

# selfbuilder + homemaker

SEP/OCT 2021

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## TIPS ON HEATING EFFICIENTLY

Our expert answers frequently-asked questions on how to heat homes more efficiently using the latest radiators

## Weaving a new chapter in Tring

A complex refurb kept the best bits of an old factory

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# FROM THE EDITOR...

Paint – seemingly a fairly mundane product, but I'd wager the results it creates probably contribute more to the overall effect of our homes' interiors than anything else.

And The Colour of the Year also might on the surface seem like a fairly lightweight piece of marketing by Dulux, however having now been going for nearly two decades, it actually has a large amount of traction across the worlds of interior design and even architecture. That of course means its effect spills over into self-builds. It gives not only the giant paint producer, but furniture and furnishings manufacturers, an important sales platform in promoting new or refreshed ideas to enhance the spaces we live in.

In recent months, the 'new' part has become a more important element than ever, not only for hopeful post-pandemic renewal, but also a new set of roles for our homes as we continue with a much more flexible home/work mix.

So it's worth highlighting that the company has unveiled its colour for 2022, after months of exhaustive development; it's a highly usable light blue-grey called Bright Skies. At its core the thinking seems to be a lot of hopeful messaging against the current backdrop, putting wellness at the fore in our interiors. But Dulux is also honing in on design for home working and other new functions.

Dulux is also talking up the importance of how the new colour links its four new palettes for designers. But actually perhaps this year and next the emphasis on creating 'happy' spaces – and a light-hearted, 'look to the skies' feel (harnessing the power of 'positive mental attitude') – is what's really meaningful.

JAMES PARKER



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(show preview on page 73)

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## HOMEBUILDING &amp; RENOVATING SHOW

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# A guide to energy-efficient heating



Alex Burgess of The Radiator Company provides some advice to self-builders on achieving energy efficient heating solutions for their property, for planet and pocket



## WHAT ARE THE MOST EFFICIENT RADIATORS?

With the population increasingly looking to find ways to make sustainable choices, and with energy efficiency high on the agenda, we're finding more and more homeowners asking for advice on this topic.

There are several design features that can make a significant difference in achieving energy efficiencies, but before these are considered, the most important step is ensuring the radiator is the right 'size' for the space. This isn't about dimensions however: to heat any space effectively and efficiently, the radiator must be able to match its heat output performance to the space and this is measured in BTUs (British Thermal Units).

So how much heat (BTU) do you need for your space? This can be worked out easily using online tools, such as the BTU calculator, by simply entering a few details about the room and its dimensions to provide you with the correct figure. From here, you are then able to match your heat requirements with your choice of radiator.

It should be easy to identify the BTU output for any radiator on the market as this information should be included with any description. To aid comparison between designs, all outputs should be calculated using a standard formula that produces what is called the Delta T, the norm for all radiators should be based on a Delta T of 50.

If you are installing a radiator to be used with renewable energy sources, the calculations may need to be adjusted as the heating system may produce different flow and return temperatures – meaning the output calculations would be based on a different Delta T. We suggest you call the manufacturer to ascertain the correct figure based on your system.

If you fail to calculate the BTU measurement, you are likely to find yourself with either a radiator that cannot heat the space sufficiently, or conversely, overheats the space. Both scenarios will place potentially huge, unnecessary demands on the central heating system and boiler as they try to compensate for the gap.

## WHAT'S THE MOST EFFICIENT RADIATOR MATERIAL?

Radiator designs that are manufactured with materials that offer more sustainable benefits are increasing in popularity. As a material that is fully recyclable at the end





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of its useful life, aluminium is an emerging material, and it's not surprising given its beneficial heating properties. It is a superconductor, which means it can rapidly respond to thermostatic changes. Its thermal conductivity is estimated to be four to five times that of mild steel, so it can heat up quickly and also cool down with speed.

Radiators that are manufactured from aluminium require less water to function and are highly efficient at responding to user temperature preferences, therefore placing less demand on the central boiler.

### **CAN RADIATORS BE INSTALLED WITH RENEWABLE OR LOW TEMPERATURE HEATING SYSTEMS?**

Aluminium radiators are ideal to install alongside renewable or low-temperature heating systems, such as ground source heat pumps, thanks to the material's thermal inertia and ability to perform with lower water temperatures.

### **WHAT CLEARANCES DO I NEED ABOVE AND BELOW A RADIATOR FOR MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY?**

We recommend that clearances of 50 mm above and 100 mm below each radiator should be left clear, so that heat from the radiator can be effectively distributed.

### **WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO MAKE MY RADIATOR PERFORM MORE EFFICIENTLY?**

Thermostatic Radiator Valves (TRVs) are a requirement as part of the Building



Regulations for new builds and refurbishments. TRVs monitor the room temperature and automatically adjust the water flow to the radiator in order to reach and maintain the desired room level which in turn, helps to reduce unnecessary energy consumption.

Opting for dual fuel towel rail models can also help to improve energy efficiency within the home, continuing to provide warmth for the bathroom when the central heating system is turned off. Instead, the towel rail is warmed using a heating element to reach the desired temperature. This is ideal in the summer months, where users require a warm space for a morning shower, yet the dual fuel design means the entire heating system needn't be turned on for heat supply.

We also advise that heating systems are regularly cleaned, as recommended by BS7593. This helps to ensure any debris and sludge that naturally builds up over time within the system is removed from the system. This debris can lead to

*The most important step is ensuring the radiator is the right 'size' for the space*

noisy radiators or radiator cold spots, and even damage the boiler as it circulates through the system. Heating engineers and plumbers will be able to undertake a flushing service which will keep the system working at an optimum level.

*Alex Burgess is national sales manager at The Radiator Company*





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# LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE

Lucy Mather from Arighi Bianchi offers some hints and tips to take lighting up a level, with a decorative approach using the latest looks and trends in fixed and accessory lighting solutions

There are so many choices and considerations when it comes to installing lighting into a new property or renovation project that it can be easy to become overwhelmed, cram too many ideas into one space or even play it too safe.

Of course, there's 'practical lighting' which has to be factored into a room, but this doesn't have to mean it's not super stylish and nor does it have to come with a 'designer price tag'. For us, planning decorative lighting into an interior scheme from the start is the key.

Fixed lighting features certainly should be something that you detail at the early stages. Ideally you should work with an interior designer, architect or electrician to design a scheme that aligns with your vision for the property – with specific lighting for entertaining spaces, practical tasks like cooking, subtle lighting for relaxing and clever lighting to highlight key design features, furniture and outdoor spaces.

If you're getting towards the end of your project and are concerned that you haven't quite nailed the lighting scheme in your property, all is not lost. There are lots of ways that you can layer clever lighting features into the final interior design that will leave you feeling illuminated.

## CHOOSE A DESIGN-LED FOCAL PIECE

Planning the positioning of your statement lighting is the first step, but for the wow factor it's important to decide on the style of lighting to suit an interior's scheme as well. Size matters – especially at the planning stage – statement ceiling lights are a hugely popular way of

combining a designer-led focal point with a soft and ambient lighting scheme. A bold piece planned in to sit over a dining table will not only frame the space, but will also create an elegant and modern backdrop for entertaining.

The metallic industrial style designs that are popular right now don't have to result in a harsh finish. Look for styles with curved edges and combine a soft bulb. To tie the aesthetic together, choose a design that has complementing pieces. Floor lamps will help to add another layer of lighting and ambience to your room, while a smaller table lamp can illuminate shelving or a small seating nook.

Ceiling lights can be used effectively in most rooms in the home to create the atmosphere that you are looking for. Remember to think about how much light they will cast – you may want to choose a darker, more enclosed design in the bedroom or relaxation spaces, but something brighter for a living space.

## USE LAMPS TO FULL EFFECT

As a rule, every room should have three different sources of light – general lighting (overhead pendants or ceiling lights), specific lighting (task-led) and ambient lighting (decorative pieces or candles).

Once you have got your general lighting sorted, it's time to think about adding in those additional layers – this is where lamps come in.

Lamps are extremely versatile and are easy to change if you decide to refresh your design scheme in the future. Never underestimate how much a floor or table lamp can transform the ambience of your room – both from a lighting and



*Planning decorative lighting into an interior scheme from the start is the key*

design perspective.

Table lamps are fantastic at illuminating a piece of artwork or interesting design pieces. You should also consider using symmetry to frame a piece of furniture like a sideboard, console table, sofa or bed – by adding a lamp at either side. Use a floor lamp to light up a dark corner or create a new perspective in a hallway or landing. You can also create a cosy





reading nook or relaxation space from a dark corner with a floor lamp.

When choosing your lamps, think about what you want to achieve with the overall look and feel – sculptural designs can be works of art in their own right and will create a design statement even when switched off. Lamps can also add colour and texture to your space and allow you to build in new materials and shapes.

#### **MAKE A STATEMENT WITH NEON**

Neon is a design trend that never goes away – in fact, this year it has been growing in popularity as people look to inject some fun and personality to their spaces. If you're looking to create a room with some extra wow factor then think about investing in a bespoke neon sign for the ultimate personalisation for your home. There are some great neon signs

out there, including bespoke made – that can work in so many spaces, from kitchens, dining rooms, studies and bedrooms to outdoor entertaining spaces. Go big and bold with a design or quote that captures your personality and joie de vivre!

*Lucy Mather is head of communications at furniture supplier Arighi Bianchi*

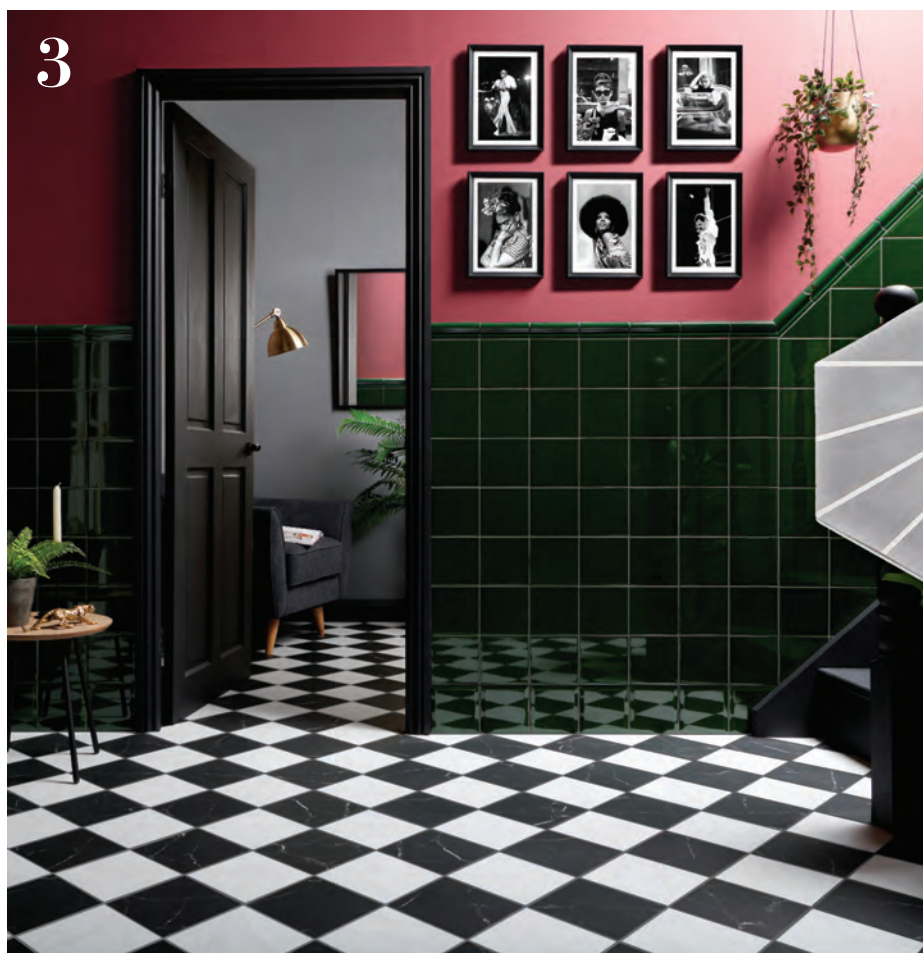




# INTERIOR INSPIRATION: FLOORING

From creating a flow from the interior to the exterior using hard-wearing tiles, to making your living space into a cosy retreat, flooring has a crucial role to play in your home's overall effect. Here are an array of new products which can help you get it right from the bottom up





1. Flooring Mountain's **Medio Rustic Oak Engineered Flooring** is a stylish range of engineered wood flooring that gives the appearance of solid hardwood oak, with improved durability and the benefit of a DIY friendly click-fit system. Available in five subtle tones and both matt lacquer and oiled finish variants, these stylish planks add depth to any room. Price: £32.95 per square metre. [www.flooringmountain.co.uk](http://www.flooringmountain.co.uk)

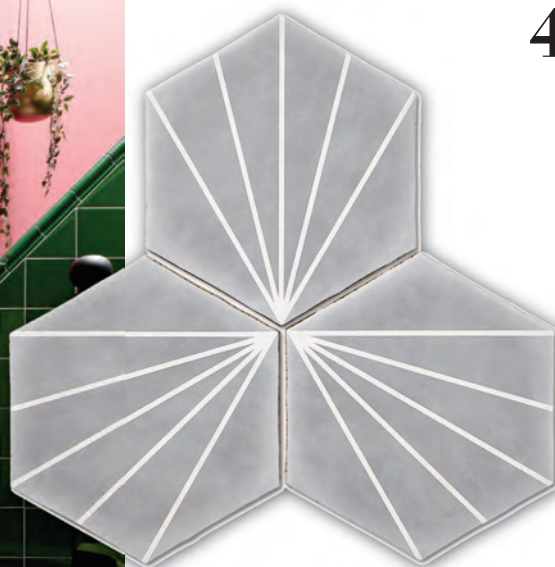
2. The **Carnival Rectangle Organic Jute Rug** by **Braided Rug** is reversible and extremely hard wearing, and can be used in any room in the house. Sustainable and made by us in Bangladesh, the rug is made in eight sizes ranging from oval and rectangular to hall runners and round styles. A bright and jolly rug, it's priced at £65. [www.braided-rug.co.uk](http://www.braided-rug.co.uk)

3. Create a glamorous statement in your home this season with these **Soho Marble Effect Tiles** by **Walls and Floors**. Made from porcelain, these small format tiles are durable, long lasting and easy to clean. They have a subtle veined design, with a remarkable likeness of natural marble. The tiles are 185 x 185 x 8 mm, and priced at £34.95 per square metre. [www.wallsandfloors.co.uk](http://www.wallsandfloors.co.uk)

4. Six sides, geometric styling and neutral grey tones make **Porcelain Superstore's Palm Springs Grey Tiles** an instant design classic. As well as looking great, these tiles have a tactile finish to channel that artisan vibe. Inspired by traditional cement tiles, these hexagons are an incredibly practical and versatile choice. They are priced at £66 per square metre. [www.porcelainsuperstore.co.uk](http://www.porcelainsuperstore.co.uk)

5. This unique **Pisac Handmade Rug** by **Tupu Home** was handwoven by artisans in the Andean region of Peru. The artisan makers use 100% natural sheep wool and natural dyes. This piece was woven using the traditional technique, and can add colour and texture to your living room as well as to your bedroom. Priced at £520 (150 cm x 200 cm). [www.tupuhome.com](http://www.tupuhome.com)

6. Luxuriously accessorise your living space with the **Eichholtz La Belle Carpet** by **Sweetpea & Willow**. This silver sand-toned carpet is carefully hand woven from 100% viscose pile with a velvety texture providing a super soft, comfortable feel under your feet. Price: £1700 (200 x 300 cm). [www.sweetpeaandwillow.com](http://www.sweetpeaandwillow.com)





## CASE STUDY

# BEATING THE ODDS

Achieving an affordable 'forever home' in the right location seemed an impossible dream for a Berkshire family, but Laura Hardie-Gleed and husband Ian succeeded against all the odds by transforming a run-down 1960s property

TEXT ROSEANNE FIELD IMAGES LAURA HARDIE-GLEED



### LOW POINT

"Definitely having no walls and rats coming in, and no one was working. And it was pretty rubbish when poo rained through the ceiling!"

– Laura Hardie-Gleed

Laura Hardie-Gleed, a Berkshire hair and make up artist, enjoys being creative, and when she and her furniture painter husband Ian were looking for a new home, they definitely wanted a 'project,' they could put their stamp on. However, as she explains, the pair "didn't know that we were looking for quite as much as we found!"

It was important that the house was in the right location – within the school catchment area they wanted for their three children in Twyford. The 1960s house they found was, but in Laura's words, was also "awful! It was mouldy, it had rats – we bought it from a hoarder," she explains. However they saw the potential in the house, which was "pretty much the only one we could afford in the school catchment area."

They had completed a project before, renovating a Victorian two-up two-down. "We

*"We wanted to make it our 'forever' home, but in an area where we couldn't afford a forever home!"*

wanted a bigger project this time, and definitely wanted to make it our 'forever' home if we could, but in an area where we couldn't afford a forever home."

They bought the house in October 2018 and









lived in it for 15 months before beginning work in January 2020. "That was pretty tough going," says Laura. "We had no heating and rats, with three kids and a dog!" Most of the house and garden had remained untouched for decades. Laura reckons the kitchen was 30 years old, and the electrics had been done by the previous owners some 40 years previously. "Everything was dangerous – we were trying to get the kids not to touch anything because we didn't know what was live and what wasn't."

Their original plan to stay with family (or in a hotel) while work took place, was scuppered when the UK went into lockdown in March. The arrival of the pandemic also left the build in a precarious position: "We had basically stripped the whole house back and had the steels put in when Covid hit – all the walls were gone," Laura says. "We were completely open to the elements, and the builders didn't come back for about four weeks because they weren't sure if they were allowed to work."

With no walls and half a roof, Laura says this period was a "terrible" experience. With no way of keeping rats out, they ended up infested, with pest controllers unsure as to whether they were allowed to work. "We'd come down in the morning and rats had been on the worktops," Laura says. "It was horrendous. I remember thinking 'we've definitely bitten off more than we can chew here!'" However, she still says it "was an adventure."

#### FINDING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

The plan was to strip the house right back to four walls, reconfiguring the internal layout and adding a single storey 11 metres x 3.5 metres extension across the back and a double storey 5 metres x 6 metres side extension. This meant going through planning, but the couple had the help of their "amazing" architect Helen

Nightingale. "We went with her because she has a great reputation for knowing the council inside out," she explains. "She was a bit more expensive, but we put our trust in her because we were asking for a lot – we were almost doubling the size of the house."

Initially Helen warned them they may need to lower their expectations. However, in the end they faced no problems gaining approval, and she managed to negotiate the best result possible. "She kind of started at a moderate level and then every time we got approved, somehow she went back and pushed for a bit more until we got what we wanted," says Laura. Their neighbours had no objections to their plans, which Laura puts down to the fact that with the previous house being an eyesore, they could only improve things.

Getting the right builders was of course crucial. They obtained six quotes – which varied by £150,000 from the cheapest to most expensive – but decided to go with K&G Builders, as they "just had a really good feeling about them," explains Laura. "It felt like they genuinely wanted the best for us – and they weren't the top end of the quotes either which was a bonus."

As well as organising all subcontractors smoothly, the builders also came to the rescue when Laura faced an unpleasant problem one Sunday. The old toilet gave up the ghost and waste started coming through the ceiling – while Laura was making lunch.

Being a Sunday in the middle of lockdown Laura thought there was almost no chance of finding anyone to fix it, but K&G "dropped everything, came round, patched it up and made it safe until the morning," she explains.

Laura project managed the renovation herself, and says the builders were surprised at just how much input she and Ian wanted to have.

#### LAURA'S TOP TIPS

- \* Stay positive. If you look for bad stuff you're always going to find bad stuff, you've got to keep focused on the positives as much as you can, because everything always works out all right in the end.
- \* Don't be too swayed by price on things like the builders, go with your gut. If you feel like you've got a good rapport with that person and you trust them, that's totally priceless.



## Top marks in every class



- Premium class: ThermoCarbon aluminium entrance door



- Exclusive class: ThermoSafe aluminium entrance door



- Top class: Thermo65 steel / aluminium entrance door





*“We had basically stripped the whole house back when Covid hit – all the walls were gone”*

However, she says “it was quite different to the last project we did, where we felt like we were fighting the builder a lot of the time. On this build, “Every time we had a worry, within five minutes they completely put our minds at rest,” she says, such as when a large crevice was uncovered in the structure, causing her concerns about how stable it was.

#### COPING WITH COVID

Having to be in the property was however a major frustration, particularly with the pressures of the pandemic. Laura recalls one day in particular when she was attempting to homeschool two of their children while the builders were installing a two tonne piece of steel above their heads. “It was the only place we could sit and do work,” she explains.

They also had to cope with the tired and somewhat dilapidated appliances. “They left the kitchen standing until the very last point, but it was crumbling beneath us. The sink fell out at one point, and the hob was at a 45 degree angle by the end,” she explains.

The other major impact of Covid was a shortage of materials, including windows and



plaster. They were so desperate for the latter that Ian drove three and a half hours to Plymouth to pick up just five bags, Laura explains; “enough to do one bathroom!”

#### DESIGN & LAYOUT

When it came to the house’s design, Laura and Ian wanted to respect the era it was built, but admits this wasn’t necessarily easy, being their “least favourite era for houses!” They resisted the urge to go for things that wouldn’t suit the house however. “We could have had really beautiful Crittall windows but it would be working against the house,” explains Laura. It was also important to them to have an open plan, family-friendly living area.

The couple wanted to be as environmentally friendly as they could be, so had all of the insulation replaced with the highest spec offered by their supplier. They replumbed the entire house and installed a Megaflo system to supply hot water including underfloor heating. “You can have quite a lot of power but it’s more

#### BELOW

The kitchen during the build



#### HIGH POINT

“We’re so proud of what we’ve done, the high point is watching people’s faces when they come round and they just love it.”

– Laura Hardie-Gleed



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economical," Laura explains. "We're really pleased with that."

Aware of the ever changing legislation surrounding log burners, they opted to have a pellet burner installed. "They burn a lot cleaner so are much better for the environment, and they're slightly cheaper to run," she says. "We wanted something we would always be able to use." However, Laura was surprised that they struggled both in sourcing it and finding someone to install it.

Laura and Ian did have a budget, but were realistic about the likelihood of breaking it, which they did by approximately £20,000. "We really wanted a cool German kitchen that broke the budget but it's fine because it's got great bits that make our lives so much easier," she says. "But you can't have everything, you've got to have priorities and sometimes not quite get everything you wanted." One such example was smart home technology – Ian hoped to install a Sonos speaker system in the ceilings but the couple "had to start cutting back on the 'really nice to have' things." Being self-employed and unable to work for much of the project due to Covid meant they had to be extra careful.

When they started work, they hoped to be done in time for Christmas, but Covid delays meant they weren't quite there. "It was definitely liveable, and we got our tree up," says Laura. She adds that the pandemic modified their expectations: "We were just grateful for every little win we had along the way, we just took those and tried to stay positive."

The layout leads from a hallway to stairs up to the four double bedrooms, family bathroom and master ensuite bedroom. To the left of the

hallway is a formal, carpeted living room – and to the right is Ian's workshop, including a 'workman's' sink, for painting and varnishing. Beyond the hallway is the large kitchen/living area, complete with a full size table tennis table. "The kids love bringing their friends," Laura says. "We like a bit of an open house!"

There's also a utility and 'dog bedroom' leading off this space, including a sink for bathing the dog and a downstairs toilet, which accidentally ended up larger than intended. "Ian and I made a bit of a mistake on the placement of the wall so it's a metre bigger than we thought!" Laura explains. "That was the only thing that didn't quite go right, but that was our fault."

## INTERIOR STYLING

Laura loved the process of decorating the house, it being one of her passions. She and Ian sourced all the products themselves, taking inspiration from magazines and Pinterest, as well as visiting showrooms once they reopened. "When I envision something you're not going to find it by going to local high street shops," Laura says. "I spent hours upon hours researching and trying to find things that I already had in my mind!"

Laura included a couple of features that would allow her to be creative throughout the year, as 'interchangeable' items that change according to the seasons. These are "part of what keeps us happy and excited to be in our home," she explains.

Such features include a bough that hangs over their dining table, which Laura decorates for every season and various occasions, and what

## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

### BUILDERS

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**Helen Nightingale, Hen Design**  
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she calls a “board of love” – a piece of quartz board that matches the kitchen worktops and is updated every week with something new. “It’s nice to change the feel of the room and it means it never becomes stale,” she explains, adding that it also satisfies her restless ingenuity. “It lets me be creative, otherwise I’d probably be saying ‘right let’s do our next project!’”

They also wanted to make a strong use of colour, which they felt confident doing in part due to Ian’s expertise as a furniture painter. He also influenced the choice of kitchen: “I’m not really a fan of modern but actually it goes so well with that 60s style; I’m glad I let him have his say!” Laura says.

Laura also used the expertise of two interior designer friends when it came to lighting, who firstly advised her and Ian to take their time choosing. They gave tips including layering lights at different heights for ambience, and to think how they would use spaces so light could be usefully placed in certain areas. “It was never a case of downlighters everywhere for us!”

When asked if she’d change anything, Laura’s only niggle is that they didn’t “kango up” the floor and install underfloor heating in one corner of the kitchen – money was getting tight and it was to be covered by the units anyway. “On very cold days we lose heat – for the sake of £1,200 – we should have done it.”

Laura’s goal was no less than to achieve “total happiness.”. She says that as she works long hours, she wanted their home to be “a sanctuary – I want to absolutely love it.” Despite that

## *Laura recalls a day when she was attempting to homeschool two children while the builders were installing a two tonne piece of steel above their heads*

demanding goal, she says she couldn’t be happier with the end result, including the fact that now their kids can bring their friends round. “We’re really pleased with the size, which means we can incorporate things that make it really fun to be here.”

Looking to the future, Laura and Ian are virtually certain they’ll do a project again, but not until the children have finished school. And the cost of land in their area means that while a full self-build might be “the ultimate dream,” Laura says that as they know they want to stay in the area, it’ll most likely be another renovation. “We’ve found our home.” ■



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CASE STUDY

# EXTENDING AN INVITATION

Having outgrown their current home, Daniela and Duncan Forbes were hunting for a property for their family that they could put their stamp on with an architect's help, and they found it in Edinburgh

TEXT NIK HUNTER IMAGES DAVID BARBOUR





*“When we got the keys, we decided we would do the work we absolutely had to do and didn’t move in for a few weeks”*

**T**he main appeal of the property, in the Cramond area of Edinburgh, was its outdoor space, as Daniela explains: “We fell in love with the garden. The house was detached, and there was a lot of space around it. Although it needed a lot of things done to it, we could visualise living here.” The location was good too, although the couple were a bit apprehensive about living under the flight path with the house being close to Edinburgh Airport. On the plus side however, it was close to town, close to the beach, and close to family while not living in each other’s pockets, and the local schools had a good reputation too.

Purchasing in May 2018, Daniela and Duncan took ownership at the end of July. “When we got the keys, we decided we would do the work we absolutely had to do

and didn’t move in for a few weeks.” The three upstairs bedrooms were redecorated, along with the upstairs hallway. The dated wallpaper, carpets and curtains were removed, and the doors stripped back. The walls were then skimmed and painted, new carpets were laid, and new blinds fitted. The bathroom had a quick makeover, with basic vinyl flooring replacing the old carpet, and then the family was ready to move in.

“Our plan was to live in the house for a couple of months and then look at how we could make it work better for us. We got a feel for the space, found out where the sun came in and where we tended to spend most of our time.” It became apparent very quickly that the only rooms that had a view of the garden were the utility which had one large window, and the sunroom which offered a





sidelong glimpse. Fortunately, the Forbes' already had an architect friend on hand to help, having already enlisted Neil Taylor of TAP Architecture to "give us his thoughts and draw up plans for." Daniela adds: "He had designed an extension for a mutual friend's house, and we loved it."

The original layout of the house consisted of a dark kitchen at the front and an L-shaped sitting room which led into an uninsulated sunroom at the side of the property. The utility and dining room were in the middle with the dining room leading out to a conservatory. Upstairs there were three bedrooms and a family bathroom.

While there was a lot of space, they didn't gel with the house. The conservatory was never used, as it wasn't particularly welcoming and didn't connect with the house or garden. The sitting room was old fashioned and had a brick mantelpiece that ran the length of the wall, with a gas fire and a tiny little window that opened onto the sunroom and an alcove through to the dining room. "It was a large room, but you never quite knew where to sit," Daniela recalls.

With Daniela using the kitchen as a workspace in her role as a professional cook and catering consultant, the kitchen needed to perform at a commercial level as well as a domestic one. "The kitchen was in the darkest corner of the house, and spending most of my day in the kitchen, that wasn't somewhere I wanted to work."

The couple's wish list was straightforward, however, achieving it was anything but. This wasn't a case of simply adding an extension on the back of the house; their requests required an entire remodel of the ground floor, which Neil was happy to offer them. At the top of the list was to put the kitchen at the heart of the home, and also to link it with the main living space which should be open plan with views out to the

garden. An additional bedroom and ensuite were also required, along with a snug for the kids to watch movies and entertain friends, and could double up as extra bedroom/living space if required. Lastly and most importantly, the whole ground floor had to flow and have an obvious and natural connection with the garden, as well as a wow factor.

#### DESIGN SOLUTION

Neil's first suggestion was to get rid of both the conservatory and sunroom as they were both poorly insulated and badly constructed, and replace them with a new extension. As there was no way to add another bedroom upstairs, he had to come up with a way to incorporate one on the ground floor.

"Neil did some fantastic drawings playing around with various configurations as to what should go in the extension and what could be incorporated into the existing house," says Daniela. The final design put the new fourth bedroom – which was to be Daniela's and Duncan's – at the front of the house with views over a courtyard space where the sunroom used to be. The old kitchen became the snug connected to a new shower room with sliding doors to maximise the space. The utility room was retained and kitted out as Daniela's work and storage space with floor to ceiling cupboards to house her appliances and general kitchen clutter. In the middle of the house, the dining room has been transformed into a contemporary kitchen with an internal glazed screen partially closing it off from the main living/dining area in the new extension.

With Daniela using the kitchen as a workspace, it needed to be easy to clean and offer lots of surface space. By customising basic IKEA units with stainless steel worktops and splashbacks the look is modern but practical,

#### LOW POINT

"When we moved in and didn't have worktops for quite a long time – that was frustrating."

#### DANIELA'S TOP TIPS

- \* Use an architect. I've seen projects where people have gone it alone and I think we've got something far better than what we could have come up with ourselves. A good architect opens up possibilities that you would never have considered.
- \* Make sure the contractor you choose is someone you can talk to so you can have a good working relationship with them.
- \* Check out their previous work; we knew James had a good work ethic and we'd seen some of his previous work, so we knew things were going to be done well.





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with the glass partition offering a degree of separation when she's working – while ensuring it's still very much a family space.

"It's surprising because footprint-wise we haven't gained that much, but we have achieved so much in terms of a layout which seems more natural, and which makes use of every inch of space," says Daniela. "We couldn't incorporate an ensuite, but what we have now is actually better which is a separate shower room that guests can use too."

The connection with the garden has also been re-established, much to the couple's delight. The common trend for fitting bifold doors was quickly discounted, due to plane noise, the inclement Scottish climate, and the fact they weren't particularly interested in inside-outside blending. "If it's nice weather, we spend our time in the garden, not in the sitting room," says Daniela. "We have an area in the garden for morning coffee, late afternoon pizzas and barbecues and then evenings are spent under the apple tree; we use all the space."

The glazed wall that was fitted instead is a major success. "I love having this exceptionally large pane of glass with an uninterrupted view over the garden. With the grass planted right up to the glass, it's almost seamless, and it's so much better for soundproofing as there are periods of the day when we have planes flying over every two or three minutes."

#### THE WOW FACTOR

The last thing on the wish list was the wow factor and on this, Neil has certainly delivered. "Neil

## *The whole ground floor had to flow and have an obvious and natural connection with the garden*

brought to the table the really interesting architectural touches that we wouldn't have thought about." This included features such as the floating ceiling in the living area, with the lights "hidden around it," as well as "the shape of the ceiling itself, lots of little touches." She adds: "Then of course there's the cladding."

Neil's solution to tie the new extension in with the existing building was to take inspiration from the property's original exterior – a fake stone facade that had been grafted onto the front of the house. The idea of a green planted elevation started to present itself, and while some clients would have been quite cautious about something so different, Neil was convinced that Daniela and Duncan would be keen to explore the idea, and they were.

"We were surprised with what Neil came up with, but pleasantly so. It's unusual and it's something we would never have thought of, but I'm really pleased that we took a bit of a risk and

#### HIGH POINT

"After a delay, when the glass was fitted – that was a big deal."





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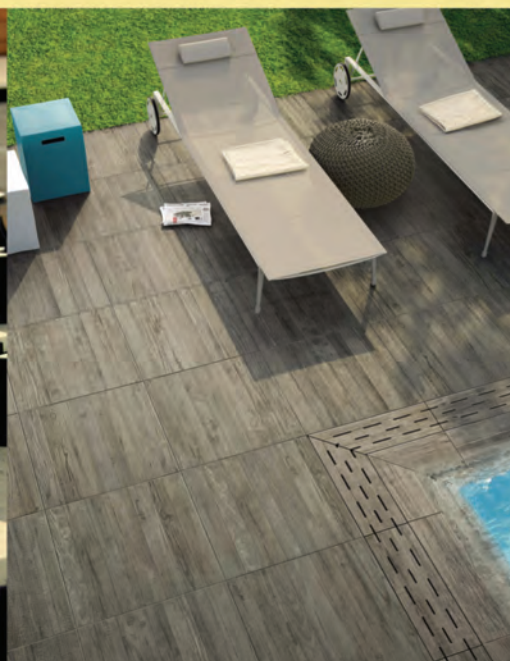
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went with it." Designing the cladding took time and evolved in an organic way with Neil taking his clients through it one step at a time, exploring what would work and what was affordable. "The first design included using aged copper, but it was prohibitively expensive, and that's when we looked at using aluminium instead."

To encourage planting to grow around the extension but not harm the building Neil's solution was to wrap the rear and side facade of the extension in a perforated aluminium mesh which is powder coated in a punchy aqua shade. The mesh is attached to the concrete block walls with long bolts, keeping it 50 mm away

from the walls. The choice of concrete walls provides a robust backing, avoiding long term maintenance issues, and also adds another layer of soundproofing to the timber frame and plasterboard finish inside. As plants grow over the new exterior, the connection between inside and outside will become ever less obvious.

#### A BIG HIT

Since the remodel was completed in August 2019 the new layout has been a big hit with everyone in the family, especially during lockdown. "The kids (now 10 and 8) call the spare bedroom "the Zoom room," Daniela explains, "And, thank goodness we have one.

## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

### ARCHITECTS

**TAP Architects**

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

### CONTRACTOR

**Ramsay Built**

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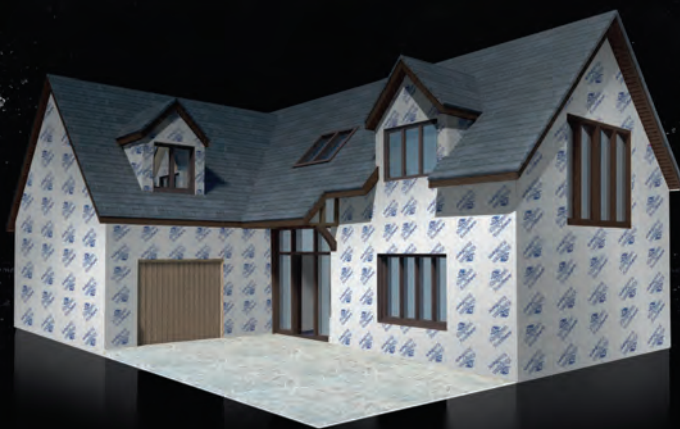
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Of course, having all this outdoor space that we now connect with has been a huge bonus. All in all, it's been a successful project."

Taking about eight months to complete and with an overspend of about 15% which included renewing all the brown dated windows, the couple are pleased with the result. "It really helped that we had a good relationship with Neil and James at Ramsay Built, the contractor; he was really organised. It was quite stressful, but these things always are, and it was only for quite a short period of time. I think for what we did, it was achieved quite quickly, and I think we got a lot for our money. Next on the list is the renovation of the upstairs bathroom and there are a few things we'd like to do in the garden. The garden is so beautiful and mature, we're a bit scared to do anything in case we muck it up!" ■



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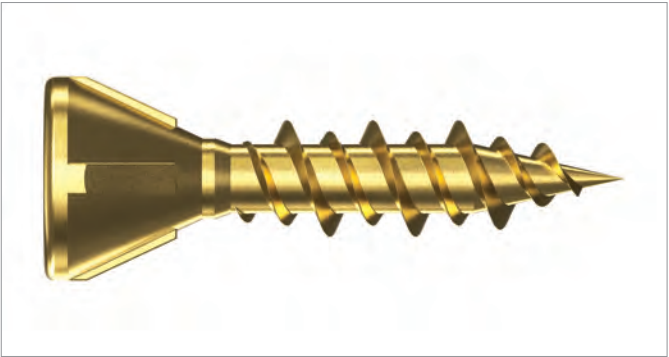
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# FOUR TIMES LUCKY

Taking on one major renovation project is ambitious enough – but what happens when you take on four simultaneously, including a historic mill? John Chasey and Eleanor are reaping the benefits of embracing the challenge

TEXT EWEN MACDONALD IMAGES EWEN MACDONALD & GLOWETH





**A**lsia Mill in west Cornwall was little more than a collection of derelict farm buildings when John Chasey and Eleanor Donegan bought it in 2013. But they could immediately see the potential of this little farm in Sennen, which sits two miles from Land's End and overlooks the famous Whitesand Bay.

"It was the same price as a two-bedroom flat in St Ives," says Eleanor, clearly pleased with their decision to buy it. The couple were drawn to the mill from the beginning. "As soon as we drove down the drive, we could see it was head and shoulders above anything else."

"We realised we could do it bit by bit. It's not overwhelming as long as you tackle it piecemeal," she adds. The same is true of the garden – which takes in four acres of mostly untouched former farmland. Around the buildings there are garden 'rooms' – spaces created for dining and playing.

"The estate was part of a working farm until the 1970s, when it became a family home," says John."

Although the property is collectively known as Alsia Mill, the mill itself is a separate building from the main farmhouse, and is the oldest and most derelict building on the site. "The mill was operational until 1966 as a grist





(grain) mill, but dates from circa 1300 AD, "making it a candidate for the oldest 'overshot' mill in existence," says John, based on the archaeological survey they had carried out. It is of course a listed building, and has been derelict since the 1970s when the farm closed. Work is yet to begin on its refurbishment, although some of the original features of the mill have been salvaged, and will be enhancing the design.

This history is proudly included in information for visitors including those who let out a converted barn – much of that info gleaned from an old neighbour's stories. In the garden by the leat that fed the mill is the remains of what would once have been the main road to Sennen. Fortunately, we arrived by the new main road, crossing a small stream.

John takes up the story: 'When we purchased the property, most of the outbuildings had been derelict for years, and much of the original farm land had been sold off, leaving four acres either side of the stream in a small valley with a granite ford.' A number of bridges cross the stream – not least a striking one for vehicles to cross to get to the main properties.

#### A QUICK WIN

With four buildings to choose from, the couple went for the easiest one to convert first, offering the quickest 'win.' The previous owners had converted one of the barns on the property to a two-bedroom holiday let. However, says John, "It was pretty run down, so we decided to totally renovate it – making it more spacious by

removing one of the two bedrooms and adding a new bathroom." Work began in October 2016 and was completed by Easter 2017, in time for the tourist season.

It has been restored to a luxury standard and is an asset that's helping to bring in much-needed funds to pay for the ongoing work. The old cart house that sits next to it has been left unchanged, acting as a covered car port.

#### FARMHOUSE

Soon they began the much bigger task of renovating the farmhouse – which will become their home and where we focus our story. This granite building would be totally gutted and rebuilt over the next few years – including extending the property in a similar style – both upwards and on the ground floor. As an extra challenge, with the barn conversion being occupied by holidaymakers during the season, it also meant that work had to happen around that.

One of the biggest projects was removing the cement used to (badly) repoint the exterior. "All of this was chipped out by hand and repointed with lime mortar. But it proved a turning point in the work, as the fresh facade set the tone for a contemporary building. "It totally transformed the look of the house, making it much brighter and cleaner," says John.

There were disappointments along the way – not least some of the elements they weren't able to include in the final house. "We carried out an extensive investigation into using a water source heat pump, potentially using the watercourse of

#### LOW POINT

"During the works, we discovered most of the first floor was rotten, and the entire farmhouse had to be gutted leaving the granite exterior walls and roof."





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the stream but due to its relatively shallow depth and the water clarity, the pipes would be visible which was not an aesthetically viable option," says John. "Likewise we investigated solar slates for the farmhouse that could generate power while still keeping a traditional look but the cost/performance ratio was pretty poor."

"We installed high capacity radiators and underfloor heating as part of the renovation, to future-proof a switch to a ground source heat pump at a later date."

The end result is a large farmhouse with six bedrooms. The interior is white washed and retains the feel of a farmhouse – not least a huge kitchen which forms the hub of the home, as a farmhouse kitchen should.

There is an open plan living space – a snug for children to play in (or for enjoying gaming or watching TV), and a utility room hiding unsightly but necessary elements of a modern home. There's also an open plan kitchen/diner with doors opening up onto a sheltered terrace, perfect for breakfast al fresco.

They say when you budget for major renovations or a new building, you should add in 10% for unforeseen events – and the Alsia farmhouse was no different. "During the works, we discovered most of the first floor was rotten and so the entire farmhouse had to be gutted leaving the granite exterior walls and roof remaining (which had been replaced in the 1980s)."

But it wasn't all bad news. "Granite was traditionally quarried from the hillside on the property, so we did not have to go far for stone during the repairs," he adds.

***"It's not overwhelming as long as you tackle it piecemeal"***

#### PROJECT MANAGING AT A DISTANCE

Overseeing the renovations from the couple's then home in Winchester had its challenges.

"We visited one weekend when the loft bathroom stud walls were being installed," he remembers. "The roof angle had been incorrectly calculated resulting in much less usable floor space and the bath that was planned simply wasn't going to fit. Some on-the-fly redesign saved walls having to be rebuilt."

"The unexpected challenge was the state of the excavation on the ground floor," agrees Jon Reed, contracts manager from building firm Gloweth. "When we reduced the levels we found large boulders, and we had to bring large machinery to remove those so we could install damp proofing and insulation."

"On a period building of this age and nature you can get all kinds of unexpected findings as you carry out the works, but our weekly meetings onsite really helped the project to go as well as possible."

The couple currently spend most of their time living in a converted flat above the garage, allowing the farmhouse to earn its keep as a holiday let. Eleanour mentions that plumbing

#### HIGH POINT

"The kitchen – we moved it to the front of the property and made an open plan dining area."



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## JOHN'S ADVICE

"Try and visit other similar properties and see what is possible and get ideas. Establishing what you don't want is as important as identifying what you want to achieve."



was added at the last minute, perfectly illustrating how renovations can mean privations.

### KITCHEN

Much of the renovation focused on the kitchen – which is John and Eleanor's favourite part of the house. The kitchen had previously been at the back of the house and "was very dark and damp," says John. "We moved the kitchen to the front of the property with an open plan dining area. It has transformed the kitchen and in the morning the space is bright with the morning sunshine and is the centre of activity for all the family throughout the day."

Despite its modernity, a key feature of the kitchen is the old range, sitting in a hearth. Eleanor has added a gas lamp – a family heirloom dating back a century. Above the kitchen island, a pair of rowing oars provide a strong visual feature.

Kitchen supplier George Robinson Kitchens

visited the site early on during the build and helped the couple design – and build – a custom kitchen. "They had some great ideas on layout and function, and based on their feedback we actually tweaked some of the wall positions to give a better flow."

### EXTENDING THE FLOW

John describes their ambitions: "We wanted to have a much brighter, warmer and more welcoming house." The open plan feel which 'blooms' out from the whitewashed entrance hall perfectly blends old and new, while a dramatic staircase leads up to the bedrooms.

To create a large lounge, they extended into the piggery that sat alongside; luckily planning permission for an extension had already been approved by the previous owner. The link between the buildings became the new double-height entrance hall, which provides access to the rest of the house.





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"The layout previously did not quite flow as a family space, having dark and cramped ground floor spaces," says John. "The intention was to remodel the original farmhouse to match the feel of the lounge and carry out a loft conversion at the same time to give additional bedrooms."

The couple were able to do much of the layout themselves, working with the architects Scott & Co to tweak the plans and do the technical bits. "We planned the dimensions and layouts of all the rooms but then worked with to turn these ideas into technical drawings and specifications for the contractor."

The first job inside was to extend the ground floor, making it a more open plan. The floor space was increased to create an ensuite bedroom and a master bedroom, and an additional bedroom in the attic. There were damp issues to solve, via improving the insulation to withstand what Cornwall can throw at you in the winter. Most of the first floor had to be replaced, while ensuring the roof structure stayed in place – a challenge for the builders.

The end result is a traditional Cornish granite farmhouse with a bright contemporary interior that still relates to its surroundings. The additions are seamless – the new living room feels part of the original house and reflects the cosiness you would expect from a farmhouse; even on a hot summer's morning, it is tempting to curl up on the sofa in front of the wood burning stove.

As with so many people buying and building in Cornwall, the properties have to earn some of their keep before they can become permanent

*The open plan feel which 'blooms' out from the whitewashed entrance hall perfectly blends old and new*

homes, but for John and Eleanor, the additional buildings on the site will continue to bring in revenue once they live in the farmhouse. John adds: "Due to the cost of the works, the design also supported running the house as a holiday let for a number of years to recoup the development costs, with the intention of us moving in full time in 10 years' time."

Being able to find money for the investment in the ongoing works was so important, that the couple discussed their plans with luxury holiday letting firm Boutique Retreats before work commenced to ensure the property would work for the rental market as before ultimately becoming a family home.

What is John's top tip for anyone considering embarking on a similar adventure? "The best tip is to visit the works frequently and ensure the plans and reality actually match." ■

## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

### ARCHITECTS

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# "Esto Perpetua" – Perfect windows for a "Forever home"



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Built in 1871 on behalf of Frederick William Allix as part of the Willoughby Hall estate, the original gatehouse was used to keep watch for approaching coaches through the small arrow slits that remain a feature to this day. The estate was divided up and sold to several different buyers over the years before the gate lodge landed in the hands of Mano in 1985.

Not wanting to rush the project that

was to become their "forever home together" Julia and Mano carefully thought out every decision made regarding their home and wanted to keep as many original features as possible and they were committed to sourcing local businesses with a great reputation.

When looking into the windows and doors they knew it had to be a Lincolnshire business that would deliver the finishing touch to their dream. Reputation was crucial to the couple and George Barnsdale answered the door.

'I knew as soon as I walked into the factory that George Barnsdale was going to be our supplier. Seeing how well presented the factory was and how the team listened to our

requests, everything just felt right.' Julia commented.

After long discussions with the George Barnsdale technical team, Julia and Mano decided on 8 bespoke timber flush casement windows, adding classic black monkey tail handles together with 4 sets of French doors, all finished to match Farrow and Ball Savage Ground.

With a slim profile casement window and black spacer bars so as not to draw attention to the double glazing, you have a picture perfect frame for the beautiful views.

The doors of the property were also carefully debated so they were in keeping with the overall theme of the house, fitted with Kirkpatrick hardware and finished with paint to match Farrow and Ball 'French Grey' the end result is elegant and understated chic.

Having been part of the property since completion, the windows and doors are now 10 years old, showing no signs of requiring redecoration. While being low maintenance the owners take great care of them cleaning on a regular basis with deionized water and no chemicals.



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# Appealing to owners

Enhancing a property and adding to its kerb appeal is all about making the right choice of windows, entrance doors, landscaping and, of course, the garage door. David O'Mara of Hörmann UK explains more



**A**lthough often overlooked, the garage can be one of the most prominent features of a home's frontage, and choosing the right garage door to complement your property's exterior is important.

However, while aesthetics are high on the list of priorities, there are a number of other considerations to be taken into account, and with such a large selection of door types available as well as a wide range of price options, it can be confusing.

## DOOR TYPE

The up-and-over steel garage door is still the most popular door in the UK. A practical and cost-effective solution, they are available with two types of mechanism; retractable or canopy. The retractable version opens fully into the garage, while a canopy door will protrude in front of the garage when open.

A roller garage door opens vertically,

literally 'rolling up' into the aperture above the door opening, offering maximum space inside and in front of the garage. They are ideal for short or multi-car driveways as a car can be parked very close to the door, while the lack of a track mechanism within the garage means that the ceiling is free for lighting and storage. A smooth operating door, designed to be easy to use, is particularly suited to automation.

Sectional garage doors also open vertically and are suspended under the ceiling, again maximising space within and in front of your garage. Made up of individual panels, sectional doors can be customised to fit irregular sizes and shaped openings. As they provide enhanced security and thermal efficiency, they are becoming increasingly popular as more people use their garages for additional leisure space and storage.

Side-sliding doors offer the option of a door that opens to the side on a track

and leaves the garage's ceiling space completely free. However, they do take up more room to the side and can reduce the overall floor space.

For a more traditional look, side hinged doors, sometimes referred to as carriage doors, are a good choice. Opening outwards, they are usually supplied in wood and can be easily customised for a visually appealing garage door.

## SECURITY

All modern garage doors should be supplied with the latest in high security mechanisms and quality locking systems to help deter intruders. Sectional doors which are automated can also be supplied with an anti-lift feature which gives additional protection against forced entry. It is also worth researching and selecting a door that has Secured by Design (SBD) certification for added peace of mind. The accreditation means the garage door will have undergone





*With their double-skinned panel construction, sectional doors tend to be the best choice when looking for a thermally efficient door*

thorough independent security and safety tests, involving prolonged brute-force attacks.

#### THERMAL EFFICIENCY

Conserving energy and saving money is important to us all and it is a significant aspect to consider when selecting a garage door. A well-insulated garage door is ideal if there is an integrated garage, or if the garage is used as additional recreational or storage space.

It will help to maintain the temperature balance between home and garage and keep any items stored within the garage in good condition.

With their modern, double skinned panel construction and superior sealing, sectional doors tend to be the best choice when looking for a thermally efficient door. When fitted with an additional thermal break, sectional doors can achieve U-values as low as 1.0 W/M<sup>2</sup>K.

#### AUTOMATED DOORS

Automating is well worth considering. The primary benefit of an automated garage door is the ease of operation, typically from within your car, especially beneficial in bad weather and when returning home late at night. Providing quick access into the garage using a secure, easy to use hand transmitter or via a mobile phone, most of the popular garage door types can be automated.

The latest hand transmitters use secure encryption protocols which provide a stable interference range that ensures no one can hack into the operating system and open the garage door. Bluetooth technology available on some controllers also enables you to open and close the door from a mobile phone or tablet, which is in addition to the conventional operation by way of remote control using handheld transmitters.

With the increasing popularity of smart home devices, some garage door manufacturers are introducing their own smart hubs which operate via an app and enable control from a central platform alongside heating, security, and other smart appliances.

#### STYLES AND FINISHES

With such a vast range of styles, finishes and colours on offer there is a garage door to suit a property no matter what its age.

Ranging from the more traditional raised panel door to the contemporary designs, enhancements such as glazing, design elements and inlays ensure ample opportunity to create a unique door style.

Surface finishes and colours include some of the latest trends such as finishes that replicate the contours of slate; and modern textured finishes such as concrete or rusty steel, through to contemporary metallic colours such as anthracite grey.

With so many options available, some garage door manufacturers provide online door 'configurator' tools allowing homebuyers to design their ideal garage. By uploading an image of the facade they can view it in place, helping buyers make the right choice.

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





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## SUPPORTING ZERO-CARBON TARGETS - TEN OAKS, HEREFORDSHIRE

Almost a decade in the building, Ten Oaks is undoubtedly an impressive family home. Architects Kirkland Fraser Moor worked with owner Ian Mays (one of the founders and now retired CEO of RES, the world's largest independent renewable energy company) to create a 'climate restorative' zero carbon home with minimal visual impact on the surrounding countryside. The highly distinctive circular building – with an additional circular annexe – features VELFAC composite triple glazing throughout, specified for its low-U values and slim-framed, contemporary and sustainable design. 'VELFAC triple glazed units met our thermal targets while the narrow frame design increased visibility from within the house and brought more daylight inside,' says Ian. 'We considered installing locally-made curved windows, but VELFAC was more cost effective and delivered the performance we needed. As a result, we opted for a faceted design where the larger window panels are as wide as possible

without compromising the curved finish. The sustainability of the VELFAC aluminium / timber frame was also important,' adds Ian: 'Every unit is almost entirely recyclable and it's also very low maintenance, which again supports our zero carbon ambitions. The fact that VELFAC was part of the same group as VELUX was also reassuring.'

## DESIGN IMPACT WITHOUT COMPROMISE - TOWER MILL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Once-derelict, Tower Mill is now a stunning eco-house, with the slim-framed VELFAC system specified for impressive energy efficiency, low maintenance construction, and value for money. 'I knew about VELFAC from other commercial projects,' says home owner and developer, Henry Martin, 'but I hadn't realised that the system could be used so successfully in a domestic project, or that it was so competitively priced. Our architect, Judith Brear, recommended VELFAC for Tower Mill as it could meet the eco-performance standards we all were looking for, in terms of thermal insulation and sustainable construction, and could deliver the flat, contemporary exterior finish that she also wanted.' VELFAC triple-glazed units are installed across Tower Mill, including punch-hole windows inserted into the curving walls of the old tower, with a series of asymmetrical, cill to ceiling VELFAC units combined to create a stunning, 360° viewing area at the top. 'VELFAC was the only system which could supply the mix of large, sliding and asymmetric casements, together with clean lines and triple glazing, that we needed to meet the brief,' says Henry. 'The window walls bring natural light flooding into the house, while also creating impressive architectural features.'

## HIGH STYLE, LOW MAINTENANCE - MARSH HILL, ALDEBURGH

Emphasising the unusual design of this new build home, and its dramatic location, Marsh Hill creators Mole Architects used composite VELFAC windows to punctuate the innovative,



articulated zinc roof and white painted brickwork facades. A long, thin floor plan means that every room looks out – through large, slim-framed VELFAC windows – over the dramatic wetland scenery of the nearby Alde Estuary. A palette of cool whites, blues and greys, reminiscent of a seagull's wing, says Mole Architects, is reflected in the finishes selected for the composite VELFAC units. External aluminium framing is finished in soft grey, and inner timber is painted white, blending the window frames into the white-walled interior. The distinctive, slim VELFAC frame design maximises natural light, and enhances the beautiful coastal views. The highly durable VELFAC system is also ideal for the exposed coastal location; designed to cope with extreme weather conditions, including salt-laden winds, the external aluminium frame requires no repainting for the lifetime of the unit. The VELFAC system also guarantees low U-values and therefore excellent low energy performance, making an important contribution to Marsh Hill's sustainability strategy, which includes a ground source heat pump, on-site private well and waste water treatment plant.

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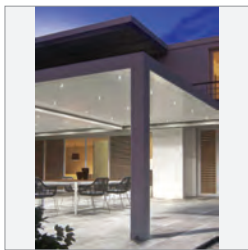
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## New Pergolas from Phantom Screens



**Phantom Screens** has long been known for the introduction of high quality power screens to the UK. Now, in addition to helping self-builders control heat build and insect ingress in large glazed areas, the company has introduced a range of pergolas that will help home-builders extend their property footprint without adding significantly to build costs. Phantom's pergolas extract more value from a space – delivering super-flexible living with a light-touch look that at once gives

the impression of a larger, multi-functional property. Motorised roof slats let you open up to the sun or close to create a wonderful additional work-or-play living space.

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# WEAVING A NEW CHAPTER INTO AN OLD STORY

Rebecca and Matthew McCloskey have succeeded in transforming a former weaving factory into a modern family home, in a 15 year journey that required patience and flexibility

TEXT JESS UNWIN IMAGES REBECCA MCCLOSKEY AND MATTHEW BISHOP





*In 2005 the McCloskeys bought the first floor and the converted attic space above as a three-bed kitchen/diner maisonette*





It was a case of instant attraction when Rebecca and Matthew McCloskey followed up an estate agent's speculative suggestion that they check out a "quirky" building in Hertfordshire, that had once been a canvas-weaving factory.

Rebecca reveals: "My first reaction when I saw inside it was to whisper to Matt, 'I think we should live here'. I could see the character and potential of it."

The building in question certainly has character – and history too. Located in the conservation area of the town of Tring, it was known in the 19th century for the quality of canvas-weaving on the premises.

Weaving activity ceased prior to the start of World War Two, but the production of ladies' clothing continued onsite before work got underway in the late 1970s to turn the property into two residential dwellings, across three floors.

It was in 2005 that the McCloskeys' part in the building's story began – when they bought the first floor and the converted attic space above as a three-bed kitchen/diner maisonette.

They began to dream about reuniting all three floors of the house as one home, but the ground floor remained a separate flat occupied by someone else until the couple were in a position to buy it in 2010. Even then, their patient wait wasn't over. Matthew, an IT professional, explains: "It was fantastic to finally secure the ground floor. However, we realised it would be a while before we could afford to change it in the way we wanted."

As it was still configured as a self-contained flat, the couple decided to let the ground floor for the next few years. They were finally ready, with funding available through remortgaging, to begin remodelling their house at the end of 2016.

The task was a substantial renovation that involved building front and back extensions, and

a total reconfiguration of the ground floor and first floor with the removal of almost all of the internal walls on those floors. The major work was completed by the following summer – although further internal changes have been made in 2020 and 2021.

The McCloskeys and their three children can now relax and enjoy a comfortable family home that harmoniously brings together both modern and old, to breathe new life into the building.

On the ground floor, the footprint has been increased by approximately 40 m<sup>2</sup>, and the layout is largely open-plan. The rear extension has made room for a carefully considered, modern kitchen and also allows for a private and cosy 'snug', which is deliberately partitioned so as to be separate from the rest of the ground floor living area. Both the kitchen and the snug are flooded with light through a glazed aluminium roof. A further wall was moved to widen the hallway and the ground floor also has a toilet and a utility.

## DISCOVERIES

The results are impressive but, as with most projects of this kind, it wasn't all plain sailing. A wall in one corner needed underpinning – work that had to be done manually and which cost £1,000 a metre. And access to materials and equipment was a problem throughout the project as the house can only be approached via a narrow driveway.

Matthew remembers that installing ground floor underfloor heating required digging down to a depth of 70 cm, uncovering "lots of weird old pipes that no-one was 100% sure were live or not." Elsewhere, initial fears about a well discovered beneath the drive eventually turned out to be unfounded.

One unexpected development the couple have learned to love is around new structural steel supports to take the weight of the first floor. The original plan was for the existing steel

## LOW POINT

"It was worrying seeing the acro props holding up the house while we were still living on the first and second floors, but there were also a few very tired moments when the all-consuming intensity of it just seemed relentless."





## HIGH POINT

"Aside from finally crossing the finishing line on the whole project, we won a planning battle over the rear extension so that it would extend far enough to accommodate our 'snug'. That room is now an important adult-only space in the evening and very popular with the children during the day."

*The task was a substantial renovation that involved building front and back extensions, and a total reconfiguration of the ground floor and first floor*

framework to be removed and replaced with the new steel, which would be hidden in the ceiling. However, safety considerations meant the decision was taken to install the new steel under the old, leaving the steel columns and I-beams exposed, adding a touch of 'industrial chic' that's perhaps fitting given the building's heritage. Says Rebecca: "It's not for everyone, but we've embraced it."

Changes made on the first floor were no less extensive. The maisonette's large living room, open-plan kitchen/dining room, study/bedroom and bathroom have been replaced by three bedrooms, two ensuite bathrooms, and one family bathroom. In contrast, the configuration



of the second-floor attic space is unaltered – featuring two bedrooms, including the master with an ensuite shower room.

The 18 month journey to planning for the renovation, says Matthew, was an "iterative process, going back and forth," to ensure their plans adhered to the relevant rules. Rebecca adds: "With it being a conservation area, new exteriors have to look the same as old, and we





## REBECCA & MATTHEW'S TOP TIPS

- \* The biggest challenge was the number of decisions to make in quite a short time. We were a bit naïve about that. We also learned there's a sequence to things, and a balance to be struck so you can still be flexible enough to make changes as you go along. In retrospect, it might have been better if we had made some of the design decisions earlier.
- \* It's important to be onsite as much as possible so you can continue to develop the relationship with your builder and be there to make decisions. If you can't live in the building, relocate to somewhere nearby.
- \* Spend money on what matters to you – we wanted an aluminium roof for the rear extension rather than PVCu, and to make sure we could pay to make it happen we delayed some of the finishing work on other aspects of the project.



had to give attention to things like making sure that the bi-fold doors at the front mirrored the size of the garage doors for symmetry."

She adds: "It was stressful at times, but if you stick to the advice you get from the council you should be alright." However, Rebecca offers the advice that if there's something "important to your design vision and how you want to use your home," it may be worth "standing your ground or making minor adjustments to negotiate towards your end goal – even if it delays the planning application process."

### PROJECT MANAGEMENT SUCCESS

The McCloskeys agree that their builders played a vital role in overcoming problems and the

eventual success of the project. Matthew says: "We wanted a recommended local outfit because they'd have a reputation to protect, and because we could look at their other work. We also didn't want them to be too big a firm, so there'd be a real and personal relationship."

Rebecca says: "Matt and I were project-managing, so cultivating and maintaining a good relationship with the builder was key. It has to be give and take, because there's always going to be something that goes wrong, some unexpected twist. So, ongoing discussion and a willingness to be flexible when needed is very important."

As well as project-managing, Rebecca also took on the interior design. It was an experience



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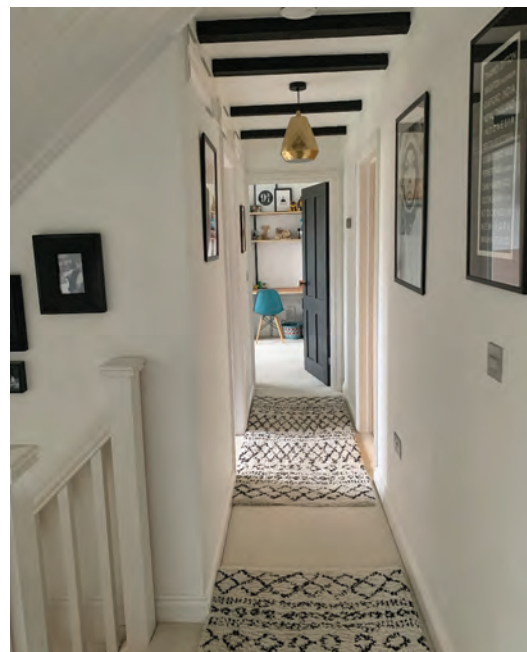
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the former teacher enjoyed so much that she's now set up her own interior design company, called Weave Interiors. "It's always been something I've had a passion for," she says.

One slightly frustrating bureaucratic legacy of the McCloskeys' renovation has been an unexpected change of postcode. Matthew explains: "The change to one residential dwelling meant a new postcode and address. The implications have turned out to be far-reaching because our property 'doesn't exist' for anyone checking an older database. That's proved a problem for everything from deliveries to renewing a driver's licence!"

### COUNTING THE COST

This couple aren't the sort of people to let a tiny glitch like that get in the way of enjoying their new-look home. Totting up the cost to this point, they believe they've spent more than £200,000 on the renovation, and are sure it's been well worth it. They had always wanted a space that would suit their growing needs as a family, and one that was open plan as they spend a lot of time entertaining family and friends. "It needed to be a place everyone would enjoy.

She admits that "some might say that converting two residential spaces into one house wasn't a sensible thing financially to do," and

*The decision was taken to leave the steel columns and I-beams exposed, adding a touch of 'industrial chic'*

they "could have done them both up, sold them and then moved on." However, having fallen in love with the house and the location, they "knew that if we could be a little patient, we could do something special with this unique property."

She concludes: "The history of the building, with all the changes that have happened over the years, is another big part of what I love about it." While Rebecca says she was "a little worried" when they began that their project might detract from that character, she adds that she's "really pleased that we've not only added to its charms, but also made it right for us as a family and whoever lives here after us." ■



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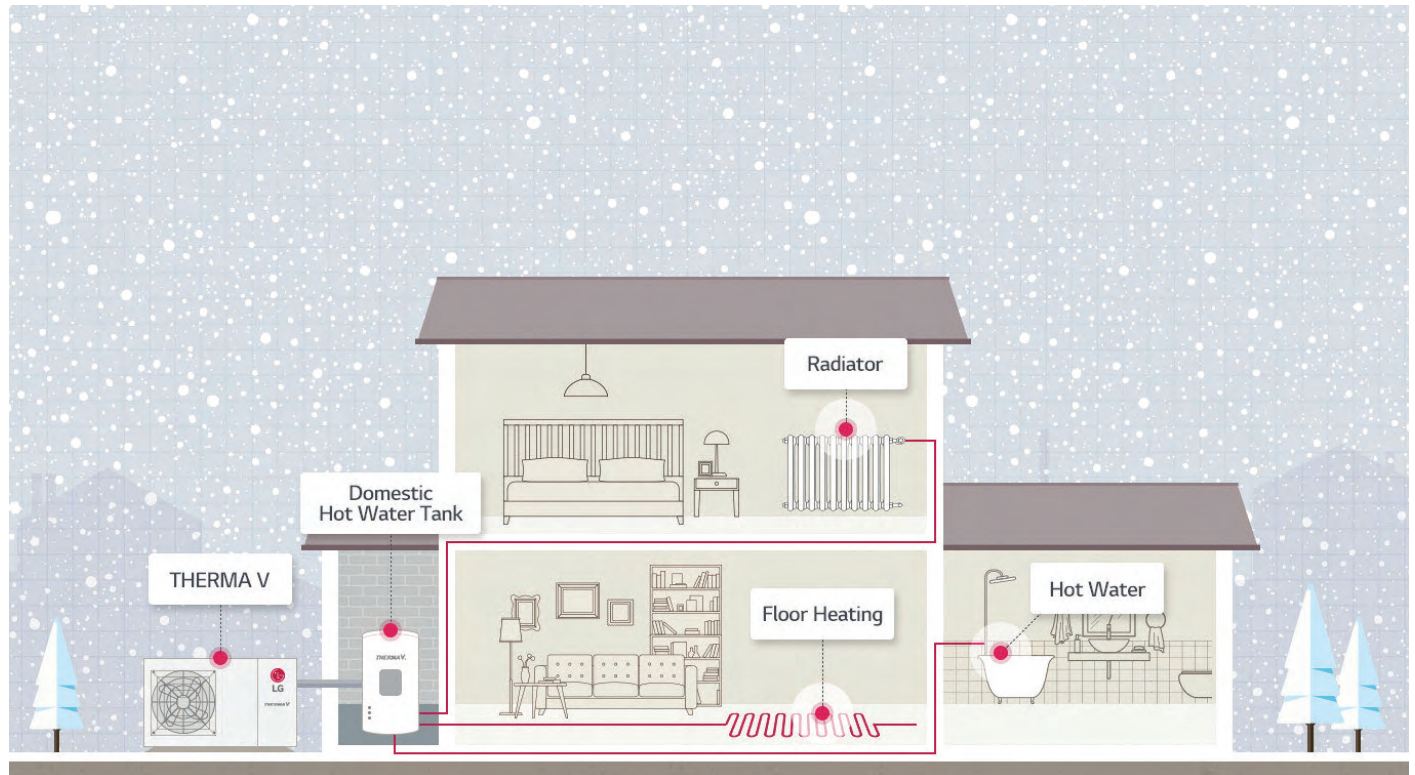
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# Pump up the volume

Donna-Marie Evans of LG Electronics explains why heat pumps are the right choice for UK housebuilders and homeowners to comply with the Future Homes Standard, and tackles some myths

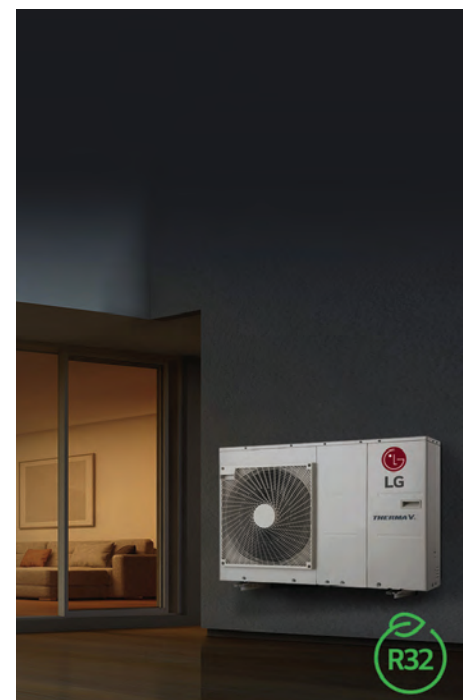


With recent announcements from the Government about the decarbonisation of heating in the UK, the arrival of the Future Homes Standard and the decision by the Government that after 2025 no new build homes can have fossil fuel heating systems, the spotlight has been trained on proven renewable technologies to provide our heating and hot water here in the UK. Heat pumps have seen a huge take up in northern Europe, Scandinavia and Canada – all of which experience far worse winters and lower temperatures than we do in the UK – and now it seems inevitable they will at last grow in importance here too.

Air to water (AWHP) systems ('monoblocs' or 'splits') present a variety of energy-saving options for a home's heating and hot water. By replacing a traditional gas, oil, or solid fuel system, or specified as the means of providing heating and hot water in a new property,

an AWHP can significantly reduce carbon emissions and energy usage. These devices' absorption of natural energy from external air makes them consume less energy than conventional heating systems. They can operate successfully at low temperatures – as low as  $-7^{\circ}\text{C}$  – and it's very rare for temperatures in most of the UK to drop that low. We're looking at between three and four times the energy efficiency you can obtain from the most efficient condensing gas boiler.

The terms 'split' and 'monobloc' refer to how the system is required to be set up in a home. A Monobloc is a bit like a combi boiler and is literally a 'single block' system, where the heat pump has all of its components – apart from the hot water cylinder which is installed inside the property – located inside a heat pump unit situated outside the home. Because a monobloc does not require someone with F Gas qualifications to get involved in the use of refrigerants, they are an excellent







additional string to the bow of most professional heating installers. After attending an appropriate training course, they will be well placed to join the growing band of installers capable of fitting these heating systems in homes.

A split heat pump unit has both an outside unit which incorporates the heat exchanger and refrigerant and an internal unit that sits inside the property, usually in a utility or boiler room.

Most homes in the UK are suited to a monobloc air to water heat pump. A split system is an option generally for more complex installations; it can be installed up to 30 metres away from the home, which gives far more installation flexibility.

The financial incentive to use heat pumps is changing in 2022. The Government has announced that the Clean Heat Grant will replace the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme in 2022. The flat-rate grant is intended for households and small non-domestic buildings across the UK. It has been proposed to help with the upfront cost of installing heat pumps to deliver space heating and hot water, and will move the

UK away from the RHI's tariff-based system for consumers.

There are a number of options for AWHPs. According to the MCS Installation Standard, low temperature air to water heat pumps produce an indoor heat exchanger outlet temperature of 35°C, medium temperature an outlet temperature of 55°C and high temperature air to water heat pumps an outlet temperature of 65°C. These systems don't produce water as hot as a traditional boiler will, as they generally only reach around 50°C at a maximum. They are perfectly suited to new build homes and self-build properties – which tend to be well insulated. To be at their most effective, they operate well with either larger capacity (possibly K3 design) radiators or a higher number of radiators and/or underfloor heating.

High temperature air to water heat pumps are designed for poorly insulated or particularly large properties, and those where replacing existing radiators or improving the insulation in the home isn't possible. These high temperature heat pumps, which are offered by a

*Heat pumps have seen a huge take up in northern Europe, Scandinavia and Canada – all of which experience far worse winters*

few manufacturers, can heat water up to 80°C.

*Donna-Marie Evans is marketing manager at LG Electronics*





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To see the 12 new colours in more detail, download the beautiful digital booklet or request your free colour card on the Earthborn website. The new Modern Country Colours are available in all Earthborn finishes and sizes, including 100ml tester pots. They can be purchased from Earthborn's online shop or via any of its stockists.

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# Reducing flue risk

It's easy to overlook the importance of chimney and flue design, says Dennis Milligan of the British Flue and Chimney Manufacturers Association, explaining some of the basic rules to bear in mind



**W**hen constructing a new dwelling, the route of the chimney needs to be thought about – at the design stage. Most residential chimneys/flues rely on natural draught – the pressure difference between cold and hot air – to draw the flue gases up the chimney to the atmosphere. A potential reduction in velocity and temperature could reduce the draw of the chimney or flue. A straight chimney is always the best

solution, but where this is not possible, due to the construction of the dwelling, the number of bends should be kept to a minimum and not exceed more than four. The angle of the bends should be no greater than 45° from the vertical.

One of the keys to a well performing chimney or flue is consistent insulation along the complete length of the flue. The last thing you want is for the temperature of the gases to fall below the dew point. Clay, concrete and pumice

liners require insulation to be prepared and added on site. Stainless steel and clay system chimneys are supplied with effective insulation. Double wall pumice chimney systems have an air gap between the walls of the inner and outer blocks. The air gap combined with the natural insulating properties of pumice provides effective insulation along the length of the chimney. Maintaining the flue gas temperature will enable the flue gases to freely escape to the atmosphere.

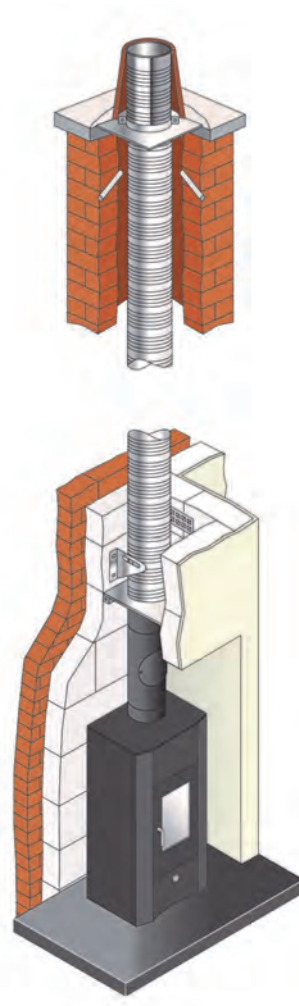
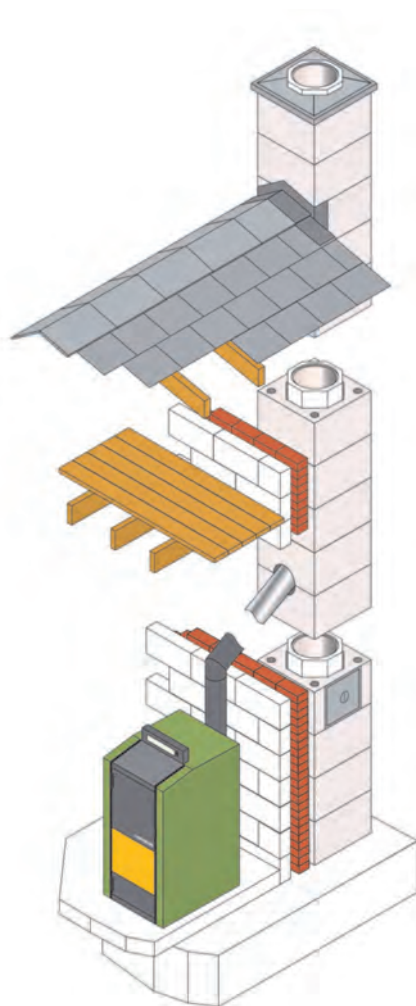


The height of the chimney/flue is also important. In accordance with Document J, the minimum chimney height recommended for the minimum performance of wood burning and multi fuel appliances is 4.5 metres from the top of the appliance to the top of the chimney. It should be stressed that this is the minimum height – some Ecodesign stoves may require more height. It is always advisable to check with the stove manufacturer's recommendations. The installer should carry out a draw test when the stove has been installed to make sure it is working correctly.

It is worth noting that there are different types of flue for different flues. For example, the flue required for a gas fire is different to that for a wood burning stove. Condensing appliances require a flue that has been designed to work with condensing appliances.

Installing a flue or an appliance is not a DIY job. In England & Wales you can engage a 'competent person' with sufficient knowledge and skill to carry out the job, and the authority to undertake it. The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) has approved a number of competent persons schemes like HETAS, Certsure and OFTEC, with HETAS the largest solid fuel scheme. A competent person is able to self-certify that their work complies with the Building Regulations.

If you have been looking for a new stove you cannot have failed to hear about the Government's Ecodesign scheme; the Defra requirement to reduce particulate emissions. Chimney and flues are not part of Ecodesign, however, the flues being sold now are ready for use



with Ecodesign appliances.

The purpose of a chimney or flue is to discharge the products of combustion safely into the atmosphere. When re-opening an existing chimney, it is important to check that the flue is sound and has no cracks or gaps. The most common way to create a sealed flue in a defective chimney is to reline the chimney with a flexible flue liner – stainless steel and plastic for gas appliances and stainless steel for solid fuel.

All mineral burning appliances need air to work efficiently and safely. It is essential that the appropriate air supply, as required by the appliance manufacturer and Building Regulations, is provided into the room where the appliance or open fire is situated. An inadequate supply of combustion air can create problems. Situations assumed to be downdraught (and spillage of smoke and fumes back into the room, which can be unpleasant and dangerous), are more frequently caused by insufficient provision of combustion air. Never block air vents installed to provide combustion air. If the appliance does not get all the air it needs to burn the fuel efficiently, incomplete combustion will occur resulting in the production of carbon monoxide and, if

badly deprived of air, copious volumes of soot.

All wood burning and multi-fuel appliances should have a carbon monoxide alarm fitted within the same room as the appliance. The carbon monoxide alarm should comply with BS EN 50291-1:2010, and must be installed to the manufacturers' installation instructions, and current Building Regulations. An alarm is required because carbon monoxide is a dangerous but odourless and invisible gas.

Chimney and flues require little maintenance. The one essential job is to sweep the chimney/flue on a regular basis. The frequency of sweeping depends on the usage of the appliance. However, as a minimum, the chimney should be swept at the start of the 'heating season.'

It is also good practice to check at least every year or two the exposed parts of a chimney, flashings and terminals for signs of damage. Just like the outside of a house, chimneys can suffer from the wear and tear of extreme weathering.

*Dennis Milligan is president of the BFCMA*

***The minimum chimney height recommended for wood burning and multi fuel appliances is 4.5 metres from the top of the appliance to the top of the chimney***



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## SHORT CHIMNEY = CHIMNEY FAN

Traditional chimney design required a minimum flue height of 4.5 m. In theory, this was enough to ensure sufficient natural flue draught to clear the products of combustion from a wood-burning stove.

Unfortunately, the chimney draught was never guaranteed and the provision often resulted in unsightly tall chimneys when appliances were installed in single-storey buildings and orangeries.

A recent change in chimney design (see source) states that a chimney can be designed using the calculation method in BS EN 13384-2005 which allows for the installation of shorter chimneys, provided sufficient chimney draught can be proved. A chimney fan will guarantee this chimney draught even on a shorter flue design.

*[...] the calculation procedure within BS EN 13384-1:2005 can be used as the basis for deciding whether a chimney design will provide sufficient draught."*

Source: Document J Building Control Combustion appliances and fuel storage systems page 30 - §2.8 - "Height of flues"

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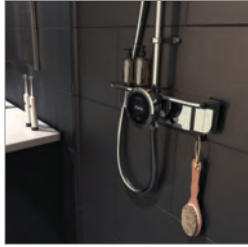
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## Quartz™ Smart Retrofit Shower range

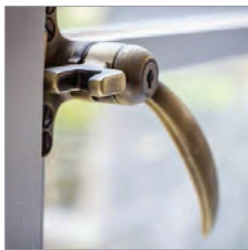


Bathroom product specialist **Aqualisa** has introduced the Quartz™ Smart Retrofit Shower – an all-in-one upgrade solution that transforms almost any make of exposed mixer shower into a voice-activated, smart digital shower system, without the need to disturb the current bathroom decor or re-tile the shower enclosure. The Quartz Smart Retrofit Shower delivers a simple, elegant and cost-effective solution that will complement any bathroom style. It also provides the home owner with a handy

storage shelf for bathroom accessories and toiletries. Quick and straightforward to fit, the installer will find it effortless to assemble with no major pipework alterations required.

01959 560010 [www.aqualisa.co.uk/smart-retrofit-shower](http://www.aqualisa.co.uk/smart-retrofit-shower)

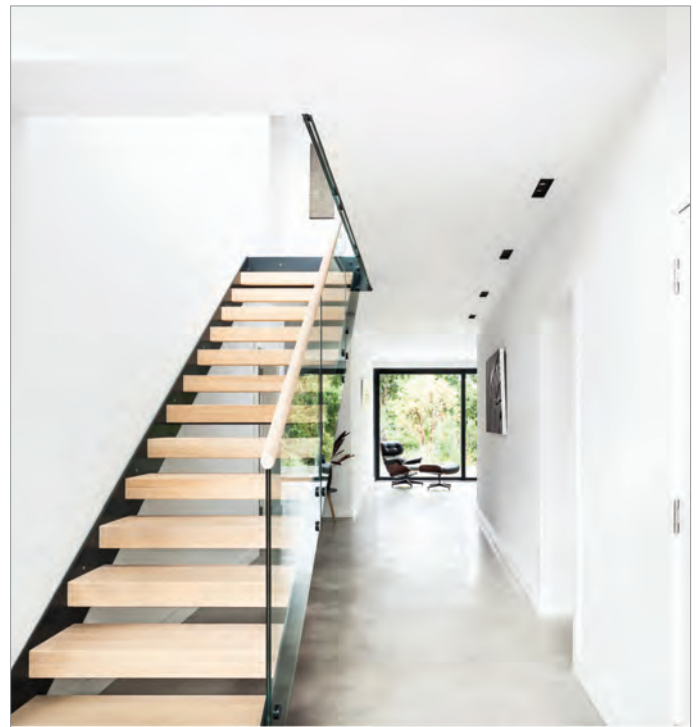
## Security and safety with SWF



**Steel Window Association (SWA)** member, Steel Window Fittings (SWF) specialises in providing quality, design-led fittings for steel window frames. A recent innovation to answer questions of aesthetics, security and longevity is a range of multipoint locking handles. The multipoint locking range is currently available for windows with door frames following soon. With this new system, security is greatly improved, durability is enforced and larger windows can be designed and produced. The

concealed system is driven by a single key-locking or non-locking handle that is available in five different designs and six standard finishes. Multipoint locking is available for W30, W40 and W50TB window profiles.

[www.steel-window-association.co.uk](http://www.steel-window-association.co.uk)



## CUSTOM STAIRCASES

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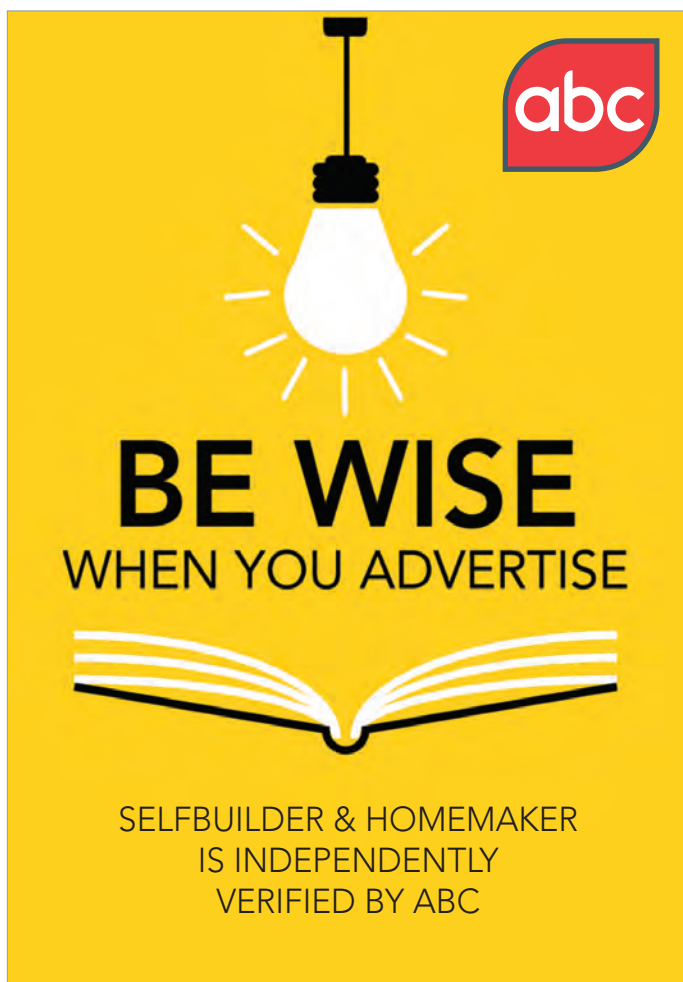
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### JACKON is 'Future Homes ready'

At Grand Designs this year **JACKON** is promoting the fact that it is Future Homes ready. This means it is ready for the tough new u-value targets for new-builds, when they come into effect from 2025 as part of the Future Homes Standard. JACKON's THERMOMUR® ICF and JACKODUR® ATLAS ranges already meet or exceed the new targets for thermal insulation. The THERMOMUR® 350 Super range – currently the company's best-selling range in the UK – already achieves 0.15 for walls with no added materials, and the JACKODUR® ATLAS system can be designed to achieve 0.11 – great news for self-builders, looking to design and build the energy-efficient home of their dreams! There will be plenty of opportunity to find out more about the benefits JACKON's 60 years' expertise in XPS and EPS manufacturing can bring to your construction project, since the company has stands in both the and Grand Designs and UK Construction Week halls at the NEC. In fact the perimeter of the 'Ask the Expert' stand at Grand Designs is constructed from THERMOMUR® ICF blocks. Come visit JACKON at Stand B48B.

01204 221089 [www.jackon.co.uk](http://www.jackon.co.uk)

## BAL Waterproof 1C – the new one-coat solution

**B**AL, market-leaders in full-tiling solutions, have launched a new one-coat waterproofing solution for bathrooms, wetrooms and showers prior to tiling.

BAL Waterproof 1C is a ready-mixed tanking solution that can be used without priming on most common substrates and is ready to tile after only two hours!

Formulated with fibre-strand technology for improved strength, it can be applied in one-coat on walls and floors with a brush, roller or 4 mm notched trowel. No additional tapes or matting are needed as it is crack-bridging from 2-3 mm.

This innovative new product is lightweight with easy-to-apply rheology and provides excellent coverage of up to 6 m<sup>2</sup> – making it suitable for domestic shower rooms, bathrooms or wetrooms. BAL Waterproof 1C also has

sustainable benefits with Low VOC and using 40% recycled materials. As part of the launch, BAL is streamlining its current waterproofing solution by deleting BAL WP1 / BAL Waterproofing Kit – and old technology that will be replaced by the higher performing Waterproof 1C.

Continuing in the product range will be BAL Tank-it – a quicker setting 2-part powder and liquid product that can be tiled in only 90 minutes.

BAL Tank-it can also be used for large scale commercial projects and external waterproofing such as balconies and terraces.

Alex Underwood, Head of Marketing said: "BAL Waterproof 1C is a significant waterproofing innovation, greatly improving the performance of our former ready-mixed tanking solutions. In most instances, with no tapes or priming required, and



being applied as a one-coat solution, BAL Waterproof 1C provides an easy waterproofing solution to ensure tiled wet areas are compliant with British Standards."

Additional advice on waterproof tanking system requirements for domestic and commercial wet areas is also given in BS 5385 Part 4: 2015.

01782 591120  
[www.bal-adhesives.com](http://www.bal-adhesives.com)



# A grand return

Grand Designs Live returns after a two year break to Birmingham's NEC in October



Featuring over 400 companies across four key home project areas, Grand Designs is back! The organisers have staged the 2021 event to be "the perfect day out for anyone taking on a self-build, renovation, or home improvement project."

Kevin McCloud, presenter of Grand Designs, welcomed the show back after its long hiatus: "I am looking forward to getting back to Grand Designs Live in October! The show is always a great time, and after the last 18 months of uncertainty that we've had, Grand Designs Live will be a fantastic event to inspire those who have been itching to renovate and invigorate their homes, learn new skills and even build their own 'grand design'!"

2021's show features new exhibitors and exciting debut features, along with popular favourites and established brands. At this year's event the following discoveries await you:

## BUILD HALL

If you're in the planning stage or your project is underway, the Build Hall will be filled with companies including glazing specialists, heating solutions, staircases and building solutions. The hall is also home to the popular 'Ask an Expert' zone. This is where visitors can book free one-to-one consultations with specialists ranging from architects and designers to finance experts and project managers.

## KITCHENS & BATHROOMS

Including designers, suppliers and accessories for your kitchen or bathroom furniture, this area showcases sanitaryware, kitchenware and appliances – all you need to take your project from start to finish. Visitors will also be able to take a break and grab something to eat at the Siemens Cafe.

## INTERIORS

The Interiors Hall features a range of products from flooring and lighting to furniture, and the latest home technology. This year you will find the brand new Great British Box Room competition, which sees interior designers transforming a small, sometimes unloved



room in the home into a creative and inspiring concept, giving you home ideas as well as possible product suppliers for your build. If you've ever struggled to sleep, speak to the International Sleep Charity at the show; they are conducting The Sleep Quality Experiment, which allows visitors to take part in a 'blind mattress test.' Visitors taking the test will have the chance to win their favourite mattress!

## GARDENS

Extend your living outdoors, by visiting the Gardens Hall. Suppliers of outdoor furniture, garden accessories, leisure products like hot tubs and Swimsplas, and outdoor buildings will be highlighted. An example is Torp, a 'design-led concept' set to disrupt the traditional 'Staycation' market, which was inspired by Grand Designs. The units are designed to a 'near Passivhaus' standard, and offer off-grid and net zero carbon options.

## THE GRAND THEATRE

Take a seat and be inspired at The Grand Theatre. Get top tips, the latest trends and advice for your home project with the live talks programme. Speakers include Kevin McCloud, homeowners who have had their project featured on the TV show, and a range of specialists across self-build, planning, renovation and home

improvement. Subjects include inside modular building, 'self-build simplified,' renovation and restoration with Sofie Hepworth, and My Beautiful Green Home.

## KEVIN'S GREEN HEROES

Each year Kevin McCloud selects the best eco concepts of the year, and their products are showcased at Grand Designs Live. This year the show will also be inviting back a selection of the 'heroes' who have now successfully taken their concept to market.

## WHEN & WHERE

To book 'two for one' tickets to the event visit [granddesignslive.com](https://www.granddesignslive.com) and enter the code **SBHM** at the checkout

(The ticket offer is valid on Grand Designs Live Birmingham 2021 tickets only and must be booked in advance before midnight 9 October 2021. Tickets incur a transaction fee and the saving is based on the weekend ticket price on the door.)



# IN SEARCH OF SPACE

A growing family in a London conservation area sought the help of an architect close to home to help them expand their modest property for the long-term, having caught the extension bug on an earlier project

TEXT TOM BODDY IMAGES WILL SCOTT







Gary and Kate Westlake, and their one-year-old son, moved into an end-of-terrace home in Blackheath Vale, south London, in 2004. At that time, while having a fairly straightforward layout with two-storeys at the front and one at the back, it served their needs. But when their second child was born it was clear they were going to need more space.

Looking at extending, they were fortunate that Kate's brother Ben is an architect (founder of Minifie Architects), so embarking on their own construction project was a less daunting prospect. A few years later – in 2012 – and after establishing which parts of the home should be improved, they completed a traditional kitchen side return extension, which made "a massive difference," says Gary.

"Straightaway, from being in a terraced house with restricted space and a galley-style kitchen, we now had a table that you can get eight people around." The extension featured a glass roof that spanned the length of the kitchen, creating a room filled with natural light throughout the day. Gary says it has become the "hub of the house."

This project only fuelled their urge to go further. Their children were also growing, to say the least – their by then late teenage son was approaching six foot six tall! "Other parts of the house such as the bedrooms just needed an increase in space," says Gary.





KITCHEN



AFTER



BEFORE

At this point, the family had two options: remain and try and work out ways of adding space, or look to move, and for a while they pursued this idea. However as they wanted to stay in the area, there was a lack of suitable properties within their budget, or any 'projects' that "were interesting enough," says Gary. Owning a graphic design company, Gary has a strong enthusiasm for architectural design, so a house that would allow them to be creative was a top priority. "I wanted a 'doer upper', something we could make our own mark on." Given that this wasn't possible, they decided to work with their home, and approached Ben a second time to gather some ideas; in the event, Gary would work closely with Ben on the design.

## PLANNING

"Ben and I had some really long conversations about architecture, and we came up with some really cool ideas," says Gary. The brief was to maximise the footprint as much as possible, and reimagine the space – "do something really interesting with it." In terms of specifics, they wanted to increase the size of the children's bedrooms, giving them enough room to do school work. Downstairs, the aim was to create extra recreational space such as a lounge – says Gary, "I wanted another room where you can break away so we're not all fighting over the channels, or just somewhere to go and read a book." They also somehow wanted to retain space for a bathroom.

With their requirements and ideas agreed, Ben and Gary began drawing up plans. However, some design complications stood in their way.

As the house is in a conservation area, its exterior detailing had to be carefully considered, including sensitivity about what external finishes should be specified. Even though the original intent was to use modern materials to clad the back of the house, the planners insisted on using London stock bricks. "There were things like that where we completely respected the planning and the conservation stipulation of using certain materials in certain areas," says Gary.

Another complication was their idea to include a dormer at the rear. As this would be the first one on the street, Ben was sceptical about its chances of getting through planning. However, as he had worked on the kitchen back in 2012, he'd got to know the planner quite well and spoke to him regularly, tweaking drawings and ideas as they went along. On top of this, to avoid any last minute immediate objections, the team involved the neighbours throughout the planning process, communicating with them as much as possible.

Three months after submission, planning was granted, despite Ben and Gary's nervousness about the dormer. "We thought the dormer was going to be a non-starter, and some of our ideas were just going to be too big of an ask," says Gary.

## TAKING MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS

Construction started in December 2019 and continued until June 2020. To keep costs down, Gary and Kate decided to stay in the house. This was a decision that Gary came to regret during some of the more disruptive parts of the build.

"Ben played a significant role at the start," says Gary, "he was often onsite, and always at

## GARY'S TOP TIPS

- \* Don't underestimate how much a big construction project like this can interfere with your day-to-day life – definitely consider moving out.
- \* Budget properly – especially if the project runs over. Ours was only meant to take a year and it took the best part of two years.
- \* Obviously I'm spoilt because I have an architect in the family, but I know that often they are used just for the design and planning; if you can, try and get them engaged during the building process as well.





## LOW POINT

"When Covid struck and we cut ties with our contractor, it became daunting at times. But completing some of the work myself was really rewarding, and I enjoyed rolling my sleeves up."

– Gary Westlake

## HIGH POINT

"How it has changed the way we live. It really has delivered against the original brief. We now have more space and it feels fantastic"

– Gary Westlake

critical stages, managing our expectations and having good dialogue with the contractor." The contractor not only knew Ben from the previous job, but had also worked on other builds in the street. That preexisting trust was vindicated by a considerable part of the build which was smooth sailing.

However towards the latter stages of the renovation things became problematic. Covid hit and derailed different aspects of the build – materials were in short supply and builders and tradesmen stopped turning up, and it became "a bit of a bumpy ride," says Gary.

While the actual house was complete, the garden room and certain finishes were not. Gary: "The contractor didn't desert us, and we were still having good conversations, but it just got to the point where things weren't being done quickly enough." With this in mind, the Westlakes cut ties and moved on.

Gary reached out to other companies but because of the pandemic's unpredictability, people were cautious to take on new jobs. This is where Gary bravely decided to take matters into his own hands. "I realised that I could probably do some of the work myself, and during lockdown I was at home a lot more, which meant I could be a lot more hands on."

Despite the challenging tasks that lay ahead, Gary felt he was back in control. With help of Youtube videos, a Speedy tool hire account, and Ben on hand to explain various construction processes, Gary managed to clad the whole rear of the house, finish all fencing work, and reposition the footings, drainage and bulkhead on the front of the garden room, so that a

*They were fortunate that Kate's brother Ben is an architect*

window could be fitted. "I also laid the floor and finished some cabinetry. I even bought a router!" says Gary.

A further challenge was added into the mix by the arrival of Luna the Cockapoo during the build; an "interesting decision," says Gary. "I've been pressured to get a dog for years, and have always said 'only if we get a bigger house'. So even though we'd yet to finish, I agreed," he says ruefully, adding: "I can't be that Dad of whom your daughter later says I never bought her a puppy – I gave in."

### MAXIMISING THE SPACE

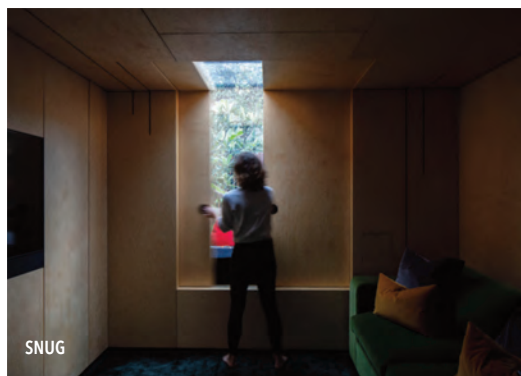
From being a confined end of terrace dwelling, the Westlakes' home has been transformed into a commodious and contemporary space, filled with creative design solutions and unusual features to utilise the smaller areas. Originally 1100 ft<sup>2</sup>, the renovation added a further 700 ft<sup>2</sup> to the home.

A two-storey extension has been built across the driveway to exploit what land is available. Ensuring that this extension maximised the space, the walls have been made as slim as possible, using brick slips. Rather than using off the shelf systems however, the contractor cut down the London stock bricks used elsewhere,





MEZZANINE BEDROOM



SNUG



ORIEL WINDOW



## Gary wasn't willing to compromise on any aspects of the design

to clad the side of the extension. "Traditional bricks would have eaten into the footprint of the interior, so we found a solution with the contractor. When you look at it, it looks like a full brick. It works really well," says Gary.

Spanning half the length of the house, the extension has enabled the house's interior to be reinvented. The original bathroom has been shifted to create a snug room, a single bedroom, and turned their son's room into a double bedroom, allowing enough space for a desk to do his sixth form schoolwork on.

The 3 m<sup>2</sup> snug room has not only met the brief of extra recreational space, but has also allowed them to keep a downstairs bathroom. As a compromise however, it only left a narrow galley-style space which wasn't big enough for a conventional bathroom – this was where Ben had to be inventive. The solution was to integrate a large Victorian-style sunken bath which you step down into, occupying virtually the entire room. On the walls, 3.5 metre x 2 metre floral ceramic panels create the desired impression of a jungle-themed spa, and make it a popular room with the children, and

their friends.

The snug features a bespoke, frameless oriel window that wraps over the roof with a cantilevered seating area facing out into the garden. Gary says "when sitting in there, it feels like you're outside." In the evening, two hidden, retractable wooden pocket screens can be pulled out to act as blinds for privacy, and LED strips on the walls and ceiling light up the room. Again making the most of the limited space, the sofa bed enables the snug to convert into a guest bedroom when needed.

Upstairs, the "box room" loft has been converted into a mezzanine bedroom for their daughter. "The previous space was too small for a double bed, and had very little head height – probably why no one on the street had built into the loft before," says Gary. Underneath, Gary and Kate's ensuite has been lowered to further increase the space. The controversial dormer adds internal space and provides views looking out over the heath.

Where possible, features are multi-functional here too. The upholstered headboard doubles up as a wardrobe, and the bespoke cabinetry such as the storage under the stairs helps utilise every nook and cranny. The stairs leading up to the bedroom's upper level uses a glass balustrade to connect the space visually. "We avoided using a wooden balustrade as it would interfere with the looks of the bedroom – because effectively it's still a fairly small space," says Gary. Their daughter's room now has a double bed and a vanity unit, and on its lower level, a desk.

## CONTACTS/SUPPLIERS

### TILING

**Domus**  
domusgroup.com

### INTERIOR LIGHTING

**Delta Light**  
www.deltalight.com/en

### GLASS WINDOW BOX

**Maxlight**  
www.maxlight.co.uk

### GLASS SLIDING DOORS

**Northolt**  
www.northoltglass.co.uk

### WALL LIGHTS

**Tom Dixon**  
www.tomdixon.net/en\_gb

### SANITARYWARE

**Duravit**  
www.duravit.co.uk





#### DESIGNED-IN EXTRAS

In the garden, two old sheds have been replaced by a multi-purpose outdoor room. It acts as a home office during the week, and converts into an entertainment area for the family with DJ decks, TV and a bar on weekends. The flooring in the garden room as well as other outside areas replicates the tiling used in the original kitchen project back in 2012, creating a seamless look that flows from inside to outside.

The interior detailing throughout the home has been largely influenced by Ben, who made recommendations such as the designs for the lighting and flooring. But some inspiration also came from Gary's work in graphic design. "I travel quite a bit, and am constantly exposed to different detailing and designs," he says. Examples on the build include the Scandinavian references such as the birch ply in the snug, and the "hit and miss screening" which Gary saw in Japan. "I created mood boards and shared them with Ben regularly, then he pointed me in the right direction as well as giving a reality check on things."

As Gary wasn't willing to compromise on any aspects of the design, they did overspend. "We were probably about 30% over budget, but it was just important for me that once we were on

*"During lockdown, I was at home a lot more, which meant I could be a lot more hands on"*

this journey, I wanted to execute it against our original vision."

The Westlakes have achieved exactly what they set out to do, and even though there were hiccups along the way, they love their new home, which has transformed the way they live. Gary and Ben's already strong collaborative relationship, which was reinforced on the project, was a major factor. Gary admits: "I think if I was not willing to invest time, or have that aspiration, or not willing to spend money in certain areas, then there might have been more tension between us." However, he adds: "Once we decided to go for it, we jumped in with two feet." ■



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## 'Staycation' customers create their own summer landscape

With more people than ever choosing to holiday at home, leading online builders' merchant **Drainage Superstore** has seen an increase in demand for its landscaping products as customers make the most of their own outdoor spaces. Following on from the trend that first emerged at the start of the lockdown restrictions, Drainage Superstore is continuing to see a huge demand for summerhouses as people look to extend their living, working and socialising space by expanding into the garden. The Shire Alnwick Shiplap Summerhouse is one of the Superstore's most popular products thanks to its spacious design and in-built veranda which gives plenty of shelter from the often unpredictable British weather. With gardens becoming a hub of activity and a preferred place to socialize with family and friends, products such as the Shire Pent Garden Bar have really captured the imagination. Providing a useful storage space with the added benefit of a sturdy bar, this is one of Drainage Superstore's bestselling garden and landscaping products. Taking pride in keeping gardens, patios and driveways clean and tidy has also seen a sharp increase in the sale of pressure washers, with the Karcher HDS 6/12 C Hot Water Steam Pressure Washer proving to be a popular investment. Sales of gardening aides have soared and the Fiskars PowerGear telescopic tree pruner has become another of the store's biggest selling products.

01752 692 221 [www.drainagesuperstore.co.uk](http://www.drainagesuperstore.co.uk)

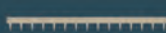


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# Bringing the inside out

Peter Wilson of Setcrete explains how an internal living space can be seamlessly extended onto an outdoor terrace with the help of floor tiling



**T**he trend amongst homeowners to 'bring the outside in' is well established, driven to a large degree by the boom in bi-fold doors for garden rooms and kitchen/diners, which can fully open an entire wall to provide an unbroken view of their garden space.

Taking this one step further, a growing number of property owners are seeing an evolution of this trend by extending the interior living space out onto an adjoining terrace or patio. And they are using porcelain tiles to create a truly unbroken connection between the inside and outside of a property.

This not only visually extends the living area of a home, but creates usable living space outside that mimics the aesthetic quality of the internal floor.

As well as delivering a clean, high

quality visual appeal, porcelain tiles are able to withstand the varying seasonal weather conditions experienced in the UK, while being easy to clean and maintain.

## BE PREPARED

What's crucial in achieving the perfect finish is to ensure that the subfloor is perfectly prepared, which means it must be sound and stable, as well as super smooth, level and at the same height as the internal floor. This makes the installation process easier and quicker to achieve that all-perfect finish; indistinguishable from the inside.

A typical concrete screed, while providing the solid base required, is unlikely to be laid so that it precisely matches the height of the internal

flooring screed and certainly would not achieve the same level of smoothness as a purpose-designed levelling compound.

Levelling compounds are designed to deliver the perfect subfloor base as part of the tiling installation. The best performing ones are formulated to make the preparation process simple and quick, with super fast drying and setting times.

## EXTERIOR PERFORMANCE

Importantly, for exterior applications, a specialist external levelling compound must be used to withstand what the British weather can throw at it; from severe winter frosts to 30°C plus summer sunshine and everything in between. Furthermore, having made the investment in good quality tiles, you'll want to ensure that the levelling





compound will retain its integrity throughout the lifetime of the installation.

High quality exterior levelling compounds have excellent flow properties and are designed to be self-levelling, requiring only minimal work with a smoothing trowel to ensure the floor is evenly covered. Normally, the levelling compound will be applied at a thickness of between 5-15 mm, but can be applied up to 50 mm deep with a gravel-filled mix.

The fast drying and setting times of high quality exterior levelling compounds mean the subfloor can be walked on after

only a couple of hours and can be ready for tiles to be installed the following day.

#### TOUGH & DURABLE

The tiling doesn't have to be installed that quickly however – if it doesn't suit your schedule. The top performing exterior levelling compounds are formulated to be tough and durable and to withstand the weather even when they are not covered. In fact, they are designed so that they can be left uncovered permanently, if required, and used as a standalone 'wearing surface.' In this scenario it is recommended that a final scratch coat is applied and brushed finished to create a textured profile that will reduce the potential for slipping.

The super-smooth surface finish provided by the levelling compound optimises the application of tile adhesive, making the tile installation process easier and faster. Crucially, it also avoids imperfections and undulations in the concrete base transferring to the finished appearance of the tiled area.

The result is a visually stunning floor that encourages a natural flow from the inside to the outside, enhancing the overall aesthetic appeal of a property and creating a practical and desirable outside space that really brings the inside out.

*As well as delivering a clean, high quality visual appeal, porcelain tiles are able to withstand the varying seasonal weather conditions experienced in the UK, while being easy to clean and maintain*

Peter Wilson is brand manager at Setcrete



**ADVICE & INFORMATION**

National Self Build &  
Renovation Centre (NSBRC)  
0845 2234455  
[www.nsbrc.co.uk](http://www.nsbrc.co.uk)

**AIR CONDITIONING & VENTILATION**

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

Total Home Environment  
0345 260 0123  
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[www.grantwestfield.co.uk](http://www.grantwestfield.co.uk)

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

**DOORS & WINDOWS**

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

**GLASS & GLAZING**

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0203 478 9610  
[www.redglazingsystems.co.uk](http://www.redglazingsystems.co.uk)

**MASTIC SEALANTS**

Domestic Mastics  
0208 7126142  
[www.domesticmastic.net](http://www.domesticmastic.net)

**RAINWATER PRODUCTS**

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

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