it. "Looking at a finished job and feeling like you could burst with pride because you did that! You transformed that room from somewhere you wouldn't even let your dogs go into, to something beautiful. You can't beat that feeling." ■



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**MADE IN BRITAIN**

# Safe as well as sustainable stoves

Erica Malkin of the Stove Industry Alliance takes a look at the key considerations for self-builders looking to enjoy a wood burning stove in their new home, including recent changes in legislation

**W**ood burning stoves offer a low carbon, renewable and sustainable way to heat your new build or extension and come with a host of wellbeing benefits for you and your family. Recent changes in legislation, coupled with the publication of the Government's Clean Air Strategy in early 2019, means self-builders can often be unclear on what their options are when it comes to choosing and installing a wood burning stove.

## A LOW-CARBON SOLUTION

A modern Ecodesign-ready wood burning stove will produce up to 90 per cent less emissions than an open fire, and up to 80 per cent less than an average stove manufactured over 10 years ago. This makes them an environmentally conscious choice that can help lower particulate emissions, improve air quality and meet Government carbon reduction targets.

This puts you, the self-builder, in the unique position of being able to both future proof your new build or renovation while improving air quality.

## ECODESIGN

Anyone doing their research on home heating, and especially wood burning stoves, will have come across the term 'Ecodesign legislation.' The Ecodesign requirements affecting the wood burning stove industry come into force on 1 January 2022, and from that date only appliances that comply with Ecodesign standards can be sold.

The good news is that stove manufacturers are ahead of the curve and there is already a comprehensive range of appliances on the market that meet, and in many cases exceed, the requirements of Ecodesign.

Ecodesign-ready stoves feature the very latest fireboxes that have been specifically designed for more complete combustion and which employ secondary



and tertiary air systems and precision baffle arrangements to burn off excess hydrocarbons. These Ecodesign-ready appliances are more efficient by virtue of their design, but more importantly, they are significantly less polluting. The Stove Industry Alliance has produced a listing of appliances certified to be Ecodesign Ready and this can be found on their website. With over 500 appliances listed, the SIA Ecodesign Ready listing covers a wide range of styles, both built-in and freestanding, contemporary and traditional.

## SMOKE CONTROL

Legally, to be able to burn wood in a smoke-controlled area, your wood burning appliance must be certified as being Defra exempt.

Many parts of the UK fall within these smoke-controlled areas and the recently published Environment Bill, while not yet law, will give greater powers of enforcement to local authorities to apply civil fines if you are not complying with the Clean Air Act. Hence, if you are building or extending within a smoke

*Ecodesign-ready appliances are more efficient by virtue of their design, but more importantly, they are significantly less polluting*

control area you will need to ensure your chosen appliance is Defra exempt.

A Defra exempt appliance might not be Ecodesign compliant, and conversely, while in most cases it will be, an Ecodesign-compliant wood burning stove is not necessarily Defra exempt. The test methodology for the two standards is different and therefore you should look



for evidence that the appliance is both Ecodesign-ready and Defra exempt.

### WHOLE-HOUSE HEATING

As well as stand-alone room heater, wood burning stoves are perfect for integration into a whole house low carbon heating system. When combined with a heat pump for example, a wood stove can offer welcome and speedy top-up heating for key living spaces on colder days, or in milder months when full-house heating is not required.

### PERFORMANCE IS AS IMPORTANT AS GOOD LOOKS

There is a huge choice of Ecodesign compliant wood burners available on the market today from numerous manufacturers. Gone are the days of the choice being limited to a little black box – virtually every interior style can be catered for, from modern Scandi-style to country living chic.

When it comes to stove body materials you will most likely be choosing between cast iron or steel. Cast iron will be hard wearing and offers longer heat retention while a steel stove will have different advantages, such as heating up more quickly, cost and offering different design possibilities.

Looking at features such as material



thickness, engineering design and operation characteristics will give you the best guide to what is a well-made appliance.

Appliance output is a calculation best left to the experts. Getting it right will ensure the feeling of warmth and comfort that attracts so many of us to a stove. Local independent stove and fireplace retailers are ideally placed to offer advice and guidance on stove output.

The SIA recommends looking out for the logo of a SIA Retail Group retailer, who will be able to provide the right pre-sales advice and after-sales support and spare parts, as well as having a wide range of Ecodesign ready appliances.

They will also have a well-stocked showroom giving you the opportunity to see your chosen design up close and, very often, in operation. Details of SIA Retail Group members are listed on the Stove Industry Alliance website.

### INSTALLATION, MAINTENANCE & FUEL

Professional installation of the appliance and the appropriate flue system by a qualified and accredited competent person is of utmost importance and the key to years of warmth and efficiency from your new woodburning stove. Professional retailers will also be able to guide you here.

Make sure you have your chimney swept at least once a year, and a programme of regular maintenance to the stove consumables such as sealant rope is imperative to trouble-free operation.

But fundamental to stove performance is fuel, and your wood fuel should have a moisture content of less than 20 per cent to ensure maximum efficiency and minimum emissions. Look out for the Woodsure Ready to Burn logo – a scheme that certifies wood fuel to be below 20 per cent moisture content.

*Erica Malkin is secretary general at Stove Industry Alliance*

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## 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.

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

## ESSE: pioneers of clean combustion since 1854



ESSE has confirmed that its range of wood fired stoves will meet tighter air quality emission requirements under the UK Government's new Clean Air Strategy – which introduces more stringent emissions standards for wood burning stoves.

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Several ESSE ranges – including the Warmheart and Bakeheart cook stoves and the 100 and 500 Vista series wood-fired stoves – already meet the new Eco Design requirements.

01282 813235 [www.esse.com](http://www.esse.com)

## Mendip Stoves' guide to choosing an Ecodesign ready stove

Wood burners have long been a sustainable option for heating the home, as they are low carbon and use renewable energy. With recent changes in Government legislation, along with the introduction of the Clean Air Strategy in early 2019, it's time to upgrade, update and opt for an eco-friendly model.

**Mendip Stoves** has a wide range of Ecodesign ready and "Defra approved" models that meet the emissions and minimum efficiency criteria, reducing particle matter emissions by burning wood more efficiently. "Whichever style and design you're looking for, it's advisable to choose an Ecodesign ready model now," says Chris Baines, managing director of Mendip Stoves. "Air quality will be improved as wood is burned more efficiently, which in turn gives the cleanest, cosiest environment in which to spend time in. We are proud to do our part in helping the planet and help consumers make the right choice for both their home and the environment." The stats speak for themselves. An Ecodesign ready wood burner produces up to 90 per cent less emissions than an open fire and up to 80 per cent less than a stove manufactured over 10 years ago. Homes within Smoke Control Areas also need a stove that is Defra approved. A Defra approved design isn't necessarily Ecodesign ready and vice versa, so it's important to choose a stove that complies with both. Mendip Stoves has plenty of designs to choose from that are both Defra approved and Ecodesign ready.

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



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## CASE STUDY

# A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

Heidi and John Exley moved into the house of their dreams near Doncaster – and then modernised it beyond all recognition with the help of a local architect

TEXT & IMAGES HEATHER DIXON

For years Heidi Exley had secretly admired a neighbouring house she could see from her bedroom window. Although she lived in the next cul-de-sac and liked the house she shared with husband John and their children Grace and Brook, she often wished for the privacy and open countryside views of the other property.

"I admired it from a distance," says Heidi. "Houses rarely come up for sale around here, but I waited and hoped that one day it would."

When nothing happened, she took matters into her own hands and put a letter through the door asking if the owners would consider selling it. As it turned out, it was perfect timing. The owners were looking to downsize and immediately got in touch.

"We arranged to have a look round, and although it was very dated inside – particularly the kitchen and bathrooms – it was everything I'd hoped it would be," says Heidi. "We put our



### EXTERIOR

Architect John Mason comments on the challenge of renovating the building in terms of the external finish: "The existing dwelling is constructed from artificial stone which is nearly 30 years old, so matching materials was always a concern. We suggested using a through-coloured render system to the walls and anthracite windows and doors to give a modern appearance."



house on the market and it sold straight away."

At that point, Heidi's dream came to an abrupt halt. The owners were unable to find anything suitable to move to and a year dragged by, with the buying chain held in limbo. Eventually Heidi and John's buyers got tired of waiting and pulled out and a second year passed.

"Eventually, the owners got in touch and said they'd finally found somewhere to live, so we put our house back on the market," says Heidi. "It was a nail-biting time. My heart was absolutely set on this place and I was terrified of losing it if we couldn't sell ours."

Fortunately for the Exleys it was second time

lucky and in 2015 they paid £325,000 for the four-bedroom detached house near Doncaster, moving in at the end of October.

They waited until after Christmas before John, who runs his own plumbing and heating business, launched a major renovation of the property by updating the entire central heating system. This involved removing plaster from the walls and taking up floors. Very quickly, the renovation took on a momentum of its own and led to re-plastering most of the internal walls and Artexed ceilings, refitting the bathrooms, laying new floors, replacing the wobbly staircase with a bespoke one built by a joiner, rewiring throughout and updating the front door.



*The architect was particularly keen to make the garden and beautiful country views the focus of the extension*





"We had about £40,000 allocated for the renovation, saving a lot of money with John being able to do so much of the work himself," says Heidi. "Fortunately we didn't have to buy new windows, which was a big saving."

With the renovation complete, Heidi and John lived in the house for a further two years while they saved up for the second phase – the creation of a new open plan living-kitchen at the back of the house.

"I knew what I wanted but had no idea where to start," says Heidi. "We needed to get

someone in who had the vision and experience to turn our ideas into reality."

They had seen and admired the work of Doncaster-based architect John Mason of Ink Architectural, and contacted him to help them come up with a design which would transform the back of the conventional 1980s house into a striking family home full of light and space.

John Mason picks up the story: "We were approached by John and Heidi to assist in creating a modern addition to their detached home which was not functioning in its current



## LOW POINT

"Making hundreds of small decisions which would have a big impact on the final look of the extension – like the positioning of the lights over the island and deciding where you want the sockets. You have to work backwards and think about the way you are going to live in the space so you don't have to go back later to rectify your mistakes."

– Heidi Exley

## INTERIOR

Many of the trees in the garden are protected, but block valuable light into the house, so the architect included plenty of glass, roof lights and a slit window into the kitchen

## HIGH POINT

"The look on our son's face when he came back home for a weekend and discovered we'd moved house! We hadn't told him because we wanted it to be a big surprise. Another high point was finding a tree specialist who could do the survey on the protected trees for a fifth of the original quoted cost."

— Heidi Exley



state for the needs of their growing family. The conservatory was unusable – too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter – and separate kitchens, dining room and garden rooms are becoming a thing of the past, with homeowners wanting open plan living with a sense of shared connection to all spaces. Our brief was to provide a modern, open plan and light filled space which could be used for day to day living, and to take advantage of the views over open fields and countryside beyond."

"John saw what needed to be done straight away," says Heidi of their architect. "He was particularly keen to make the garden and beautiful country views the focus of the extension, which includes full-height feature windows leading directly into the garden." John also suggested that the extension should be rendered rather than built in the same brick as the original parts of the house.

"He said the new section would always look like an add-on if it was completed in the same materials," Heidi adds. "By rendering the exterior at the back, and making it a very modern extension, the house still works as a whole without trying to disguise its original style. It shows how old and new can work together."

The challenge was getting it through planning. The garden has a number of trees which are protected by preservation orders. One in particular, a huge Class A beech tree in the middle of the garden, blocks a lot of natural light from entering the house.

Doncaster Town Council asked for a tree survey to be carried out – at an estimated cost of £3,000 – and special foundations installed to prevent damage to the tree roots. After extensive research, Heidi managed to find a specialist company, Selwyn Trees, to carry out the survey for more manageable £600, and their findings were duly accepted by the council.

"This resulted in specialist foundations being designed and specialist excavation and construction methods being adopted," says John Mason.

The council also refused to allow any extension that went beyond the footprint of an original conservatory and small enclosed porch.

"We finally got permission to build a single storey extension across the back," says Heidi. "We didn't consider applying for a two storey extension because we were already running on a tight budget. The pitch of this extension was determined by the existing second floor windows – we didn't want to have the expense of moving windows unless it was absolutely necessary."

The building work was "relatively straightforward" with the old conservatory and porch being demolished, foundations dug out for the new extension, and walls built to create the new open plan living space. The roof was put on and the doors between the living room at the front of the house and original dining room were bricked up. The wall that once housed double doors leading into the conservatory was completely demolished, and a steel beam installed to take the weight of the upper floor.

To keep the house liveable during the build, John plumbed a sink and dishwasher into the garage, and Heidi set up a table in the hall with a makeshift cooker and a few kitchen cupboards.

The extension roof was finished with Sandtoft Caldersale Grey roof tiles and new windows installed along the width of the house at the back, before first and second fixes were installed and floors laid. The project cost Heidi and John a further £60,000 – but they believe it was worth it to achieve the updated house of their dreams.

Heidi's only regret with the design is the large steel support beam which runs the full





width of the kitchen – a structural necessity but nonetheless a visual division between the kitchen and sitting areas of the new open plan living space.

"It would have been brilliant to have a high open ceiling throughout, but to compensate for the restricted light this created in the kitchen area we introduced a high slit window which brings in light but doesn't impact on privacy with next door."

When it came to final fixtures, fitting and furniture, Heidi resorted to basic techniques to decide where everything should go. "I marked out the position of the kitchen island in red chalk and masking tape, and even went so far as to lay plates on the floor so we could see how wide it needed to be," she says. "We also marked out the position of the extractor pipe and the size we wanted for the sofa, so we could order one that would fit exactly where we wanted it. It's hard to visualise these things – and very easy to get it wrong."

*Very quickly, the renovation took on a momentum of its own, and led to re-plastering most of the internal walls*

The final job, which was carried out in the autumn, was the patio which links the house and garden.

"We still have a few bits to finish," says Heidi. "We can't wait for spring so we can open up the doors and start to really enjoy the house and the way it links to the outdoors. I have had a few moments when I wondered whether it would have been easier and cheaper to just buy a bigger house in the first place, but doing it the way we have means we have a lovely home in the location we always wanted, yet redesigned to suit our needs. It's a win-win solution." ■



## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

### ARCHITECT

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Architectural  
01302 455642

### PLUMBING & ELECTRICS

Scarbrook Plumbing &  
Heating / Scarbrook  
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## A feast of high-end worktops



**Königstone** has opened a new 2,200 sq ft showroom in Market Harborough. Königstone dealers and trade partners can send their customers here if they need more inspiration on surfaces or help visualising such products in their own home. On display is a kitchen island which showcases one of the concrete colours from the KönigQuartz range which was launched this year, Concrete Fossil. The worktop is built around a clad sink and a glass leg which demonstrates the adaptability of the

surfaces to fit around any kitchen scheme. These worktops here have been fitted together with Königstone's Premium Joint which ensures a seamless finish between two different pieces of worktop.

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

## Earthborn's historic paint colours

**Earthborn** is well known for its high performing, eco friendly paints that are healthier to live with and better for the planet.

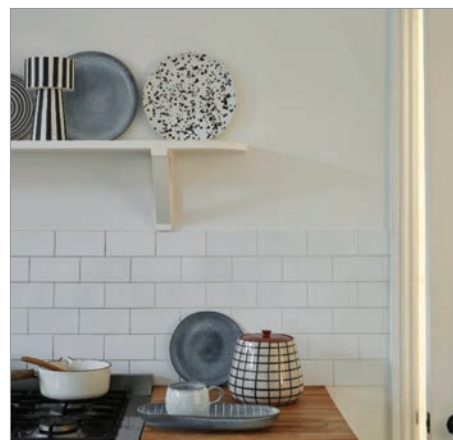
With a host of unique qualities, Earthborn is the perfect choice for listed buildings and period homes. From historic medieval churches to sprawling Georgian mansions, compact Victorian terraces to mid-century bungalows, Earthborn's paints are regularly specified by homeowners and professionals alike for a variety of heritage projects. Claypaint is available in a palette of 72 signature shades, including several based on historic paint colours.

Every period building has its own unique characteristics and considerations when it comes to decorating. So Earthborn has combined its own paint knowledge and colour know-how with the expertise of Lincoln Conservation, to produce a guide on how to choose paint for older properties and create historic paint colour palettes that remain suitable for modern living.

Together, they have created colour palettes suitable for a range of architectural styles and eras.

The "Earthborn Guide to Historic Paint Colours", identifying design themes and colour recommendations for Georgian, Victorian and 20<sup>th</sup> century property styles is available on request via email.

01928 734171 [marketing@earthbornpaints.co.uk](mailto:marketing@earthbornpaints.co.uk)



## BLANCO's hot tap saves time in the kitchen



Whether homeowners want to make a fresh cup of tea or coffee, blanch vegetables or fill up a hot water bottle; they no longer have to wait thanks to the TAMPERA hot tap from **BLANCO**. The tap provides boiling water in an instant so there's no more standing around waiting for a kettle to boil.

This saves valuable time in the kitchen. Homeowners can pour water straight from the tap into their tea or coffee cup for an instant caffeine fix in the morning. It also

saves time when cooking too. Whether the homeowner is cooking vegetables, pasta, quinoa, etc, they can pour instant boiling water from the tap at the push of a button.

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

## Königstone expands team



**Königstone** has appointed Dan Snaith as its new Regional Sales Manager. Dan joins the team with plenty of experience in sales from his position with a components supplier and then at Rotpunkt kitchens. In his previous role, Dan was responsible for selling kitchens and knowing every aspect of them, including worktops that were often made by Königstone. He became familiar with the brand and then, after some time away from the industry, was delighted to hear about the chance to become a part of the worktop

manufacturer's team. Dan commented, "I'm really looking forward to joining the journey that Königstone is on and being part of what is to come for the company in future years."

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





## CASE STUDY

# THE FRUITS OF DETERMINATION

Nothing was going to stop resourceful self-builder Gill MacLeod achieving the house of her dreams, a major renovation in rural Scotland

TEXT JAYNE DOWLE IMAGES EMMA GRAY

Clambering around a delivery depot in a hi-vis vest and hard hat, clinical psychologist Dr Gill MacLeod realised that her mission to raise a new home from a cluster of tumbledown farm buildings had given her powers of determination she didn't know she possessed.

What was she doing there? Her voice warms with passion as she recalls the story. Planning the interiors for her self-build project, she had fallen in love with some engineered wood flooring – at a cost of £63 per m<sup>2</sup>.

"It was lovely, but it was too expensive," she

explains. "So I went on the internet and ordered a similar floor for much cheaper. Then I was reading various online forums and people were saying that this particular flooring company would take your money, but send you a different floor to what you had ordered. I was really worried, because once you accepted delivery, there was no way to send it back."

That's how a middle-aged professional woman ended up crawling around in a delivery depot in Livingston, in a desperate search to divert an order before it was dispatched to her half-built new home, eight miles away in Linlithgow.

## LOW POINT

"When the wrong flooring was delivered"

– Gill MacLeod





When Gill finally did locate her flooring, she was vindicated. It turned out to be "a cheap pinky colour, not what I'd ordered at all." So she cancelled it forthwith, eventually received a refund and opted to buy from the Edinburgh Carpet and Flooring Warehouse instead, where she also managed to haggle her way to a super-reasonable £13 per m<sup>2</sup> deal on the soft bleached wood flooring of her choice.

Her two-year quest to create a contemporary five-bedroomed family house on the footprint of an existing farmhouse and its surrounding byres and barns has also left Gill, 54, who works for the NHS in Scotland, with a whole new take on life.

In fact, she enjoyed the self-build experience

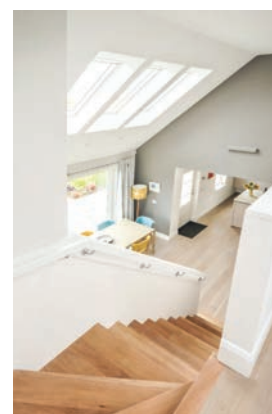
so much, she is now working on plans to convert an outbuilding into a holiday let.

Gill freely admits that she was the driving force. Her husband, David, 52, works as a senior retail manager and travels frequently for work and her son, Ross and daughter, Anna, are away studying in Glasgow and London respectively.

"David only wanted two things, a boiling water tap and an outside fireplace!" she laughs. "Seriously, he knew I would make the right decisions, and he was happy to let me get on with it."

During the process of rescuing Manuel Haugh – the historic name of the farmhouse, which she and David have retained – Gill says





she discovered many things about herself, including a love of bargaining and an appreciation of those special companies which go the extra mile.

"If I hadn't had my iPhone, I couldn't have done this project," she admits. "Although we do have good suppliers in Scotland, the choice can be limited so I did loads of research online." Her bath came from Soakology, which is based, ironically enough, in Bath. "The guy there was so helpful on the phone. The kind of bath I wanted now sells for about £7,000, but I got it for £1,300."

Through her architect, she also found a cabinet-maker in nearby Falkirk to build the oak staircase for less than £3,000; Gill says that she had seen similar models from specialist makers for between £15,000 and £20,000.

Although Gill had rewired, replumbed and plastered her first flat in the West End of Glasgow some years ago, and is adept at tiling and painting, the major renovation and rebuild of Manuel Haugh required professional intervention in the shape of architect Adam Toleman, founder of Falkirk architectural practice Arka Architects.

This was Gill and David's first self-build project. "It was something I had considered but didn't think the opportunity would arise. We weren't actively looking. I saw the site when it was for sale on the way to visit a friend, who just lives up the road." Then David spotted it too, and together they agree to take the plunge.

She chose Adam on the recommendation of a friend who had already used his services: "I had

had a very negative previous meeting with another architect who said he "wouldn't touch it with a barge pole" but I was determined it was happening. I loved Adam's positivity and vision."

As this was such a long and detailed project, it was imperative that there was a strong relationship between architect and clients. Gill and David acquired the site in January 2014, agreeing to purchase it without planning permission. "Yes, I'm the risk taker," Gill admits. "But somehow the house just spoke to us both."

Demolition and clearing of the site began just under a year later, after bat and bird surveys and mining reports had been carried out. Gill and David stayed in their previous house, a modern new-build on an estate, during the work. This was then sold to help fund the project, which had a build cost of £500,000: "We had no time pressure as we were able to stay in our existing home, so took time to plan and think with Adam. He encouraged a collaborative approach from the start and we had a number of planning meetings to discuss our priorities and Adam's idea for the build."

Planning permission was granted, with enthusiastic local support for rescuing the neglected farmstead, under the provision that the new Manuel Haugh had to retain the original footprint of the buildings. Then the build took place between January and October 2016 under a team of local contractors.

Perhaps that hapless original architect's reluctance was understandable; the house, which takes its name from the ruined medieval Emmanuel Monastery nearby and 'haugh', a

#### MANUEL HAUGH

The house takes its unusual name from a ruined monastery plus the Scottish word for a meadow beside a river

### HIGH POINT

"Finding out we had been successful in the purchase and the day demolition started. Also once the sizes of the rooms became apparent, it was great to find out that they were much bigger than we had anticipated."

— Gill MacLeod



## GILL'S ADVICE

"Be on site every single day. Communication with your contractors is key. There will inevitably be things that go wrong and if you're not there then you can't sort them out."

Scottish word for a meadow beside a river, was, in Gill's own words, a 'wreck'.

"Has she told you about the dilapidation of the place?" asks Adam. "The whole thing was stuffed full of old agricultural machinery, old tyres, every bit of it was rotten to the core. But as we clambered over the debris, I thought there is a double courtyard here – an idea which offered great potential – and so many buildings it was too much to convert. So my idea was to hollow out some of these buildings and leave their walls as a defining space."

Out of this initial idea, the 'new' Manuel Haugh was forged; Adam undertook careful consideration of which walls to retain and which areas to extend with a combination of timber frame and steelwork, taking care to re-use materials from the original buildings whenever possible. For example, stone blocks were repurposed to help create walls. "They look like they have been there hundreds of years now," says Gill.

He based the design around two courtyards; the first acts as the parking area, defined by the original 'steading' walls, outbuildings and a carport, the second is the 'garden court', which allows direct entry to the house.

"It was one of those projects that you smile at in the end," says Adam. "I wanted other people to walk in and smile too. I know that sounds simple, but I wanted someone to enjoy living in

what that ruin could become."

But what a journey it was; the replacement dwelling, glistening in sharp white render and designed for easy and comfortable modern living – with a balcony on the first floor and oversized doors to the garden – could not be more different from the crumbling pile Gill and her husband took on.

"We love the way the building gradually unfolds as you walk through the property from outside to inside," adds Gill. "Adam was happy to incorporate all my ideas about the internal layout: I wanted to add a study, move and add windows and make sure we had all the bedrooms ensuite. We have no glass doors in the showers – they are all open stalls – so less to clean!"

The original farmhouse had a kitchen, laundry/scullery, two living rooms, a downstairs bathroom on the ground floor and two bedrooms and a box room upstairs. By embracing the footprint of some of the farm buildings, Gill and David now have a 320 m<sup>2</sup> new home which has five bedrooms, four ensembles, a study, cloakroom, sitting room and a light and spacious open-plan kitchen/living/dining area.

The dining element is the magnificent heart of it all, and brings a real sense of grandeur to the living space; the roof rises upwards and there's a first-floor galleried hall which looks down on the





space below.

"We're really proud of the soaring ceiling heights and the unusual asymmetrical angles visible," says Gill. "Adam really listened to what we wanted. I asked him to add a wood store next to the fireplace and designed the kitchen myself so it sat sympathetically with the open-plan living area."

She also loves the huge expanses of thermally-efficient glass: "Adam has given us a beautiful view from every window. I know it's a cliché, but we do feel connected to the landscape from every single room. The view from the upstairs sitting room is particularly special."

Manuel Haugh sits in a peaceful rural setting in a valley with beautiful views of Cockleroy – a local hill, plus a landmark railway viaduct and the surrounding farmland: "We have no neighbours, so can keep chickens and two cockerels!"

As well as setting out a distinctive design ethos, there was also much work to do to make the new home habitable.

Although water was on site, the previous occupier, who had died, lived alone and used a diesel generator for electricity. It cost Gill and David £30,000 to bring in a brand-new electricity supply under a field. Installation of services meant the juggling of priorities between cost and environmental concerns.

"We wanted a biomass boiler, and in an ideal world were intending to have one but the Government dramatically reduced the subsidies at the time we were building," says Gill. "The

outlay would have been four times the cost of an oil-fired heating system. It's a pity there was no financial incentive for us to use an alternative of eco-friendly heating systems."

However, because the house faces south-west and has Velux windows in the roof, it does benefit from impressive solar gain – "even though it's Scotland!", laughs Gill. She says that except in the depths of winter it's usually warm enough without switching on the underfloor heating downstairs and radiators upstairs.

Their new home is a far cry from the mouldering heap of buildings that stood here just a few short years ago. "It's hard to think now, but the farm and out-buildings were unfit for habitation," says Gill. "Now we feel as though we are permanently in a luxury holiday home. We feel very lucky to have had this opportunity, as well as a great feeling of achievement." ■

*The replacement dwelling, glistening in sharp white render, could not be more different from the crumbling pile they took on*

## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

### ARCHITECT

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Rob Roy Homes  
robroyhomes.co.uk

### WINDOWS

Rational from Architectural Doors and Windows Ltd;  
Velux  
adwlimited.co.uk  
velux.co.uk

### SANITARYWARE & TILES

Porcelanosa Edinburgh  
porcelanosa.com

### BATH

Soakology  
soakology.co.uk

### KITCHEN & UTILITY

Kitchens International  
kitchensinternational.co.uk

### FLOORING

Kersaint Cobb from Edinburgh Carpet and Flooring Warehouse Limited  
edinburghcarpetwarehouse.co.uk

### SOLAR GAIN

Because the house faces south-west and has Velux windows, it benefits from "impressive" solar gain, "even though it's in Scotland," says Gill



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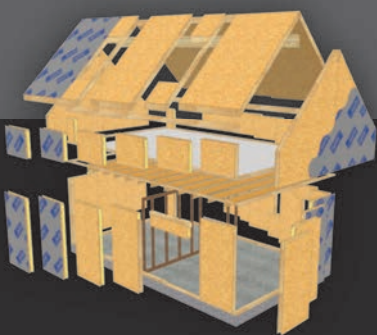
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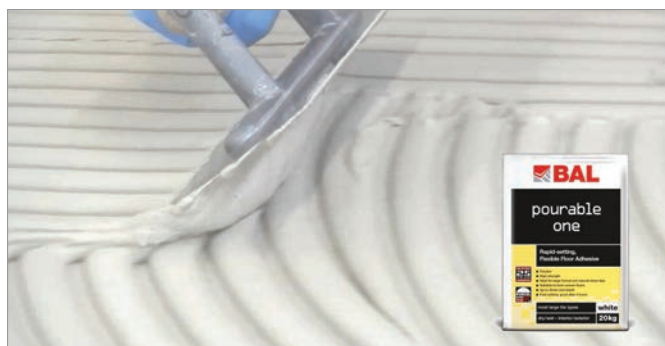
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# Future-proofed design

John Alimi of Stiltz Homelifts explains why it's imperative self-builders think ahead when designing their home in order to create a 'home for life'

It is now far easier to be presented with options for a self-build project or major house renovation than ever before. A range of media, including a plethora of TV programmes, has revealed homes-for-life that are eco-friendly, technologically advanced and above all, created for bespoke requirements.

Whether you are looking to remodel a current home or self-build from scratch, a project's appeal is usually intrinsically linked with creating a home that suits the individual needs of the family within. Huge personal rewards can be garnered from a home renovation that closely delivers on desired attributes. Creative design and a considered, realistic approach should enable you to continue living with comfort, safety and enjoyment well into older years.

Indeed, a growing number of self-builders are considering future living when creating their ideal home. So, while you may desire more natural light via floor to ceiling windows currently, it is equally important not to overlook the ensuing years and plan for when getting up and down the stairs and accessible open-plan living, for example, may be of key importance. Get it right and you can relax in the knowledge that your home is future proofed for the next 20 to 30 years and further alterations will be minimal.

To ensure optimum build success and to create a home that adapts to the ever-changing necessities of everyday life, it is of course imperative to complete preparations firmly in advance. The self-builder who is best prepared pre-project will normally have a better estimate of expected costs so that all planned requirements are delivered on time and on budget. If you're looking for a plot of land, the Right to Build scheme launched in 2016 requires local councils in England to keep a register of land suitable for self-builders, and to approve planning permissions.

For a project to run smoothly, work with a reputable builder and seek an architect with experience in future-proofing homes. They can help navigate planning and building applications and work with you to deliver innovative yet practical house plans and adaptable designs. Project-



managing a build yourself can save 15-20 per cent on costs, but unless you have the time to deal with tradesmen and the know-how to choose suitable materials, you might be wise to delegate.

Decide on your ideal layout in advance and research interior and exterior fixtures and fittings. With due diligence applied, you can achieve a successful house design that enables long-term benefits and added reassurance for its occupants. Design considerations are not only aesthetic – they include surface solutions, energy-efficient technology and eco-friendly construction, as well as future-proofing solutions that foster greater health and wellbeing.

Overall, consider how you live now and how you wish to see yourself in your home in the future. Think carefully about the practical functionality of bathrooms, kitchens and bedrooms, not just 'wow-factors' such as extensive glazing and sweeping staircases, so that your finished home offers an enjoyable place for you and your family to live now and in the years to come. Would you wish to move again if those stairs become difficult to use and upstairs rooms were not easily accessible? Including a few key elements

*Design considerations are not only aesthetic – they include future-proofing solutions that foster greater long-term health and wellbeing*

in your design means you can negate the need for further major renovations if accessibility was to become an issue. In the long run it's a win-win situation, as effective future-proofed homes are not only popular with buyers, they also bring





additional value to a home.

So, for instance, consider including doors that are wide enough for a wheelchair should one become necessary and create a flat, open-plan design which flows between communal areas with ample space in high traffic rooms such as the kitchen. Consider fitting a homelift to help with moving between floors or providing space for

one to be easily fitted at a later date, if required. Being unobtrusive, homelifts are fast overtaking the traditional bulky stairlift in popularity.

For example, one homelift offers a compact footprint of less than a square metre, without the need for a lift shaft, and a very straightforward installation process. Today's homelifts can bring a contemporary design twist to a home,

while offering extended independence and accessibility, so self-builders can stay put in their much-loved homes for longer.

If you are approaching retirement age, or are newly retired, space may not be high on your list of must-haves, especially if the children have only recently moved out. However, it's worth keeping in mind whether your new build can allow for extended family visits and the future arrival of grandchildren. Adding a downstairs bedroom and bathroom allows you to cater for family visits; such space may also provide live-in accommodation for a carer should the need arise in later years. An 'intelligent' house is one that provides adaptable and accessible living space that's readily able to accommodate lifestyle changes, and which adjusts easily to meet the changing demands of the family within.

As you can see, planning for and creating your own home need not be a challenge. Make sure you consider every future scenario and incorporate future-proofed designs and solutions into your finished build to enable enjoyment and ease-of-living for you and your family, now and well into the future.

*John Alimi is product manager at Stiltz Homelifts*

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After installing a jetty to provide safe access to his boat, a marine enthusiast was looking for a product that would protect the wooden decking from the elements whilst also enhancing its natural grain. Painter and decorator, Robert Moore of R.F.M Painting & Decorating Services was contracted for the project and **Osmo UK Decking-Oil** was chosen to provide a high-quality and professional finish. Impressed by the ease of use of Osmo UK finishes, Rob recommended Decking-Oil for this project:

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## Enabling toilet tech

When limitations make doing anything an effort, one man has found a great way to enable him to spend time doing what he wants to do, rather than what he has to do... Stephen Savill, 58, has been disabled since he was 23, as a result of a brain haemorrhage and stroke. Deterioration in his abilities due to general ageing has prompted, on the advice of his Occupational Therapist, the installation of **Closomat's** Palma Vita wash and dry toilet and Aerolet Tilt toilet lifter.

"It's been a life changer! He can spend time doing the things he wants to do, and not the things he has to do," explained Stephen's brother Mark, who helped organise the installation, by Closomat, at Stephen's extra care flat in Grays, Essex. "Before, he had to transfer from his powerchair to a rotunda (patient transfer system) to toilet, and back again. The effort left him exhausted, especially when doing it several times a day. Now, he just positions himself against the Aerolet, it lowers him over the WC, the Closomat's functions ensure he is clean without having to try and wipe himself, and the Aerolet lifts him up again when he's finished," added Mark. "The installation went with minimal intrusion, a professional, high quality job, and backed up by a quality control visit, when they also made sure Stephen understood, and was happy, using it all."

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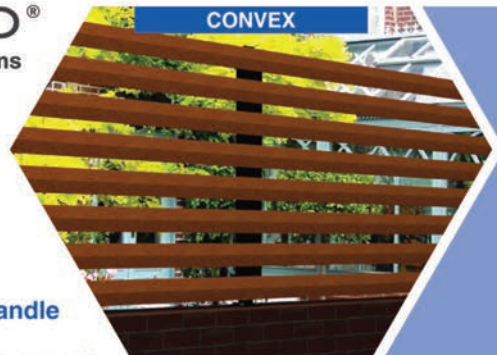
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## CASE STUDY

# AN UPHILL BATTLE

Ian and Julie Perrin were unsure about buying the 'difficult' plot of land they ended up building on in Montgomery, mid-Wales, but they convinced themselves to take the plunge

TEXT ROSEANNE FIELD IMAGES NIKHILESH HAVAL



### A TOUGH SITE

The steep site slopes the height of three storeys from one end to the other

### OPPOSITE

The couple liked the idea of an oak frame, thinking it would help the building sit well in the historic town

When the time came for Ian and Julie Perrin to retire, they set about scouring the country for a place to settle down in, with no real desire to stay in their then home village of Mortimer, near Reading.

They came across the town of Montgomery in the Welsh Marches "by accident" when they were researching their family history. "My grandparents came from this part of the world," explains Ian. "We were having long weekends away in various parts of the country, half looking at houses where we might like to retire."

It was while in Montgomery that they spotted a Georgian house for sale in the town centre, and having been "charmed" by the town and its people, they decided that this could be the place for them.

The house they'd seen had made them "re-assess what kind of house was best for us long term." Originally their plan had been to live in a more remote, rural setting: "we were looking for a house in the country with a couple of acres and views, but the ones we'd see had always been a compromise," Ian explains. They put an

*"We didn't feel capable of taking it on, and rejected it at first"*

offer in on the Georgian property, which fell through, but by this point they had their hearts set on living in the town.

The couple were aware of a building plot for sale in the area, but admit a self-build wasn't something they had even considered. Despite having planning permission, they were also acutely aware that the plot had garnered little interest due to its tricky topography. "The plot had been up for sale for a long time, as it was a difficult site," Julie says. "We didn't feel capable of taking it on as a project and rejected it at first."

Despite their reservations, when the house sale fell through they decided to give the plot





another look. "The garden sloped three storeys from one corner to the other," explains Ian. "I think that's why it didn't have a lot of interest." It also suffered from slightly awkward access, located off a "steep single track" with the road two metres below the plot's ground level. "It was a big job just to get onsite," Ian says.

As well as the difficult terrain, one of the neighbours' sewer pipes ran right through the middle of the plot, roughly one metre above the road level. "We began thinking about how we could make the plot work for us," says Ian. "With no experience we were wary about buying it, but there were lovely views, in addition to the fact that we loved the town."

Before they committed, Ian and Julie wanted to first explore their options, and second, ensure the planning permission was extended, as it wasn't far off expiring. The planning approval had been given to a Victorian-style house that catered for the requirements of the owners' disabled son. They visited the National Self Build & Renovation Centre (NSBRC) in Swindon to look into companies who could offer 'turnkey' kit houses – an option they thought would work for them given their lack of experience and knowledge of the local area and suppliers.

It was at NSBRC that the couple noticed Welsh Oak Frame had a mock-up of one of





approval they had to keep the building's footprint the same size as the original one. The new design did however bring the building forward slightly, increasing the garden space at the back. A few conditions were set by the local authority: "We had restrictions on the windows facing the town," Ian explains. "A big hedge also had to be destroyed to break into the site, so we had to replant that after."

There was also some negotiating around the creation of a 5.5 metre hardstanding area for lorries to be able to enter the site and turn. "It was virtually impossible," admits Ian. "We got the impression they weren't keen on the site being developed." Despite the obstacles, they were granted permission in February 2015, three months after submitting the revised application.

## BUILDING BEGINS

Ian and Julie were ready to set about clearing the site in March 2015, and one of the first jobs to tackle was redirecting the sewer pipe. They then began removing several lorry loads of soil.

Their neighbour allowed them to take a digger through his garden so they could cut into a two metre high bank and create their own access. As part of being located within a conservation area, a planning condition meant an archaeologist had to watch over the process. When they came across a medieval drying kiln where their entrance was to be located, a minor delay resulted. "It was interesting, but set us back a couple of weeks," says Ian. They eventually got the site cleared, a site cabin in place and the footings done by June.

The sloping nature of the site means that what is the first floor at the front becomes the ground level at the back, and the ground floor at the front ends up below ground. This is where the majority of the soil was excavated, and the nature of the design meant extra support had to

their builds, and began to discuss options with the company's representatives. "They took us around local projects, and showed us pictures of the kind of oak-framed house we could build," explains Julie.

"We were unsure whether to press the button," she says, "but they came out and said that while the site was awkward, the idea wasn't unachievable." They also liked the idea of using oak, deciding it would sit well in the historic town, finding some other kit offerings too modern.

With the company having convinced them the idea was feasible, they negotiated with the current owners to get a planning extension and eventually bought the plot in November 2014.

They worked with Welsh Oak Frame on a revised planning application, which the company submitted on their behalf – something the couple say definitely helped. "The planning consultant was familiar with the local policy so they were able to ease it through compared to if we'd done it ourselves," says Julie.

Because they were amending an existing

## IN THE FRAME

The oak frame is exposed throughout the property, adding heaps of character





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be included. "The below ground level needed overhead steel beams to support the concrete beams above," explains Ian. "This effectively created the robust foundation structure the oak frame sits on."

As the groundworks was the most complex part of the project, Ian and Julie hired a project manager who helped oversee things during this period. "He got things rolling for us," Ian explains. "He had lots of contacts with local contractors, and that worked well in early stages." Once this tricky stage was over, he took a step back and left the couple to manage the rest, stepping in whenever they needed support. "I was onsite every day, learning as I went, carrying stuff around, clearing up and getting ready for the next day," says Ian.

The frame arrived onsite in September, which Julie says was a "really exciting" time, for both them and the locals. "A crane arrived lifting all these great timbers – it was quite a spectacle," she explains. "It took about three weeks to get the main structure up and then it felt like we had a house, but really it was just the start." The 'A' frames were craned into position, while the rest was "like putting together a big jigsaw."

They had been warned that the oak would stain when touched or walked on, as it brings out the tannin. "It's quite horrible to look at," Ian says. For that reason they treated all the internal elements with diluted oxalic acid which, he explains, "you have to really scrub in. That was my job in the evenings – scrub the timber, treat it and power wash it off. It was a big job but well worth it as the oak looks stunning now."

Once the frame was up they hoped to have the roof on so everything was watertight before the worst of the winter weather kicked in, but sadly it didn't quite happen. "We had the wettest winter ever," Ian says. They also hadn't anticipated the floor screed would take three months to fully dry out, which meant tradesmen had to go off to work on other jobs in the meantime. "We couldn't do very much," says Ian. They found work slowed up in general

***"The planning consultant was familiar with the local policy so they were able to ease it through"***

towards the end of the project. "Trades came and went and it was difficult getting them to come back when we needed them," Ian admits.

The interior was eventually finished in January 2017, although Julie and Ian had moved in during the previous October as the buyers of their existing house were ready to proceed. "It was finished enough for us to move in, but we didn't have the downstairs shower room fitted out," Ian says. They spent the next two years finishing off small jobs and doing the landscaping, with the house and garden finally fully complete in the summer of 2018.

## DESIGN

When it came to designing their home, the couple had a few key requirements. They needed something large enough to accommodate their family when visiting, as well as an open plan living area, plenty of glazing to both let in light and maximise on the views of the surrounding area, and they also wanted eco-friendly features. As well as this, it was also important to them that the house fit in with the locale, and Ian wanted a basement room to house his model railway, which is located behind the garage and utility room.

Ian says that in some respects, the 340 m2 house "designed itself." As you look at it from the road, the building line floats 1.5 storeys left to right with a double garage on the lower side,

## VIEWS

The elevated site gives stunning views of the rural surroundings

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and the main floor straddling the garages," he explains. The main living area sits above the garage at the front, but due to the slope is at ground level at the back.

They worked on the design with Welsh Oak Frame's John Edmunds, who they say "brought together our nebulous thoughts, and produced a design that's nice to look at, and solved all the things we were hoping for." They'd seen another project with a large front gable which they liked, so this was incorporated into their design. "Usually they're part of the hallway or stairs, but ours has a dining and seating area with the bedroom above," Ian explains. "It gave us the views of the countryside we wanted."

Another key design feature is the 'cathedral'-style vaulted ceiling. "It could have been dark, with the dining room in the middle of the open plan, so having a big open void has added a lot more light," says Ian. "Light drops right the way through the building."

They made some small tweaks to the design, swapping two ensuite bedrooms for three bedrooms and a family bathroom. Welsh Oak Frame produced a 3D walk-through which Ian says made it "much easier to understand what it would look like. We could see if rooms looked oppressive." This proved particularly useful when finding the right balance with the oak, which they didn't want to "overdo." They left it exposed in some areas, such as the contemporary staircase finished with glass, but omitted beams in the contemporary kitchen. Externally, the house was finished with a mixture of cladding and stone, which they says helps it blend in.

Ian's desire to make the home as sustainable as possible saw the couple install an air source heat pump, a rainwater harvesting system which flushes their toilets, a Clearview Stoves log burner, and underfloor heating. "We have the renewable heat incentive for our heat pump so for seven years we get a payment back that virtually covers the cost of our winter fuel," he

*They treated all the internal elements with diluted oxalic acid which "you have to really scrub in," says Ian*

explains. They wanted to install solar panels but the removal of the feed-in tariff meant it wasn't financially viable – something they admit was frustrating. "I would have liked more of an eco house than we have," Ian says.

They also found the process of choosing everything somewhat overwhelming. "You think it would be lovely to choose from scratch, but it's not easy, especially as we had to travel far and wide to visit all the shops," says Julie. "We could have bought online, but we wanted to see things in the flesh – otherwise you're just hoping you've made the right decision."

Despite those small frustrations, Ian and Julie are more than pleased with the finished product, as, they say, are the local residents. "They've been amazed by it, which is nice," Julie says. They credit Welsh Oak Frame with supporting them through the project – the pair say they were "able to hold our hand throughout."

The couple in particular pick the gable window as a favourite feature – they can look out of it from the kitchen island – along with the void above the dining table. "If you look directly up, you can see the sky above you," Ian explains. "We've ended up with the house we wanted, in the place we wanted to live. We're very happy." ■

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