

selfbuilder + homemaker

JUL/AUG 2021

MINIMISE BILLS, MAXIMISE ECO CREDENTIALS

Our expert from Ideal Standard answers self-builder queries on which products to specify to save water in the bathroom

Revitalising a Victorian home

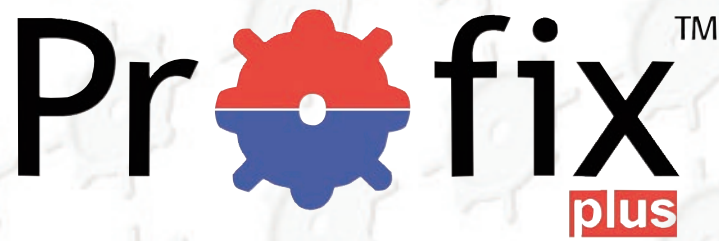
A London renovation created a family home for the future

Interior Inspiration

The hottest fires and fireplaces for 2021

Runway to heaven

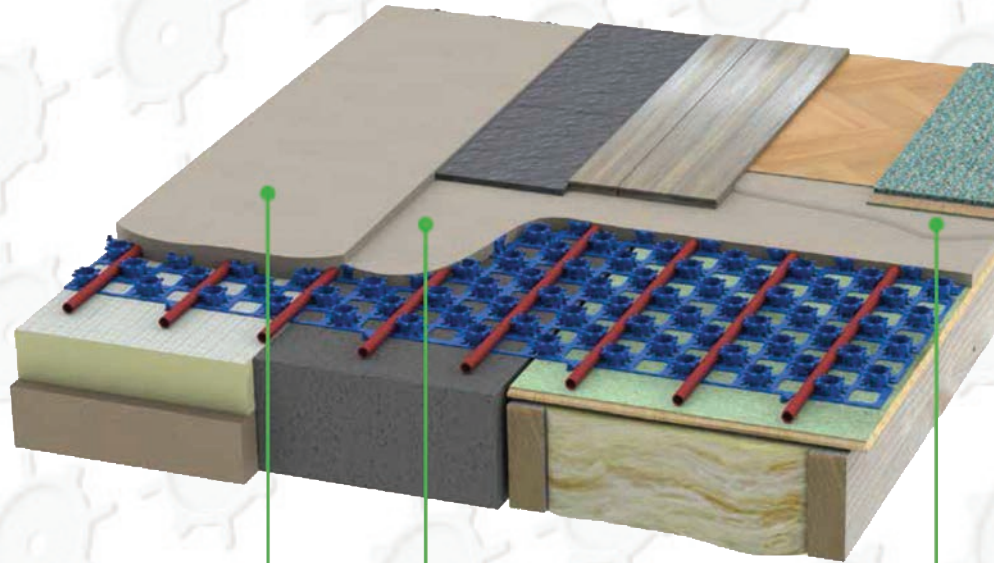
How a microlight enthusiast and his partner built their dream home on the Scottish airfield they own



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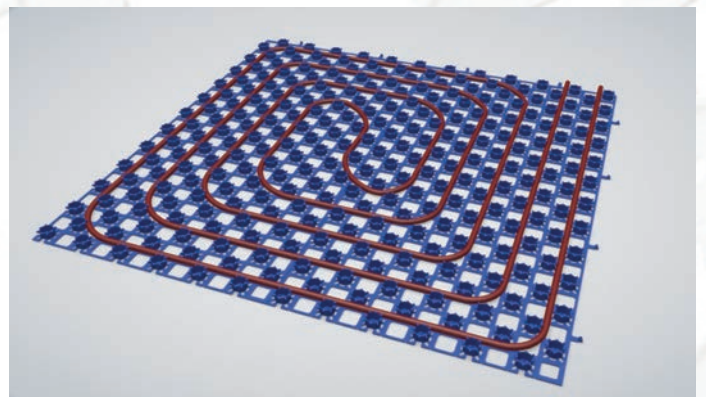
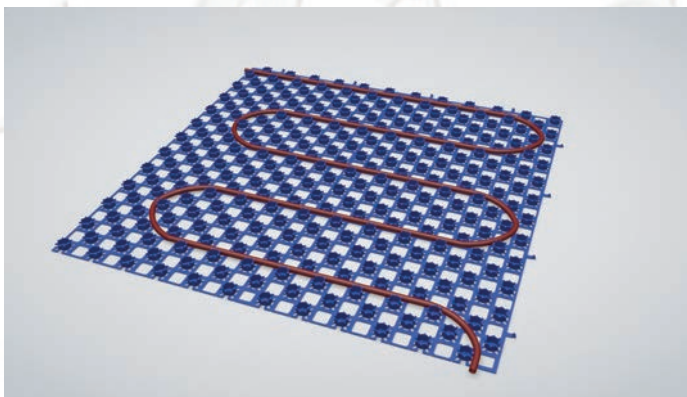
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FROM THE EDITOR...

Now that the prospect of England winning a major football final has receded back into the distance, life as normal can resume, which – er – means unlocking a country still full of Covid! However it has to happen at some point, and the Government has decided the 'least worst' option is to do it when the schools break up, so at least there's a chance that transmission will be minimised.

I'm sure that your build, if it has been underway in the past year or so, has felt the effects of the pandemic, although arguably construction has been one of the few sectors to escape its worst effects. As I've stated before, on smaller sites with only one or two builders, maybe there's a very slim chance of transmission, compared with other work locations.

However there are of course a host of other sub-contractors who need to be onsite, and products that need to arrive in a certain time window, for things to continue smoothly. To add to this, materials shortages – due not just to Covid but a handful of other factors – are rife.

We are soon to send out a survey which will ask you not only what you think of our content – including your views on the advertisements we run – but also your experiences of issues such as delays onsite in recent months. We hope you won't mind sharing (anonymously) some of your valuable insights – we are very grateful for your help.

The findings will help us continue to improve our content and ensure it's relevant to you, so do look out for the survey which should arrive in your inbox in the next couple of weeks!

JAMES PARKER



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

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First time lucky

Presented with the opportunity to do a self-build in his East Grinstead home's garden, Tim Lamont found it impossible to resist, and he enjoyed it so much he's already planning the next instalment

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A third of Graven Hill homes built using innovative 'modern methods of construction'

The UK's largest self and custom build community, Graven Hill, has announced that a third of the self-build homes built there in the past three years have used modern methods of construction (MMC), including both offsite manufacturing and innovative onsite techniques such as tunnel form construction.

With the Government having announced an MMC taskforce in its latest Budget to encourage the delivery of homes built using such innovative methods, Graven Hill said it "aims to remain a part of this important movement as it shifts into its next phase."

This year, one of Graven Hill's 'specialist suppliers' is on track to complete 25 prefabricated homes within the development. Since 2018, the site has seen a total of 34 self and custom build projects built using MMC. On average, said Graven Hill, they have taken two to three days to assemble and make watertight, and around six or seven weeks to construct and finish onsite, "considerably quicker than the average bricks and mortar home."

Each self-build project at Graven Hill has a 'Plot Passport,' which has been pre-approved by the local council. Now allowing for MMC techniques, the Passports outline the parameters and other key guidelines for that specific plot. Graven Hill claims self-builders following this method can get planning permission in just 28 days, "as opposed to the usual 8-13 weeks."

Karen Curtin, managing director at Graven Hill, said: "With the help of our specialist suppliers we have proven that prefabricated homes can be just as high quality and aesthetically beautiful as traditional homes. Offering both speed and affordability, MMC certainly looks to be the way forward for housing and we're proud to be part of the revolution."

Custom build new homes are also employing MMC at Graven Hill. A range of 'move in ready' new build homes are currently available, with many eligible for Help to Buy. The development is prioritising "accessibility" for different demographics, providing a range spanning two- and three-bed terraces to five-bed detached homes. "The flexibility and affordability of MMC ensures this can be achieved without having to compromise on quality," said Graven Hill.





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Self-builder scores rare win in tax case against planning authority

A dispute over a property levy which led to a landmark ruling at the High Court has been branded a 'warning shot over the bows' of local planning authorities by tax specialists.

Mrs Justice Lang decided in favour of a planning applicant over her local council at the hearing into a £16,389 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) demand, plus surcharges.

The case (Trent v Hertsmere Borough Council) revealed failures on both sides, but delays and mistakes on the part of the local planning authority were found to be the deciding factors, according to property tax specialist E3 Consulting. The firm said the ruling was "a clear warning to ensure paperwork and procedures are correct – especially for councils."

The dispute arose following the issue of demand notices by the council following the construction of a new home by Alison Trent in Radlett, Herts, whose planning permission was granted in February 2017.

The case centred around Ms Trent's submission of CIL forms – including a Form 7 (Part 1) self-build exemption claim – and the council's belated response. She began work without following up on the self-build application and didn't submit the necessary Notice of Intended Commencement. The issue only came to light after the development was finished in 2019.

The council issued CIL Liability and Demand Notices but these were dismissed by a planning inspector. A second notice from the council in 2020 was successfully challenged by Ms Trent via a judicial review.

Managing director of E3 Consulting Alun Oliver (pictured) commented: "This decision provides a timely reminder to all Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to precisely follow the correct procedures in any CIL matter – not least the requirement to act promptly – otherwise they could forfeit levy payments due."

Oliver added: "The vast majority of CIL appeals tend to find in favour of the local planning authorities. In this case there was a catalogue of errors on both sides but particularly from the council in failing to respond and demonstrate that the relevant CIL processes had been correctly followed."

He concluded: "Early advice is key to avoiding costly errors. Once work has started in the vast majority of cases it is usually too late and rarely results in a favourable outcome for the developer or homeowner."



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A MODERN CLASSIC

Holly Ghent of Pash Classics explains the various rules to follow when looking to bring the classically suave and stylish Mid-Century Modern look back to life, in any room or space

It's an interior style that is almost 100 years old, but since it first emerged in the 1930s, Mid-Century Modern style has rarely been out of fashion. Now, as it hurtles towards its centenary, consumer interest in the movement has never been higher.

Typified by clean lines, enticing curves and a striking use of mixed materials, the movement was born out of a desire for functional furniture that not only looked great but could be easily mass produced, ensuring affordable style was available to all.

It made household names out of designers Charles & Ray Eames, Arne Jacobsen, Harry Bertoia and Eero Saarinen, and their iconic designs –

although decades old – remain at the heart of many family homes.

On-screen, Mid-Century styling has become a staple of the TV and film industry. Setting the scene in everything from James Bond and Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* to *The Big Lebowski*, it's even the look of choice for animated families with the *Jetsons* and the *Incredibles* both inhabiting homes that are instantly recognisable as Mid-Century.

Like every classic design trend, getting 'the look' is part science, and part art. So what are the unbreakable rules and styles you need to follow to get the Mid-Century vibe in your own home?

FUNCTION FIRST

The Mid-Century movement emphasised the importance of function and form, so before you make a move, decide what the space needs to achieve. Is it a space for curling up with your favourite book or something more specific; a home office or dining area perhaps? Once you have decided how you want to use your space, finding the perfect furnishings is a lot easier.

CHOOSE A STATEMENT PIECE

Pick correctly, and a single statement piece of furniture will set the mood and tone for the rest of your space, perhaps even the rest of the home. And when it comes to 'standalone stunners,' there are plenty of Mid-Century pieces to choose from. Sophistication oozes from every curve of Charles & Ray Eames' iconic Lounge Chair and Ottoman. Resplendent in moulded plywood and leather, when it's not being used as a seat, it doubles as a piece of art. There is also Eero Saarinen's Tulip Dining Table. With its streamlined and seamless style, it slots



into any existing interior and instantly adds an element of laid-back luxury. Versatile and practical, it's just as at home being used for family dinners as it is swanky suppers.

GO POP WITH COLOURS

The Mid-Century colour scheme is dominated by neutrals and natural fabrics, browns, oranges and blues. Combining these with bright pops of primary colours is a classic interior design hack of the Mid-Century school. Feeling particularly bold? Add some brightly coloured Tolix-inspired bistro chairs around your dining table. Don't worry about sticking to one colour either – mix and max for impactful interiors. If you





The Mid-Century colour scheme is dominated by neutrals and natural fabrics, browns, oranges and blues

want something a little more subtle, but just as fabulous, consider a coat rack – something similar to the Eames Hang It All – in the entrance hall. Practical and fun, instead of traditional clothes pegs, it has multi-coloured bobbles from which to hang coats and has become something of a firm pop culture favourite. If you want to go all out, consider an Arne Jacobsen-inspired Egg Chair in bright pink or electric blue.

BE BRAVE WITH WALLS

It might be tempting to let your furnishings do the talking and leave your walls relatively neutral, but if you really want to seal the Mid-Century look, be brave and go big. There are no half

measures here. Geometrics in muted non-primary colours are the go-to. Think striking graphic patterns in those classic Mid-Century shades such as orange or brown, with perhaps a touch of lime for interest. There are plenty of options out there right now. Today's wallpaper design houses have taken inspiration from the original Mid-Century masters but thanks to advancements in digital printing can create striking designs in punchy colours that will really make your interior pop.

GO BIG WITH PLANTS, OR GO HOME

It's the movement that gave us the mighty Swiss Cheese plant, the Fiddle Leaf Fig and the Snake Plant – big leaved statement plants whose nature contrasts

with the rigid lines of the furniture and geometrics of the wall. It's all about function, colour and contrast, and while house plants bring a luscious and luxurious touch to your interior scheme, they are also favoured by Mid-Century fans thanks to their biophilic benefits. It is said that house plants, whether real or faux, can help boost productivity, aid sleep and reduce stress, as well as, of course, looking great.

Stick to these golden rules of Mid-Century styling and you won't go wrong when recreating one of the most iconic interior fashions of all time.

Holly Ghent is marketing coordinator at Pash Classics

1



INTERIOR INSPIRATION: FIRES & FIREPLACES

2



There are a plethora of products on the market to help heat your outside space as well as traditional interior spaces, with homeowners keen to blend interior and outdoor living. We round up some of the current options for creating a warm focal point, whether for the garden or a living room

3



4



1. Designed for woodburning only, the **Elmdale Multifuel Stove** by **ACR Stoves** is the contemporary solution for traditional large inglenook fireplaces. The stove offers an expansive view of the fire through the airwash-equipped, angled glass door. It features a premium grade cast iron firebox for durability and efficient heat transfer and a matching steel canopy to radiate heat back into the room. Price: £1895. www.acrstoves.com

2. The **Forno Outdoor Oven** by **Beaumonde** is much more than a grill – using the Forno, you will be able to cook tasty and versatile dishes. Now you can experience for yourself how easily delicious food can be produced – from steaks to smoked salmon, homemade

pizzas, or lamb. Priced at £999. www.beaumonde.co.uk

3. Heat up your home in classic style with the **VonHaus** standard-size **Portable Electric Stove Heater**. The stove heater heats rooms up to 53 m² and benefits from two heat settings – 925W and 1850W. Thermostatically controlled, the heater automatically switches on or off according to room temperature. The stove is priced at £77.99. www.vonhaus.com

4. **Cuckooland's Cook King Bali Fire Bowl** is available in three sizes, so there's a size for every garden. Hand crafted from steel, providing you with a built to last contemporary creation. Its concave shape prevents burnt wood and ash from

being blown around. Priced at £115. www.cuckooland.com

5. **Lime Lace's Stix Fire Pit** is a modern, bioethanol burning portable fire pit made of stainless steel. The Stix has an ethanol burner at its core that burns a bright orange flame without producing any smoke, soot, or ash. No chimney or flue required, thus there are no restrictive cables or gas connections. Price: £2195. www.limelace.co.uk

6. **Celeste Fire Pit** from **Firepits UK** comes in five sizes and is made from high quality British steel. Shown here with an optional long-legged tripod cooking rack. Original design handmade in the UK. This fire pit is priced from £130. www.firepitsuk.co.uk

Reduce your water footprint

Bart Sobieszczanski of Ideal Standard answers the key questions around how to specify bathroom products to maximise water-saving benefits, and increase your build's sustainability as well as cost-efficiency



When it comes to water-saving in the home, one of the main areas where we should be considering how we can cut back on water consumption is in the bathroom. A staggering amount of water can be wasted in bathrooms if more efficient products aren't used. For example, according to Waterwise, a ten-minute shower uses roughly 120 litres of water, but a low-flow showerhead reduces this by half to 60 litres. With options like these, self-builders are in a unique position to really reduce water usage, their environmental footprint, and utility bills.

WHY SHOULD I LOOK AT SPECIFYING WATER SAVING BATHROOM PRODUCTS?

When it comes to self-build projects, many people are choosing to build more sustainable homes, as they bring about fantastic benefits when it comes to reducing energy bills, and are also better protected against future environmental regulations. Often these impressive projects will include solar panels on the roof, advanced insulation, and even measures to make them completely self-sufficient. However, implementing technology and equipment to save on water usage tends to come lower down the list of priorities.

This is a problem, as the bathroom is one of the biggest contributing factors for water use in the UK home with the average home roughly using almost 350 litres every day. Creating an eco-friendly bathroom can also add value to your build, as if and when you decide to sell, buyers are prioritising sustainability more and more when it comes to choosing a new home.

Many premium collections on the market today feature innovative water-saving solutions within elegant designs



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A staggering amount of water can be wasted in bathrooms if efficient products aren't used

been expressed around efficiency and hygiene with half-flushing, however, some products offer innovative elements that can ensure a complete flush every time due to the unique distribution of water across the entire bowl. Choosing a toilet with clever design elements like this means there doesn't have to be a compromise between hygienic and environmentally responsible solutions.

HOW DO NEW TAP DESIGNS STOP EXCESS WATER USE?

Water-saving doesn't just stop at the toilet though. One of the big culprits of excessive water use is bathroom taps, particularly when you look at older bathroom suites. To address this, most new taps now limit the rate that water is dispensed to five litres a minute, ensuring that a plentiful amount is still released, without over-using water.

Another way to make sure that new homes deliver water saving benefits is by installing a low-flow tap in the bathroom or kitchen. Flow restrictors can help reduce water consumption by up to 50 per cent.

Overall, when approaching your self-build project, sustainability should be a huge consideration, and water-saving will be a big contributor to how environmentally friendly the end result will be. With the advancements in water-saving products across the entire bathroom industry, it is now easy to find a solution that not only fits with your design vision but also offers tangible benefits when it comes to your water consumption.

Bart Sobieszczanski is a designer at Ideal Standard, and general manager of the firm's London Design and Specification Centre

WHAT ARE THE GENERAL POINTERS ON SELECTING PRODUCTS?

Most fixtures in the bathroom now offer integrated water-saving features as standard but, as well as offering practicality, products also need to help you achieve your overall design vision. Water-saving products don't need to sacrifice design for the sake of sustainability – many premium collections on the market today feature innovative water-saving solutions within elegant designs.

Investing in high-quality pieces is also

important. A leaky toilet can waste between 200 and 400 litres a day, and a dripping tap can also result in over 5,500 litres of water wasted a year. Having well designed, well-made fixtures in the bathroom can lower the likelihood of any issues, save water and reduce maintenance needs for years to come.

WHAT ABOUT HALF-FLUSHING?

When it comes to water-saving in toilets, the half-flush function has been around for decades, with dual-flushes giving the option to use a smaller amount of water in certain situations. Concerns have often



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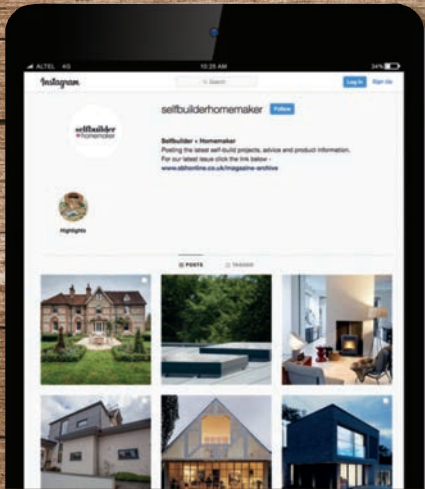
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Innovations for a self build project

The self-build market is an aspirational one, with many media titles targeted towards those people who are merely dreaming about building their own house. Unlike some newsstand magazines, Selfbuilder & Homemaker (SBH) has a focused readership of genuine self-builders, renovators and agents, reaching only the people who already own their land or property, have planning permission and are ready to start work. As well as the magazine, SBH has an established online presence. Its informative website is a one-stop shop source for all the latest press releases, providing visitors with access to information about products and services that they may require. A variety of features offer inspiration and practical advice, and each in-depth case study tell a unique self-build or renovation story from the owners' perspectives. From the website, you can also find a complete company directory that has live links to advertisers' websites. You can choose to subscribe to receive regular copies of the printed and digital versions of the magazine, or sign up to the monthly email newsletter. In addition, Selfbuilder & Homemaker has expanded its social media portfolio, meaning that you can now follow us on LinkedIn and Instagram as well as Twitter to keep you as informed as possible.

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CASE STUDY

UP, UP AND AWAY

When the daily commute became too much for a busy pair of air industry entrepreneurs in west Scotland, they came up with a way to avoid it completely: build a house on their airfield!

TEXT NICHOLA HUNTER IMAGES MARTIN LAMBIE





Colin Mackinnon and Marta Briongos bought Strathaven Airfield in South Lanarkshire 14 years ago and commuted from Glasgow every day to run it. As the airfield could be operating pretty much 24/7 from sunrise to sunset, Marta and Colin quickly realised they needed to be closer. "We thought it would be a good idea to move to Strathaven," says Colin, "then we thought it would be an even better idea to build a house onsite if we could."

Marta and Colin had already made a few changes and improvements to the airfield since they had purchased it, and as a result felt they already had a good relationship with the planning department. "We talked through what we were thinking, and they were supportive of our plans. However, then we had to decide who we were going to ask to design a house for us." The couple already had a few ideas of their own in terms of design as Marta had attended art school in Madrid, and Colin had always had a keen interest in art; they now needed someone to turn these ideas into a building. After researching architects from across the globe, they invited Richard Murphy, a world-renowned architect from Edinburgh, to come and see the site.

Asides from being a successful architect, Richard was also a microlight enthusiast and was keen to visit the airfield and hear Marta and Colin's ideas as Colin remembers: "The fact that he had this hobby did appeal to us, and when he



flew over to see us he instantly seemed to get what we were looking for."

One of the couple's stipulations was to have the main living space sited on the first floor, to better take in the views. "That came from life experience," says Colin. They previously lived in a top floor flat in Edinburgh and loved the elevated vista. "When we mentioned this to Richard, he shinned up the windsock mast and said: 'Yes, you're absolutely right – much better view from up here.' We very much liked his hands-on attitude."


Before their meeting Marta had also been working on a rough mood board, collecting colours, shapes, putting together things that they liked. "We gave it to Richard, discussed a few ideas and the next time we saw him, he arrived with his design; we hadn't even confirmed whether we were going to work with him or not!"

"At first I was thinking, where's our choice of three designs?," Colin laughs, "However, Richard came up with something neither of us could have imagined! It's a big credit to Richard that he actually listened to what we wanted, and then added a bit of magic dust."

The couple only instigated two changes to Richard's design. One was to make the car port into a garage with a proper door, and the second was to add a separate utility room as Richard had initially housed the washing machine in the bathroom next to the main bedroom. Colin and Marta decided this would be too noisy and located the utility room downstairs, in the room that was situated

HIGH POINT

"Literally, the highest point of the house!" says Colin. "We had to put the foundations in ourselves after watching a YouTube video! Marta was on a high in every sense when she inserted the final bolt at the top."



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furthest from their bedroom.

The final layout consisted of a sitting room, kitchen/diner, snug, main bedroom and ensuite on the upper level and three further bedrooms, utility room and garage on the ground floor. And, although agreement on the design and planning was relatively swift, achieving the build itself was slightly more complex, as Colin remembers: "We were stuck in the middle when it came to builders. You have firms that build timber frame houses and then you have firms who build office blocks and hotels. We were too different for one group and too small a project for the other." In the end they decided they had to project manage it themselves, to "bring together some of the contractors."

Even finding a decorator was difficult, as the interior was as unique as the structure. Features that the couple wanted to emphasise and stand out – such as the steelwork – they were encouraged to box in and hide. "Some tradespeople look at a drawing and try to relate it to their own experience rather than looking at the actual details," Marta recalls. "It was hard to explain what we were trying to achieve without being able to show them an example."

Some ideas also needed some serious head scratching in order to be brought in on budget, too. The curved ceiling is a case in point with the first version being quoted at £15,000 – which simply wasn't feasible. However, after lengthy discussions with their joiners a suggestion was made to use an incredibly flexible 6 mm ply with a 6 mm plasterboard, which could be sandwiched

Their architect was also a microlight enthusiast, like Colin – and was keen to visit the airfield and hear his and Marta's ideas

together to create the desired curved effect.

On the decor front, Marta's Spanish heritage meant that colour was going to take centre stage, as she explains: "I've been living in this country for nearly 25 years, and I still don't understand why people insist on using so much grey. Colour is so important, and Colin and I both love it. We aren't scared of colour and experimenting with it. Try a bright colour, and if you don't like it, just buy another tin of paint!"

The colours in the property are still evolving, with the fireplace only acquiring its vibrant orange hue more recently. And with so much greenery outside and an abundance of windows, experiments are still being conducted on how best to complement it. In some areas the couple have opted for a neutral backdrop with bold, colourful furniture and artwork, and in others the colour is in the main fixtures and fittings such as

LOW POINT

"The hardest thing was trying to get the build going again after a two-year break. Building up momentum and motivation was incredibly difficult."

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the red kitchen work surface and the orange bathroom furniture.

All four bedrooms have been designed as calm spaces which encourage sleep, and they have been kept deliberately minimal in terms of decor and furnishings. Any colour comes from the external views which are framed perfectly by the porthole windows. In the guest bedrooms, the only furniture is a bed and a bedside table. Storage comes in the form of small built-in racks for hanging clothes, and a few shelves plus a large cupboard down the hall for any overspill. This was because when most of Marta and Colin's friends and family come to stay they only travel with hand luggage. "Our guests spend their time in the main living area, they don't need huge bedrooms. A friend likened them to sleeping pods, which I think is very apt," says Marta.

Indeed, the layout throughout the property works incredibly well for entertaining, as Marta explains: "Pre-Covid when we had friends staying and the weather was rubbish, we were

stuck inside, and it was fine. The communal areas flow really well, it's easy to cook, easy to dine and then move through to the seating areas to relax and socialise."

Whilst the internal layout and its finish has obviously been carefully considered, probably the most stunning aspect of the design is the way the building sits in such a barren landscape. At the end of the airfield is Europe's largest onshore windfarm, but the rest of the landscape is more traditional, including old aircraft hangars. The aim therefore was to find a building that tied in with, and complemented both. The solution was a simple cantilevered steel frame with roof and wall clad in mill-finished corrugated aluminium, a material which resonates with the cladding of local farms and indeed that of the adjacent hangars. Fortunately, Richard's design resonated with both the planners and Colin and Marta, who all agreed that a modern, kit-built house would have looked rather bizarre in the middle of an airfield.

"Obviously, tastes are subjective," Marta continues, "I love coming around the bend in the road and seeing the shape of our house. I love how it changes in the light of the day and I love how from whichever side you look at it, it has a different aspect." As expected, Marta also had strong views on the colour and eschewed the traditional hangar green. "You see them in the landscape whether they're green or not, they're big sheds – so why not just make them more interesting?," she says. "When I see our house in this openness around it, it's like a big sculpture in the middle of the landscape, it's a piece of art. It was important to us that the house added to the landscape, it didn't need to merge, just as long as it added something."

CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

ARCHITECT

Richard Murphy Architects
richardmurphyarchitects.com

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TOP TIP

* "Accept that bespoke means you are the test pilot. Things will go wrong. It will be stressful. It will come close to breaking you. There is a reason why most people opt for tried-and-tested, kit-built homes!"

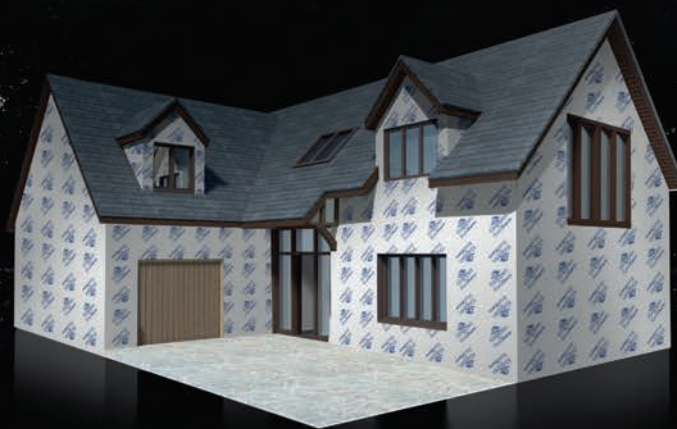
The finished result is indeed impressive but the journey to get to here was a long and bumpy one with a major setback that nearly derailed the entire project. The couple had been building for two years when their main hangar burned down, causing £850,000 of damage. It took five years for the insurance to pay out and during that time their house fund was used to keep the airfield going. This meant the project took roughly four years to build with a two-year hiatus in the middle. "Whilst it was tempting to abandon it at times, the frame was up, and the windows were in," Colin recalls, "However, it was incredibly difficult to get the momentum going again."

But get it going they did, and today they say there is nothing they would change about their unique home. During the planning process this couple thought through every conceivable circumstance in how they would use this house and this painstaking process has paid off. In that respect, Colin says that they don't really have a favourite bit of the house. "Our favourite room or area will depend on

One of the couple's stipulations was to have the main living space sited on the first floor, to better take in the views

the weather and what we're doing at that particular time. Each space reacts perfectly to its purpose."

"Building our home was a challenge, and now we've completed it, I don't think we'd do another one," says Marta. "However, I think that's because we can't imagine the need to build again. It's not just the house, it's our airfield, the community in Strathaven, it's a whole package." ■



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Action stations

If you're building a dream home away from it all in a beautiful countryside location, it may mean no access to the mains sewer; Dan Berry from Harlequin Manufacturing explains why packaged pump stations are a simple answer

If a pumping solution is needed on a property, due to it having no mains sewer connection, normal practice in recent years has been to build a chamber made from concrete rings, fitted with equipment including pumps, pipes, and valves. But this is very time consuming, and can create several challenges.

You can now get the same solution built and ready to be installed, in the form of a packaged pump station, which presents a much more efficient, cost-effective, and long-lasting solution. They save significant time and cost, being able to be installed very quickly.

A pump station is effectively a collection tank designed to transfer sewage, effluent or surface water to a local drain, private manhole or mains sewer when they are located higher than the domestic sewage plant. Pump stations are also used to remove wastewater from residential properties that do not have access to the main sewer; some homes are already connected to a private pump station before they connect to the main sewer.

Whenever the main sewer sits on higher ground than the domestic sewage plant, the sewage needs to be transported to the main sewer. This is where sewage pump stations come into the picture



HOW IT WORKS

A pump station comprises a large tank – also known as a wet well – that acts as the receiver for sewage from a house or a group of houses, until it reaches a predetermined level. The pump is located in the bottom of the chamber, activated by a float switch when liquid waste reaches a certain level. The waste is pumped through an MDPE pipe up to the outlet connected to the mains sewer. Once the liquid waste level has dropped below the float switch threshold, the pump stops. A non-return valve is built in to ensure that the liquid waste cannot return to the chamber once pumped up to the higher level.

TYPES OF PUMP STATIONS

Single effluent pump stations comprise a single pump, designed for liquid effluent only. They are often placed after a domestic sewage treatment plant to pump the treated effluent to a watercourse or field drainage.

Twin effluent pump stations consist of two pumps and a control panel. Twin

pumps can cope with much bigger amounts of liquid. They are often used for surface water on sites where ground conditions aren't suitable for soakaways, or for larger commercial treatment plant to pump the treated effluent to a watercourse or field drainage.

Single sewage pump stations comprise a single vortex pump, designed for solid and liquid waste. They are mostly used on a single dwelling or an extension, to pump sewage to a private manhole cover.

Twin sewage – Twin sewage pump stations use two vortex pumps designed to cope with solid and liquid waste. They also include a control panel. Twin pumps are mostly used on larger domestic dwellings or multiple dwellings that are discharging to the mains sewer.

Single grinder – Single grinder pump stations use a single pump, designed for heavy solids and liquid waste. They are often used to reduce the amount of liquid entering a mains sewer as the water authorities in certain areas are very strict about the quantity of liquid entering the mains sewer system.



SELECTING THE RIGHT PUMP STATION

There are a few key criteria that need to be considered while selecting a pump station that meets your requirements:

- Distance the pump/s need to travel in metres
- Uphill lift in metres
- Capacity of pump stations required
- Requirement of 24-hour storage to comply with Building Regulations.

PART H BUILDING REGULATION - 24-HOUR STORAGE

Part H of Building Regulation offers guidance on drainage including foul and surface water and rainwater, and sanitary waste disposal, including sewage structures and their upkeep. Approved Document H1 2.39 states that, "Where foul water drainage from a building is to be pumped, the effluent receiving chamber should be sized to contain 24-

hour inflow to allow for disruption to service. The minimum daily discharge of foul drainage should be taken as 150 litres per head per day for domestic use.


"For other types of building, the capacity of the receiving chamber should be based on the calculated daily demand of the water intake for the building. Where only a proportion of foul sewage is to be pumped, then the capacity should be based pro-rata. In all pumped systems the controls should be so arranged to optimise pump operation."

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Dan Berry is area sales manager at Harlequin Manufacturing




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VICTORIAN VALUES BROUGHT UP TO DATE

A family in London found the ideal Victorian property for a renovation project that would provide the space they needed – though it needed a major overhaul to the layout, plus some contemporary touches of their own

TEXT ROSEANNE FIELD IMAGES DAVID BUTLER





With their sons growing up fast, James Whyte and Tina Reiss were sorely in need of more space, but didn't want to move out of their beloved London. Finding a Victorian house in Finsbury Park provided an almost ideal solution, but something was still missing. "It hadn't been renovated for 20 years, and was clearly 'someone else's' house," explains James.

Despite this, they loved the three storey, 300 m² house; it was the right size, and they were drawn in by its "heritage and charm," says James; 'it had lovely features.' However, over time the layout had become "disjointed," says Tina: "the living spaces had become isolated from one another." They wanted to create a layout that would work better for them as a family, make better use of the garden, and ultimately make the house 'theirs.'

Friends had mentioned Levitate Architects to them, having used them for their own house redesign. "We'd seen the results and thought they'd be perfect for the task," says Tina, adding "I'm not someone who obsesses over interior design, so this was all new to me." The family were intending to stay in the house for the foreseeable future, so wanted to make sure everything was done right. Spencer Guy, director at the practice "quickly proposed an idea we liked," says Tina, so it was "a case of fine tuning that until we pinned down all the details."

When it came to deciding how to alter the

house, the family had a few priorities. "The focus was predominantly on the lower levels of the house," says Tina. It was important to them that the rooms would work socially but also give the family the space they needed, especially as their sons got older. "Our youngest was just born when we started thinking about all this, so we had to have a clear idea from the beginning," Tina explains.

They wanted a layout that meant if one of them was in the kitchen cooking or washing up they wouldn't be "cut off from everyone else," explains James. And while they wanted a home with a contemporary look, it was also important to honour the property's Victorian features, so they had a "constant presence."

Above all else, the most essential element for Tina and James was a strong connection to the garden. "We wanted it to feel like a part of the house so we could just walk right from the kitchen to the garden," says Tina.

Spencer developed their ideas into more solid plans; for example the playroom on the lower ground floor and work bench at the centre of the kitchen-diner grew out of "some vague ideas we initially approached Levitate with, in terms of a real social hub for the family and a space for the children to call their own," Tina explains. She adds: "I liked the way Spencer was attentive to the needs of our children as much as us."

The house isn't located within one of London's many conservation areas, but their scheme wasn't unusual or challenging in terms of its

HIGH POINT

"When it was finished and seeing the Japanese maple through our back windows as the project came together."

— James Whyte



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design, so they didn't face difficulties with the planners. "There was nothing too risqué or controversial for us to float with them," says Tina. "As a result it went through pretty smoothly." She credits Levitate with being a huge help with planning, removing the worry factor for them.

MAKING IT WORK

When it came to challenges however, the scale of the work needed meant the couple decided to break the work into two phases because of the costs involved. James admits this was "a difficult decision." Phase one included the renovation to the existing home, underpinning and structural steel work to prepare for the second phase. Phase two consisted of removing the floor of an existing living room at the back of the house, lowering the floor of this space to ground level. This created a double-height kitchen/dining area and the extension out into the garden provided the "all-important outdoor connection," in Tina's words.

The couple decided to install bifold doors which when fully retracted create a complete, open corner. "We love the way the inside is perfectly merged with the outside," James enthuses. They also included polished concrete surfaces both inside and out, to further blur the boundary between the two areas.

The final step to ensure the seamless transition for James and Tina was to have a sleek flush finish to the doors. They were warned by Levitate however that flush thresholds such as they chose can be problematic. "It's what everyone wants – but achieving it isn't as easy as

Spencer, director at Levitate Architects "quickly proposed an idea we liked" – Tina Reiss

it looks," says James. "You have to ensure the junction doesn't allow rain to blow in under the door." Luckily, this hasn't been a problem they have suffered, and he in fact says the installation was "fairly straightforward."

The kitchen design was key to the family's needs, of course. "We wanted to have a social kitchen, but it also had to be super functional," explains Tina. "The cupboards and storage space around the kitchen is the result of a lot of hard work by Spencer and the joiner Rob Vialle of Vialle & Co, who some friends had introduced us to." Tina went with him to visit a kitchen he'd worked on previously which gave the couple ideas for how to arrange several aspects of their design. For example, "it helped us get options for how we could maximise recycling without it being visually obtrusive," she says.

CONTRACTUAL ISSUES

The couple used one contractor for phase 1, but another contractor had to be found for phase 2,

LOW POINT

"Realising that we would have to do it in two stages."

– James Whyte



CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

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because the first had gone bust. The second main contractor was found on the recommendation of a friend, who then took care of finding the majority of the subcontractors. "We found a few, but they were mostly provided by our main contractor," says James.

Levitate remained involved throughout the construction, taking on a project management role, although the couple remained closely involved throughout. "It's one of the key things we found," explains James. "Even though they were managing the project, we still needed to make sure we make time to keep on top of the decisions that had to be made." They remained living upstairs while the work took place, which was ideal for making sure they were as involved and present as necessary. "It was nice to be able to keep track of things as they developed," James says.

Being there also proved useful on a couple of occasions during the build. "I was standing with the builder as they were pulling out a wall near the reading nook that they were going to rebuild and I made a snap decision not to rebuild it!" James explains. While onsite they also realised they would need more plug sockets than they originally planned for.

Work started in March 2012, and everything was completed by August 2019, and James admits that adhering to both the original budget and timescale wasn't possible in the end.

THE RIGHT LOOK

The original property being of Victorian heritage meant the changes James and Tina made

externally needed to be minimal to avoid compromising desirable original features. However, to include a contemporary touch, they incorporated a lantern skylight above the seating area within the extension, which has been finished with standing seam zinc cladding. "It adds a hint of modernism to the otherwise restrained external alterations," says James. They drew inspiration from various sources, including personal recommendations, a self-build trade show, and their own online research.

Internally they had more freedom to include modern features and achieve an overall contemporary look. It was also imperative that it was filled with light, says Tina. "Partly that is achieved by using large areas of glazing, but the semi-reflective surfaces of the polished concrete and the work surfaces really helps," she explains. They also wanted to ensure the open theme continued throughout the interior of the house. "We wanted it to be connected, so that whoever was cooking didn't feel like a scullery servant!" Tina says.

The new layout at the back of the home is more "ordered" than that of the original, the architects explain, which they describe as a "tangle of staircases terminating in the garden."

Entering the house from the front, visitors pass a formal living/TV room, while a study is accessed via a light-filled hallway, from which stairs lead up and down. Upstairs, the bedrooms have been fully renovated, though their layout remains unchanged. Descending to the lower ground floor, Tina explains the first thing you see is the Acer palmatum (Japanese maple) in the



garden through the windows. A seating area sits closest to the garden, with a large workbench used for food preparation behind it, and a playroom for their children behind that. "They're spoiled for choice – they have their own rooms, the playroom and the TV rooms," says Tina. "As it turns out, they prefer being in the main living space with us, doing homework or playing board games." Another set of stairs leads back up to the street level, via the study.

Tina and James had already installed solar PV panels prior to phase 1 to help the family live more sustainably. The redesigned home integrates further energy efficiency measures; they reinsulated the walls and installed a new boiler and a highly efficient underfloor heating which runs through the entire lower ground floor. The heating is weather-compensated to provide a stable temperature across each day and through all seasons, meaning the boiler "doesn't have to work too hard," says Tina. They also have food waste and worm composting bins in the kitchen. "We try to reduce our footprint as much as possible."

Overall James and Tina say they're "very happy" with the result, although she says "there are always small things that are so easy to overlook." One such example Tina highlights is that she thinks they could have installed more

The new layout at the back of the house is more "ordered" than that of the Victorian original

plug sockets, and repositioned the ones they do have. James mentions the concrete floor and Dekton worktops as particular favourite features. "There are little things that really make a difference," he says. "The way the angles of the room come together overhead is surprisingly attractive."

With the project complete, the couple are satisfied they're finally enjoying the full potential they knew the house had. On that basis, they intend to remain living in it for a while and another project isn't something James currently foresees. "It's not imminently on the cards for us," he says. "We plan to stay here for some time." ■

JAMES & TINA'S ADVICE

"Make time to discuss options with your architect or designer. Be aware that things will usually take longer than you think."



Collated flooring screw banishes squeaky floorboards for good!

Floor fitters and home owners alike will be all too familiar with the curse of squeaky floorboards. Time after time the culprit is the fasteners; nails working loose over time, leading to expensive callbacks and customer dissatisfaction. While it's well known that screws provide a tighter grip power by pulling the boards together, fitting 6mm plywood to underlay has long presented a dilemma. The conventional 25mm timber screws used to fasten flooring carry a risk of damaging underfloor electrical cables or puncturing water pipes, with potentially dangerous and costly consequences. The alternative use of 19mm nails, however, can cause the plywood subfloor to lift from the floorboards. Construction products manufacturer **Simpson Strong-Tie** has developed an affordable solution: the groundbreaking new 19mm MTHZ19E collated underlayment screw. Designed for Quik Drive auto-feed screw system, the MTHZ19E allows fast and secure underlayment to subfloor installations, with a sharp point for fast start and a trim head for a neat finish. Fasteners Sales Manager Natalie Dixon explains "The MTHZ19E can be used with timber joists, or to fix to steel up to 0.9mm thick – for example in the installation of computer flooring, and can be easily removed and reapplied if access required to pipework at a later date."

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Here's one they made earlier

Potton MD Mark Stevenson explains how the evolution of 'prefab' or 'flatpack' methods of self-building means the the assumption they prevent customisation is an now outdated one

When you think of the terms 'flatpack' and 'prefab', you might picture a certain Swedish furniture store, and probably recall stressful afternoons spent sifting through a box looking for component parts. You may not imagine that these terms can be applied to houses, and you may be under the impression that if you do buy a 'flatpack home,' you'll be required to completely assemble it yourself. Put down your hammer, because you'll be pleased to know that self-assembly it isn't.

These homes are made using prefabricated parts, so, technically, we're talking about flatpack homes here. However, a home partially assembled in a factory then finished onsite can also be referred to as a prefab home, so the two terms are largely interchangeable. The phrase 'kit home' can also be used to describe the same thing. All these terms mean is that some proportion of the building work on the house has been done offsite in a factory.

The offsite nature of flatpack home construction means that only certain types of building systems can be used, ones which lend themselves to some degree of prefabrication. Where a masonry home needs to literally be built brick by brick onsite, much of the assembly of a timber-frame or SIPs home is done offsite. This isn't to say that your entire house will be delivered on the back of a lorry, just that parts of it – the timber frame or SIPs (structural insulated panels) which make up the walls, for example – will already be complete when they arrive.

It's easy to understand why lots of people assume you have to build a flatpack home all by yourself; after all, you would if you bought a flatpack table. But as houses are a lot more complicated and require a lot more expertise, you can let the experts do it. The term 'self-build' is actually rather misleading here; while it's



true that some self-builders do carry out all the assembly work onsite themselves, they make up a very tiny percentage of the market. The majority might decide to self manage their project, or try their hand at a bit of tiling, or even take a completely hands-off approach and appoint a project manager. All of these people would still qualify as 'self-builders,' because being a self-builder isn't about how hands-on or hands-off you are; it just means you commission a

house that is not built by a developer.

CUSTOMISATION

Some people might be turned off by the idea of a flatpack home because of the myth that you'd be buying something 'off the shelf' which isn't personalised for you. A flatpack home might be 'off the shelf' to an extent, but the vast majority of companies who provide such homes offer their customers a substantial amount of customisation. In fact, buying a ready-



made kit home from a catalogue of pre-set floorplans and house designs is the exception rather than the rule.

With the huge increase in self-building, it's becoming easier to design a home that's right for you. Most people only embark upon a self-build project once, so you want to make sure you do it right, and get a home that fits around you, not the other way around. To this end, many kit home suppliers nowadays offer fully customisable design plans for you to work from. Or, if you know exactly what you want, a lot of suppliers even offer a fully bespoke design service. So, if you wanted to, you could design a home completely from scratch and still get all

the benefits of a prefabricated house.

The rapid speed of build is the number one reason self-builders opt for a flatpack home design. As you can probably imagine, the difference in the build times between building a house brick by brick and slotting together pre-assembled wall panels is quite significant. The full superstructure of a timber-frame or SIPs house can be assembled in around two to three weeks. There are also less potential delays when you opt for a 'dry' construction method like timber, compared to a 'wet' one like masonry. Weather plays no part in the speed of a timber-frame or SIPs build; construction can continue even through a downpour.

When you opt for a prefabricated design, you'll dramatically slash your project costs because much less time will need to be spent onsite, meaning lower labour costs and fewer site deliveries. This is less impactful environmentally and to your future neighbours too. As the panels are made and partly assembled in a quality-controlled factory, your risk factor will be much lower because there is much less that can go wrong than if the entire superstructure was built in situ.

It will also mean one company is responsible for all the build elements, rather than you having to rely on lots of different trades to arrive on time and in

You will dramatically slash your project costs because much less time will need to be spent onsite, meaning less labour and fewer deliveries

the right order. This makes flatpack homes a great option for anyone wanting to project manage their self-build project themselves, or just for people who want to remove as much stress as possible from the entire process.

Mark Stevenson is managing director at Potton



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The home front



What will you choose for your dream home's facade? Lisa Grosse of Cedral explains why fibre cement cladding makes a great choice, for both practical reasons and the aesthetic 'wow' factor

As well as providing protection against heat, cold, wind, weather, noise and fire, the envelope of your house contributes considerably to internal comfort. Construction standards are becoming increasingly strict, and you should factor this into your plans when looking at how to clad your project. Key criteria are durability over the long term, thermal performance and carbon footprint.

Options include timber, stone, vinyl, external foam, metal, weatherboard, fibre cement, concrete and glass, on their own or in various combinations. If you want to be in keeping with the surrounding houses, it's sometimes best to choose similar colours for the exterior walls. Or, if your property is on the coast or surrounded by greenery, you may want a look that fits with this natural setting.

There won't be one single design solution that fits all and individual circumstances will vary, but to help you choose the facade material that suits you best, here are the key points to consider:

- Are there local regulations or

restrictions in relation to colours, finishes or energy performance?

- What are the material's fire safety ratings?
- What are the material's eco credentials?
- What does it contribute to energy efficiency, thermal control and comfort?
- How does it add to the aesthetics?
- How durable is it?
- What is the cost (not only initial expense but whole-life maintenance)?
- How easy is it to install?

A DURABLE CHOICE

One of the trends we are seeing now is towards more natural products, including the use of fibre cement cladding. A strong, versatile and sustainable material containing cement and fibres, it doesn't rot, rust, warp or crack under extreme temperature changes.

It comes in a variety of textures and colours and has a minimum life expectancy of 50 years. Compared to PVCu facade cladding, fibre cement does not expand in heat. Wood can be affected by all kinds of weather conditions that may cause it to discolour.

Fibre cement uses fewer raw materials and less energy in its manufacture, produces less waste than some traditional building materials and is fully recyclable

Wood is also unable to provide the same degree of fire resistance as fibre cement materials, which can provide a fire classification of A2-s1, d0.



Fibre cement cladding is also easy to install and low maintenance – a wipe-down with a wet cloth is all it takes to look as good as new.

THINKING ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

Homeowners are increasingly thinking about the environmental impact of the products they use. Fibre cement uses

fewer raw materials and less energy in its manufacture than some traditional building materials, produces less waste, and is fully recyclable.

CHOOSING A COLOUR THAT FITS

Take into account the colour of your roof, your windows and doors, or even the surrounding vegetation as a starting point when making your choice. Also factor in the house's orientation and the amount of sunshine. Cladding a facade in fibre cement offers protection against the sun's UV rays and thanks to providing a second layer around the home, the structural elements of your house will not be exposed to harsh weather conditions.

A ventilated facade is often used for improved energy efficiency. With this type of system the facade cladding doesn't sit directly against the insulation but is separated by a ventilation gap which effectively protects the insulation against moisture. This enables rapid drying of external walls, reducing condensation and humidity. As insulation and cladding are separated from each other, such a build-up also provides fire, sound, heat and weather protection.

A VARIETY OF LOOKS

Light fibre cement colours are ideal for shaded or north-facing exterior walls.

They also help to highlight the architectural design, making the house look larger.

Shades of light and medium grey can provide a modern vibe to a house, giving your home a more contemporary look. Shades of green and blue will help the home fit in with nature, and whether in the countryside or by the sea. Reds, terracottas and ochres enable you to give your house a warm and original feel. Fibre cement cladding comes in a wide range of colours and the colour will stand the test of time.

Fibre cement cladding is available in weatherboards for a more traditional lapped style or in a flush fitting tongue and groove, providing the opportunity for a more classical or contemporary flat finish. Vertically installed cladding is a growing trend to create a sleek and contemporary aesthetic across the facade. There is also a range of visual design possibilities from combining different materials.

It's all about choosing the facade material that suits you best. And whether you have a modern or a more classic property, fibre cement can provide a host of options in terms of look, colour and method of application.

Lisa Grosse is brand manager at Cedral



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MASTER OF ARTS & CRAFTS

Thanks to years of experience in the construction industry, Howard Vaughan knew exactly how to transform a rundown Arts & Crafts house into a polished gem for his family to enjoy

TEXT REBECCA FOSTER IMAGES CARL BLANK



BEFORE

The roughcast stone exterior of the Arts & Crafts property was re-painted to give it a new lease of life





Howard's friend realised he'd bitten off more than he could chew with the renovation

Howard Vaughan has always nurtured a passion for architecture. "I've probably watched every episode of *Grand Designs*," he says. "I love the idea of designing and refurbishing a property." Howard, who runs three construction and development companies in North Wales, had always cultivated the dream of creating a bespoke home where he could raise his young family. However, it wasn't until four years ago that the right opportunity, in a place very familiar to him, came up.

"I used to walk past this 1920s Arts and Crafts house every day on the way to school but I never really knew it was there," he says. "There was a group of huge conifer trees in front of the building that pretty much obscured it from view." When the property came up for auction in 2017, Howard went to view it with a friend.

Though it piqued his interest, Howard wasn't in a position to take on a major project at the time. "At that stage I was more interested in the land adjoining the house," he says. "We came to a deal whereby we would split the property,

so my friend would own the house and do it up, while I would get the parcel of land that came with it." The pair went ahead with this strategy and planning permission was granted for Howard's company, Brenig Construction, to build four new homes at the bottom of the sloping plot.

The plan took a drastic change of course, however, when Howard's friend realised he'd bitten off more than he could chew with the renovation. "It dawned on him that it was going to be too much work. Some time had passed by that point, so I went round to take a look. By then, the time was right, so I jumped at the opportunity."

CHALLENGES & INSPIRATIONS

Howard knew he'd have his work cut out for him with the renovation. The state of the house left a lot to be desired, as it had not been upgraded in decades. "It was stuck in a 1930s time warp," he says. There were broken windows with frames falling out of place and some of the rooms weren't even hooked up to the mains electric supply. "You certainly wouldn't have moved your family in there! My wife, Leanne, thought I was crazy as we lived in a modern new build at that point – the opposite end of the spectrum to what I was taking on."

Despite the challenges the run-down house posed, there was one standout feature that Howard couldn't wait to make the most of in the redesign. "It has one of the best views in Glan Conwy. It looks straight down the estuary and across to the mountains on one side and over

EXTERIOR

The flat roof form of the extension helps to distinguish it from the original property. The cedar cladding that has been used on the first floor will weather to an attractive shade of silver over time

LOW POINT

"We had a six-week delay on the delivery of aluminium-frame glazing for the extension. It was painful because it really hit the build programme hard."



© Carl Blank

BALCONY VIEWS

The master suite has its own balcony, giving a holiday-style feel and great views

HIGH POINT

"The best moment was finally getting to see the area for the new family room once we'd taken out the walls of the original property. It was at that point you could actually get a feel for the space."

Conwy Castle on the other," he says. "You've probably got 270 degrees of amazing views." The property's convenient location within walking distance of the village was another major draw.

Howard called on Harry Reece of Base Architecture + Design to draw up plans for the renovation. As well as revitalising the Arts & Crafts house by bringing it up to modern standards, Howard was keen to maximise the views by adding a side extension. "I knew that by extending sideways, I'd be adding more rooms that could take in the breathtaking outlook."

Howard worked closely with the architect to develop a detailed design brief. "We came up with what was essentially a shopping list for Howard's aspirations," says Harry, who's a director at the practice. "Next, we looked at the footprint of the building to see how we could incorporate those elements alongside the panoramic views."

DRAWING UP THE PLANS

Initially, the design strategy for the project aimed to create an extension that would be in keeping with the existing house. "However, the conservation team in Conwy had some concerns about that approach," says Harry. "They said that ultimately, they'd prefer something more contemporary rather than us trying to replicate the style of what was already there."

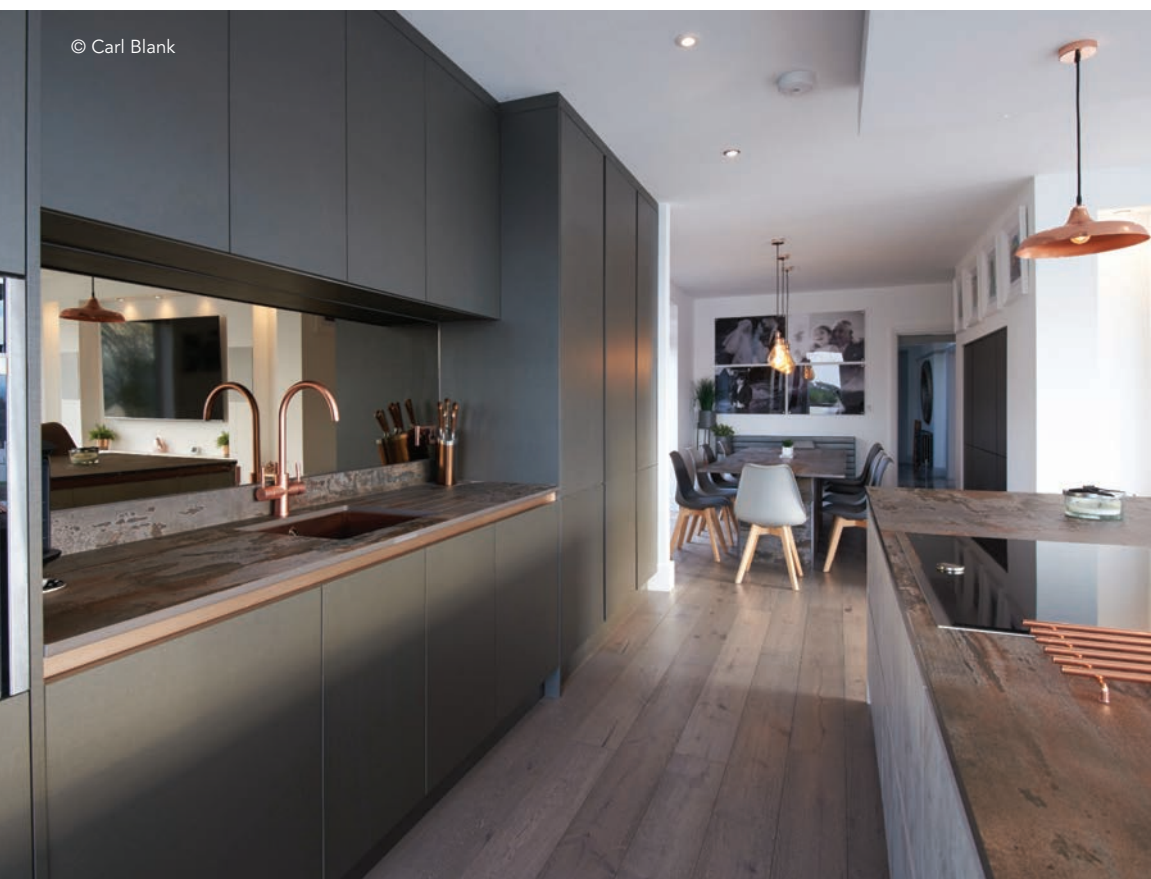
With that advice, Howard withdrew the initial planning application and went back to the design drawing board. This time, he and Harry

"It was a case of getting the steels into the right place before we could take down the walls below" – Howard

came up with a design for a modern two-storey extension that would contrast from the existing property, making it easier to distinguish old from new. "That's when we came up with the idea to have a flat roof cedar-clad modern extension bolted onto the side of the existing Arts & Crafts property," says Howard. "We took all the comments on board, so when we went back into planning with that design there were no objections."

CONSTRUCTION JOURNEY

With his years of experience in the construction industry, it made sense for Howard to take on the project management duties himself. "Although I've been involved in construction for years, typically I am offsite running the company rather than the day-to-day work onsite," he says. "This project gave me an opportunity to roll back the years and get



involved in the detail of the build. I got a lot out of it, too – you're always learning new things when you work in construction."

Howard's company, Brenig Homes, was brought in to build the extension and tackle the refurb of the existing house. "They were already working on the adjoining land that had been split off from the house, which was a bonus," says Howard. Although a lot of work was needed to bring the existing property up to standard, Howard was keen to keep as many original elements as possible to retain the house's charm. New double-glazed windows were installed throughout, as well as an efficient central heating system.

Relatively little work was needed to bring other exterior elements up to standard. "The original property has an ascending roof, which means it has small tiles graduating up into larger tiles across the whole surface. The roofer said we'd do more damage in trying to alter it, as it was still in fantastic condition," says Howard. "We did the re-leading in some areas. We also jet washed the roughcast stone exterior to clear away years of grime. Then we added a lick of paint to freshen everything up."

One of the most challenging parts of the construction was tying the original property into the new extension, which is formed of a block structure on the ground floor with a timber framework above. Some robust structural steelwork was required, too, to support the large open-plan family area on the ground floor of the addition. "We got the blockwork up on the ground floor and then punched holes through into the existing building that we could rest the

steelwork on," says Howard. They then built "about three quarters" of the upstairs structure before knocking down the original gable end wall of the house to tie the new extension in. "We had to support the roof as well, so it was a case of getting the steels into the right place before we could take down the walls below."

THE FINISHED PRODUCT

Despite some of the construction challenges the team faced along the way, the build was completed swiftly and without any major issues. Part-way through the build, Howard decided to take the plunge and incorporate a variety of smart features. "It did take me a bit over budget, but I knew I wasn't going to be doing a project like this again for a while, so I may as well put the smart tech infrastructure in while I could," he says.

Howard opted for a Control4 system incorporating audio-visual, music, home security and lighting. "Everything is controlled from the same hub, which links to our voice assistant. You tell Alexa whatever you want to do, and the system will do it," he says. "If we want to wake up the kids, for instance, it'll open their blinds automatically and turn on music and lights in their bedrooms."

In terms of the interior fit-out, Howard was keen to create some distinction between the original parts of the house and the extension. Though the revamped Arts & Crafts side of the house comes with buckets of traditional charm, the open-plan family area in the extension is the star of the show. "As you come round the corner into the kitchen-diner, you've got huge

KITCHEN-DINER

The kitchen island is kitted out with an induction hob for quick and easy cleaning, and a minimal ceiling-mounted extractor

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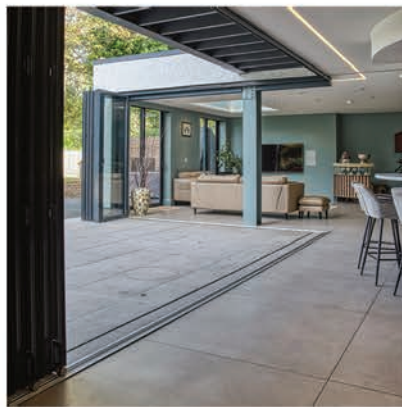
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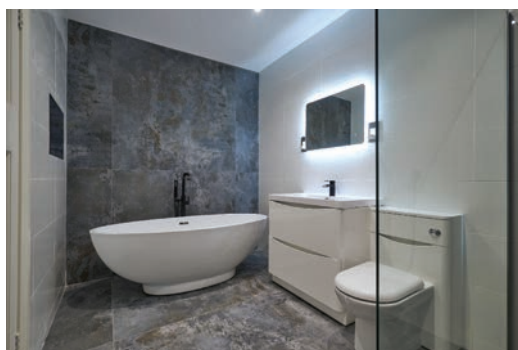
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aluminium framed sliding doors that really bring the outside in," says Howard. "It is truly the heart of the house."

Hardwearing Dekton countertops have been paired with handleless kitchen units to establish a sleek, unfussy finish. Grey oak engineered timber floors have been laid atop underfloor heating. However, the highlight is, of course, the view. "Being able to cook, turn around and have that view right there is incredible. We've captured the feeling that we wanted in that principal family space," says Howard.

Sitting above the kitchen-diner on the first floor of the extension is the master suite, which is connected to its own balcony for Howard and Leanne to make the most of the far-reaching vistas. "We wanted to create the feeling that we were on holiday in a hotel, in one of those rooms where you have the luxury of more space than what you really need," says Howard. The ensuite also exudes an opulent, hotel-like feel thanks to the spacious walk-in shower and elegant freestanding tub.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Now the project is complete, Howard is ecstatic with the results and has no regrets about taking the scheme on. "Looking back, one of the best days was when the kitchen went in," he says. "Once the plaster was up on the walls I could really see everything starting to come together. Being able to see what the heart of the house would look like was a special moment." Aside from a couple of aesthetic details here and there, there's very little Howard would change

Howard was keen to create some distinction between the original parts of the house and the extension

about the finished house. "Overall, it's everything we wanted. In terms of the whole build and the layout, I think we cracked it. It's as good as we could have done it."

Having worked with Base on so many projects through his construction firm, Howard enjoyed the experience of working with Harry on his own project. "We've got a good relationship, so it was fun," he says. "The advice Harry gave was very good throughout."

Though Howard loves living in the house, he hasn't ruled out the prospect of doing another project in the future. "Next time I'd like to build a home from scratch – Leanne goes mad at me because I am always looking for the next opportunity," he says. "To some extent, a renovation always holds you back somewhat in what you're able to achieve. However, it'd need to be a showstopper of a plot to beat what we've got here." ■

DINING AREA

As well as supplying the Dekton surfaces for the kitchen worktops and splashback, Ruby Granite crafted this bespoke Dekton dining table

MASTER SUITE

Carpeted floors give the master suite a plush, hotel-like feel

ENSUITE

Dekton tiles measuring 1.4 m x 1.4 m have been partnered with ceramic tiles to create a striking feature in the ensuite bathroom



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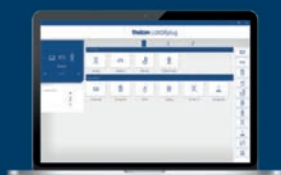
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SWA launches associate member option



Steel Window Association has recently launched a three-tier system for the industry's manufacturing membership and, as a further refinement to the new structure, an "associate member" package has been developed. Designed for suppliers to the steel window and door industry in the UK, an associate membership, which costs £1200 pa, comprises a listing on the SWA website with contact details and links to the individual websites. In addition, companies can issue product information to SWA

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FIRST TIME LUCKY

Presented with the opportunity to do a self-build in his East Grinstead home's garden, Tim Lamont found it impossible to resist, and he enjoyed it so much he's already planning the next instalment

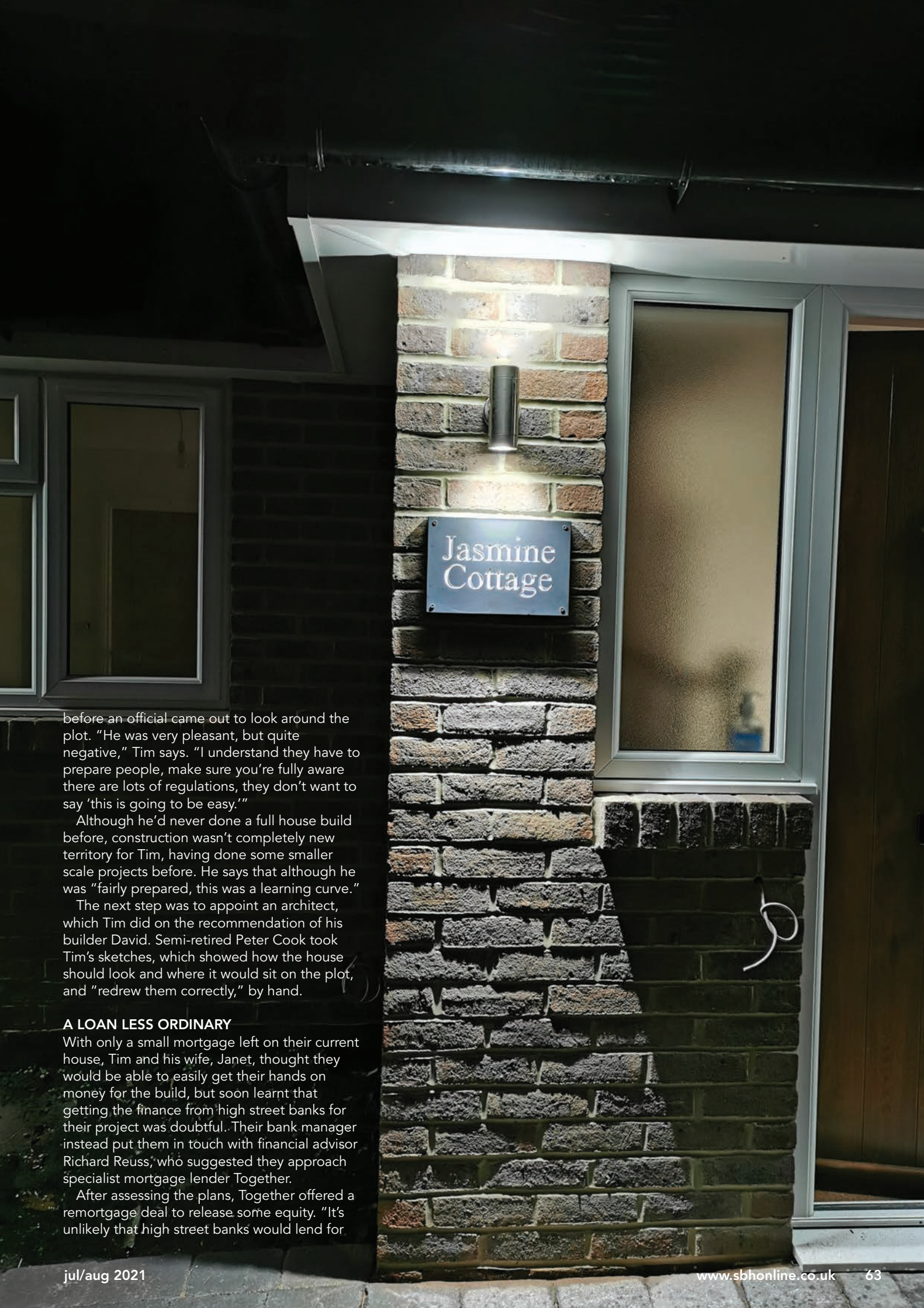
TEXT ROSEANNE FIELD

The idea of undertaking a self-build was not something that had ever been on businessman Tim Lamont's radar. But a conversation with builder David Jempson, who was doing some work for him and had recently worked on a self-build, made Tim realise that it was an option. "David's really the key person in all of this," he explains. There was ample room for developing in the garden of his East Grinstead home, and although he'd always been aware of the potential value, he had only considered selling land to a developer, rather than doing it himself.

Following the conversation with David, Tim looked into the possibility, and decided he'd give it a go. "There was a financial driver, because property's value is always very high," says Tim, who used to work as a model maker

With dormer-style bedrooms if you're not careful there are spaces you just can't use

and now runs a manufacturing business. "But it was also curiosity, and I had confidence because I had a good builder, he was really enthusiastic. The opportunity was there." The first step was arranging a pre-application meeting with the council, and presenting a few rough sketches



before an official came out to look around the plot. "He was very pleasant, but quite negative," Tim says. "I understand they have to prepare people, make sure you're fully aware there are lots of regulations, they don't want to say 'this is going to be easy.'"

Although he'd never done a full house build before, construction wasn't completely new territory for Tim, having done some smaller scale projects before. He says that although he was "fairly prepared, this was a learning curve."

The next step was to appoint an architect, which Tim did on the recommendation of his builder David. Semi-retired Peter Cook took Tim's sketches, which showed how the house should look and where it would sit on the plot, and "redrew them correctly," by hand.

A LOAN LESS ORDINARY

With only a small mortgage left on their current house, Tim and his wife, Janet, thought they would be able to easily get their hands on money for the build, but soon learnt that getting the finance from high street banks for their project was doubtful. Their bank manager instead put them in touch with financial advisor Richard Reuss, who suggested they approach specialist mortgage lender Together.

After assessing the plans, Together offered a remortgage deal to release some equity. "It's unlikely that high street banks would lend for



“Mainstream lenders tend to have a ‘computer says no’ attitude when it comes to funding projects which are slightly out of the ordinary”

USING THE SPACE

Originally Tim planned to buy part of the neighbour’s garden, and his planning application for a design that used that space was granted “almost instantly,” he says. However, they realised that by moving the house by 4.5 metres they could simplify things by staying within their own garden. “I chanced my arm, and redesigned it, but the planners said no,” he explains.

Approval was given on the basis that the house must be chalet-style, not because of the surrounding buildings but because of the council’s rules regarding infill development. “I wanted more of a cottage style but they wouldn’t allow that, they were resistant to us doing anything different,” says Tim. “It’s just one of those rules they follow. With planning, you’ve got to be so patient.”

When it came to designing the house, Tim and Janet had a few non-negotiable requirements. Their road has ample off-street parking so it was important to them to include space for cars, not only to keep the road car-free but also to include the potential for future electric charging. They also wanted to ensure the home’s main living space would be bright and open plan, and include a downstairs bathroom, and separate utility room.

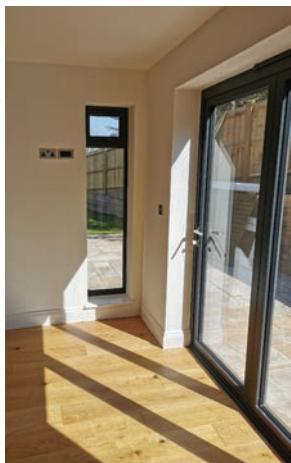
Once the design was approved and the new title created for the separated land – a “straightforward” process, says Tim – the first task was clearing the site, including what Tim says were “masses” of conifers, blocking light and taking up a large chunk of garden. This

TIM’S ADVICE

- * “My best advice is to get a really good builder, somebody who’s going to be able to concentrate on your project. That’s absolutely key. But you have to manage the build yourself, you’ve got to be a bit of a project manager and make sure you’re organised. Get stuck in and be involved.”
- * “Find an architect who will give you a full package, including SAP calculations etc. It’s worth paying the extra.”
- * “Speak to your neighbours. We were fully supported, we had neighbours that were very good about it all.”

this purpose, particularly to someone without extensive experience of property development,” says Together distribution development manager Scott Clay. “Mainstream lenders tend to have a ‘computer says no’ attitude when it comes to funding projects which are slightly out of the ordinary.”

The couple were able to choose to receive a lump sum rather than the funding being released in stages, which was a help. “Together were an essential part of the plan,” Tim says. “I’m very grateful to them.” Janet put the money in a savings account, and with close monitoring they kept the project within the budget. Proceeds from the sale of their existing house will be used to repay the loan.



LOW POINT

"There wasn't really a low point; there were frustrations, like finding out what it's going to cost you to get a legal document! Feeling like money is just going to drift away, frustrations from delays, but nothing significant."

– Tim Lamont

HIGH POINT

"It was just a constant high point really – it was fun."

– Tim Lamont

was required just to allow space for the build, but it also improved the garden of their existing house.

The site geology is clay, so the first major element to complete was digging it out and replacing it with "substantial soil," says Tim. "What you don't want is clay under the driveway." He estimates groundworks company DK New Homes dug out over 200 tonnes of clay over the course of a few days. "It was phenomenal," he says. "Trucks were coming every few hours and within a couple of days it was all gone." They also dug out all the tree roots; "there was a fair bit of heavy preparation."

CONSTRUCTION DURING COVID

Work started onsite in March 2020, and the majority of the project was therefore impacted somewhat by Covid. The house is constructed with a timber frame, which builder David put up single-handedly. "He had a nice job for a couple of months without having to be with anyone else apart from delivery companies turning up with materials," says Tim. "We had one trade at a time, sometimes they overlapped but we tried to keep it so there wasn't more than one or two guys at a time working."

The other concern in the current scenario was potential delays obtaining materials, but Tim credits David's good relationship with suppliers with making things run smoothly. "If it had been me trying I'd have stood no chance, but they looked after him," he says.

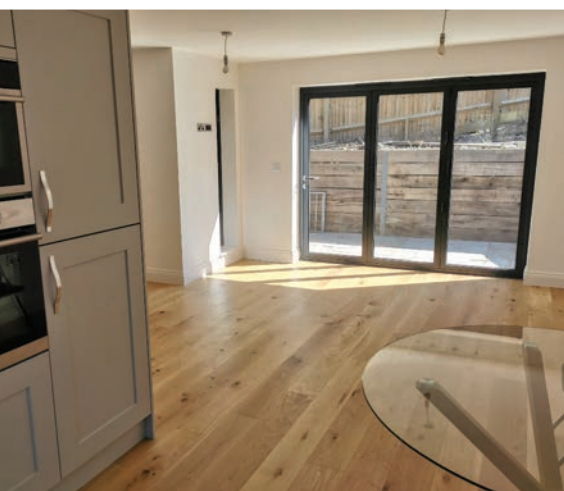
They experienced a slight delay getting the

water supply connected – which Tim reports was Covid-related – but the rest of the utilities were connected without a hitch. Because the couple were still living in their house while the new one was being built they weren't in a rush, so any delays caused by limiting the number of tradesmen onsite weren't critical. "We never had big problems because of Covid," says Tim. In fact, he says he feels lucky they had the project to keep them busy during lockdown.

Tim took on the role of project manager, with help from both Janet, who took care of the financial side, and Dave who appointed and managed the subcontractors. "My wife was essential because she handled the money and kept all the files. Dave was like the foreman," says Tim. "I did the paperwork, legals, applications etc. I think anyone who's going to do this has to be prepared for that, if you leave it to other people it will probably go wrong."

Living next door meant they were onsite pretty much 24/7. "Every evening I would go down and see what's happened and therefore if there were any small issues we would keep on top of it, so it stayed pretty organised," Tim explains.

Timber forms the vast majority of the frame, along with some supporting steels, which was suggested by his architect Peter Cook. Although Tim was very clear on what he wanted visually from the house, how the fully brick-clad structure would be built was something he was more than happy to be guided on. Having fully overseen its construction, he says he's very impressed by its sturdiness. "This house is a significant structure, it will be there forever,"



he says. "It's extremely robust."

Despite the restrictions imposed by Covid, the build was remarkably quick. Having started onsite last March, by mid-April the timber frame was constructed at ground floor level, and by mid-May the entire frame was up, including the roof and dormers. By the beginning of June the brickwork was completed and the house was watertight, with the roof finished by mid-July and the windows and insulation installed – meaning work was ready to proceed inside – by the start of August. "The house flew up in no time at all," Tim remarks. "But the inside takes just as long." They "more or less" finished all internal work by January, having finished the painting and flooring over Christmas, as well as the final plumbing and electrical checks.

Tim admits that having been lent the money

for the project could have been "quite stressful" when it came to budgeting, but with David's guidance and what Tim describes as "realistic ideas of what things would cost," they managed to stay within their budget. "We were very careful," he says.

DESIGN & FUNCTIONALITY

Tim has ensured that the house is as future-proof as possible in a couple of ways. A friend, Geoff Fox, owns renewable energy systems company Enlightened Solar, and recommended he install an air source heat pump – something he'd not heard of before. The result is "magnificent," Tim says. "We never set out to build a house with an incredible heating system, but thanks to them it's just top notch."

The pump system is housed in a small shed-type building attached to the house, and feeds the underfloor heating and upstairs radiators. Each room has its own thermostat so they can be individually controlled, and he has been told he's unlikely to need the radiators due to the system and house's efficiency.

Their electricians suggested installing all the cabling required to connect every room to computers and smart TVs. "When you look at the hub under the stairs the cabling's a bit daunting!" Tim says.

Visitors enter the house into a hallway containing the stairs up to the first floor and a glass door that leads through to the open plan kitchen/dining/living area. The kitchen sits at one end in a narrower space, which Tim says helps it feel slightly separated. Bifold doors

CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

BUILDER

David Jempson Ltd
www.jempsonltd.co.uk

ARCHITECT

Peter Cook (retired)

FINANCIAL ADVISER

Richard Reuss, Mortgage Plus Ltd
richard@mortgageplusltd.com

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open out onto a patio, and the utility room sits off from the living space. From there is a Jack and Jill style bathroom, which then leads into the spare room.

Upstairs is a family bathroom and two double bedrooms. The chalet-style house means they have encroaching ceilings, but David built in wardrobes and drawers, all painted to match, which Tim says utilises these “awkward” spaces. “With dormer-style bedrooms if you’re not careful there are spaces you just can’t use, so by building in cupboards you can get into the corners and use every square inch,” he explains.

The family’s existing home is five bedrooms, so they are downsizing substantially. Their eldest two children have moved out leaving Tim, Janet and their 18-year-old son to move into the new home. “We’ve thoroughly used the space and the next stage of our life doesn’t require us to have so many bedrooms,” Tim says.

Janet took care of the interior design, including choosing the kitchen and bathroom suites. “We discussed it all, but she wasn’t really involved with the design of the house so I thought it was appropriate to let her take over once the house was built,” explains Tim. “We wanted it clean.” The kitchen is pale grey with white stone worktops, while the rest of the house is painted white with oak flooring and oak doors. “She’s got good taste so it worked out

“With planning, you’ve got to be so patient” – Tim

really well as teamwork!” They picked everything out online or from catalogues on the recommendation of the tradesmen. One extra feature included was an illuminated shower, with lights that change the colour of the water depending on the temperature. “Just for the fun of it!” Tim says.

Although Tim admits this is not their dream house, he’s still pleased with the result, which he says is thanks to the people who worked on it. He highlights the heating system as one of his favourite features. “It’s amazing,” he says. He admits their new home will be “fairly compact, and arguably a bit on the small side,” compared with what they’ve been used to.

However, having enjoyed the process so much, he’s already thinking about the next build. “It will be next level, an eco house with a full solar roof,” he says. “It will be our dream house, to live in forever, built to a similar specification but bigger. We’re definitely interested in doing it again.” ■

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Vent-Axia supports Noise Action Week



Vent-Axia is pleased to have once again supported Noise Action Week and has raised awareness that ventilation doesn't need to be noisy by offering seven steps to silence. With the health implications of noise very clear, making a quiet home environment is even more vital. Vent-Axia's seven steps are: selecting a fan; looking for third-party accreditation; selecting the right size; choosing high efficiency motors; silent scheduling; avoiding nuisance running and finally, where to site a fan. Vent-Axia's Silent Fan is ideal for refurbishment projects, offering 'visual' silence as well as acoustic silence, with simple, clean lines and an attractive slimline fascia that looks like a bathroom tile.

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NIBE unveils new smart home accessories



NIBE Energy Systems has launched a selection Solar PV panels to power its heat pumps and expanded its range of smart home accessories to maximize indoor comfort and climate control. The new range builds on the heat pump manufacturer's plans to offer customers a smarter and more connected home. The new range of myUplink wireless smart home accessories compliments the NIBE S-Series heat pumps, providing more comfortable, precise room-by-room climate control. Each accessory is a

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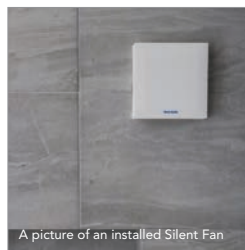


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Vent-Axia fan celebrates sweet sixteen



Vent-Axia continues to lead the way in reliability with one of its Silhouette bathroom fans celebrating its sixteenth birthday. Installed in 2005 in a family home in Hornchurch, Essex during the refurbishment of the property's main bathroom, the fan is still going strong 16 years later. The Silhouette fan has worked effectively during this time without requiring any attention and continues to improve indoor air quality and combat condensation and mould. It is this longevity

and reliability that is central to Vent-Axia commitment to sustainable high-quality design. While it has never required any repairs, Vent-Axia fans are designed to be easily repairable and are simple to maintain.

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Keller partners with Plantics

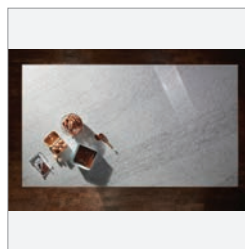


Keller Kitchens and parent group, DKG, have collaborated with Plantics. Together the companies will look at how a high-quality kitchen can be manufactured entirely from roadside grass and hemp. Hemp can be used as a raw material – it's strong, grows fast and can be cultivated on a large scale. Plantics has developed a new set of bio resins that bind hemp and grass together. This material is now used to develop circular materials which can be used for developing sustainable kitchens which still have that

high-quality and beautifully-designed Keller appeal. Keller Kitchen has been a Carbon Neutral manufacturer since 2017 and, with the help of ZLTO, has taken the next step to becoming carbon negative.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVU5qMcBCzU

Saint Moritz from Königstone sparkles



Königstone has brought the vision to life to the kitchen with the Saint Moritz quartz worktop from the KönigQuartz range. Saint Moritz is made up of over 90% Quartz; the quality and durability of this material make it the perfect choice for a kitchen worktop. The KönigQuartz range is available in an impressive range of colour options designed to excite all kitchen schemes. The flecked surface of Saint Moritz is complemented by the high-gloss finish of KönigQuartz and the shine is easily

maintained by very simple cleaning and care methods. The high scratch, stain and heat-resistance of quartz is even more reason to consider this for the kitchen.

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Spiralling down the piste

When it comes to lockdown projects, the Love family take some beating. Over the past year, they have worked on the renovation of a 1970s ski chalet, both inside and out, completed with a stunning squarial staircase from British Spirals & Castings.

Chalet Marmotte is situated in the popular La Plagne region of France. Its refurbishment was a labour of love for owners, Julie and Rich. Virtually every aspect of the chalet has been given a facelift and the family worked tirelessly with local tradesmen to overcome the challenges posed by COVID and keep the project on schedule.

A key aspect of the refurbishment was the removal of the huge stone fireplace at the centre of the living space. To open this up, the plans called for a much more compact staircase which could pass two floors. After some research, they discovered the squarial staircase design from British Spirals & Castings. This features treads which can

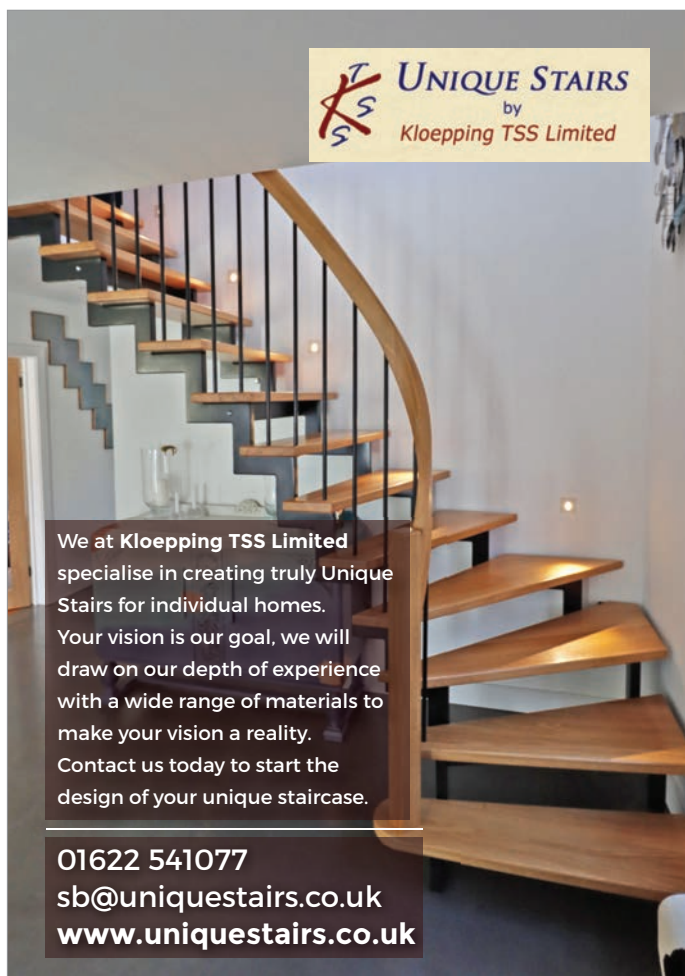
be cut to fit precisely within an opening, maximising the available tread area.

Using measurements supplied by the contractors, British Spirals & Castings developed bespoke CAD plans for the staircase. The design features thick, solid oak treads and long metal balusters which run from the treads to the floor and ceiling, providing both safety and a stunning, modern aesthetic. As with all British Spirals & Castings pieces, it was manufactured here in the UK by their skilled craftspeople.

The staircase now sits with pride within the living space of the fully refurbished Chalet Marmotte which is now open for bookings through the Lovely Chalet Company.

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Stepping it up

Katie Chown of Spiral UK has researched the latest trends in staircase design, and proposes some fresh ideas for your self-build project

One thing is for sure, the shutdown of movement across the country has not stopped people from ordering new products, in fact it seems to have increased in some cases. A series of lockdowns has caused delays and inconvenience in the construction world, but for those on furlough who found themselves with plenty of spare time stuck staring at four walls, it was a chance to finally catch up on life outside of work.

As a result there has been a definite increase in residential renovations in the past year or so, and those new builds not held back by a lack of staff at the planning office have benefitted from a quieter world. Of course, the current financial climate has not been a bed of roses for everyone, and so the divide in budgets has widened. Those with money to spend have continued to do so with high end luxury projects wielding bespoke helical staircases, whereas an increase in lower end kit stairs sales suggests both budgetary constraints and the time for competent DIYers to attempt self-installation.

But what have people been buying? Here are the latest staircase trends, based on actual orders in 2021.

MOST POPULAR STAIR TYPE: SPIRAL

Last year saw a big increase in cantilever and floating stairs, but this year has seen us start with a first quarter filled with orders for self-supporting columns of treads. There could be several reasons for this, the first being it tends to be the most economical option when it comes to feature staircases, starting with simple galvanised steel kits stairs.

It could also be due to their space-saving nature; while some people are surprised at how large the diameter of a spiral must be to both meet Building Regulations and be comfortable to use, they can be easier to fit into unusual spaces or where there are no load bearing walls to cling on to – spirals are largely self-supporting and other floating options tend to be much more difficult

(and therefore expensive) to engineer.

Perhaps since everyone bought cantilever stairs last year, they've lost a bit of their novelty, and so spirals are having another time to shine. Or maybe they're just a reflection of how we're all feeling after over a year of twists and turns in the roadmap!

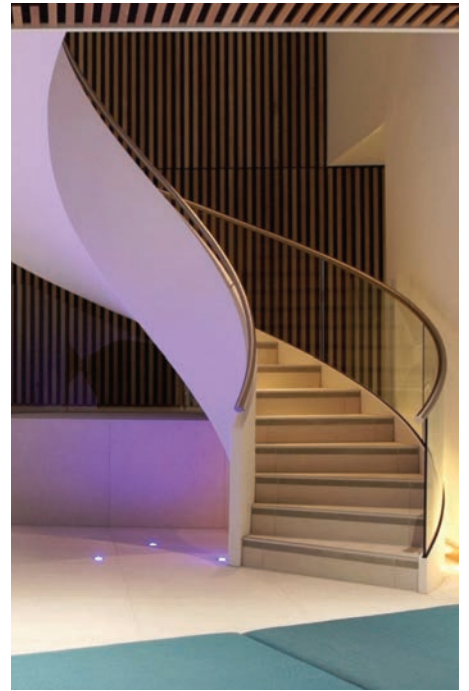
For the higher end developments there is a slight preference towards helical stairs – a spiral devoid of its centre pole that instead curves through a space, seemingly unsupported. These are significant feats of engineering and as a result the price attached (around £30K) is a big commitment for self-builders. As with anything, though, the devil is in the detail, and if you insist on imported travertine marble for the treads and soffits, it is going to cost you quite a lot of money. This is where bespoke staircase manufacturers come into their own, being able to tailor a solution that can tick every box, from aesthetic desires to building inspectors' needs, leaving you with a standout feature staircase in your home.

MOST POPULAR STAIR COLOUR: RAL 7016

Anthracyte grey isn't going away. You may have noticed the upsurge in the colour in PVCu products; windows, rainwater goods, decking and paintwork – it extends to stairs too. If a stair isn't timber with glass, it tends to be dark grey, and while steel stairs can be powder coated in any RAL colour, this sleek, modern aesthetic has enduring popularity. Practical and neutral yet striking, it suits interior and exterior stairs of any style.

MOST POPULAR BALUSTRADE: SOLID

Whether it be glass sheet or sheet metal, enclosed treads are the trend of the year so far. Curved glass panels allow light to filter down or through a stairwell but do require an eagle-eyed clean. Despite this, it's still the most requested option. But for a more sculptural stair, there has been a lot more interest in plastered walls enveloping internal spirals, either with side or top mounted stainless steel



Last year saw a big increase in cantilever and floating stairs



handrails. These can easily be rendered to match the decor, and updated in different colours with ease. Because the stringers and fixtures are all hidden, it makes for a very clean structure whereas glass balustrades require decisions on balusters, bosses and stringer types – zigzag, cantilevered or boxed. More choices isn't always a good thing when you're already overwhelmed with options.

MOST POPULAR TREAD - TIMBER

A classic choice, it goes with anything, is warm underfoot and comes in a variety of grains and colours – which can get expensive if you're looking for a particular type of less standard wood. The thing to point out with wooden treads is that when it comes to stairs, solid isn't necessarily best. We're all used to thinking solid wood is more

expensive because it's better quality, but it can cause issues with shrinkage and splitting on stair builds. For that reason it is often recommended to clad a steel step in an engineered box with a real wood veneer – it's much more stable and long-lasting.

Katie Chown is marketing manager at Spiral UK

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Make light work (in 'Soho')

A big impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic is that far more of us are now working from home. Ensure you maximise natural daylight in your home working environment – it's good for your well-being says **Crittall Windows**... Daylight flooding into workplaces, schools - and homes - has a positive impact on our daily lives, and that's not just a vague feeling, it's scientifically proven. Daylight induces wakefulness, cognitive function, productivity, general health and healing. "Evidence suggests it's important to have a feelgood factor inside your home. Our positive well-being depends on frequent exposure to light, and daylight is the most powerful way, especially during these times of the pandemic, with more of us working from home and creating a home office or working zone," says Russell Ager, managing director of steel window and door manufacturer Crittall Windows. "Our homes play a big part in our sense of well-being and their design; lighting and exposure to natural light through windows and doors really do impact. Steel-framed windows are ideal with their inherent strength allowing large expanses of glass, elegantly slender frames and the slimmest of profiles. The hallmark of a Crittall window is the slender steel frame that is so much slimmer – and therefore admits so much more light – than alternative window systems which require far larger profiles due to the basic differences in the frame material and their relative strengths.

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TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY IN CORNWALL

Renovating a centuries-old collection of buildings into a family home became a labour of love for a mum and her young son looking to leave London behind for Cornwall's Atlantic coast

TEXT & IMAGES EWEN MACDONALD

Moving to a new home is meant to be one of the most stressful of times – next to a death in the family, and divorce. Salma Khan faced all three in a short space of time. Throw in a pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns, and you have all the ingredients of a catastrophe.

But Salma is now ready to start a new life with her young son in a newly renovated listed building by the beach in West Cornwall.

The original Roundhouse in Crantock dates back more than 250 years. It has been through countless uses from tearoom to art gallery, but its history isn't the only confusing element: the configuration of the main building and the additions that followed is an

enduring mystery. Originally a row of separate buildings and outbuildings, the Roundhouse site incorporates 18th century smelters, a cottage and a series of joined up farm outbuildings – including a tack room and piggery – dating back to around 1850.

Its various uses also included a broccoli packing site, before being converted into use as an art gallery, craft store and church tea room. But by the time Salma bought the property it had gone unchanged for 40 years – and was in definitely need of major renovations to make it a family home, which would see the interiors gutted.

"The house consists of the outbuildings, an old cottage, and the Roundhouse itself," explains





Salma. The outbuildings formerly housed animals but now accommodate bedrooms, the main bathroom and a shower room. The kitchen/diner, mezzanine area and a den for the children are in the old cottage, while the showcase circular living room sits in the Roundhouse.

While the original buildings were as run-down as their layout was confusing, the new single storey home boasts five bedrooms. All of it sits under a total of six roofs – one of the few remaining clues to the cluster of buildings that once occupied the site.

Configuring and renovating the building was a mammoth task. Decisions had to be taken on how to rip out the tawdry 1980s additions of cheap flooring and decor but save some of the old features – from the oak ceiling beams to the tack room nails which still hung on the backroom walls.

"I'd undertaken smaller renovation projects before and when I took this one on I knew it would be big and expensive, but I didn't anticipate just how big and expensive," she admits.

Acting as her own project manager meant endless trips from London to Cornwall to meet architects and suppliers while making decisions on how to turn these essentially still separate buildings into a home, while keeping its key historical features and then get it all approved

by planners. "It was gruelling," she concedes.

As with most old farm buildings, head room was an issue. The architects dug down to create space above, rather than up. This meant preserving the circular roof and the ancient beams holding it all up in the living room, ceiling windows in the bedrooms allowed all the walls and beams to remain untouched.

SEEKING THE DREAM LOCATION

Finding projects in Cornwall is becoming increasingly rare as many seek to exchange their life and property in London for a coastal retreat. Finding the right spot is as important as finding the right property, says Salma. She spent regular childhood holidays in Cornwall and has plenty of links to the place: her great aunt lived in a house overlooking Fistral beach, while her great uncle is buried in the churchyard in nearby Crantock (her aunt also married in the church and baptised her children there).

"I had loved Crantock since I was a child, and the age and location of the property really appealed to me," she says of the Roundhouse. However, when she approached the agents with an initial offer, she was told it was too low and wouldn't be accepted. "By the time I had decided to revise my offer about four weeks later, it was already under offer."

But that was far from the end of the story. In 2017 her mother died – on the same day that

LOW POINT

"The ever-increasing costs and sometimes worrying myself silly about how I could ever physically get this project over the line," says Salma. "Also, coming to terms with the fact that I had to re-write my dreams for the place with only me and my son in them."

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her flat (in Lake Como) came under offer. So armed with funds, she began to search again for her dream Cornwall home – and discovered the Roundhouse had come back on the market that same day. For Salma and her eight-year-old son Faris, it was the opportunity of a new life away from London.

KEEPING THE BEST BITS

The end result is a seamless blend of old and new. The beauty of the 250-year-old structure has been maintained while removing many of the cheap and nasty ‘improvements’ that ripped out some of those original features to create a thoroughly modern interior. Parquet flooring sits above underfloor heating, freestanding tubs sit beneath skylights, and a mezzanine floor floats above the children’s den.

She has many favourite areas in the finished home. “I am very fond of the mezzanine – not only because it is high and lets in a lot of light, and recreates the height of what would have been the old cottage, but also because it is cosy and I can relax on the gorgeous Cream of Cornwall floor cushions and play board games with my son.”

The converted hayloft, accessed by a stunning bespoke spiral staircase, is a highlight of the home. A high window seat has been installed to create a cosy den off the main sitting room. “The idea for a mezzanine came to me when I saw a very old photograph of the building, roughly from the late 1800s, and I could see a

Acting as project manager meant endless trips from London to Cornwall to meet architects and suppliers

child’s head poking out of the upper cottage window,” she remembers. “I realised it must have had an upper floor. I got my builder to dig down so that we could have what I believed to be the original height. Salma adds a touching detail that her roofer “had even played in the hayloft as a child.”

She says she loves the Roundhouse itself “because it is architecturally breathtaking, and it always excites me to see people being so taken aback when they walk in there!” The living room takes up the whole of the original Roundhouse building and features exposed roof beams that radiate out from a central post in the middle of the room, made even more of a feature by circular, sheepskin-wrapped seating. The old beams found on ceilings throughout the house show centuries of use.

HIGH POINT

“Seeing the roof come off the old outbuildings and looking at the cob wall (including horse hair) and the original ‘A’ frames – over 250 years old and absolutely stunning!”



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“Decisions had to be taken on how to rip out the tawdry 1980s additions of cheap flooring and decor but save some old features”

LIGHT TOUCHES

Old houses have a tendency to put cosiness above light; here the owner has added in Velux windows that allow light to come in while preserving the original features of the house – particularly in the former outbuildings where windows were particularly scarce.

The house is built over a single storey – steps up and down as you enter different parts of the restoration are the only real clue to the original configuration of the building. In the hall there are small nooks cut into the exterior wall, giving an indication of how thick the white washed walls of the cottage are.

The skill in renovating such an old project is finding the right modern products to

complement the era of the house rather than fake it – but which also support the needs of modern living. The parquet flooring throughout the living area of the house came from ESB flooring, of London. “I wanted something that would work well with underfloor heating and which looked traditional and parquet-like, without the cost of real parquet,” she says.

The kitchen came from Howden's and was designed by Salma, with a little help from the company's CAD designer. “I had fallen in love with a deVOL kitchen and wanted the same feel and look without the price tag. The stone worktops are from Everything Stone in the Cornish village of Par. It is my dream kitchen,” she admits. “It is the perfect entertaining space, opening up onto the patio.”

This fabulous kitchen opens out via floor to ceiling and wall to wall windows onto a secluded garden – where a hot tub and outside shower awaits. The dining table, bench and chairs are made from reclaimed wood by furniture store Lee Longlands in Birmingham. “I chose them because I wanted to bring an industrial feel into the property, to reflect its history as a working building.” Dramatic steam bent wooden pendant lights from Tom Raffield provide a sculptural element here.

Sadly the floors had to be completely replaced – among other past architectural atrocities committed here, the original flagstones had been lost during its 1980s renovation and replaced with carpets, Lino and



cheap laminate flooring. "Pretty grim," admits Salma of the floors she inherited. "I wanted to give the building an old farmhouse feel to reflect its heritage as a working building." She replaced the floors with farmhouse flagstones.

The original – slightly less than sophisticated agricultural origin of the bedrooms – is celebrated in the names of the rooms and reflected in the original curiosities that she has kept in each room. "I wanted the rooms to reflect their original use," explains Salma. "The Tack Room is so named because it still has the original large nails in the wall, which would have been used to hang horse tack on." Similarly, the Cow Shed refers to the fact the cows were

milked in the outbuildings.

Names for additional rooms came from local anecdotes – her octogenarian neighbour remembered that the farm outbuildings were once called The Mowhay. The wonderfully named 'Piggery' is now her son's room. Following housing pigs, it was later converted to a car port, says Salma, adding that she "built it up to form part of the main house."

Throughout the house canvas photographs decorate the hall walls of beaches and surfboards, reminding you that you are only a few minutes from the Atlantic ocean. Aerial photographs also show the cottages before work began, offering a glimpse of the original buildings. Despite the difficulties completing the project, the travel, and the stress of building during the pandemic, Salma says it is worth it "a hundred times over".

The Covid-19 lockdown has delayed her move to Cornwall, but with her son now enrolled in the local school, The Roundhouse is set to become their forever home by 2022.

"It is a very special place and I felt so drawn to it," she says. "It called out to me and was meant to be. I will not deny that it has been hard – not least because of the massive life changes that have occurred during the period of renovation – but it has been such a great experience for me, and I have learned a lot and ended up with a very special home." ■

TOP TIPS

"Be prepared to invest a lot of time, especially if you are project manager. Also be flexible and roll with the unfolding surprises as they come.

"These kinds of projects are a bit like opening Pandora's box – you don't know what you are going to find until you get stuck in. Don't be put off by the extent of renovations required; embrace the challenge. If you find a property you absolutely love then it will be well worth your efforts!"

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