

# selfbuilder + homemaker

NOV/DEC 2020

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## WATER SAVING FAQS ANSWERED

The nitty gritty of choosing water-saving products for the bathroom can be tricky, but our expert provides the answers

## Interior Inspiration

A round up of fires and fireplaces to warm your heart

## There once was an ugly duckling

How Rupert and Lizzy Atkins transformed a dowdy house into their forever home

## *Saving grace*

The Andersons saved up for over a decade to achieve their ideal home, a totally reconfigured semi-detached in London that brings the outside in



It's what's underneath that counts



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# FROM THE EDITOR...

We would like to say a warm welcome back to *Selfbuilder + Homemaker* after what has been a daunting few months for the country, and a challenging time for all media businesses like ours. However we have managed to remain in good health thanks to strong industry support – particularly when it comes to our online offers such as newsletters (which you can subscribe to at [www.sbhonline.co.uk](http://www.sbhonline.co.uk)).

Did you know that 30 October was Right to Build Day? The NACSBA (National Custom and Self Build Association) has been doing its best to promote the event over the year since it launched in 2019, to celebrate the day that councils had to complete enough self-build planning permissions to meet their local demand. However, maintaining the presence of this occasion in the self-build nation's minds will have been a challenge in the current environment.

To coincide with this year's event, the Right to Build Taskforce has launched a suite of guidance with the aim being "to ensure consistent good practice in the delivery of custom and self-build homes and in particular the Right to Build legislation." It aims to fill "identified gaps" in what is currently available and to provide a clear steer in areas where "different practice is being observed."

With a recent survey by Ipswich Building Society revealing that 35 per cent of UK adults want to undertake a self-build, it's imperative that councils help out – and help us catch up with the rest of Europe.

Go to [www.righttobuild.org.uk](http://www.righttobuild.org.uk) to find out more!

JAMES PARKER



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As we head into winter, there's nothing better than being able to curl up in front of a warm fire, preferably with a comforting drink of some kind! Selfbuilders recognise the continued importance of creating a toasty centrepiece for the home, and the increasing need to burn in an eco-conscious way. This roundup shows how you can have it all...

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Choosing the right front door is key to creating a good first impression and enhancing kerb appeal. With so many different products on the market, Stuart Shaw of Hörmann UK provides some insights to help self-builders make an informed decision

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# THE PERFECT FRONT DOOR

Bethaney Larkman, marketing manager at Distinction Doors gives practical advice for selecting the right entrance door for your self-build or renovation project

An entrance door is a subtle yet effective way of enhancing your home. It is the exterior definitive statement, that says a lot about you and your style and sets the tone for the rest of the property.

Choose wisely and your door will be far more than just a functional entrance, it will complement the overall style of your house while helping to keep it cosy and secure. A simple way to boost kerb appeal, the right door will provide a warm welcome.

## GETTING STARTED

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the variety of door materials, styles and colours available. The best tip to get you started is to list your functional, physical and emotional requirements. This can be as simple as wanting to keep the dogs and children in or out of the house while maintaining a flow of fresh air and light – solution; a stable door – to future-proof your entrance with a wider opening, low threshold and ergonomic handle. Also, consider practicalities such as which way you want the door to open.

## DOOR STYLE

As a general rule, stick to the door style that best complements the architecture of your home. The look and period of your property will help direct you towards a modern or traditional door style. Do you like clean, contemporary lines or would you prefer something more ornate, for example? Do your research – some door suppliers allow you to have fun and design your own entrance door online.

## LIGHT & BRIGHT

We are increasingly aware of the importance of natural light for our



health and wellbeing, while this may have been factored in elsewhere in your project, it would be easy to overlook the entrance. Would your hallway benefit from more light? This will influence your choice of door style, glass type and design, and whether a fan or side lights should be considered.

You can choose from double or triple glazing, with some suppliers offering triple glazed, laminated glass as standard. Many also offer glass options to help with thermal efficiency and security. For added peace of mind, obscure or opaque glass may be preferable, but also think about adding a blind within the glass unit.

## MATERIALS

Budget and design criteria will often dictate your choice of door material; with aluminium at the upper end of the scale and PVCu suited to the more budget-conscious. The UK door industry has expanded so much recently that there's now an option for everyone.

The PVCu door market, for example, has been overtaken by the composite



door. They are available in a greater number of styles, colours and designs and will suit a wider variety of properties, while a dual colour option allows you to complement both the interior décor and exterior.


Maintaining a composite door is also incredibly easy, they simply require a regular wash with warm soapy water and a soft, lint-free cloth.

The material will also impact the performance of the door. Some door types will have a void in the panel while others will have a solid timber or glass reinforced plastic core. This can affect the thermal efficiency and security of the door.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

You may not think so, but the energy efficiency of your entrance door can





*Choose wisely and your door will be far more than a functional entrance, it will complement the overall style of your house while helping to keep it cosy and secure*

impact the overall performance of your home. Often opening onto a hallway, and giving access to other rooms and floors, it would be easy to lose heat through an inefficient entrance door. Energy ratings are a good indicator and provide valuable guidance.

#### **SECURITY**

If you are building a new home or converting a commercial building, warehouse or barn into a dwelling, then you will need to meet the requirement of Building Regulations (in England) Approved Document Q (security – dwellings). In part, the security requirements relate to doors at the entrance to a building. They must have been manufactured to a design that has been tested to an acceptable security standard.

You can exceed the requirements of Approved Document Q by choosing a Secured by Design entrance door which has been rigorously tested and certified by a third party.

#### **VISIT A SHOWROOM**

We would always recommend visiting a showroom to get a feel for the door. This will help you to determine the quality of the material, get a true representation of the colour and finish and ideally, appreciate the ergonomics of the hardware – handles, knockers etc.

Remember to take your plans or photographs of the build in progress or existing building, a reputable supplier can then guide you through the options and help you make the right choice.

Entrance doors no longer need to be simply functional; they are so much more



than a means of access. So, do your research, consider your options, and make an entrance!

*Bethaney Larkman is marketing manager at composite door supplier Distinction Doors*

# Pocket and planet



Here Paul Bailey of Grohe UK answers FAQs on how water-saving products can be incorporated into self-builders' bathroom projects, to save them money and help the planet

With a staggering 32 per cent of household daily water usage used for toilet flushing alone, and 36 per cent for washing, bathing and showering, it's no wonder that many of us are trying to cut down our water consumption. The goal is not only ongoing energy and cost savings, but also to try and ease our burden on the planet too.

## HOW MUCH WATER COULD I POTENTIALLY SAVE?

There are significant savings to be made by opting for water-saving bathroom products, and with more and more advanced technology being developed, many of these economical options are still able to deliver an excellent experience, without leaving you feeling like you've been cut short.

Typically, showers in the UK use around 12 litres per minute, although this is also dependent on what type of boiler system and shower system is fitted in the home. Water-saving options can reduce consumption to just 9-10 litres per minute, and with additional products that can be fitted to shower heads, usage can be brought down even further, to as little as 7.5 litres per minute.

Similarly, by opting for a dual flush plate instead of a standard flush, you can save as much as 50 per cent, while basin taps can also generate water savings of up to 50 per cent.



*Water-saving options can reduce consumption to just 9-10 litres per minute*



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### ARE WATER-SAVING PRODUCTS MORE EXPENSIVE?

Prices for water-saving products are becoming more and more accessible as a greater number of solutions become available. However, you'll still want to ensure that the price you're paying is reflective of the quality of the product, so look for reputable brands that use durable materials and design finishes to ensure you'll get a product that will last for years to come.

### WHAT ARE THE WATER-SAVING WC OPTIONS?

Dual flush plates are one of the easiest ways to save water. These styles of flush offer two different options – a smaller volume flush, usually around 3 litres, and a larger volume flush, which can vary between 4.5 and 6 litres. Dual flush systems usually need to be installed onto an installation frame which is then hidden behind the wall. Despite being just one small element of the bathroom, it is important these are factored into your bathroom project planning early on, as they can require more invasive work if installed later down the line.

### WHAT ABOUT BASINS AND TAPS?

Infra-red sensor activated taps are really efficient when it comes to saving water. What's more, they can be really affordable and provide lots of additional benefits. By only dispensing water when the sensor is activated by movement, you are only using the water you truly need! In addition, some brands have incorporated a water-saving aerator into

the mechanics of the tap, which can further restrict flow to as little as 5.7 litres per minute.

Despite the reduced water flow and volume, the aerator adds air into the stream of water to create the sensation of increased volume. Infra-red taps also make a great hygienic solution for family homes and cater to all generations, from young children who are just starting to use the bathroom unaccompanied, to elderly relatives or those with reduced mobility who can comfortably wash their hands without having to twist or turn any handles.

Digital features now feature in basin tap design and as well as offering new functions that will enhance user safety and improve accuracy of water temperature, the technology also encourages a more conservative use of water. Look out for LED display eco functions that will be able to be activated through infra-red sensor detection, encouraging all family members in the home to opt for a 'greener' choice when washing their hands or cleaning their teeth.

### WHAT OPTIONS DO I HAVE WHEN TRYING TO SAVE WATER IN MY SHOWER SPACE?

Typically, power showers use more water than conventional showers such as thermostatic systems, so this is the first factor to take into consideration. In addition, some thermostatic systems are also fitted with 'eco' buttons which will override the current settings and reduce water use by up to as much as 50 per cent. When shopping around for your shower, pay close attention to

the shower head specification in particular. Many eco-friendly models will have water-saving limiters fitted as part of their design, and others may also allow you to install this yourself post-purchase. However, water-saving limiters are not suitable in power showers as they are pumped units, and the use of a limiter would likely damage the system.

You'll also want to go back to basics and look at your water pressure. If your home supplies low water pressure, a limiter will only further decrease the shower performance and therefore you might want to reconsider methods to improve this before progressing further with your bathroom planning.

### ARE THERE WATER-SAVING PRODUCTS THAT INVOLVE SMART TECHNOLOGY?

Leak detection and smart water systems are a great addition to any property, particularly if you are trying to manage your water consumption more responsibly. They don't just work with your bathroom, but across all water usage points in the home. Alongside detecting micro leaks, frost risk, burst pipes and being able to automatically shut off your water supply in the event of a problem, these systems also use app connectivity to help you track your consumption and spot which appliances are draining most of this precious resource, giving the information you need to inspire further eco-friendly changes in the home.

*Paul Bailey is senior category manager at Grohe UK*

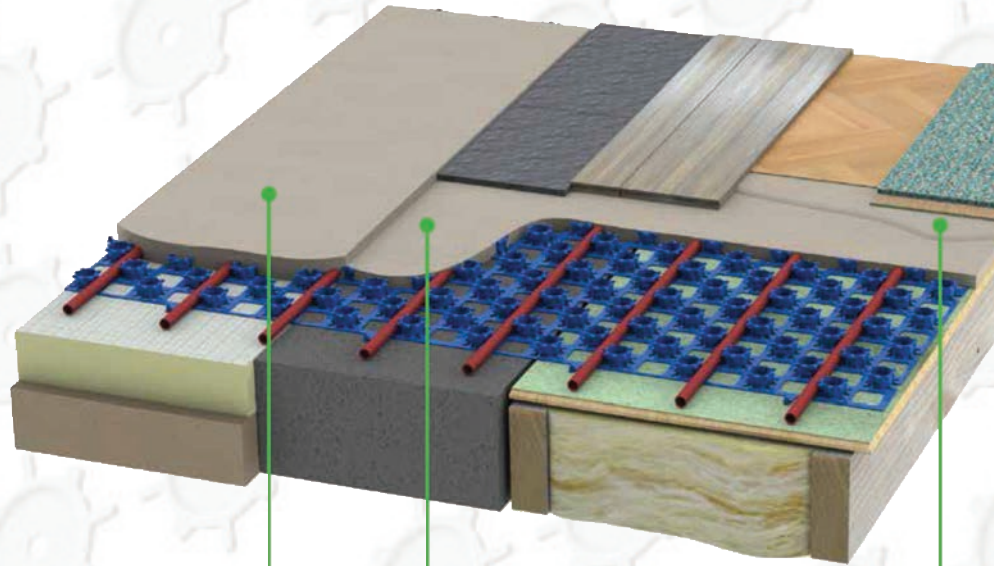




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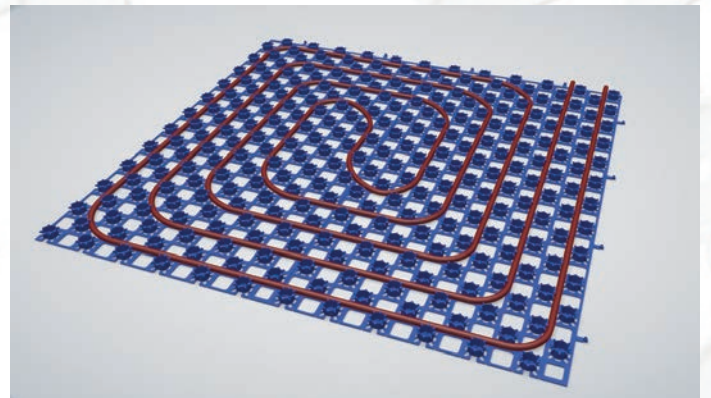
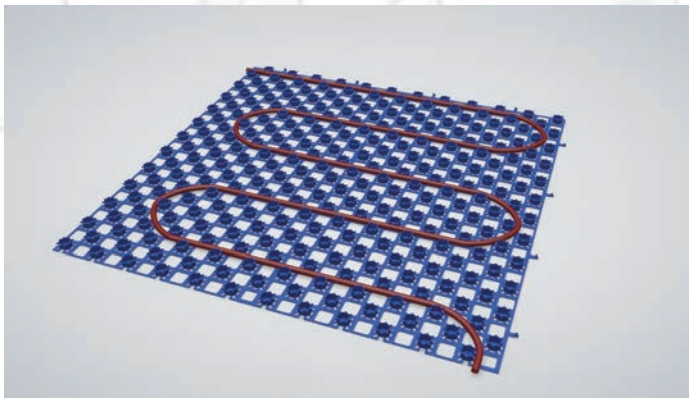
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# Safe and reliable bathroom solutions for timber floors

Insulation is at the centre of sustainable energy and is extremely important to incorporate into any renovation project especially in timber structures that are subjected to damp and draughts. The cheapest way to reduce heat loss is to use building materials with low U values and materials with low heat-conductivity as surface finishes. Suspended timber floors to bathrooms can also be particularly at risk from hidden plumbing leaks and condensation behind fitted units.

wedi's subconstruction elements are tackling the above mentioned issues – from tilebacker boards through shower elements to pipe and wall hung toilet cistern claddings to mention only a few – they are 100 per cent waterproof to the core, decoupling, have the best thermal capabilities (0.036 Wm<sup>2</sup>K) amongst common tilebackers on the market and can be either tiled directly onto or plastered. No additional waterproofing, priming before tiling or heat insulation is required.

Current trend shows increased popularity of walk-in showers but when it comes to suspended timber floors, it is imperative to take time evaluating between different brands in order to select the best solution that ticks all boxes.

wedi products are developed with practicality, versatility and functionality in mind. Uniquely, all wedi Fundo shower elements have a 360° dry-fit

drain technology that offers reassurance of their use in/on wooden floors and a sealing set developed especially for the all-round sealing of their perimeters.

wedi offers two solutions, one with point and the other with linear drainage, for installing walk-in shower areas in timber floors. In contrast to other shower elements, both the wedi Fundo Ligno and Fundo RioLigno shower elements fit and sit flush in the wooden flooring, without having to cut into floor joists or build up further floor height. With their outer edges of just 20 mm and 25 mm respectively, keeping safety in focus above everything else, both shower trays are fitted with a support plate on the underside reinforcing the area around the drain opening thus providing unrivalled peace of mind within the moisture sensitive and ever moving timber floor.

Thanks to its close collaboration with industry professionals, wedi knows all too well that leaks often result from poor positioning of the drain body. In order to eliminate any possibility of failure, wedi offers a pre-formed drain-substructure element with both Fundo elements, guaranteeing reliable support and accurate aligning of the drain body.

In relation to bathrooms in timber structures, wall and floor insulation is also an important topic to discuss.

Coupling wedi Fundo shower solutions with wedi building boards and/or wedi Subliner Dry & Flex membranes on walls and floors, would not only result in a CE marked walk-in shower area but also would be awarded with a full wedi system guarantee.

wedi building boards are famous for their suitability to be directly bonded onto timber or metal stud frames without the need for mechanical fixing eliminating laborious sealing measures over the penetrations thus saving time and offering further safety. wedi's



Subliner range, as a complement to wedi building boards, is renowned for its reliability in waterproofing and/or decoupling of bathroom walls and floors.

As mentioned before, it is also important that the tiles chosen have low heat conductivity or to prevent heat loss and promote hygiene at the same time, use a panelling type of finish.

wedi's first 'visible' range, the wedi Top Line boasts panelling (wedi Top Wall) for cladding of walls and other surfaces such as washstands for example, pre-formed shower tray finishes (wedi Fundo Top) both with point and linear design and pre-formed design solutions for cladding of shower seats (wedi Sanoasa Top), niches (wedi Sanwell Top) and toilet cistern cladding for wall hung toilets (wedi I-Board Top). All pre-formed surfaces are a perfect match to the backing wedi elements with matching gradients. The wedi Top Line provides a perfect alternative to traditional tiling; their seamless nature and antibacterial surface promotes hygiene around the bathroom and thanks to their low heat-conductivity they are warm to touch. However, they are not only functional but aesthetically pleasing too; whether homogenous pure white to match modern sanitary ware, natural stone look in any of the four available shades or a mixture of those – they offer a timeless, modern look and a warm, natural feel.



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# A work in progress



Jack Wooler speaks to Andrew Baddeley-Chappell, CEO of the National Custom and Self Build Association, on why England lags behind the developed world on levels of self-build, and what can be done

Self- and custom-build homes make up around 40 per cent of new homes throughout the developed world, yet in England, they count for just 5 per cent. England's housing market has had its long-term issues in many regards, but one that is less understood than most is the lack of custom and self-build homes.

With shows like *Grand Designs* dominating the field for creating aspiration to get involved, many are led to believe that self and custom building is about expensive, often life-consuming feats of architectural achievement.

While of course this can often be true, the industry offers a whole range of options – which don't always come at a premium.

Andrew Baddeley-Chappell, CEO of the National Custom and Self Build Association (NaCSBA), has been fighting to educate and support people in their journey into the sector. He explained to me that at its heart, self and custom build is nothing more than giving buyers the agency they get in any other purchase.

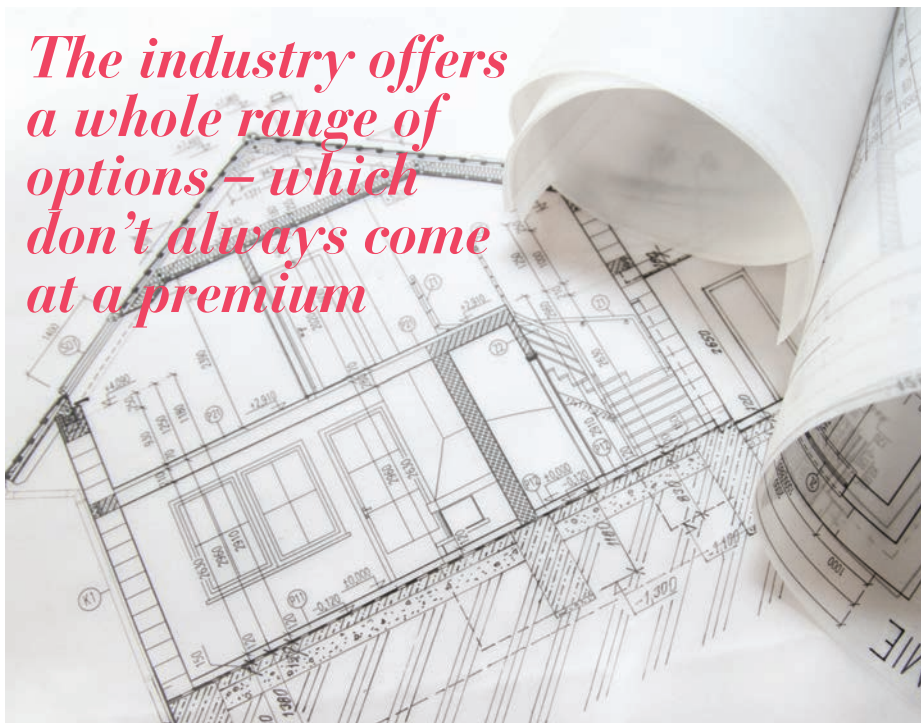
## DEFINITIONS

Andrew admits there can be confusion about the difference between self- and custom-builds, and what each method actually entails.

"Broadly," he explains, "self build is about a home on an individual plot, and custom-build is building on a site where there are many different plots available, and typically where there's a 'custom build enabler' who lays out the site, prepares the roads, gets services installed to the plot and sets out how the house must be built – but still leaving the customer with the choice of house that will reside in their plot."

He describes a custom-build 'home park' in Frankfurt, Germany, as a "kind of house supermarket," showcasing over 70 different homes in one place. Visitors can enjoy a meal, then view the options, and discuss with the manufacturers how designs can be tweaked to meet individual needs.

*The industry offers a whole range of options – which don't always come at a premium*



## CUSTOMER CHOICE

"At its heart," says Andrew, "this customer choice is what custom and self build is really all about." He adds however that trying to get people to understand this is one of the biggest challenges for the sector currently.

"It's a problem that just doesn't exist in every other developed country in the world, where it's just a normal part of how houses are built."

In most other consumer markets, it's a given that customers are given choice and agency. Andrew uses car sales of the past as an analogy here for the current UK homebuying situation: "In many ways, building a home is like how buying a car used to be; you'd go along to a garage and choose a car that's already there – but around 20 years ago manufacturers realised they could sell so much more by letting the customers tell them what they wanted, and then build the exact car they need."

He adds: "It's what needs to happen in

the housing market." However, in the volume housebuilding sector currently, there are a small number of major suppliers with a monopoly over new homes in their area, he says, and who "only attract a limited number of people, but enough for them to sell the homes for the price they need to."

"Even their own surveys show that many people do not want to buy new build houses, and somehow in the UK we think that's normal," he continues. By contrast, with most other new products; phones, clothes, computers, he says, "everyone wants the latest."

The result is that many want to use older buildings to get a creative result. "If someone wants to have an exciting home, they buy an old house and start again, or build a modern glass and steel extension," he tells *Selfbuilder + Homemaker*. "If new home builders were getting it right, buyers would say they want their old home to look like the new one they've seen being built up the road."



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He says frankly: "We should look as a society at how we got to this point, where we accepted that this was the way things are done."

He notes that the Government is well aware of the problems, acknowledged in its 2017 White Paper. The Conservative Party's last manifesto even included clear commitments to do more to help people to acquire land, and extend the Help to Buy scheme to the custom and self-build sector.

So, what's holding things up?

### GRAND IDEAS

One of the most important barriers to greater adoption is image, says Andrew. Grand Designs paints a very different picture to the general reality, he says.

"Your typical Grand Design is inspiring, but it basically implies that if you are going to build your own home, then you have to be prepared to have a near breakdown in the middle of it and an extra baby by the time it's finished."

While he notes people "shouldn't underestimate" the complexity of building a house, he says that it should be borne in mind that being a TV show, "it's nothing without the drama." He says that while Grand Designs can offer inspiration, "what we really need is normal, everyday people to understand that this is an

option that's available to them, just like in every other country."

### A HELPING HAND

With a UK housing market not currently geared towards self-build, it comes down to policy to drive things forward. This is where NaCSBA comes in: "We are unique in being singularly focused on growing the sector," says Andrew, and "driving the political and policy led changes that are needed to make this happen."

NaCSBA's mission is to fight for the self and custom-build sector, and, according to Andrew, it has already been instrumental in moving sector-benefiting policy forwards.

One of the most prominent of these policies, he tells me, was The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, which led to the creation of Right to Build registers – making it a legal requirement for local authorities to maintain registers of people looking to self build, and bring forward enough plots to match that demand.

NaCSBA was integral to getting government to bring forward the legislation, says Andrew, adding that it "continues to argue strongly for greater Government support, by lobbying and challenging those in power." He adds

that magazines such as *Selfbuilder + Homemaker* are also crucial to progress, "acting as an interface with the public, to help people undertaking this journey to understand the best ways to go about it."

To help local authorities, NaCSBA runs the Right to Build Taskforce, funded by the Government, which is a consultancy service that offers free briefings to every UK authority to explain what they need to be doing to fulfil their legal obligations.

### CHANGE

Andrew holds that self and custom-build is the answer to the problems in the housing market. But in order to make it work, he says there's "a massive job" to simply educate people and make them think about it as the market matures.

He concludes: "When people begin to believe that this is an option for them, when they join the registers and look at the options that are available to them, options without massive premiums, they'll realise that this isn't about cost, it's about choice – they don't need to compromise."

**To find out more about NaCSBA's work, visit [www.nacsba.org.uk](http://www.nacsba.org.uk) and to find your local authority's self build register, visit [www.righttobuildportal.org](http://www.righttobuildportal.org)**

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# The path to green finance

The Government's Green Homes Grant offers homeowners up to £10,000 for energy-saving home improvements. Jack Wooler explains how you can take up the opportunity, and enhance your project's sustainability



**A**ble to fund up to two-thirds of the cost of energy-saving measures in your home, the new £2bn Green Homes Grant scheme could be the extra push you need to go green, or financially support your ongoing efforts to bring sustainability into your project.

Announced by Chancellor Rishi Sunak in July, the financial support will come in the form of vouchers covering the larger portion of green upgrades such as insulation or heat pumps. The maximum contribution for most is £5,000 – though

households on low incomes will be eligible for up to 100 per cent funding at a maximum of £10,000 – all as part of a wider £3bn government plan to cut carbon emissions.

The appeal of this scheme is very clear. Regardless of the ecological benefits and cheap improvements you could bring to your home, the Treasury says that by using these vouchers, families could save an average of £200 on their energy costs over the course of a year.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO INSTALL?

To be awarded the vouchers, you need to install one of what the Government calls 'primary measures' as a minimum. Once you've done this, the voucher can then also be used to help cover the cost of further 'secondary measures.'

Incidentally, the amount you get towards the cost of the secondary cannot exceed the amount you get for the primary. Overleaf is a list of some of the home improvements eligible under the scheme.



# Going for a Green Homes Grant?

Be safer, warmer and quieter with ROCKWOOL



With the Green Homes Grant set to give homeowners in England access to funding for energy efficiency improvements, it's a better time than ever to turn your dream home, into a green home.

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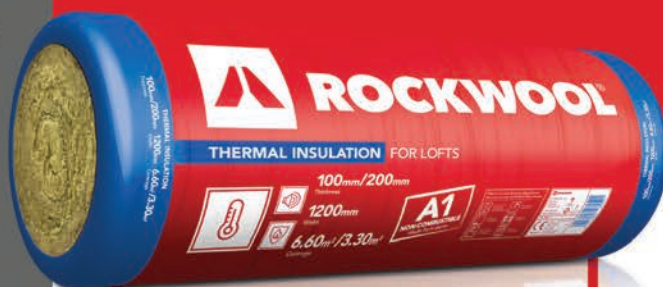
#### Improve comfort

Not only reducing heat loss and saving you money, stone wool regulates internal temperature - keeping you cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.



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As non-combustible insulation, stone wool won't burn - making your home as safe as it is warm and sound.



### Did you know?

Upgrading loft insulation is one of the easiest (and quickest) ways to improve a home's energy efficiency.

ROCKWOOL's Thermal Insulation Roll has been designed to do just that.

Learn more about the benefits of upgrading your home insulation with ROCKWOOL and search for ROCKWOOL Green Homes Grant App on the following stores:

or go to: [www.rockwool.co.uk/greenhomesgrant](http://www.rockwool.co.uk/greenhomesgrant)



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



#### PRIMARY MEASURES

##### Insulation:

- Solid wall insulation (internal or external)
- Cavity wall insulation
- Under-floor insulation (solid floor, suspended floor)
- Loft insulation
- Flat roof insulation
- Pitched roof insulation
- Room in roof insulation
- Insulating a park home

##### Low carbon heat improvements:

- Air source heat pump
- Ground source heat pump
- Solar thermal (liquid filled flat plate or evacuated tube collector)
- Biomass boiler
- Hybrid heat pump

#### SECONDARY MEASURES

##### Windows and doors:

- Draught proofing
- Double or triple glazing (where replacing single glazing)
- Secondary glazing (in addition to single glazing)
- Energy efficient replacement doors (replacing single glazed or solid doors installed before 2002)

##### Heating:

- Hot water tank thermostat
- Hot water tank insulation
- Heating controls (such as appliance thermostats, smart heating controls, zone controls, intelligent delayed

## *The financial support will come in the form of vouchers covering most green upgrades such as insulation or heat pumps*

start thermostat, thermostatic radiator valves)

#### OTHER GRANTS OR FUNDING

The Government has stated that you cannot claim a Green Homes Grant voucher towards the cost of a measure which has also had funding under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO).

It has also made it clear that you cannot apply for the scheme if you have already received a grant from your local authority as part of the Local Authority Delivery Scheme.

You can however claim both the ECO and Green Homes funds – as long as they are each for different measures – and you can claim the Green Homes Grant and

use it to apply for accreditation to the Domestic RHI.

#### HOW DO I APPLY?

First you must check to see if you are eligible, which can be done by completing a quick survey at [www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk](http://www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk) – then you can decide on the improvements you are best to install.

You must receive at least one quote from a Green Homes Grant, TrustMark-registered installer in order to apply however – work cannot be completed by yourself, a member of your household or your immediate family.

You can then make an online application on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website, and if successful you'll then be provided with the voucher to give to your chosen TrustMark-registered tradesperson.

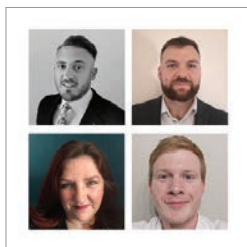
#### NOW'S THE TIME

While there has been some unofficial talk of the scheme being extended in some capacity, there is at present a cut-off point. You must make sure that all scheduled work is completed, and the voucher redeemed subject to its terms and conditions by 31 March 2021.

While this may initially seem like a while away to some, tradespeople across the sector are expecting a surge in such projects between now and then, so it's advised to put things in motion as soon as possible. If there was ever a good time to make those green improvements to your project that you were thinking about, it's now.



## Formica Group's new residential sales team

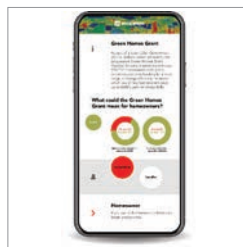


It's a positive time for change at **Formica Group** with the launch of our newly refreshed residential Axiom® and Prima® worktop ranges fast approaching. In order to support the launch, Formica Group have set about to strengthen and develop their residential sales team to ensure they can offer the best service possible to their customers. Highlights from the new Axiom® range include high-end, eye-catching designs in new colourways carefully developed by our

design team based on customer feedback and key trends. Pictured are residential sales team members Ryan Smith, Paul Stewart, Nicola Toledo Gonzalez and Rowan Harrison.

0191 622 0106 [www.formica.com](http://www.formica.com)

## ROCKWOOL launches Green Homes Grant App



The Green Homes Grant has opened the door for over 600,000 eligible homeowners in England to make valuable energy efficiency upgrades to their homes. **ROCKWOOL**, has developed an app to guide homeowners through the most important elements of the scheme and to help them get the maximum value from the funding. From best practice advice on insulation, to clarifying any misconceptions with the primary and secondary measures, the ROCKWOOL Green Homes Grant app is

there to support homeowners to make the most of the voucher scheme. The app is available now on the App Store, Google Play or online.

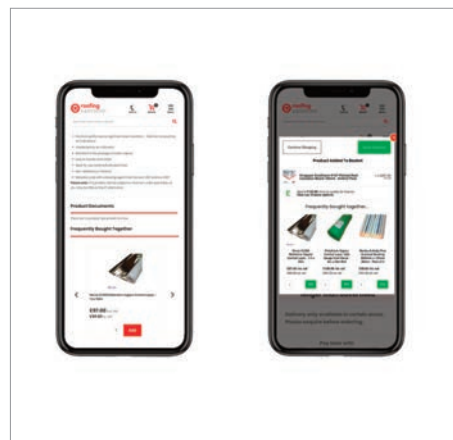
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[www.rockwool.co.uk/green-homes-grant-scheme/homeowner](http://www.rockwool.co.uk/green-homes-grant-scheme/homeowner)

## Artificial intelligence investment boosts CMOStores.com

Online builders' merchant **CMOStores.com** is seeing superb results from its latest investment in improving customer experience on its six e-commerce sites, with recommended product purchases doubling since the company invested in a new onsite personalisation solution. In the six months since CMO partnered with artificial intelligence (AI) pioneer Peak, its onsite personalisation solution is driving twice as many transactions as the site's original non-AI recommender tool. The solution, part of Peak's Customer AI offering, creates hyper-personalised product recommendations at the point of sale across CMO's web superstores. What's more, over a fifth of all transactions on the sites have involved an interaction with the solution, proving that customers are using and benefiting from the new technology. It has also led to an 11 per cent increase in overall session values across the sites, and a 6.5 per cent increase in overall session-to-transaction conversion rates. And in recognition of this success, the innovative AI solution has recently been shortlisted in both the 'Best use of AI' and 'Best Specialist eCommerce' categories at the annual eCommerce Awards. The success of onsite personalisation is a further boost to the rapidly-growing e-commerce company, which has also seen its market share increase this summer as more homeowners shifted to online purchasing, and demand for construction products rose thanks to a nationwide trend for DIY projects during lockdown.

01752 692 769 [www.cmostores.com](http://www.cmostores.com)



## CMOStores.com supports grant scheme



Following the launch of the Government's new Green Homes Grant initiative, tradespeople and homeowners taking part in the scheme will be able to hit the ground running with the help of online construction products merchant **CMOStores.com**.

Offering an extensive product range which includes solutions to help both insulate and reduce the carbon footprint of a property, CMO will be supporting the new scheme alongside the BMF who, in partnership with Trustmark, is helping to create a reliable and

high-quality supply chain. One of the main areas that the Green Homes Grant hopes to promote is the installation of various types of insulation, from solid and cavity wall to under floor and loft.

01752 692 769 [www.cmostores.com](http://www.cmostores.com)

## Selfbuilder & Homemaker website



The Selfbuilder & Homemaker website is an online provider of past and present products and news items for all those involved in and working on a self-build project. [www.sbhonline.co.uk](http://www.sbhonline.co.uk) is a one-stop source for all the latest press releases, providing visitors with access to information about products and services that they may require. From the website, you can find links to digital issues that have live links to advertisers' sites, as well as daily email alerts to keep you as informed as possible. You

can also subscribe to receive regular copies of the printed and digital versions of the magazine, or sign up to the monthly Selfbuilder & Homemaker newsletter.

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## Selfbuilder & Homemaker website



The Selfbuilder & Homemaker website is an online provider of past and present products and news items for all those involved in and working on a self-build project. [www.sbhonline.co.uk](http://www.sbhonline.co.uk) is a one-stop source for all the latest press releases, providing visitors with access to information about products and services that they may require. From the website, you can find links to digital issues that have live links to advertisers' sites, as well as daily email alerts to keep you as informed as possible. You

can also subscribe to receive regular copies of the printed and digital versions of the magazine, or sign up to the monthly Selfbuilder & Homemaker newsletter.

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Laing Bespoke Homes developed the property and were amazed by both the ease of use of the Jackson systems and the very high energy efficiency of the completed building.

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CASE STUDY

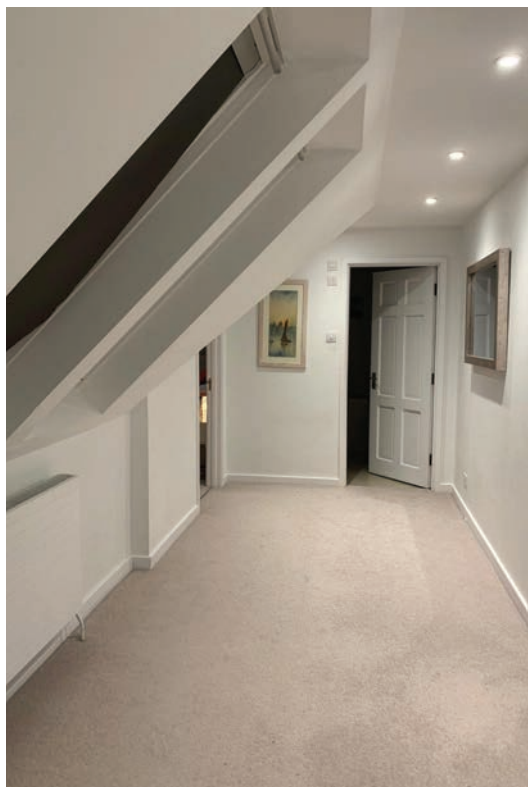
# UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Lizzy and Rupert Atkins hadn't intended to do a self-build, but when faced with moving out of the area they loved, they decided to embark on a major renovation project to transform an 'ugly duckling'

TEXT ANNA REYNOLDS EXTERIOR IMAGES BAILEY PARTNERSHIP







Neuropsychologists Lizzy and Rupert Atkins had been living and working in New Zealand before they decided it was time to move back to the UK. Rupert was originally from North Devon and they were keen to live somewhere near the coast. In 2005 Rupert was offered a job in Plymouth, and so the couple relocated.

They rented for a year until a house came up for sale in an area they liked called Mannamead. Mannamead is known for its grand Victorian villas but Rupert and Lizzy wanted something more modern. In 2006 they bought a three-bed, 1930s semi-detached property. Their two sons were born there and the house became the family home for almost 10 years. The house was within walking distance of the boys' school and the couple's friends lived nearby.

Rupert and Lizzy love to entertain and the house was often full. Despite converting the roof into a fourth bedroom, it was downstairs where the family needed more space.

They were faced with a dilemma: "Round here if you want to move to a bigger property you only have two choices," explains Rupert. "Either a huge, six bed Victorian house but with a small living area, or the 1930s style which we were already living in."

Land didn't come up for sale very often, and so when a large plot came on the market just around the corner from their home, Lizzy and Rupert went to take a look. The house was unusual in that it was a detached, 1980s self-build that had been designed by a local roofer. It was very spacious with four bedrooms, a drive and separate garage. The house itself needed a lot of work: "Inside it was a total disaster," says Rupert. As well as having to install a new kitchen, bathrooms, electrics, and plumbing,

there were lots of outdated features including a huge, 80s-style, inglenook chimney which extended up through the entire house. "We thought we would probably have to knock the whole thing down and start from scratch," says Lizzy.

The house attracted a lot of interest from other homeowners in the area but most people, including Rupert and Lizzy, were put off by the amount of work that needed doing. The house was still on the market a year later – in 2014. The couple were having dinner with friends who had expressed an interest in the house, and drew up sketches of what it could look like. Rupert and Lizzy began to see its potential. As luck would have it, their friends bought a different property and were out of the running. Rupert got in touch with a friend at Bailey Partnership, a construction consultancy in Plymouth that specialises in larger, commercial properties. They sent a junior architect to look at the house. "Our project was relatively small fry for them, but I think they liked it," says Lizzy.

When the couple saw the architects' drawings, they were sold: "It was beautiful," says Rupert. "The biggest risk was that we spent a lot of money but still ended up with an ugly house." The architect had come up with a design featuring an extension to the left of the house, a new roof and more proportionally-sized bedrooms upstairs.

Rupert and Lizzy made an offer in January 2015 which was accepted, and surveys were carried out the following month. Things then went relatively smoothly; there was only one stipulation in the planning permission, which was that the building's roofline couldn't be raised. Two large trees at the front and back of the house were protected, however one of these, an

## LOW POINT

"Living round the corner from the house meant we would often pop round after work to check on progress – it became really depressing walking around a derelict space in the dark thinking 'what am I doing?' – we stopped visiting so often after a while!"

– Rupert





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oak, was so rotten that it was knocked down before the groundwork began.

#### THE RIGHT BUILDER

Initially the couple struggled to find an enthusiastic builder – most were put off by the size and complexity of the job. Eventually it was Rupert's hairdresser who suggested they contact a local builder, Paul Edwards, who had done a similar renovation project in the area.

Building work began in July 2015. The couple were busy at work and Lizzy was juggling exams at the same time. "Paul was fundamental to the project," says Rupert.

"We had complete trust in him and his ideas, which meant we were able to make decisions as we went along rather than working to a fixed schedule."

This rather organic process had both advantages and disadvantages. With no quantity surveyor the couple had to trust that Paul was keeping track of the costs: "On the plus side it meant that we had people on the ground who could make last minute changes at a better price than if we had negotiated in advance," says Rupert.

#### TRANSFORMATION BEGINS

All of the original walls were knocked down along with the 1980s-style chimney, to create a

*The downstairs living area is the real showstopper – configured around a central, double-sided wood fire, separating the kitchen, dining area and main lounge*

large open plan kitchen, living area and entrance hall. A new slate roof was installed, which took around three months to complete.

Rupert admits he was alarmed when, almost halfway through the project – around Christmas 2015 – all the money he had budgeted had been spent. "I remember looking around this shell, thinking 'Crikey we've still got a long way to go.'"

#### HIGH POINT

"We wanted to create a modern house and everything that comes with that. The real gift is to have that in the exact area you want to live. We can still call on our neighbours – we thought we'd have to lose all of that."

– Rupert

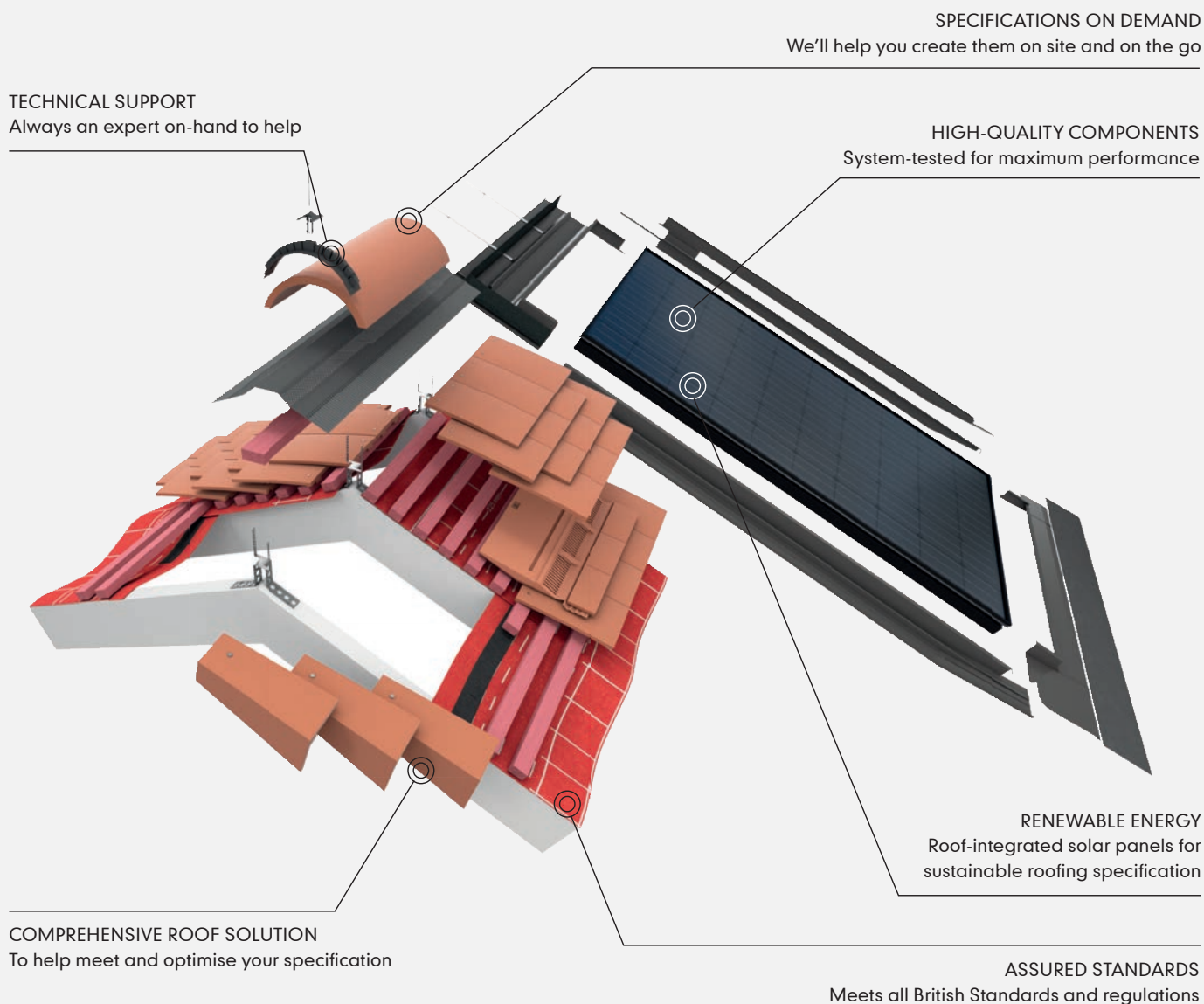
#### RUPERT'S ADVICE

"If we did this again I would have kept a better handle on the finances. If we had thought through what was required, we probably wouldn't have done it!"





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Upstairs the builders knocked through two of the four smaller bedrooms to create a master bedroom and ensuite. The extension on the left side of the house includes a large study/spare bedroom, utility room, shower room, larder and boot room.

The family were still living in their old house which was on the market; by the beginning of 2016 they had a buyer and moved in with friends for a few weeks until the electrics were fitted.

In April 2016 the family moved into what resembled a building site; "In hindsight it was far too soon," says Lizzy, remembering the look of horror on the faces of the removal men. The first couple of weeks were tough, "That was the most stressful time for me, living there with two young children and working at the same time."

It was a big job – teams of builders, carpenters and plumbers arrived every morning: "The weekly wage bill was obscene," says Rupert.

With Rupert and Lizzy working long hours, their builder Paul's constant enthusiasm and passion for the project was vital: "In the darkest moments he was always there keeping us calm." He was such a big influence on the project that many of the features in the house are a result of his vision. "A lot of people have a clear idea of what they want, but we get enthused by others, so it suited us," says Rupert.

## THE INTERIOR FEEL

The couple had a rough idea of how the inside of the house should look; a large open kitchen diner, a central wood burner, bi-fold doors opening on to a patio, a downstairs toilet, utility room, and larder, were all essential.

The family's previous home had lacked warmth and so internal insulation was another important factor in the renovation. Each wall is internally padded with 50 ml of Celotex while a central wood burner provides most of the heating and circuits controlling other areas of the house.

The couple also spent time installing an efficient plumbing system that avoids wasted water - the boiler is set up to have a solar panel on it which they are considering for the future. Other energy efficient features include a gas tumble dryer, which saves on electricity.

Through the interiors Lizzy was able to make her stamp on the house. Her love of bright colours has been incorporated into every room, including a bright green floor in the kitchen, which she says is "something I've always wanted" – and blinds instead of curtains create a light and airy feel.

A large chunk of the couple's budget went on aluminium framed windows and doors, which were sourced from a local, family run company called Green Circle. "You get so involved that

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## *Lizzy was able to make her stamp on the house, her love of bright colours has been incorporated into every room*

making decisions, even about small things, becomes incredibly hard – you can have a beautiful version of something or a cheap one – it's hard to work out where to compromise," says Lizzy.

The downstairs living area is the real showstopper – configured around a central, double-sided wood fire, separating the kitchen, dining area and main lounge. There is a large breakfast bar for Rupert's coffee machine which turns into a cocktail making area in the evening when the family have friends round. "It's a great party house – if we ever had the time!"

The kitchen was made in Exeter by Intoto, and features a seven-metre long white marble worktop, which was made by a friend. A Kartell Bookworm bookshelf by Ron Arad features on the main wall in the living area.

Parts of the house have been designed for the couple's two sons; there is a mini snooker table, a football table in the entrance hall and table tennis in the garage. The large study-cum-spare bedroom converts to a snug and play room. There is also a boot room for the countless pairs of football boots. There are four bathrooms, including a downstairs shower room, two ensembles, and one main bathroom. "It's a fabulous house to live in and brings us a lot of joy. We are pretty lucky," says Rupert.

### **LOCAL SUPPORT**

From the front, the house is incredibly striking and stands out against the surrounding Victorian

terraces. The neighbours were behind the project from the get-go: "We did cause some waves," says Rupert. "But ultimately we took an ugly property and made a beautiful property which is something people supported."

He adds: "We still get people standing at the bottom of the drive staring up at it."

Four years on and the couple are now ready to start work on the second stage of the renovation. The large terraced area at the front of the house is mostly driveway space with a garage. At the back of the house is a smaller, L-shaped lawn with a summer house. The couple plan to renovate this into an airbnb, or a place for the boys to live when they get older, and are hoping that Paul will take on the project later this year. "If we can finish the garden, I don't know where else I would want to live," says Lizzy. ■



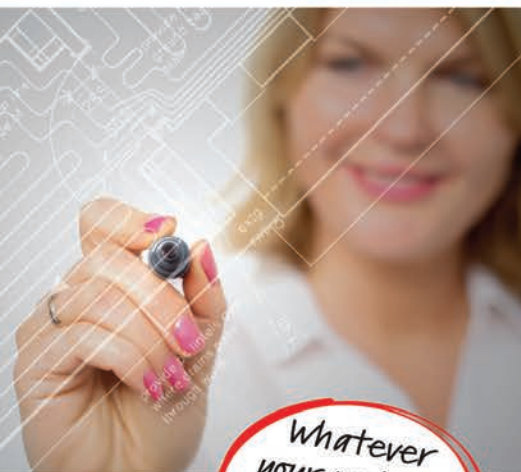


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# Offsite, on time

Paul Newman of Potton Self Build explains the ins and outs of offsite construction, and the many benefits it holds for self builders

In many people's minds, construction still happens 'brick by brick' on a building site. With the advent of offsite construction, however, more and more of the building process is happening in a factory environment. Contrary to what the term might suggest, offsite construction isn't necessarily the delivery of a fully built house on the back of a lorry. It just means that elements of the build – in the case of timber-frame construction, the wall panels, roof structure, and potentially floor structure – are manufactured and part assembled in a factory. These sections are then delivered to site and the superstructure is erected. There are a number of important benefits to this prefabricated approach to housebuilding.

## CONTRACTUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Offsite construction is often offered as a package by companies, most of whom will deliver a build to a weathertight stage, and some of whom will offer a design service too. This ensures that the company has sole contractual responsibility for all of those build elements, so you know exactly who to contact if necessary.

## SPEED

As you'd expect, the part-assembled nature of buildings constructed using timber frame means that, once the kit is delivered to site, this construction occurs extremely rapidly. Often, the superstructure is standing within a matter of weeks. This delivers it to a weathertight stage much sooner than a masonry build, allowing internal works to quickly start alongside external ones like cladding. Because of this, bricklaying can be removed from 'critical paths' in the construction programme.

## DRY

The erection of a timber frame conforms to what's known as a 'dry' method of building. This comes in very handy in the unpredictable (and often soggy) climes of the UK. Essentially, unless strong winds mean the operation of a crane is unsafe, there is virtually nothing to stop timber frames being erected. Where masonry builds have to stop, sometimes for weeks,



because of wet or cold weather, timber frames can continue unimpeded.

## QUALITY AND HEALTH & SAFETY

As offsite construction takes place in a factory, it's far easier to control the quality and manage any potential variables. Every panel is measured and manufactured exactly to the standards of the specific design, which produces a high level of dimensional accuracy. This higher level of accuracy allows for increased cost certainty, in comparison to other build methods. It also makes build times much more predictable, as there are virtually no 'unknowns' with a timber-frame build, which could otherwise incur significant delays and therefore additional cost.

The quality of the finished goods is checked and verified even before they leave the factory. Factory Production Control systems are used which cover manufacturing quality, health and safety and environmental sustainability, and these are audited independently each year. Moreover, by moving work that would otherwise be carried out onsite into a quality-controlled factory environment, health and safety performance is significantly improved.

*Wood is also a 'carbon store,' i.e. using timber will retain carbon that would otherwise have contributed to greenhouse gases*

## SUSTAINABILITY

Timber frame is one of the most sustainable mainstream construction methods. FSC and PEFC certification bodies ensure the timber and timber products are sourced from sustainable forests, which plant more trees than they harvest. Even the OSB (oriented strand board), chipboard, and plywood that make up offsite panels and/or floors is harvested from sustainably sourced timber.





Lower embodied energy also factors into the sustainability of timber-frame build systems. This is the amount of energy required to cultivate, harvest, and manufacture the timber frames, and it is significantly lower than other build methods, most of which require heat to extract and manufacture them. This means timber frames have a

lower carbon footprint than other mainstream construction methods. Wood is also a 'carbon store,' i.e. using timber will retain carbon that would otherwise have contributed to greenhouse gases. Manufacturing the timber panels in factory conditions also ensures much less waste than a wholly onsite build.


## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Panels used in timber frame construction are filled with insulation, making it easier to achieve levels of performance that exceed those required by Building Regulations. When considering the performance of a building as a whole, the performance of external wall junctions in timber-frame buildings typically significantly exceeds that of masonry builds. As well as the walls being easier

to insulate to higher levels, building with timber frame also facilitates all of the building's external wall junctions being made more efficient overall.

The offsite nature of timber-frame construction carries many benefits. Build times with offsite construction are incredibly fast thanks to the factory-manufactured and part-assembled timber-frame panels. Cost certainty is easier to achieve, as is the predictability of the build time because of the dry nature of the construction method. Finally, the ability to achieve greater sustainability is another reason why offsite construction is increasingly used in housebuilding, and its use will only continue to grow.

*Paul Newman is director of Potton Self Build*



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## CASE STUDY

# SMALL WONDER

In just six months, Max Tillings and Katie Roach built their bijou coach house on an awkward infill plot, using reclaimed materials to complement the neighbouring Victorian property

TEXT DEBBIE JEFFERY IMAGES MAX TILLINGS & KATIE ROACH

Few people would have looked twice at the small piece of land where Max Tillings and his partner, Katie Roach, recently built their new home. The couple already owned the courtyard to the rear of an apartment building in Westgate-on-Sea, north-east Kent, which had previously been used as a musicians' benevolent home.

"My parents were landlords, so I grew up learning about property and tackling all sorts of building projects," Max explains. "When we first bought St Cecilia's House it was in a shocking state of repair, but we loved its history and set about renovating and converting the building while maintaining the original facade and features."

"It was a massive project to create eight luxury seaside homes, which we still own and rent out," continues Max, who has been a landlord for almost 30 years. "We thought the rear courtyard might make a communal garden for residents, but they weren't particularly enthusiastic, as they wondered who would maintain the space."

The couple decided instead to develop the land as a one-bedroom home for themselves, with garaging below for their two vintage Rolls Royce Phantom cars, which Max inherited from his father. "Katie is also very hands-on and practical, so we knew that building our own home would be a true self-build project," says Max. "We certainly don't mind rolling up our sleeves."

The house had originally been built as a residence for a racing driver, so it seemed fitting to design their new home as a coach house, with his and hers double garages beneath a one-bedroom apartment, accessed by an external staircase.

### LAYOUT

The first-floor open plan living/dining/kitchen faces south through glazed doors, with a large rooflight inset into the sloping ceiling. Beside this, a double bedroom also benefits from a rooflight and glazed doors opening onto a Juliet balcony, with a shower room tucked to the rear of the floorplan.



### EXTERIOR

Built on a compact courtyard infill plot, the coach house was carefully designed to complement the existing building and provide garaging with a one-bedroom apartment above

### LOW POINT

"We found some decorative clover-leaf tiles for the external walls, and when these were accidentally omitted some of the new walls needed to be taken down and rebuilt"


– Max Tillings

*An ornate and highly decorative brick chimney is a scaled-down version of those on the main house*

"We sketched out a design ourselves, and then asked a local architect we've used before to produce workable plans," explains Katie. "This was always going to be our home, so we were involved in every decision from the start."

The new property is attached to the back of the main house, while being completely self-contained, and was devised to avoid blocking the outlook from existing windows.





"Instead of having a brick wall abutting the house, we set the first-floor living accommodation back slightly and put in railings, which allow light to pass through," says Max. "This reduced the size of our living space but it's created a small outdoor seating area and means you can still see the architectural features of the main house – the windows, headers and chimney – which was extremely important."

#### **PLANNING CONSTRAINTS**

Gaining planning permission for the new build

proved more challenging than the couple had anticipated and took almost two years to achieve. The plot stands within a Conservation Area, and an existing brick boundary wall needed to be either modified or demolished and rebuilt as part of the new coach house.

"The old wall was in a poor state of repair, and we decided that working with it just wasn't practical," says Katie. "Our plan was to carefully take this down and then rebuild it using the same bricks, including the distinctive panels of burnt clinker bricks which are a feature often seen in this part of Kent."





Max and Katie had already made a huge effort to retain original features on the main house, reusing windows, roof tiles and other materials, but despite their impeccable track record, the local authority twice refused them permission to temporarily take down the rear boundary wall.

"The conservation officer, planning officer, and local conservation groups were all against it, so I requested permission for our application to be taken to committee," explains Max, who was assisted by a local town councillor. "We then visited every household in the vicinity to show people our drawings and asked if they would be willing to help us."

Over 70 residents wrote letters of support for the couple's proposal and – after Max had spoken at the committee meeting – the 27 members voted unanimously in favour of the application.

"The delay meant putting everything on hold, and a further nine-month wait to reassemble the team," says Max. "We also needed a breather before starting on site in May 2019, working with subcontractors we already knew and project managing the build ourselves."

#### PREPARATORY WORKS

Dismantling the old boundary wall and then carefully cleaning and stacking bricks – including the darker over-fired clinker bricks – was a process which involved five people, in addition to Katie and Max.

Rather than breaking up the existing slab for groundworks, this was cut around to create footings – a procedure further complicated

by the discovery of a huge water catchment well on site.

"It's a magnificent feat of engineering, with a gravity-fed system of pipework to draw water for irrigation, and when we lifted the lid the water inside was crystal clear," says Max. "Preserving the well involved installing a pump system and hatch so that we can use the water for plants."

Foundations needed to bridge the well at one corner, which meant hand-digging five-metre-deep holes and installing shuttering and steelwork. Cellar space in the main house dictated that the adjacent strip footings also needed to be extremely deep.

"During the dig, we came across a huge pipe which nobody was willing to lay claim to, so the structural engineer and building control officer came up with a scheme to bridge and protect this," says Max. "Even to this day we don't know where it goes or what it serves."

Working on such a tight site meant that storing materials and plants was an issue, involving constantly shuffling and moving items. This also restricted the quantity of materials which could be ordered and required a structured programme of deliveries to avoid obstructing the road and footpath, where permission was granted to create a dropped curb.

"We kept up dialogue with all the residents, who were going to be our neighbours, and made sure they knew exactly what would be going on," says Katie. "One poor lady moved into her new flat to the roar of a petrol disc cutter breaking the ground, but she was extremely tolerant about the whole thing."

#### HANDS-ON

Max and Katie took a hands-on role throughout the project





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## EXTERIORS, DOORS, BEAMS & FLOORS

During the build, Katie and Max had been temporarily renting in the main house, but then needed to move out and relocate before their new home was ready. As a courtesy, and to remain on good terms with their neighbours, the couple offered to wash their cars every fortnight to remove dust created from cutting bricks and other building work.

Sourcing matching soft Kentish red bricks for the external walls proved difficult, and all bricks were mixed together prior to rebuilding to integrate new and old batches for an even finish. An ornate and highly decorative brick chimney on the new coach house is a scaled-down version of those on the main house and makes an impressive feature.

Bricklayer, Stuart Goldman was employed, with Max tackling much of the pointing, and the external garage walls have an inner skin of space-saving high density blockwork and an insulated cavity.

Extra insulation to the garages ensures that they meet residential building regulations for thermal, acoustic and fire values, and could potentially be converted into additional living space if required.

Installing garage doors proved an interesting challenge, which Max solved by sourcing reclaimed fibreglass up-and-over designs. He then routed and painted these to resemble traditional double timber doors, with black cast iron handles and hinges. "We couldn't have garage doors opening onto the footpath, so this was a way to produce the effect," he explains.

*Max and Katie made a huge effort to retain original features on the main house, reusing windows, roof tiles and other materials*

Glazed arches above these doors were hand bent in metal, using wooden templates, and the same craftsman made railings for the Juliet balconies from reclaimed metal. "Many of the trades were people we've worked with before, and they really were a great team," says Max.

Steel beams were craned into position and the timber first floor living accommodation has been set back slightly so that it perches on the garages. "We helped build the timber frame, which bolted together like Meccano and has been highly insulated," says Max. "I managed to source reclaimed clay Rosemary tiles for the roof, hips and ridges, and there were just enough to complete the job."

Additional reclaimed items include panels of York stone above the garage door arches, which were originally stone tomb lids found in a

## SHOWER ROOM

High ceilings, glass, and pale colours ensure the shower room feel spacious and bright

## HIGH POINT

"Getting planning permission was a huge relief after the initial opposition"

– Max Tillings

## MAX'S ADVICE

"Make sure to check quantities carefully when using reclaimed materials and allow for a high percentage of wastage"





#### KITCHEN/DINING/LIVING

The kitchen in the open plan living space has been positioned beside glazed doors and beneath a rooflight

reclamation yard, and the external staircase, which Max and Katie found online and had delivered to site ready to reassemble.

A bespoke timber rooflight in two sections was installed in the kitchen and bedroom, with end-of-line wooden windows and doors made to fit by a joiner. These were painted by Katie, who

undertook decorating throughout the house, in addition to jointly managing the project, cleaning the site and helping on every aspect of the build.

Thermally and acoustically, the timber-framed structure has proved extremely efficient and is heated by radiators, as underfloor heating would have raised floor levels and reduced airy ceiling heights, as well as potentially warping the reclaimed timber floor.

The distinctive pitch pine for the flooring was salvaged from a kit-built 1950's Colt house, which involved de-nailing the wood, treating it for woodworm, drying the boards and laying them over an insulated chipboard deck. Sanding and sealing the pine has created a characterful floor, which contrasts beautifully with the pale walls and soft green of the kitchen.

#### THE BENEFITS OF DIY

Katie and Max wanted to keep within their budget and buying the kitchen and oak block worktops at B&Q helped them to complete the whole coach house for just £87,000. They already owned the plot – which had an





approximate value of £110,000 with planning permission – and arranged a stage payment development package to fund the project. The house is currently valued at more than £350,000.

"Completing so much of the work ourselves definitely saved money, although using reclaimed materials probably proved more expensive than buying new," says Max.

"We thoroughly enjoyed the whole process, which only took about six months, and being so involved makes us feel extremely attached to the coach house. It's exactly how we'd envisaged it, and being self-builders gave us far more control over the project."

The new property has been so carefully designed and detailed that it perfectly suits its setting and complements the original Victorian house. Living next to their apartment building is also extremely practical for Max and Katie, who undertake the constant maintenance of the older property.

"We've managed to create a home which suits us perfectly," says Katie, "and there's even a small outdoor seating area as you go up the stairs, so we can enjoy the south-facing aspect with our dog."

She concludes: "Nothing has been straightforward with the build, and at one point we thought planning permission might never be granted, but our perseverance eventually paid off. We spend so much time working on older buildings that living in a brand new home feels rather like a holiday!" ■

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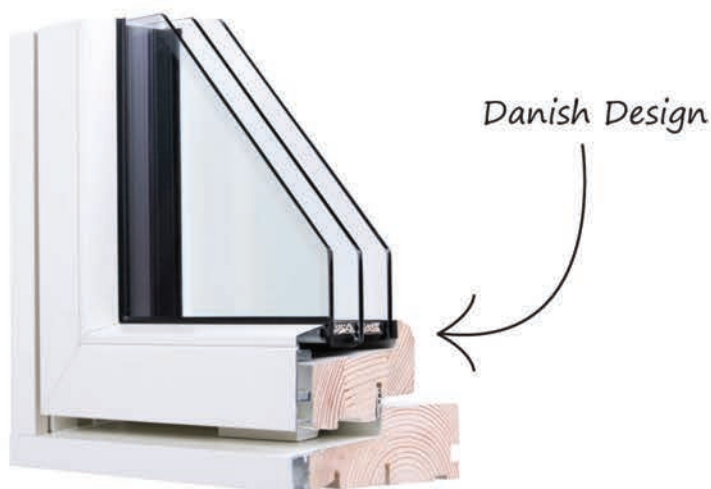
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# Get on top of sustainability

With the Future Homes Standard about to change how we heat and power homes for ever, self-builders wanting to future-proof their homes should consider integrated green roofing solutions, says Marley's Stuart Nicholson

Time is now ticking for everyone in housebuilding, with the introduction of the Future Homes Standard scheduled to proceed by 2025. The standard outlines changes to Parts F and L of the Building Regulations which govern energy efficiency and ventilation in new build homes, as well as moves to toughen up the system for enforcing these rules. With all eyes on the Government's 2050 net zero carbon emission deadline, a look towards banning fossil-fuel heating from all new homes, is one part of a holistic move towards a greener future.

To this end, the Chancellor recently awarded £2bn in Green Homes Grants to enable homeowners to better insulate their houses or to install double glazing. This is further support for the wider objective to deliver a more sustainable future vision for the nation's homes.

How we heat, power and insulate our homes will be central to achieving the ambitious government target and is also why the Green Homes Grant scheme – where homeowners can receive up to £5,000 towards green improvements in the home – is an important step on this journey.

## THE ROLE OF THE SOLAR ROOF

For those looking to create their own bespoke living spaces through a self-



build project, the ability to create sustainable home energy offers some exciting solutions. From ground source heat pumps to harnessing the power of the sun to provide low cost, green energy sources via roofscapes, careful planning and open-minded consideration can mean a dream home can also provide a sustainable future.

Indeed, many incentives exist for self-builders, such as financial support available for those wishing to implement the green contribution of heat pumps. While not all sustainable product solutions are covered by the Green Homes Grant – for instance photovoltaics (PV) systems – nonetheless taking advantage of some of the incentives on offer could help to free up spend to supplement additional areas that are proven to help the environment and help save homeowners money at the same time.

Chief among these is the specification of solar panels – a well-established sustainable energy source. The Energy Savings Trust estimates that installing solar panels to a roof space can reduce a

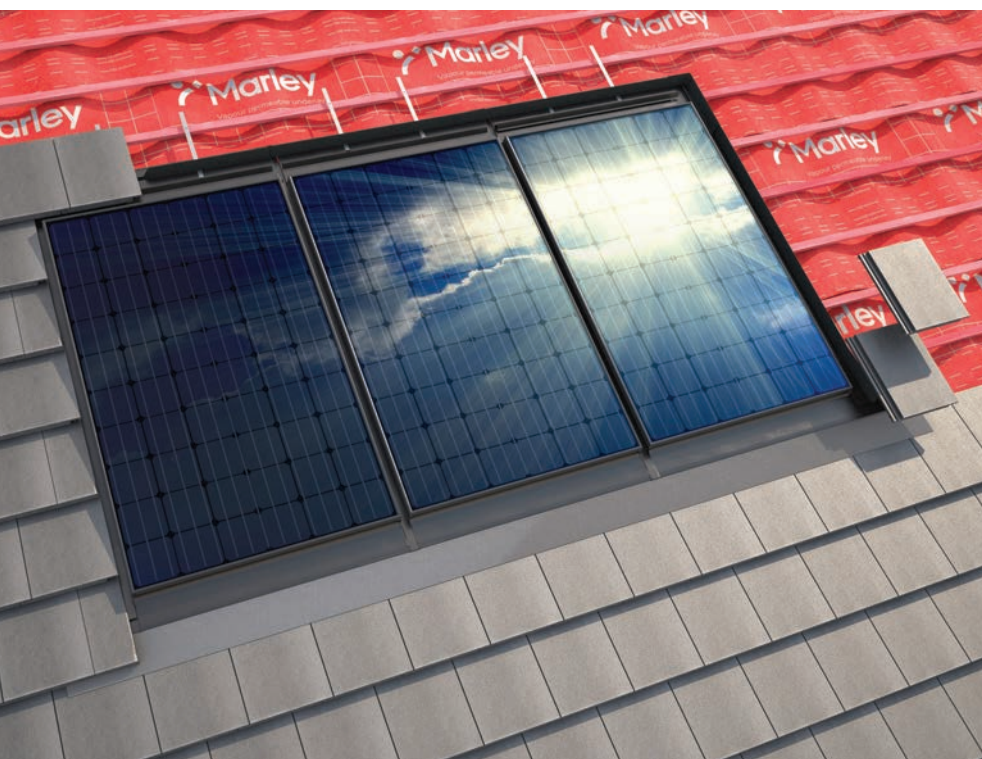
household electricity bill by over £250 per annum, as well as helping to drastically cut the homeowners' carbon footprint. As a result, in addition to other sustainable material solutions, solar panels could be an ideal answer for a self-build project with an eye on a greener future.

Solar panels are easy to install, as well as being a roof-integrated solution that comes with all the required components via an installation kit and a straightforward instruction guide. Self-builders can follow the clear steps that form the simple installation process: from securing the initial fixings, placing the solar tiles in position, undertaking a push-fit process for additional tiles, and finishing the install with final fixings and flashings.

With aesthetics a primary focal point when creating a new dream home, the good news is that solar panel systems are evolving and being finessed constantly to ensure they can sit seamlessly within roofscapes and are more attractive to the observer. As an example, solar panels can now be enabled as a fully integrated installation over a standard roof







construction, with 25 mm battens and a continuous functional underfelt that terminates in a gutter.

For those looking at retrofit, the integration of solar panels can also work seamlessly with existing roof structures by

directly replacing roof tile sections, and it is a quick and simple way to provide a greener and cost-effective energy source for any building project.

And, for self-builders seeking further assurances when it comes to roofing,

## *Banning fossil-fuel heating from all new homes is one part of a holistic move towards a greener future*

there are also benefits to working with a single manufacturer. Not only are project teams on hand to advise of the best solution in relation to sustainability objectives, but this approach delivers added assurances when it comes to compatibility of products.

Furthermore, complete roof systems that include integrated and aesthetically pleasing solar panels, offer the peace of mind that comes with long term performance warranties, as well as access to specification expertise during construction phases.

Stuart Nicholson is roof systems director at Marley

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# High performance glazing – the key to excellent thermal performance

Improved thermal performance is a priority for many self-builders and renovators. The aim is to create the ideal balance of light, heat and air (and to reduce energy bills) by eliminating the draughts, cold spots and condensation problems caused by inefficient building products and poor architectural design.

Achieving optimal thermal efficiency depends of a number of factors, not least the orientation of your home and the impact of natural light and local shade on each facade. As a result, the strategic installation of high performance windows can play a vital role in creating a comfortable and uniform temperature across the home, even in open plan designs.

VELFAC aluminium / timber windows and doors are specifically designed to help deliver the perfect 'indoor climate' by providing the ideal combination of innovative (and stylish) low energy design and high performance construction. The VELFAC system delivers:

- Up to 15 per cent more natural light through the ultra-slim 54 mm composite frame – the increased ratio of glass to frame also boosts thermal performance, as glass is a better insulator than frame.

- Impressively low U-values - standard VELFAC double glazed units meet most low energy targets, while also providing excellent acoustic control.
- Triple glazing for extra-insulated performance – offering U-values as low as 0.8 W/m<sup>2</sup>K, with added acoustic protection.
- No visual impact when combining double and triple glazing as all VELFAC units have uniform sightlines – mix and match to deliver optimal (and more cost effective) energy performance without compromising facade design or interior finish.
- Discrete ventilation – acoustic trickle vents fitted flush within the wooden frame control ventilation and reduce noise without impacting frame profile.

## CASE STUDY: SPOTTES MILL, SCOTLAND

Built on the site of a former grain store, Spottes Mill brings together traditional and modern materials in a highly distinctive new build home. VELFAC composite windows and doors are installed in every facade, with units also combined to create a full height corner curtain wall which brings maximum light into the open plan interior and frames beautiful views of the nearby Spottes Burn.

Spottes Mill owner, local businessman Mark Paterson, worked with architect Peter Sassoon on a design which emerged 'organically, although I knew I wanted a lot of glass,' says Mark. 'Architect friends had introduced me to the VELFAC system,' he adds: 'I really liked the external aluminium frame and knew it would look good against rustic stone walls and give a contemporary finish to a traditionally-styled building.'

When installing large areas of glazing, care is needed to ensure internal spaces remain comfortable all year round – which is what happened at Spottes Mill. 'Peter positioned the glazed screen so that it only catches the morning sun, to minimise overheating,'



explains Mark. 'He also overhung the screen with a metre-wide gable to provide added shade. The screen is made up of fixed units with trickle vents in the frames, which together with the opening windows, doors and sliding patio doors provide plenty of ventilation.' Triple glazing was specified for good thermal insulation, essential as Spottes Mill is built in a shallow frost pocket ('with swirling winds in winter' adds Mark), and it also provides excellent acoustic control: 'When the Burn is in full spate it's actually quite noisy,' he says, 'but inside the house you can hardly hear a thing'.

Design was also clearly important when creating Spottes Mill. Mark specified an anthracite grey finish for the aluminium external frames, making them stand out against the stone walls and western red cedar cladding while also linking to the slate and zinc roof. By contrast, internal VELFAC timber frames are painted white: 'We opted for a paint finish because the interior design already features wooden staircases, bookshelves and beams,' Mark explains. 'As the windows are also installed in white-painted alcoves, the white finish helps make the slim frames 'disappear' so that the emphasis is on the glass, and on the view beyond.'

## FIND OUT MORE

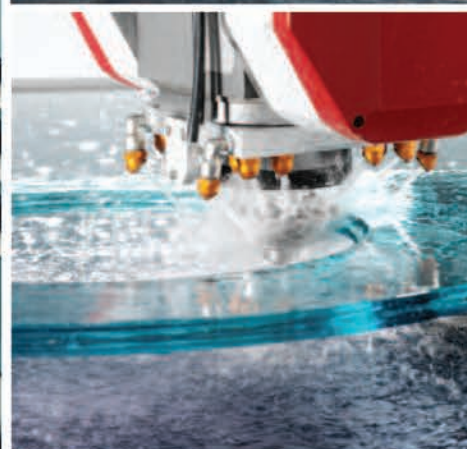
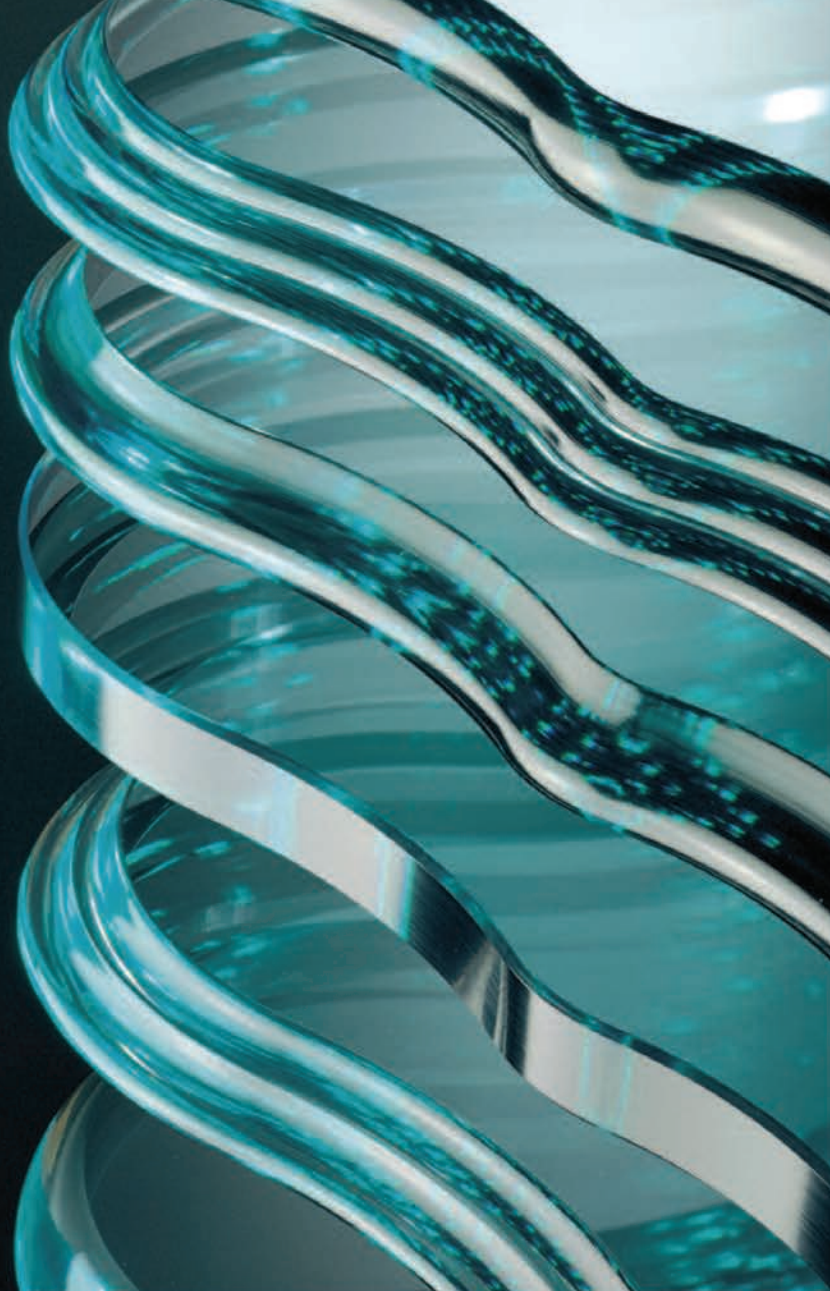
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# A signature entrance

Choosing the right front door is key to creating a good first impression and enhancing kerb appeal. With so many different products on the market, Stuart Shaw of Hörmann UK provides some insights to help self-builders make an informed decision

The entrance door you choose for your development has to satisfy many criteria; not only do you want it to look good and work in harmony with the style and design of the property, it also needs to provide the highest levels of functionality when considering security, thermal efficiency, durability and maintenance. Combined with a variety of material options and an ever-increasing choice of finishes and colours, choosing the right door can seem daunting.

Traditionally, timber doors have been the most fitted door type in the UK; while offering good insulation properties, they do require constant maintenance to ensure that this natural product withstands the British weather and stays looking good. PVCu doors, popular with the replacement and commercial new build markets, score highly in thermal insulation but they can discolour and warp over time. However, recent developments in manufacturing techniques and material design have led to aluminum and steel doors seeing a steady increase in popularity in all sectors as they offer durability and resilience, together with high levels of performance.

As caring for our environment becomes increasingly important, insulating a property has never been more relevant, and choosing a thermally efficient front door will help reduce heat loss and save money on heating bills. All new doors can now be tested for their Energy efficiency and given a simple A-G rating. A high-performance insulated door will have a minimum energy rating of 'C' and above.

Current legislation also requires that all new doors sold and fitted in England & Wales must have a U-value not exceeding 1.8 W/m<sup>2</sup>K (the lower level of 1.6 W/m<sup>2</sup>K applying in Scotland). The U-value of a door is a measurement of its thermal transmission properties, in other words how much heat is lost through the door. The lower the value, the more energy efficient it will be. The latest technological advances now see front doors manufactured from steel and



aluminum being able to achieve U-values as low as 0.87 and 0.47 respectively.

To protect property against unwelcome intruders, it is vital that the most advanced locking and security systems are fitted, with minimum requirements complying with Part Q of the Building Regulations. Entrance doors can be fitted with a high-security locking system and the profile cylinders which protect against manipulation. Increased levels of security can be provided by fitting break-in resistance equipment manufactured and tested to the latest British and/or European standards.

The way in which locks are operated should also be considered in terms of security and convenience. Although traditional keys are still most commonly used, there are a wide range of systems that are now available on the market that offer unrivalled standards in useability and security, with smart technology becoming increasingly popular. Radio finger scanners, keypads or remote-control transmitters are all designed to provide homeowners with exceptional levels of security, supported by apps

*An extensive choice of colours and finishes provides ample opportunity to experiment with a splash of colour*

which offer the ability to open the entrance door remotely throughout the property, whilst checking on the status of the door.

The specification of entrance doors relating to accessibility for domestic dwellings is covered by Part M of Building Regs. Compliance with the regulations means that where a front door is fitted to a new build property the door must have





a level threshold (minimum threshold height 15 mm), so that wheelchair users can move in and out of a property without a step. The entrance door should also be at least 838 mm wide. Renovations of existing houses or extensions do not have to comply.

Incorporating glazing features within the door or as side panels is becoming widespread and popular both in terms of aesthetics and to add light into hallways. Homebuilders should ensure that glazing is manufactured from multi-pane insulated glazing units incorporating

toughened or laminated safety glass to help protect against injury in case of accidental breakage.

Popular door styles range from the elegantly classic to more contemporary designs, and door manufacturers have been working hard to improve the overall look of front doors by offering more concealed hinges, pivots and streamlined handles. An extensive choice of colours and finishes provides ample opportunity to experiment with a splash of colour, such as a vibrant Flame Red through to contemporary greys.

Some manufacturers are now providing on-line 'Configurator' tools which show an overview of all their designs and finishes and allow the end consumer to customise their door in just a few clicks. The selected door can then be seen insitu by simply uploading an image of the facade of the property, truly providing self-builders with the chance to meet the individual design requirements of their project.

*Stuart Shaw is national field sales manager at Hörmann UK*



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## Neaco launches easy-order balcony packages



**Neaco** has launched a range of Juliet balcony packages providing easy specification and fast turnaround from order. They are ideal for renovations, refurbishments and projects which are subject to restricted timescales. Comprising a range of precision-engineered modular components, the glass-fronted Juliet designs feature a top rail in a powder coated aluminium finish which is non-chip and rust-free, providing permanent aesthetic quality and maintenance-free use. Their toughened

glass panels maximise sunlight penetration and provide an unobstructed view out. Each panel is subtly secured in place by circular support brackets (with no stanchions needed) providing attractively minimalist looks.

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When engineer, Ivan Semenenko, decided that he no longer required his former barn and workshop in the heart of the Cotswolds, he pondered a new life for the building. Ivan decided to embark on a project to transform the workshop into a beautiful new home. To create the distinctive steel windows and doors, he called on **Steel Window Association** member, Cotswold Casements. After having worked together on previous projects, Cotswold Casements was seen as the ideal partner. W20 sections, finished

with black polyester paintwork and double-glazed units, were used. Espagnolette fittings were introduced to the doors to ensure maximum security both at the top and the base of the units.

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## CASE STUDY



# SURREY SPLENDOUR

Darren and Juliet Milgate fulfilled their lifelong ambition when they self-built a stunning Georgian-inspired property, sandwiched between central London and the splendour of the Surrey Hills

TEXT JENNIFER GRIMBLE IMAGES PAUL NOBLE

Darren and Juliet Milgate realised their lifelong ambition the day work on their beautiful Georgian-inspired Surrey property finished. Located in the tranquil village of Kingswood, the magnificent house is set back from the road and stands proud at the end of a sweeping driveway.

"We'd lived in Raynes Park, south London, for years," says Darren. "But we wanted to move somewhere that offered more space for our money." After struggling to find anything locally, the pair turned their search to the commuter belt. "It had always been our ambition to self-build, and by selling our three-bed Victorian terrace, we could afford a substantial plot on which to do so."

After a lengthy search, the couple discovered Kingswood, which offered the best of both worlds. While being an attractive rural village, it had the added benefit of a regular train

*"We wanted the house to sit on the plot, rather than dominate it"*

service to London Bridge. "Its proximity to the M25 and the Surrey Hills was also appealing," says Darren.

The couple searched for an opportunity for three years, looking for either a property they could significantly renovate, or a piece of land on which to build one from scratch. "The search was extremely challenging," says Darren. "In fact, it was probably the most difficult part of the whole process. All the prime opportunities were

### LOW POINT

When the property was broken into. Despite a speedy recovery, the theft remained a real concern for us and when we locked up the next day, we were worried.

– Darren









snapped up immediately, while others were too rural, which compromised commuter times."

Finally, the couple discovered a picturesque two-bedroom bungalow that was both within budget and perfectly located. Offering a mature quarter-of-an-acre garden, it was also within easy reach of the train station. They opted to live in the property for a few years, in order to consider their next move. "We got to understand how the building, garden and sunlight could work together, if we designed the house properly," Darren explains.

### BACK TO BASICS

As well as its idyllic setting, the bungalow also benefited from having planning permission in place for a large five-bedroom development, but due to budget constraints, Darren and Juliet decided to amend the plans. "We scaled back the application to reduce costs, but also because we wanted the house to sit on the plot, rather than dominate it," says Darren.

Looking for a modern and efficient home that could be constructed in a short amount of time, the pair decided to commission timber frame specialist design and build firm, Benjamin Allen. "We'd subscribed to self-build magazines for years, gathering inspiration about build options and internal design," says Darren. "We were attracted to Georgian architecture and homes with lots of natural light and functional, open-plan layouts."

Benjamin Allen had previous experience of designing and building traditional Georgian farmhouses, while the timber frame method allowed for certainty of the schedule and cost. "People tend to overcomplicate things when self-building," says Darren. "So we wanted to go back to basics, using modern materials and well-established building techniques."

As such, the amended planning application

was relatively straightforward, and the couple had no difficulties obtaining consent. "Before we submitted the application, we also approached our neighbours and asked for feedback," says Darren. "We now appreciate how invasive the building process can be, so we were lucky to have such supportive neighbours."

### GETTING UNDERWAY

Once plans were approved, Benjamin Allen carried out the demolition of the original bungalow. "The beauty of working with Benjamin Allen was that we could contract them to do as little or as much as we desired," says Darren. "We wanted to be heavily involved and so we agreed to carry on with the work after the first fix stage, using sub-contractors."

Since Darren was keen to have a hands-on role, he took on project management duties, becoming responsible for everything from the budget to the deliveries. "It was always my ambition to project manage the build," he says. "I was attracted by the challenges, and ultimate rewards, of managing a self-build project."

Prior to construction starting, Darren approached various sub-contractors that had each come recommended by Benjamin Allen. "This was one of the wisest decisions we made," he says. "Hiring trades who had worked together before was a considerable benefit. They helped me, and each other, to plan the schedule and all had previous experience working on projects of a similar size and style."

### STAYING IN CONTROL

As a qualified accountant, Darren knew that financial discipline would be key to the success of the project, but one of the biggest financial hurdles came during the very first month of the build, when there was a significant overspend on

### EXTERIOR

The use of heritage-inspired bricks from York Handmade gave the facade a beautiful Georgian aesthetic

## HIGH POINT

When the timber frame was complete, you could stand on the ground floor and look up at the natural beauty of the wood. Every beam was cut and installed by hand – it resembled a cathedral-like structure.

– Darren Milgate





#### INTERIOR

The home's interior effortlessly blends traditional elements with contemporary design

The couple's stunning open-plan living area is the perfect spot for relaxing, cooking and entertaining

Extensive glazing, such as sliding doors and roof lanterns, allows for a light-filled interior and beautifully links the living space with the garden beyond

### DARREN'S ADVICE

The tap in our downstairs cloakroom is very cool and modern, but it's used by all our guests and many struggle with knowing how to work it. My advice is to keep things simple and consider how guests will use the house as well as yourselves.

the foundations. "Our budget was based on standard foundations, but building control and the house warranty inspectors (LABC) insisted that we dug deeper. It was an expensive but timely reminder that controlling the budget would be key."

The foundations were ready at the end of April, and by late June the timber structure was complete. "It took two months for the shell to be erected," says Darren. "When it was finished, before the internal insulation and boarding started, you could stand on the ground floor and look up at the timber frame," he explains. "Every beam had been painstakingly cut and installed by hand. It resembled a cathedral-like structure."

By the middle of July, the roof was on and the windows were in, which meant the property was watertight and the internal work could begin. Since the project was planned to take approximately 12 months, Darren decided to take a six-month career break for the second half of the scheme. "This worked out really well and allowed me to focus on the final part of the project, when key design decisions needed to be made."

The materials the couple chose were critical in ensuring the house had the traditional Georgian farmhouse aesthetic they were so keen to achieve. "Selecting the external materials took time," Darren explains. "For example, York Handmade Brick gave us a list of properties that had been built using their Old Clamp blend. We



spent weekends driving around south east England looking at them, to ensure we ended up with exactly the style we wanted."





## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

While the project ran fairly smoothly, Darren and Juliet did face a few obstacles along the way, the biggest of which happened one evening, after the house had been locked up for the night. "Someone broke in and stole the lead capping from the roof, damaging the patio doors in the process," says Darren. "Luckily we had Protek Site Insurance, which proved invaluable."

Despite the company being quick to act, the break-in remained at the back of their minds for the rest of the build. "It was a real concern," says Darren. "Every time we locked up, we were worried. It didn't feel very nice."

For Darren, project management was a highly rewarding job, but it also wasn't without its challenges. "I was responsible for deliveries to the site," he says. "I hadn't considered the complexities of this and materials would turn up on different sized lorries, with various offloading mechanisms. Some even turned up with no offloading facility at all!" Despite good access, the logistics of every delivery had to be planned and monitored meticulously.

Co-ordinating the scaffolding also proved to be a tricky aspect to manage. "I hadn't considered that each trade would require the scaffolding to be positioned at a different height," says Darren. "In order for everyone to work safely and efficiently, there was a constant

***"People tend to overcomplicate things when self-building, we wanted to go back to basics"***

need for compromise."

Another challenge came in the form of the chimney, which ended up being a complex part of the design. "I had no appreciation of the technicalities involved in designing and building a chimney," says Darren. "It's a dark art, but with the support of Benjamin Allen, our bricklayer, and a patient builders' merchant, we got there in the end."

Benjamin Allen was only contractually responsible for work up to the first fix stage, but despite this were always there to ensure the build went off without a hitch. "From day one, they couldn't do enough to provide advice and guidance. They were always available with 24/7 support and were quick to answer any questions," says Darren.

## MASTER BEDROOM

The master bedroom benefits from large windows and an elevated position, maximising landscape views across the garden



## Good indoor air quality with HPV



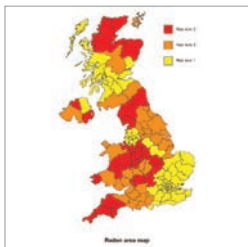
If you build homes which are super-insulated with superior air-tightness, then good indoor air quality with no formal heating system can be achieved with Heat Pump Ventilation. It provides energy efficient heating, cooling, hot water and heat recovery ventilation all in one system. Shortlisted in 2018 for a Build It Award, the HPV Series is PassivHaus Certified and great for off-gas properties. It was featured in 2019's GRAND DESIGNS: The Street series and has also been chosen for the

Build It Education House at Graven Hill in Bicester.

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0345 260 0123 [www.totalhome.co.uk](http://www.totalhome.co.uk)

## Taking action during UK Radon Awareness Week



**Airtech**, the condensation, mould and radon specialists, supported UK Radon Awareness Week (2-8 November 2020) ran by the UK Radon Association, by encouraging households to protect their lungs by being Radon Aware and taking action. This year radon awareness is more important than ever due the pandemic. "We are pleased to support Radon Awareness Week, especially since this year it has never been more important to protect the health of our lungs. With radon the

second leading cause of lung cancer in the UK after smoking, it is vital we make more people aware of the risks of this naturally occurring colourless, odourless radioactive gas", explains James Kane at Airtech.

01823 690 292 [www.airtechsolutions.co.uk](http://www.airtechsolutions.co.uk)



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## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

### TIMBER FRAME SPECIALISTS

**Benjamin Allen**  
[www.benjamin-allen.co.uk](http://www.benjamin-allen.co.uk)

### SITE INSURANCE

**Protek Self Build**  
[www.protekselfbuild.co.uk](http://www.protekselfbuild.co.uk)

### BRICKS

**York Handmade Brick**  
[www.yorkhandmade.co.uk](http://www.yorkhandmade.co.uk)

### WINDOWS

**Bereco**  
[www.bereco.co.uk](http://www.bereco.co.uk)

**Express Bifolding Doors**  
[www.expressbifolds.co.uk](http://www.expressbifolds.co.uk)

### STONE WINDOW SILLS

**Grecon Architectural Stone**  
[www.greconuk.co.uk](http://www.greconuk.co.uk)

### PREFORMED WINDOW ARCHES

**Keystone Group**  
[www.keystonegroup.co.uk](http://www.keystonegroup.co.uk)

### STAIRCASE & GALLERIED BALUSTRADES

**Woodbase Joiners**  
[www.woodbasejoiners.co.uk](http://www.woodbasejoiners.co.uk)

### ROOF LANTERNS

**Aluminium Roof Lanterns**  
[www.aluminiumrooflanterns.com](http://www.aluminiumrooflanterns.com)

### FLOORING

**One Wood Floors**  
[www.onewoodfloors.co.uk](http://www.onewoodfloors.co.uk)

The project turned out to be a full-time job and Darren and Juliet found themselves onsite almost every weekend. "We were involved in lots of aspects of the build, including painting the external open eaves and pointing the pre-formed brick arches," says Darren. "You shouldn't underestimate the time commitment involved in a self-build."

However, all their hard work paid off the day the scaffolding was removed. "We could finally see the natural beauty of the handmade bricks, the traditional wooden sash windows and the detailing of the open eaves," says Darren. "After weeks of driving around the country, it was a magical moment."

### THE FINISHED ARTICLE

The completed property is a stunning juxtaposing of tradition and modernity, heritage bricks and Georgian-style sash windows beautifully blending with a sleek, open-plan interior. The home's timber frame is referenced throughout, in the property's doors, staircase and natural wooden floors, while extensive glazing allows for a seamless flow between the interior and exterior spaces.

As well as five bedrooms, the home also benefits from a large, open-plan living zone that is perfect for family socialising. "Our favourite aspect of the house is the free-flowing kitchen and dining room," says Darren. "It has a real wow factor." Sitting at the centre of the building, the garden wraps around the room

and a large roof lantern allows lots of sunlight to travel indoors, making it bright and inviting no matter what the weather is doing.

The build was a collaborative effort, something that Darren believes was crucial to its success. "The whole project was a massive team effort," he says. "Juliet's mum lent us a second hand car, which proved invaluable for daily trips to the builders' merchants, while my dad, who's a carpenter, shared his general building knowledge throughout the design and planning stages and contributed to second fix tasks, too. His input was invaluable."

As for Benjamin Allen, Darren and Juliet couldn't be happier with their involvement. "They always had a duty of care and were part of the journey through the highs and lows, ensuring that we successfully built our dream home," says Darren. "It's been very rewarding to share pictures and feedback with them. We'd go so far as to say the project wouldn't have been the success it was without them."

Every now and again, a passer-by will stop and comment on how attractive the property is, something that reassures Darren and Juliet that every effort was worth it. "Positive feedback always fills us with an overwhelming sense of joy, pride and achievement," says Darren. As for undertaking another project in the future, this couple hasn't ruled anything out. "We've fulfilled our lifelong ambition and we're living in our dream home, but never say never!" ■





# solution

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# Fires & Fireplaces Showcase



## Solution Fires

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

## Stovax & Gazco

The Vogue 700 Inset woodburning fire from Stovax offers an industrial-style aesthetic, but with all the allure and elegance of a built-in woodburner.

The door handle is discreet and ergonomically engineered for ease of use, while a single air control lever makes for simple operation and adjustment to the flames.

With an advanced combustion system, this woodburner is also Ecodesign compliant, reducing emissions to a minimum, and can even be activated during installation for use in DEFRA smoke control zones.

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



## Ludlow Stoves Ltd

A stunning Purevision PV5W panoramic 5 kW wide stove that shares all the features of the PV5 with the additional benefits of accepting longer logs and greater fuel volumes.

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

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# DRU launches Virtuo series of contemporary electric fires



Virtuo 75 front model

**D**RU Fires, based in The Netherlands, is a leading European manufacturer of contemporary fires and stoves in gas and wood.

DRU has launched the Virtuo, a revolutionary, realistic electric fire with a unique 3D flame picture and a design and build quality that is the equal of its award-winning gas fires.

The Virtuo series is based on the design of the DRU Maestro range of high-end gas fires. They are glass-fronted with authentic log fire beds, realistic flames and a selection of front-facing, 2-sided and 3-sided models. The fires can be installed into false chimneybreasts or other architectural

features around the home to create complete, contemporary fireplaces.

## UNIQUE PROJECTION SYSTEM

Unlike ordinary electric fires, the Virtuo 3D flame picture is generated by a unique projection system that replicates the image of a real log fire, from the tall, dancing flames to the glowing LED fire bed and flying embers. The mirrored decorative glass interior further enhances the depth of image and there is even the sound of crackling wood.

There are three different flame variations, including special light effects that can be updated. In addition, there is a remote control and an exclusive

control app for smartphones and tablets with a timer and thermostat.

## SUSTAINABLE AND EFFICIENT

Virtuo delivers a cosy 2 KW output or it can be run as a purely decorative fire. There are no ribbons to twist or spindles to squeak and it is energy efficient with low running costs.

Commenting on the Virtuo launch, DRU UK general manager Niall Deiraniya said:

'Virtuo fulfils a real need in the fireplace market. Many householders are moving away from burning fossil fuels towards more sustainable home heating. Virtuo is also suitable for today's well-insulated properties that do not require an appliance with a high output, but still want the luxury of a beautiful flame effect.'

'For home builders and self-builders, Virtuo also makes a very attractive option, as it requires no chimneys, flue pipes or complex construction. Simply plug it into the domestic power supply and enjoy the experience of an atmospheric log fire.'

For further information and a brochure, please email.

[info@drufire.co.uk](mailto:info@drufire.co.uk) [www.drufire.com](http://www.drufire.com)



Virtuo 80/3, 3-sided model





# INTERIOR INSPIRATION: FIRES & FIREPLACES

As we head into winter, there's nothing better than being able to curl up in front of a warm fire, preferably with a comforting drink of some kind! Selfbuilders recognise the continued importance of creating a toasty centrepiece for the home, and the increasing need to burn in an eco-conscious way. This roundup shows how you can have it all...

2







1. The versatile **Ascot Lux Bioethanol Fire** from **Go Modern Furniture** is a fully portable, freestanding fire designed to sit in your existing fireplace. The fire is available in three sizes, with three different burner sizes, depending on the amount of heat you want and the room available in your fireplace. It's priced at £1280.

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

2. The **NEO 3C Log Storage Multifuel Stove** from **ACR Stoves** is designed to allow you to burn wood in smoke controlled areas. The product is made from high quality steel construction with a cast iron door and top plate. The stove is priced at £1890.

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

3. **Cuckooland's Imaginfires Anya Bio Ethanol Fireplace** is the perfect option if you have an old unloved, unused or blocked up fireplace that needs a little 'jazzing up.' The bioethanol fire emits no smoke so you don't need a working chimney to enjoy a real flame in any room of the house. It's priced at £199.95.

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

4. Fill your home with warmth with the **Le Feu Bio-Ethanol Fireplace** by **Beaumonde**. The easy to install ceiling fixed flueless contemporary fire from this Danish lifestyle brand runs on clean and smokeless liquid fuel. This model can be fixed to a flat ceiling, and is priced at £1399.

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

5. The sleek **Black Ground Low Bioethanol Tripod Fireplace** by **Lime Lace** is portable, making it perfect for apartments and rooms with limited space. It features a black iron dome and smooth Danish hand crafted legs. The fireplace is designed to burn eco friendly bioethanol fuel, and is priced at £1499.

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

6. Made in the UK, the **Firebelly FB1** from **Ludlow Stoves** offers a 6 kW output and will heat any large room or space. It's available as a single or double-sided stove and in a multitude of colour options to suit your interior decor. The FB1, which is available with brushed stainless steel legs, is priced at £1690.

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







CASE STUDY

# LOCALLY SOURCED

Carolyn and Chris Brown's dream house was right on their doorstep, but they still changed it beyond all recognition to create a very modern family home

TEXT & IMAGES HEATHER DIXON



*“You have to allow  
for some of the  
budget going into  
things you won’t  
necessarily see  
when the house  
is finished”*







When it came to the crunch, friends, neighbours and the local community meant far more to selfbuilders Carolyn and Chris Brown than a bigger house in a different street. "We wanted to buy our own place after renting for more than five years," says Carolyn. "We loved the street we were in, and the rented house worked for us, but the owner didn't want to sell – in spite of us trying three times."

They started looking for something else and, eventually, a similar property just three doors down from the one they were living in came up for sale.

Although it was the perfect solution, right there on their doorstep in the community they loved, it was by no means a perfect house. It was a dated three bedroom property, built in the 1950s, and relatively un-modernised. There was damp in every room, a tiny kitchen which was disproportionate to the rest of the house, a utility barely big enough to house a washing machine, and dated decor. The pantile roof was 'shot' and the pointing on the external brickwork was crumbling so badly that the whole house needed to be redone. The plot fared little better, with a tired-looking garden and a single garage with an asbestos roof.

Yet Carolyn and Chris were looking for "a project," and the run down property was just what they had in mind. They were the first to put in an offer (which was accepted) in May 2017 and then they carried on living in the rented house until they were able to move in at the end of September 2018.

The first job was to get permission for their plans to reconfigure the entire house and build a two-storey extension across the back. It took just 10 weeks, with no objections, for Harrogate Borough Council to give the nod, and building work began on 1 October. By this time the house had been empty for more than two months, giving Carolyn and Chris time to line up contractors and source materials ready for the first phase.

"The garden was cleared first," says Carolyn. "There was good access down the side of the house, so the builders could get machines and diggers to the back and any rubble and waste could be taken off site quite easily."

The garage was also demolished, with special care taken to safely dispose of the hazardous asbestos, which could not be recycled, re-used or put into an ordinary skip. The general rule with asbestos removal is to ensure that no fibres are released during the demolition, and that specialist masks and suits are worn to prevent inhalation of asbestos dust. Smaller pieces of asbestos should be placed in a bag or polythene sack as soon as they are removed and all asbestos should be wrapped in strong polythene before being collected by a company that specialises in dealing with hazardous waste. "It is best to leave it to the experts," says Carolyn.

With the garage gone and the space opened up, work began on the foundations to the extension. The builders immediately hit a problem. As fast as they could excavate the garden, the channels were filling up with water.

#### KITCHEN

The house has been extended across the full width of the house at the back to create a light-filled, open plan living and kitchen area

#### HALL

Everything has been replaced and modernised, including the staircase and hall floor

### LOW POINT

We were delayed by several weeks waiting for the delivery of the correctly sized beam for the extension, and the delivery of a fascia board which needed to be fitted to complete the roof – it was very frustrating

– Carolyn Brown





#### BEDROOMS

The layout upstairs has changed dramatically, turning the three bedroom house into a four bedroom property. All the rooms were stripped back to bare brick, re-plastered and decorated

#### BATHROOM

The main bathroom was the last room to be fitted out and was completed after the Browns moved in

#### SITTING ROOM

The family tends to spend most of the time in the new living-kitchen, but the sitting room is still a favourite for cosy winter evenings

### HIGH POINT

"Moving in and realising the house was living up to all our expectations. We also love the fact that we've been able to renovate a house in the street we've lived in for years. We've got the best of both worlds – a home we love in the neighbourhood we didn't want to leave."

– Carolyn Brown

A pump had to be brought in to keep the water levels at bay until the block and beam foundations could be laid.

At the same time, the old drains to the property were dug up and replaced with a new system. It was an unexpected cost but, as Carolyn and Chris acknowledge, it was necessary to reduce the potential for more costly problems further down the line.

"You have to allow for some of the budget going into things you won't necessarily see when the house is finished, but are crucial if you want to prevent things coming back to bite you at a later date," says Carolyn. "In the long run it's a lot more costly to carry out retrospective repairs than it is to invest in new systems at the time of the build, when contractors are onsite and access is easier."

Before the extension walls were built, a chimney to the side of the house was demolished which they believe was responsible for some of the damp problems. The walls of the extension went up without incident, creating a new living area running the full width of the house at the back.

Roof timbers were then craned into place and the extension made watertight with what a surveyor described as "one of the best roofs she had ever seen", built to a very high standard and highly insulated in the process. However, it wasn't achieved without huge effort and perseverance on the part of the roofers, who took two months to get it right.

*The surveyor described it as "one of the best roofs she had ever seen"*

"This was partly due to the fact that we were waiting for a piece of fascia board to be delivered," says Carolyn. "Without it the roof couldn't be completed. It was very frustrating."

"My dad was very keen for us to have good insulation throughout the house," she says.

"It was his passion and he encouraged us to install more than was actually required in the walls and the loft space. It was good advice."

The extension was fitted with bi-fold doors and skylights before the original external wall was demolished to open up the space between the extension and the old kitchen area. Inside the original part of the house, two reception rooms were opened up into one large sitting room, and the hall was redesigned to include a new staircase and wooden floor. The upper floor layout was also dramatically changed, with the original three bedrooms becoming four and the inclusion of both a family bathroom and an ensuite.

As part of the renovation, the whole house was rewired and replumbed and the old





windows, which were in a poor state of repair, were replaced throughout with a combination of aluminium and two-tone PVCu, along with the external and internal doors. On top of that, every room was taken back to brick and replastered.

All the utilities were redirected to a safe point in the garage, instead of coming into an understairs cupboard. "The builder was determined to bring everything up to date, and futureproof the house," says Carolyn.

"The only original exterior wall to remain intact was the front wall. Even that has been rendered with a lifetime guaranteed product that will only need pressure washing every 10 years. It took two weeks to dry properly but the weather was dry and hot so everything was fine."

Every part of the house was affected or changed in some way, whether it was the installation of new windows, floors being taken up, or walls coming down.

"There was no way we could have lived in it while it was being modernised. There wasn't a single room left intact," says Carolyn.

This was more than mitigated by the advantage of living close by, as Carolyn and Chris were able to walk down the street on a daily basis to check on progress, answer builders' questions, and stay one step ahead with ordering materials and fittings as and when they were needed.

By the time they moved into the house and the work was signed off in November 2018, they were £80,000 over the quoted budget of £140,000 – bringing the total cost of the remodel to £220,000.

"It's very easy to go over," says Carolyn. "The drains were an unforeseen expense and we chose a more expensive staircase and front

***"The builder was determined to bring everything up to date and futureproof the house"***

door than we had originally budgeted for. We also had the garden hard landscaped so it flows seamlessly from the house. We wanted to make sure we only did the jobs once."

The Browns moved in once the kitchen and ensuite had been fitted, but without the main bathroom. It took a further two weeks to complete and for the builders to finally move out. There was just one more major task required to pull the whole house together – the interior finishing touches.

Carolyn and Chris run their own asset finance business and didn't have the time – or, by their own admission, the skills – to create an interior befitting the new-look house. So Carolyn called in Yorkshire interiors company Furnish and Fettle to help them choose wallpaper, paint colours, soft furnishings, furniture and accessories that would complete their new home.

"I would urge anyone who is struggling with those finishing touches to employ a company like Furnish and Fettle," says Carolyn. "They take away the stress of having to make yet more decisions and prevent you making costly mistakes at the final hurdle. After all, we're not planning to move again in a hurry!" ■

#### GARDEN

An old apple tree is all that remains of the original garden, which has been landscaped to work seamlessly with the house and, in particular, the extension

## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

#### FLOORS (WOODEN)

**Howarth Timber & Building Supplies**  
www.howarth-timber.co.uk

#### FLOORS (TILING)

**Al-Murad Tiles (fitted by Marc Thorne Plumbing & Heating)**  
www.al-murad.co.uk

#### BUILDING WORK

**Mr M J Dobson Builders**  
www.mjdobsonbuilders.co.uk

#### KITCHEN

**Design House Interiors**  
www.designhouseuk.co.uk

#### BATHROOM FITTINGS

**EPS Interiors (fitted by Johnsons Heating & Plumbing)**  
www.epsharrogate.co.uk  
01423 324269

#### BATHROOM TILES

**Best Price Stone**  
www.bestpricestone.co.uk

#### STAIRCASE

**AW Moffitt Joinery**  
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#### LIGHTING

**AB Electrical Wholesalers**  
www.abew.co.uk

#### EXTERNAL FLAGSTONES

**GH Brooks & Co (Harrogate)**  
www.ghbrooks.co.uk

#### EXTERNAL DOORS & WINDOWS

**Concept Windows and Doors**  
www.conceptwindows.co.uk

#### GARDEN FURNITURE

**Barker and Storehouse**  
www.barkerandstonehouse.co.uk

#### INTERIOR DESIGN

**Furnish & Fettle Interiors**  
www.furnishandfettle.co.uk







# Greener to greenest with Green Homes Grant

Insulation and waterproofing specialist, Soprema, is urging specifiers to consider the sustainability of the materials they select for housing upgrade projects carried out under the Government's Green Homes Grant scheme.

The scheme allows home owners and landlords to apply for a grant of up to £5,000 per property to cover up to two thirds of the cost of home improvements that reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. Those on certain benefits can claim up to £10,000 to cover the entire cost of improvements.

The scheme, which applies to home improvements completed by the end of March 2021, is expected to lead to a significant surge in uptake of internal wall insulation (IWI), roof insulation and external wall insulation (EWI) for solid wall properties. However, Soprema has raised concerns about the possibility that less green solutions will reduce the

benefits of the initiative and result in additional environmental issues in the long term.

Roland Jackson, commercial director of Soprema explains: "Any insulation installation will provide environmental benefits by improving thermal performance but the reality is that some of the materials commonly used are made from non-renewable and non-recyclable materials that continue a cycle of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and waste.

"While these products are acceptable for use under the scheme, both specifiers and home owners need to consider the goals of the Green Homes Grant and choose renewable, recycled and recyclable insulation materials. These solutions provide all the environmental benefits of improved thermal performance, without any of the negative environmental side-effects."

Soprema advises that a woodfibre



insulation system, such as the company's Pavatex range, provides the ideal solution for IWI and roof void insulation upgrades. Manufactured from renewable timber and completely recyclable, Pavatex provides excellent thermal performance, with options for plasterboarding or rendering, and is also naturally breathable for a comfortable indoor environment all year round.

0330 058 0668 [www.soprema.co.uk](http://www.soprema.co.uk)



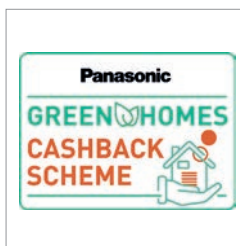
Image courtesy of John Knight Glass and David Godfrey Photography

## Authentic Crittall – The real steel deal

It's almost 200 years ago when **Crittall** pioneered the original, iconic steel window frames. Modified over the years to meet today's stringent regulations, hand-crafted Crittall windows, doors and screens undoubtedly add value to a home with bespoke, timeless, design for every application. World famous for minimalist, slim profiles and sightlines, the company's products are equally as popular today with people looking to make a statement about their property through renovation, new or self-build projects. Innovative development using steel has led to creative multiple-use options from room dividers to shower screens adding glamour and elegance. Cleverly dividing space and letting in light, acoustic properties make interior screens particularly suitable for partitioning kitchens, living areas, home offices and more, with glazing options to reduce noise and allow privacy. The company prides itself on its manufacturing expertise, using handcrafted, centuries-old techniques with skills and craftsmanship that can rarely be matched. Crittall windows, doors and screens are virtually maintenance-free, finished in any colour with galvanised, factory applied powder-coating to last a lifetime. A discreet plaque stamps Crittall authenticity and approval allowing identification of genuine Crittall products.

01376 530800 [www.crittall-windows.co.uk](http://www.crittall-windows.co.uk)

## Panasonic unveils Green Homes scheme



**Panasonic** has unveiled details of a new incentive for homeowners who install air source heat pumps in the UK; The Green Homes Cashback Scheme. Under this new scheme, which takes effect from 1 October 2020, homeowners replacing an oil-fired, LPG, electric or mains gas boiler will be able to claim cashback of up to £600\* via the Green Homes Cashback Scheme following the successful installation of a Panasonic Aquarena A2W heat pump with a connected Smart Cloud Controller\* (conditions apply).

The new scheme, available throughout the UK, will run at the same time as the UK government's Green Homes Grant (1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021) and is an additional incentive aimed at homeowners.

01344 853182 [www.aircon.panasonic.eu/GB\\_en/green-homes](http://www.aircon.panasonic.eu/GB_en/green-homes)

## Alumaflex® gains LABC recognition



As a slim and highly efficient thermal multifoil insulation, Alumaflex® is ideal for barn or loft conversions and in general timber frame construction. The proven, high performance product has UKAS accreditation and thanks to further investment by IPP (**Magply**), was also awarded LABC Certificate No EW 1045.

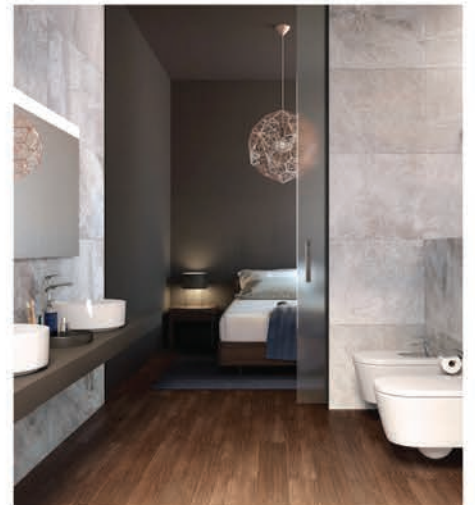
Alumaflex® is very versatile and installer-friendly, being initially fixed with stainless steel staples, before normally being secured

with battens to create a cavity. Alumaflex® can help architects and other specifiers achieve the highly sought after PassivHaus standard for airtightness and perform as a vapour control layer by taping the joints.

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## Sizzling Smokey Wood kitchen from Keller



This stunning new Smokey Wood kitchen scheme from **Keller** has been designed to ooze beautiful rustic charm in the heart of the home. The rough veneer, with smoked wood stain, is luxurious and adds a modern touch to this country style kitchen; while top quality manufacturing techniques make for long life and smooth operation. The handle trims in gun metal provide the finishing touches along with superb Keller pan drawer lighting and custom-made dresser and seating. Keller

Kitchens offers complete versatility; finishes comprise veneer, melamine or lacquered; while matt, silk, high gloss and structured lacquers are available in over 1950 NCS colours.

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

## Making concrete stain resistant

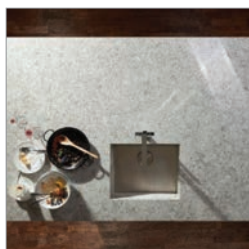


Introducing **Osmo** Concrete Oil, a clear, satin impregnation oil that is designed to protect and enhance the appearance of concrete, artificial and natural stone, screed and unglazed tiles. The finish is intended for use on wall panelling and flooring in kitchen and bathrooms, and on tabletops, windowsills and kitchen worktops. Concrete Oil is a microporous and breathable finish that penetrates the surface, rather than forming a film on top of it. This prevents the finish from cracking, peeling, flaking or

blistering. Once treated, the surface becomes water and dirt repellent as well as stain resistant. Osmo Concrete Oil is ready to use straight from the tin – it does not need to be thinned – it just requires stirring.

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

## Königstone's search for a fabricator



**Königstone** is seeking a new fabrication partner in the North West of UK to supplement the company's healthy growth and expansion. This is following on from the success of Königstone's debut presence at KBB 2020. Königstone supplies an impressive range of supreme quality kitchen surfaces with both a natural stone and elegant Quartz range. Recent developments include the innovative new Königsink and breath-taking portfolio of semi-precious materials for use in unique kitchen features.

The brand is already well established, developed and respected within the market and this step to offer Königstone slab to new fabrication partners will compound the company's strengths.

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

## Where quality matters



Devon-based luxury housebuilder, Bishopstone Homes, is currently creating Amberley Gardens, in Kingsteignton, Devon. Creating high quality homes demands high quality, reliable materials and Bishopstone has once again chosen **Norbord's** CaberDek flooring panels for the intermediate floors. Sam Bishop, managing director of Bishopstone Homes, particularly likes the strong film covering on CaberDek which, he says, "protects our homes during the build process and peels off easily to

reveal a clean smooth surface ready to accept floor finishes". "We use CaberDek on all our housebuilding projects as it is easy to work with and debris is easily swept off at the end of the day".

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

## The Supreme loft ladder



The 'Supreme' from **Premier Loft Ladders** sets the standard for loft ladders, combining heavy-duty performance with light-weight operation. It features a high-strength retractable ladder, suitable for ceilings as high as 4.6m. Furthermore, it offers superb thermal insulation and an airtight seal, therefore helping to maintain warmth in the home and reduce energy costs.

The sophisticated counter-balance system makes using the Supreme very easy.

However, it is also available with fully-automatic electrical operation for ultimate convenience. Visit Premier Loft Ladders web site to learn more about the Supreme loft ladder.

0345 9000 195 [www.premierloftladders.co.uk/supreme](http://www.premierloftladders.co.uk/supreme)

## Convenient and paper-free



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companies. Selfbuilder & Homemaker also offers monthly updates with the Editor's Choice newsletter, sharing content curated by the editorial team and newsletter, offering news on products, services and events.

[subscribepage.com/sbh](http://subscribepage.com/sbh)

## Claypaint transforms listed property

Paragon is a grand Grade 1 Listed Georgian Terrace designed by Thomas Attwood and built in 1768. Situated in Bath city centre, it is surrounded by period architecture. Guinness World Record holder and Britain's fastest snowboarder Jamie Barrow, decided to take on a slower challenge to fully renovate a two storey apartment in the terrace.

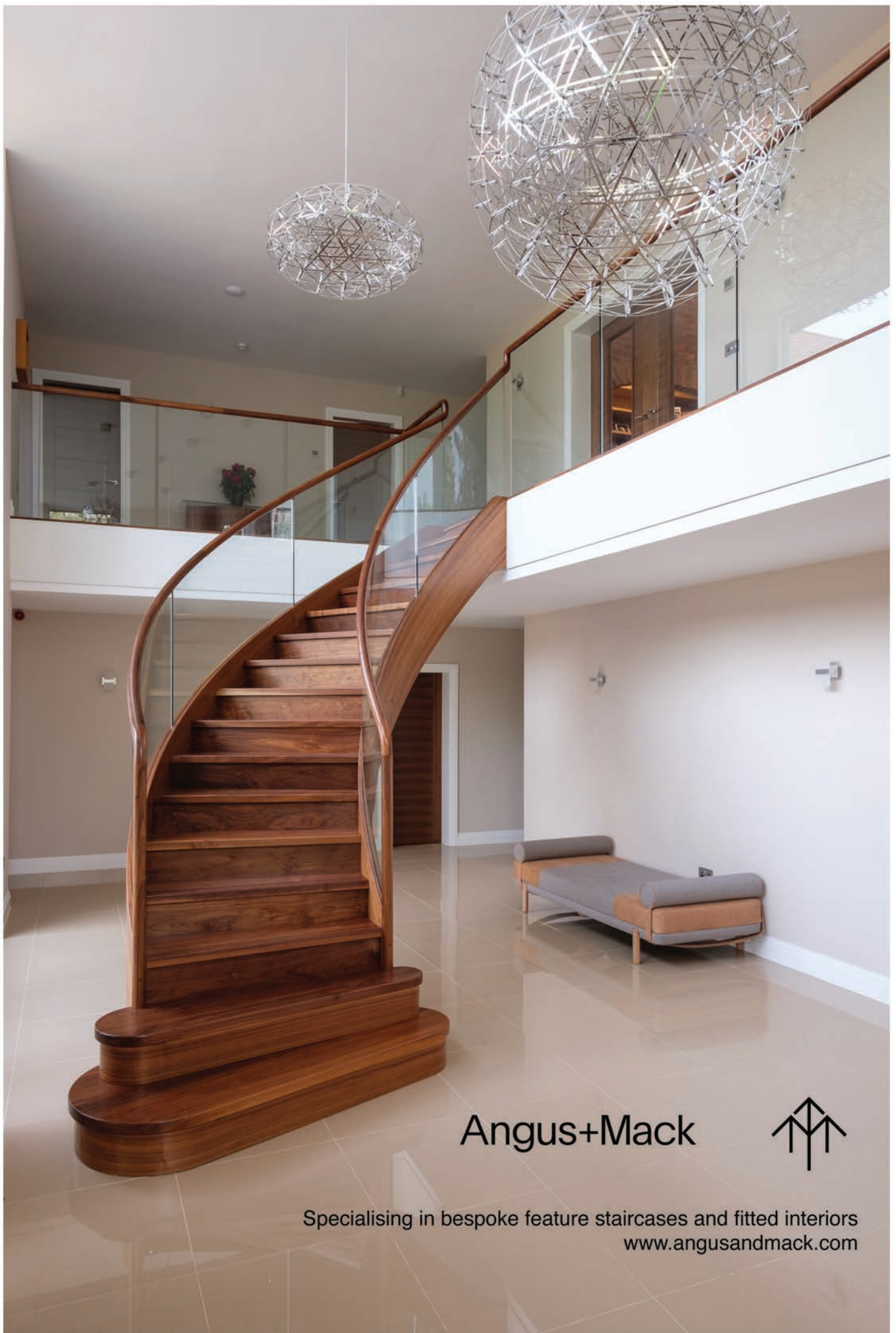
Jamie re-plastered the apartment in lime to ensure it remained breathable. He said: "In the basement of a Grade 1 Listed building, there were obviously some damp issues. As we were not allowed to damp proof these buildings, we had to use breathable materials, which is why we used lime plaster on the walls."

Jamie decided to use **Earthborn** Claypaint due to its high level of breathability, thick creamy consistency and ease of use. He added: "We initially used a lime wash as this is what was suggested but after many coats it just wasn't covering well. This is when I looked into what breathable paints are available and came across Earthborn Claypaint. I decided to give it a go and after just one coat it covered amazingly and gave a really nice luxury feel. That is why I am now using it on my other projects."

01928 734 171 [www.earthbornpaints.co.uk](http://www.earthbornpaints.co.uk)





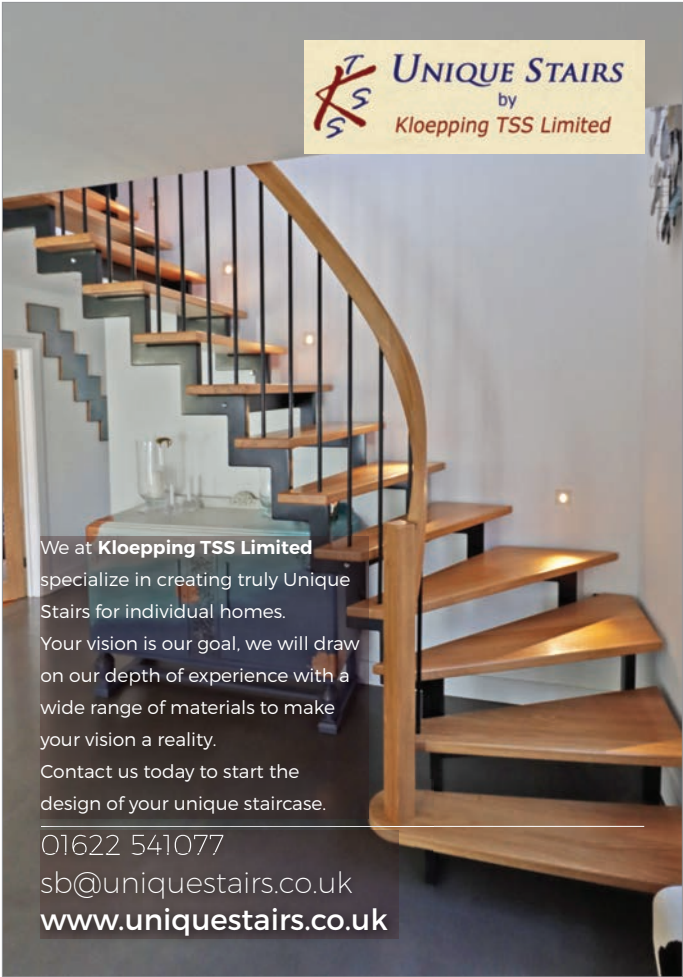



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# Vital steps to safety

Kevin Underwood of the British Woodworking Federation discusses why staircase aesthetics must go hand in hand with safety, and why too often design flair can compromise it

For many, the staircase is a central feature of any new home, and for self-builds it offers the ability to truly put a unique and personal mark on a property. So why is stair safety so important? According to the British Standards Institution (BS 5395-1:2010), trips, slips and falls on the stairs cause 500 deaths in the UK each year. Added to this, 250,000 non-fatal accidents take place on staircases in the home each year that are serious enough to require a visit to an A&E department or a doctor. When combined, this is the same as an accident occurring every two minutes on a staircase within the home in the UK.

## STEPS TO SAFER STAIRS

Safer stairs do not mean you have to compromise on design. At the British Woodworking Federation (BWF) we recommend that self-builders consider five vital design characteristics before designing and installing a new staircase.

### CONSISTENT RISE

When going up or down a staircase, the brain subconsciously judges the depth of each step based on the first couple of steps and movements made. This means that if each step is not consistent in its depth then the brain will not adjust to the change, making everyone vulnerable to trips and slips on stairs. To help prevent

accidents, the step rise should only vary by one per cent throughout the staircase.

### CONSTANT GOING

The 'going' of a stair (its width) can significantly affect a person's ability to travel up or down the stairs safely. If the going is 30 cm or more, users are less likely to overstep. However, if a staircase must be narrower, consider surface finish that offers high slip resistance to reduce the risk of an accident.

### GUARDING

Any potential fall over the side of a staircase presents a serious injury risk. For this reason, drops of more than 60 cm





© BWF Stair Scheme

should be protected by guarding. The material used for the guarding should be strong enough to withstand someone falling into it and high enough to stop anyone falling over it. For properties where children will be using the staircase, the gaps in the guarding should be less than 10 cm in width and height to prevent them from falling through.

#### HANDRAILS

Trips and slips on the stairs can often be prevented by providing something for someone to hold onto when they lose their balance – particularly for properties where vulnerable persons may be using the staircase. Handrails should be incorporated into the design at an early stage so that they can become an attractive design feature. The railing should be positioned where it can be easily reached at all points on the staircase.

#### SURFACE FINISH

The finish of a staircase can be the final touch for a truly breathtaking design, but it can also significantly influence the risk of slips. For example, a shiny varnished wooden floor will be more prone to becoming slippery in comparison to a carpet. The ongoing maintenance of the stairs should also be considered when selecting the surface finish, as wet and dusty surfaces, worn or thin carpets and various types of hard flooring can all wear differently and increase the risk of trips and falls.

Stair safety does not need to be a restricting factor on design creativity. In fact, by incorporating features of interest including handrails and guarding, unique staircase designs can be created to

*By incorporating features including handrails and guarding, unique staircase designs can be created to further enhance the focal point of any home*

further enhance the focal point of any home. The BWF Stair Scheme promotes best practice in stair design and has a wealth of information on its website to help you ensure that beauty and safety are carefully balanced.

*Kevin Underwood is technical director of the British Woodworking Federation*



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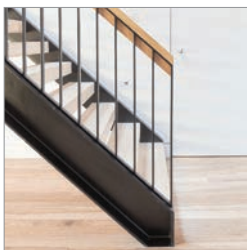
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**Flight Design** specialise in the design and installation of architectural features such as staircases, balustrade and bridges. We undertake work for both residential and commercial projects, working with architects and interior designers, as well as private clients. Working with a wide range of materials, we look to stretch the boundaries of both material and design, to produce fascinating structures. Every installation is bespoke, and carefully built to your specifications. We work closely with you

throughout the project, producing a full design package. Our experience with materials and processes, coupled with a strong design ethos, ensures a project with stunning impact, and beautiful proportions.

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## Stelrad launches Boutique series



Leading radiator manufacturer **Stelrad Radiators** has launched a new radiator series of existing and new radiators under its 'Boutique' branding. You'll find familiar and welcome products in the new Series – with names such as Caliente, Concord and Column – but equally you'll find new styles and names such as Como and Lecco.

The UK's no.1 brand in the radiator market is adding style and appeal to the kitchen and bathroom and adding colours and

chrome finishes to add to the sparkle. To find out more about the new Boutique Series, head for the new Stelrad website at [www.stelrad.com](http://www.stelrad.com) or at [www.stelrad.ie](http://www.stelrad.ie) in Ireland.

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

## Style and simplicity key



A new Prima® worktop Collection from **Formica Group** promises offers the ultimate in fresh, modern kitchens. Experts at Formica Group have opted for a quality-over-quantity approach, simplifying the Prima Collection from 52 to 34 core and on-trend designs, including 16 new worktop decors and 10 feature splashbacks. Light woods, warm stones and solid colours are at the heart of the selection, which draws upon intensive design research, complemented by detailed customer research and of course

knowledge and expertise from our own in-house design team. Nina Bailey, Formica Group design manager, believes the collection offers everything today's style-conscious homeowners are looking for.

0191 622 0106 [www.formica.com](http://www.formica.com)

## Oak Hill Joinery & Flooring expands



**Oak Hill Joinery & Flooring** was formed in February 2017 and specialise in manufacturing solid Prime grade American white oak skirting boards, sold in fixed 3600mm long lengths, also matching architrave sets and door linings

We decided in November 2019 to get our own workshop and fitted it out with brand new woodworking machinery.

Now one year on we have expanded our operations and moved two larger industrial units, and now have a more spacious machine workshop including a separate timber store, where all our oak is stored in the correct dry conditions

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# A staircase inspired by the sea

For a new home in the beautiful Constantine Bay in Cornwall, British Spirals & Castings collaborated with Jonathan Lees Architects to craft a bespoke helical staircase which draws inspiration from the curving patterns of a nautilus shell.

The property replaced an existing bungalow which stood on the plot. Whilst retaining the original ridge height, the new building introduces bedrooms on a second floor. The building designs called for a statement staircase linking the entrance hall with a mezzanine gallery above.

Jonathan Lees Architects developed the initial designs with the curved conical nature of the stairs reflecting the geometry of the nautilus shell and simple balusters representing the ribs. He then approached British Spirals & Castings to develop and engineer these plans through to the

finished staircase.

British Spirals & Castings are a family business located in Derbyshire. All our staircases, railings and balconies are design and crafted bespoke here in the UK. Through the use of computer aided design (CAD), we were able to quickly develop the initial concepts into the final design incorporating structural calculations.

The structure, balusters and handrail are all formed from steel which has been powder coated to colour match with other metalwork within the property. Both the fascia and balustrades should run continuously up the staircase and along the length of the mezzanine, creating a beautiful flow to the entire structure. The steel balustrade and handrail interconnects with those of the curved basement stairs that flowed under the main metal stairs.



The treads of the staircase are carved from premium oak which was bleached to match the finish of the white oak floor to the hall. The treads wrap around steel concealed steel supports, giving the illusion that they are floating over the metal structure.

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## CASE STUDY

# PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

By astutely saving up for over a decade, Chris and Linda Anderson had the time and money to re-configure their 1930s London semi to be exactly how they wanted, including a dramatic blend of indoor and outdoor

TEXT KAREN WILSON IMAGES ODC DOOR & GLASS

Taking their time has paid dividends for Chris and Linda Anderson, who were able to fastidiously plan every single element of their home extension, resulting in a relatively stress-free build.

"I wouldn't change anything, as we spent such a long time planning and putting together mood boards," says Chris, who has a furniture making start-up after working in the fashion industry for many years. "We even have a dedicated power socket for the Christmas tree – that's the level of intricate detail we're talking about."

After their daughter was born in 2004, the couple wanted to move from their Victorian terraced house in Haringey, north London, to a more family friendly home – even though it was a big step up financially. Their search area was wide, encompassing London and also Hertfordshire where they grew up. Eventually they found a four bedroom 1930s semi in north London that fitted the bill. "It was a probate sale and had been on the market a while," says Chris. "But it had a garage, decent sized loft and lots of scope to re-jig the interior layout in future. We particularly loved the 90 ft rear garden which fans out, giving the opportunity for a future extension that would still leave ample garden space."

Built by its original occupant, Chris and Linda were only the third owners and inherited a very dated interior. However they were in no rush to dive into major work straight away so initially focused on smaller quick fixes and cosmetic changes to make the house liveable. "We didn't want to end up in debt for the rest of our lives but didn't want to compromise either," he explains. "So we decided if we can't do it the way we want, we'll just wait."

To begin with, a wall was knocked down between the tiny kitchen and dining room, timber bi-folds were installed to replace the old metal sliding doors, and the hall carpet was ripped up to reveal the original oak parquet flooring. Moving the recessed side door out by three feet was another no-brainer, in order to make the outside toilet inside, and the greenhouse and pond were removed for safety.



### REAR EXTERIOR

By demolishing a raised terrace and excavating the sloping site at the rear, Chris and Linda managed to add a basement family room with extended kitchen diner above

## LOW POINT

"When we started excavating and discovered a huge three metre lump of concrete. We needed a digger with a breaker for a week, which cost significantly more. It was also bad timing to do the loft conversion in winter as there was water coming down the walls."

– Chris Anderson

*As the kitchen and diner were flipped around, they were able to fit a range cooker in the chimney breast*

During the intervening years, the couple saved up and made overpayments on their offset mortgage to gather the funds for a much more ambitious extension. This thinking time proved invaluable to solve the house's flaws. "There was plenty of natural light through the stained glass windows at the front, but the north-east facing rear was crying out for more," says Chris. "As there was no way of doing a sympathetic extension, we had to create a new modern aesthetic at the rear while keeping the front untouched."

Since it's a sloping site, the kitchen diner is at street level from the front door but opens out onto a raised terrace with basement storage at the rear. "There was no link between the house and garden, just stairs down from the terrace," says Chris. "So as we wanted to extend the kitchen diner by about three metres, it made sense to create an additional basement level









family room with direct access to the garden, otherwise it would have just been a huge void beneath. We didn't need to dig underneath the house, which reduced costs significantly and meant we could retain the cellar storage."

After seeing several architects, Chris chose Ana Alonso, who was recommended by a friend. "The first architect we saw was going to charge £3,000 to sketch some rough ideas before we'd even decided who to work with," says Chris. "Ana was happy to work collaboratively, didn't seem to have the big ego that a lot of architects do, and had a good relationship with the local planners. She also worked with a structural engineer to ensure our ideas were feasible."

As both neighbours had set a precedent by extending, the planning process was pretty smooth. The only tweaks were a slight reduction in volume at the rear. "Our basement family room was originally going to fan out with a diagonal back wall, but in retrospect it would've been a mistake as the TV would have been pointing at a weird angle," says Chris. And when the planners didn't want a wraparound terrace which could overlook the neighbours on one side, Ana suggested roof lights for the basement down that side, trumping Chris's idea of a living roof.

In March 2018, Strong Base Construction began work on the steel and block two-storey rear extension. "We naively thought we'd be able to live in the house, because we'd managed it when initially knocking a wall down," says Chris. "However when they started smashing holes in the walls for the steels on the first day, we realised it was a bad idea and very

***"The tradesman couldn't believe it when we asked him to slap the render on roughly"***

quickly found a rental property 10 minutes away so I could be onsite every day."

Unfortunately the main challenge came early on and was completely unexpected. "When rear excavations began, they discovered an excessively large three metre deep slab of reinforced concrete," says Chris. "An underground stream appeared soon after, which was diverted to the main drainage with a sump pump, and extreme tanking was needed."

The house's energy efficient credentials have also been boosted with extra insulation, and a new 'mega flow' combi boiler in the garage which powers the wet underfloor heating in the new rooms and a Heatmiser remote controlled zonal heating system. A wood burning stove was also fitted in the kitchen diner by specialist company Ash & Embers. "We considered a wood burner in the basement too, but if we'd had both on at the same time, the house would've become a furnace," says Chris. "In the future though, I'd like to have solar panels on the dormer and maybe a ground source heat pump."

#### KITCHEN DINER

Extending out by three feet with a trio of new roof lights above has given the couple a much bigger kitchen diner with seating area to make this new space the hub of the house

#### CHRIS'S TOP TIPS

- \* It doesn't cost proportionately more to go bigger, so be bold, and go as big as you possibly can
- \* Don't be scared to change your plans if it's not working. Yes it may have cost implications, but the most important thing is to get what you want

#### HIGH POINT

"When I came back from holiday to see the glazing going in. The idea that your house is now sealed and secure was such a magical thing."

– Chris Anderson





#### FLIPPING

Flipping the kitchen and diner around has given more space for the kitchen units, including a large fridge freezer built flush into a bespoke frame and a new chimney breast

To 'futureproof' the house, Cat 6 internet cabling has also been installed, along with a surround sound system in the basement. "It's easy to run wires around the room when you're building new walls," he says.

Thanks to past experience working for his family's construction business, Chris was able to fit the kitchen and bathrooms himself as well as laying flooring. As the kitchen and diner were flipped around, they were able to fit a range cooker in the chimney breast, although this was remodelled three times based on their changing requirements. A big American style fridge freezer was another must-have, but Chris sourced a surround kit so it wouldn't stick out.

"Having fitted about 20 kitchens I've seen what works and what doesn't," he says. "So we built a makeshift kitchen out of cardboard boxes, trestles and bits of wood to get a feel for it first. Then we chose solid oak fronts from a local company, keeping it simple and robust with no fancy pull-out corner units that could break. My daughter's quite proud that she chose the style and colour."

When it came to revamping the family bathroom, Chris and Linda kept the existing 1980s bath and sink as a homage to the house. "We quite liked the champagne colour, so had a shower tray made to match and added modern fittings," says Chris.

In October 2018, work began on phase two – a hip to gable loft conversion so the house wouldn't be too 'bottom heavy.' "We knew the original roof was falling apart and had ummed and ahed about converting the loft and



***"When they started smashing holes in the walls for the steels on the first day, we quickly found a rental property"***

replacing it," says Chris. "But it wasn't until half way through the main build that we realised the tiles could easily fall off and damage the glazing. That gave us the motivation to do it sooner."



#### OPENING UP THE BASEMENT

The new basement family room has an entire wall of sliding doors, plus roof lights at one end so it's flooded with light. Stone paving and wood flooring creates a sense of flow between indoor and outdoor



Having driven around the local streets looking for loft conversions in progress, Chris came across TLC who built the shell, while he sourced the glazing, staircase and ensuite fittings.

Once the eight week project was underway though, the couple decided to alter the layout. "We were originally going to have the bedroom across the whole width of the dormer at the rear, with the bathroom at the front," he says. "However that would have meant having a sloping ceiling in the bathroom, which I've always found annoying. As the view was phenomenal and we're not overlooked, we decided to move the ensuite to the rear and give it a full height window instead. We use a bedroom on the floor below as a dressing room instead of having walk-in wardrobes to keep the bedroom space as open as possible, and our old master is now a proper guest bedroom."

Chris believes using a specialist loft company was about half the price of a standard builder, although it was essential to be onsite to oversee the various tradespeople. "I couldn't fault them in the slightest, but trying to communicate the idiosyncrasies of my design was quite challenging as it's so fast-paced," he explains. "The first fit, second fit and third fit teams are all going from one project to another, so even though you've explained to the first team exactly

what you want, the second team doesn't always know that."

Throughout the project, Chris and Linda were careful to blend old and new, incorporating several features that differentiate the build from a typical flat pack add-on. For instance they commissioned a replica of the original staircase up to the loft and had the dado rails reproduced to create the illusion that the new top floor had always been there.

They also painted the original wooden windows to match the new aluminium ones, and decided on an exposed brick wall which runs alongside the staircases on the bottom two floors. "We saw something similar at the stable block spa at Babington House in Somerset, and thought it looked fantastic," says Chris. After much research, they settled on reclaimed Victorian red bricks with lime render rather than standard neat pointing, and this was repeated on the opposite wood burner wall to link the two spaces together.

"The tradesman couldn't believe it when we asked him to slap the render on roughly, so it looks like someone's ripped the plaster off," says Chris. "The end effect works really well, as it makes the house feel more solid and grounded rather than a huge plasterboard box."

One of Chris's favourite features though is the

## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

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**CP Lighting**

[www.cp-lighting.co.uk](http://www.cp-lighting.co.uk)

### EXTERNAL BRICK (RECLAIMED)

**Travis Perkins**

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

### PAVING

**Jewson**

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

### OAK DECKING

**UK Timber**

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



## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

### ARCHITECT

**Ana Alonso**  
www.facebook.com/ana.alonso.architect

### GLAZING

**ODC Door & Glass**  
www.odcglass.co.uk

### BUILDER

**Strong Base Construction**  
www.strongbase.construction.co.uk

### LOFT CONVERSION

**TLC**  
www.theloftconverter.com

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**TQL**  
www.tqlkitchens.co.uk

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**Hitt Oak**  
www.hittoak.co.uk

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**Ash & Embers**  
www.ashandembers.com

### STOVE

**Charnwood**  
www.charnwood.com

### ZONAL HEATING

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www.heatmiser.com

### INTERNAL OAK DOORS

**Oakwood Doors**  
www.oakwooddoors.co.uk

### UNDERFLOOR HEATING

**Omnie**  
omnie.co.uk

### INTERNAL BRICK SLIPS (RECLAIMED)

**Reclaimed Brick-Tile**  
www.reclaimedbrick-tile.com

### STONE HEARTH (RECLAIMED)

**Foras**  
www.foraswallsandfloors.co.uk

### MEGA FLOW WATER SYSTEM

**Ideal**  
idealboilers.com

### COMBI BOILER

**Intergas**  
www.intergasheating.co.uk

### FRIDGE FREEZER

**Fisher & Paykel**  
www.fisherpaykel.com

### RADIATORS (LOFT)

**Trade Radiators**  
www.traderadiators.co.uk



#### LOFT ENSUITE

As they're not overlooked, Chris and Linda were able to add a full height vertical window to the loft ensuite, making the most of the views over tree tops

low profile sliding doors by ODC Door & Glass that lead the eye out to the garden. "I had become frustrated with the timber bi-folds we'd initially installed, as you get a huge chunk of door to one side," says Chris. "You get better sight lines with sliding doors as there's more glass and less frame. The products we chose are fantastic and very competitively priced."

Work was completed just a few weeks later than anticipated in January 2019, and the end result is a well balanced five bedroom home which still has a large garden. "Without the previous terracing, it actually appears larger," says Chris. "And we've managed to level and turf the remaining space, with some heavy tarred sleepers acting as a retainer. I also like how the

front of the house gives no hint as to what's in store when you walk through."

Although the kitchen diner is the hub of the house, in the evenings the family are still drawn to the original front sitting room. In summer they spend more time in the basement room, where the occasional fox or magpie will often saunter in through the open doors.

However it's the loft bedroom, which Chris describes as a "revelation." He admits, "If we'd done it straight away, we probably wouldn't have been so bold with the larger portions of glass, which is what really makes it" Chris concludes: "I'd happily do another project tomorrow as I enjoyed the process so much, but I'm hoping this will be our forever home." ■



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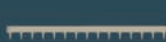
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### ADVICE & INFORMATION

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