

# selfbuilder + homemaker

JAN/FEB 2022

## PAPERING PERFECTED

Wallpaper has recently made a comeback; designer Avalana Simpson gives some tips on how to roll out your creativity

## Dry January

Our waterproofing expert from Everbuild answers FAQs on keeping basements dry

## Living the dream

Showcasing the key colours and trends for living room furniture in 2022, with a selection of products to inspire you

## *Learning curves*

A family in Cass Bay, New Zealand, gave their architect free rein to design an unconventional house shaped to reflect their lives, and the local geography



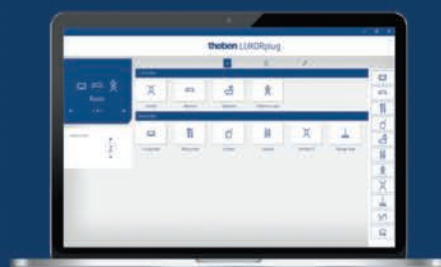
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# FROM THE EDITOR...

Hello and welcome to 2022! Well, you might be used to this new year by now, with all of its wintry trials and tribulations, but this is the first issue of *Selfbuilder and Homemaker* of the year, and we are pleased to bring it to you.

With Covid and various other political concerns bedevilling the Government over the past few months, it's perhaps little surprise that its self-build loan scheme was launched with more of a 'whimper' than a bang. The quiet emergence of a 'prospectus' for Help to Build was no doubt because the scheme from Homes England was originally announced in April 2021. But also because it represents, if popular, another major strain on the Government's resources following what has been a very expensive couple of years. And the Government is trying to put all its PR energies behind 'levelling up' the poorer areas of the UK, rather than being seen as funding 'Grand Designs' (which some self-builds might appear to be in the minds of many).

However, Help to Build is here, and self-builders only need a 5% deposit, to be topped up by an equity loan from the Government (between 5% and 20% of the total cost), and a self-build mortgage for the rest. It covers projects up to £600,000, which would represent a lot of the schemes we cover in the magazine. The Government loans only extend to £150m, so register with Homes England now if you are keen.

The UK still lags way behind other European countries, and despite all of our other challenges currently, Help to Build is a fantastic step forward, let's hope it lasts!

Best wishes for 2022 – for you and your builds.

JAMES PARKER



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**SELFBUILD LIVE**

11 - 13 MARCH, DUBLIN

[www.live.selfbuild.ie](http://www.live.selfbuild.ie)


ON THE COVER...  
CASS BAY (PAGE 14)

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# Home and dry

Andrew Scanlon of Everbuild answers some of the basement waterproofing queries asked by self-builders to help them avoid getting out of their depth in their projects

**B**asement conversions have long been a popular way to increase the usable space in a home, used for everything from living rooms and home offices, to kitchens and even bedrooms. Although different projects will require different approaches, one important factor to consider is how you are going to protect your new subterranean space from possible water damage and the associated problems of mould and dampness. Here are some answers to some of the key questions.

## DO ALL BASEMENTS NEED TO BE WATERPROOFED?

It's important to remember that by their very nature, basements are built below the ground and are at risk of water ingress and becoming damp. The most common source of water in basements is seepage from the groundwater held in the soil around the foundations of your home, although other factors such as pipes and a high water table can put some projects at a greater risk than

others. That's why it's important to seek expert advice before you start work to get a better idea of what you are dealing with. For the majority of projects though, choosing a high-performance waterproofing treatment can provide all the protection you need.

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TANKING AND WATERPROOFING?

Waterproofing covers lots of different methods such as cavity drainage systems, but the term 'tanking' is most commonly used when referring to basement or cellar conversions. The tanking process involves applying a special waterproofing 'slurry' coating to prevent exterior water from penetrating the walls and floors. It's important that the whole room is treated, not just the area where there is existing evidence of water damage as this will not stop the problem – water will enter the fabric of a building any way – and anywhere – it can, unless every possible route is sealed off. Tanking is an effective way of preventing water

ingress into a property as, as the term suggests, it can create an impenetrable, watertight barrier.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

Tanking slurry prevents water droplets from seeping through the walls and floors into the basement by forming insoluble crystals which water can't pass through. There are many different tanking products available on the market, but the best ones are those that offer flexibility and long-lasting protection. Flexibility is important as it needs to be able to cope with both negative and positive water pressure to act as a vapour permeable layer which will still allow the substrate to 'breathe' while preventing water from being able to seep through.

## DO I HAVE TO DO ANY PREPARATION?

As with any building work, preparation is one of the most important parts of the job. Before you apply any waterproofing coatings, you should ensure that the surface is clean and free of any flaking paint, dirt or debris. It's also important that any cracks or holes are filled prior to treatment as these will otherwise become weak spots. These can be treated with a suitable waterproof compound. The point where the floor and wall meet also needs special attention. Here, it's recommended that you create a triangular 'fillet' at the intersection and seal it using a special durable plugging compound which will expand as it cures to form a permanent watertight seal with similar characteristics to concrete.

## APPLICATION

It's a good idea to choose a product that can be brush or spray applied so you can quickly and easily coat larger areas, and one that can be applied to areas that are already damp. It's important to cover the area thoroughly, so look for a product that is available in a choice of colours, (usually grey and white). Using different colours for each coat will make it easier to see any parts that have been missed, helping make sure you have applied the coating evenly across the whole area.

## WHAT ABOUT DECORATIVE FINISHES?

If you're looking to save time and money, choose a product that can be used as a final decorative finish too. If you're planning on using render or plaster over tanking slurry, it's essential to refer to the






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## *Factors such as pipes and a high water table can put some projects at a greater risk than others*

manufacturer's instructions, but it's advisable to opt for cement based rather than gypsum plaster. As gypsum has hygroscopic properties (meaning it absorbs and retains water), it can fail in damp environments and facilitate the spread of mould. If dry lining is preferred, you should never use mechanical fixings that could penetrate and damage the tanking layer but instead, use a suitable dry 'dot and dab' adhesive.

### **ANY TOP TANKING TIPS?**

Tanking is a project commonly seen within self-builds, but one that can seem



a little daunting, so before you start it's a good idea to do your research. Most product manufacturers have lots of useful information online, including application advice. Choosing complementary products from one supplier is also a

good way to ensure that all the different elements of the tanking process work effectively together.

*Andrew Scanlon is applications manager at Everbuild (a Sika company)*

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# WHAT THE PAPERS SAY

Wallpaper might be one of the last things you think about during a build, but it's one way to create the 'wow factor' that's vital for bringing your interiors together, and infusing your personality. Designer Avalana Simpson shares some tips

The UK's love affair with wallpaper originated in the late 15th century, but it was the French that came to dominate the industry. One of the most famous manufacturers was Jean-Baptiste Réveillon, who had a royal warrant and produced lavish papers for the aristocracy at his factory in Paris. Modern, bare walls later came to prominence as the on-trend interior choice but now, wallpaper is back. It's come a long way.

The wallcoverings of today can go way beyond what can be done with paint, and as a designer I've learned first-hand how colour, patterns and hand-drawn scenes can not only add colour and interest to a room, but also form the basis for a whole interiors scheme, delighting the homeowner and wowing their guests.

## SEEK OUT INSPIRATION

I love clashing prints, bold colour and a maximalist approach to design. I do believe that as we step into 2022, most



homeowners will change their outlook on walls, and opt to be brave and bold when it comes to colourful walls and patterns. However, if you're not sure where to start with your room makeover, then seek out some inspiration. Hotel-style is a huge trend in home interiors at the moment, largely due to restrictions on travel – and I always find that hotels are a great reference point when it comes to dramatic wallpaper. Don't be afraid to translate hotel style onto a smaller scale in your own home – you can take inspiration for all parts of a design – from walls, furniture, lighting and other finishing touches. Beyond hotels you could look to fashion, nature and social media for design inspiration.

## MAKE A STATEMENT

Textured and patterned wallpaper can manipulate spaces and add or eliminate architectural detail. An added advantage is it can cover up any imperfections or oddities in your walls. A big mistake many homeowners make is playing it safe when it comes to their wallpaper selection but walls and even ceilings are the perfect place to add some designer flair and make a statement – so don't ignore them. Intricate murals are very impactful compared to the traditional wallpaper repeat designs. The more unique the better! Be drawn to things that sing to you, whether that's nature inspired full of botanicals, a quintessentially British landscape or Chinoiserie with ornate flowers and birds.

## GO CUSTOM

Consider working with a designer who can help create a custom wallcovering

*Hotels are a great reference point when it comes to dramatic wallpaper*



or mural and adjust their collection to align with your colour palette. It makes no sense to have put so much time and effort into the exterior of your property to settle for walls, textiles or soft furnishings that you aren't 100% happy with. Invest well so your choices will stand the test of time.

## SCALE & PROPORTION

Like paint, wallcovering options can fit every budget and creative mind. To help you choose, I suggest you keep in mind two simple things – scale and proportion. In a small room, for example, a large-scale pattern may not repeat more than once before it meets the skirting board.





This would be rather like seeing only half of a painting. Instead, try a smaller pattern with a shorter repeat or go for a mural on one 'statement' wall.

A larger room can handle bolder colours and larger patterns. If you have a small room, but prefer a large print, make sure it has lots of lighter colours or space to balance the effect. While maximalism is a key trend for 2022, eyes still need 'resting places,' so muted accents and white space are still key elements to complement busy or bold designs.

Wallpaper can manipulate our illusion of a space. For example, a vertical stripe can give the impression of greater height to a room with a low ceiling. Large

patterns which are rich and dark will make a large room feel more intimate, while using open patterns in light colours or ombre walls make a space feel bigger and adds depth.

#### POWDER ROOMS & BATHROOMS

Bathrooms are now less confined to being clinical, all white walls and a contemporary feel throughout. Even those who like clean lines and modern bathrooms are becoming more confident about going busy and bold on walls or in little alcoves. Colour, rich patterns and stand-out murals are a popular choice for bathrooms and powder rooms to create spa-like sanctuaries for the

homeowners themselves to relax in, and appreciate every day.

One of the key bathroom trends we'll see more of is a fusion of Eastern and Western design – it's here where we can get an Eastern experience in all its glory. Adding a completed oriental scene to your bathroom wall creates an instant focal point. Silvers and deep greens add harmony while hand-drawn Herons wading through silvery lily ponds and framed by interesting foliage results in a show stopping and perfectly balanced theme.

*Avalana Simpson is founder of Avalana Design*





# INTERIOR INSPIRATION: LIVING ROOMS

As their name suggests, living rooms tend to be used daily by everyone in the family, so must be carefully designed to provide comfort and relaxation in addition to practicality. That's why every detail counts; here we round up some of the latest products to inspire your interior spec

1. The **Small Biggie Corner Sofa** by **Snug Sofa** is crafted in a slim and modern design which is perfect for adding that contemporary vibe to your home. This stylish sofa is easy on the eye and comes with optional storage for you to store those secret snacks or hide away the spare bed sheets.  
[www.snugsofa.com](http://www.snugsofa.com)

2. This **Bridgman Victoria Armchair** is characterised by blind button detailing, slender legs and lavish style. The premium handcrafted quality of this piece is instantly apparent, pairing with the Bellis Aquaclean upholstery, a velvet that's both stain-resistant and pet friendly. The armchair is a "luxurious cradle of design and comfort."  
[www.bridgman.co.uk](http://www.bridgman.co.uk)



3



3. With its square oversized proportions and natural woven fabric, the **Livienne Chaise End Corner Sofa** by **Mad About Mid Century Modern** is industrial all over. And note the deep seat – so comfy. Plus, its modular function means you can style it how you want with other pieces from the collection.

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

4. **Iconic Lights' Barbro Light Wood Tripod Floor Lamp** is a gorgeous addition to any living or bedroom space. Perfect for illuminating any dark corners, it will bring a touch of class to the interior while keeping things subtle. The lamp requires one 60W ES/E27 bulb or LED equivalent.

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

5. As the living room's centrepiece item, the **Model B Coffee Table** in mid ash by **Swyft** is an ideal home for oversized coffee table books and magazines. Or, can be used to create a calm, inviting environment with the use of candles and diffusers.

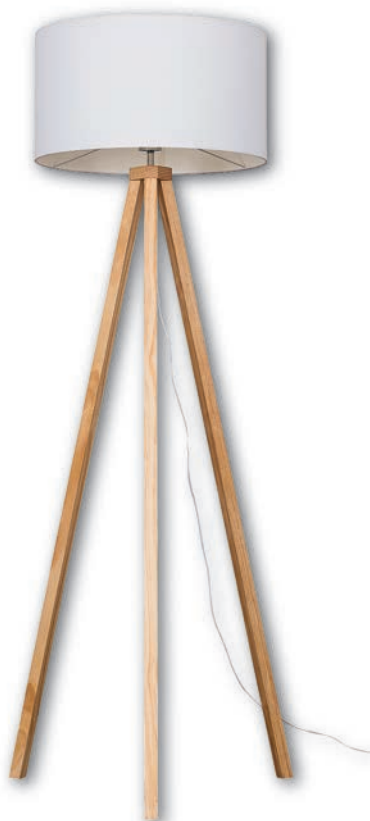
[www.swyftthome.com](http://www.swyftthome.com)

6. **Atkin and Thyme's Deco Marble Shelving Unit** has a distinctive rosewood design with white marble surfaces set within the open shelving, which is finished with luxury brass detailing. It would look stunning in any space, from

a living area and dining room to a home office, guest room or even in a spacious hallway or landing.

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

4



5



6





## CASE STUDY

# SHAPING THEIR FUTURE

Designed with a contemporary form to fit into the picturesque landscape of New Zealand's Cass Bay, the architect of Aaron and Christine Green's new curving copper family home has produced a unique building

TEXT TOM BODDY IMAGES AARON GREEN



A family based near Christchurch in New Zealand's South Island gave a local architect full freedom in designing their new home in picturesque Cass Bay. The result is a dynamic curved and copper-clad structure that emulates the surrounding landscape, while providing the family with everything they've ever wanted.

Software developer Aaron and his wife, French scholar Christine Green had been living with their two daughters in the suburbs of Bishopdale in Christchurch for the past 20 years.

With the couple having a passion for pursuing new projects, since they moved into their house they were constantly redesigning different

sections of it.

But even though they've loved this process, and the work they've done, it's always been their goal to find an architect and build a home from the ground up. However, as Aaron explains, "Finding the right architect and site has always held us back."

This all changed when they discovered a plot in Cass Bay, a remote area about 30 minutes south of their home. The site was a complete contrast to where they were currently living – directly on the waterfront with scenic views of mountains. "Although Cass Bay is close to the city, it feels like you are in a totally different world; it's a real hidden treasure," says Aaron.

## HIGH POINT

"The high point for the project is inviting everyone who was involved back to see it and appreciate the work they have done and to hear the constant praises that they get from passers by who are as mesmerised as we are by what has been created."





## LOW POINT

"The only low point on the project was having to stop for 6 weeks during Covid lockdown, although we turned it into a positive and took the time to refine the interior joinery plans."

The existing building on the site was a 1960s home constructed of brick and timber. Aaron explains that the building wasn't doing justice to its "amazing" location, for example in terms of orientation, and – any new construction "would need to start from scratch."

Via a friend's recommendation, the couple also finally found an architect they loved – Michael O'Sullivan of Bull O'Sullivan Architecture, who was well established in the local area. "Everything was lining up," explains Aaron, "I had also come to a point in my business where I could step back and fully focus on a project of this magnitude."

### BRIEF

While the couple wanted to create their own distinctive home, they also wanted to provide the architect with as much freedom as possible, and therefore kept the brief intentionally loose.

"When you find an architect that you trust, whose work you love, you need to step aside and let them do their job," says Aaron. He adds: "In the same way I would never take the paintbrush off an artist, I didn't feel the need to tell Michael how to design a home."

Some of their specifics however included three ensuite bedrooms, a generous open plan living kitchen and dining area, a five-vehicle garage for car enthusiast Aaron, and a cinema. They left virtually everything else to Michael's creative skills.

During the design phase, Michael spent several months visiting the family, to understand how they function, and their way of living. And even though he was given an almost blank canvas, he made sure that he was sharing all of his ideas and sketches with the family

throughout the project, as well as with the builders onsite. "From that perspective, the project has been a team effort," asserts Aaron.

Michael drew up three designs and presented them to the Greens, one of which really captivated them. He wanted to create a building that really fitted into its environment, so his design incorporated a curved, organic form which emulated the site's coastal and hilly landscape. The original design was for a very natural cedar cladding, however the final option chosen of carefully detailed copper helps the project sit in its surroundings, while providing a strong aesthetic.

At the start they made very few tweaks to this design, but Michael enabled them to make some decisions later, says Aaron. For example, the positioning of windows was left to the latter stages of construction. The reasoning behind this was to see where would be best to place them while they stood in the structure – "when you're standing in framed up spaces it becomes very apparent what needs to go where."

The design was bold and quirky, but as Aaron explains, their intention was to never make an attention-seeking statement, but instead to produce a building that "considered the environment" it was in.

With the site backing onto a large and well-used public park and beach, and being at the junction of two roads, it was a challenge to not only keep the design relevant to the local aesthetic but to also ensure the family had some privacy.

"Michael wanted to clearly demarcate the public and private areas," says Aaron. This was done using a substantial cinder-block





wall inspired by Mayan temple design. The many penetrations created in it allowed plants and light to “pop through the gaps,” and give privacy “without being anti-social,” says Aaron.

You would think that a large scale project like this would have attracted a lot of issues during planning. However, with Aaron and the rest of the team working collaboratively alongside the council including a planning consultant preparing everything in tandem – it was a “simple process,” explains Aaron. In terms of advice on ensuring success in getting through planning for anyone taking on a similar build, he says “find professionals that you can trust, and let them do their jobs.”

#### CLOSE TO THE ACTION

The build began in February 2019 and took around 360 working days to complete in total. During the construction, with Aaron’s keenness to be involved in all of the decisions whether big or small, he took the step of setting up his own office space onsite where he could continue with his software developer work while also fully engaging in the project.

He says the reason was two-fold: “I love the process of construction, and every single day, dozens and dozens of little and big decisions were getting made. I wanted to be part of those decisions and ensure a lack of decision making was never going to hold up the schedule.”

One decision that Aaron didn’t want to make however, was choosing to lose the 10 km of cedar wood cladding included in Michael’s

*“In the same way I would never take the paintbrush off an artist, I didn’t feel the need to tell Michael how to design a home”*

original design. The complexity of installing the cedar while making it completely watertight was going to be too much of a stretch, and its weight would also require more steel and concrete to support it, adding up to nearly \$1m more than an alternative.

“The material would have also required repainting every three to five years due to our often harsh New Zealand weather and sun conditions, as well as attracting a lot of spiders and dirt in the slats,” explains Aaron.

While the couple loved the initial original cedar design, the large cost differential plus these added complications left them little choice but to find an alternative.

Michael put forward copper as a substitute. As well as reducing costs thanks to its lighter weight resulting in less supporting steel, the material would be able to “resist the strong southerly



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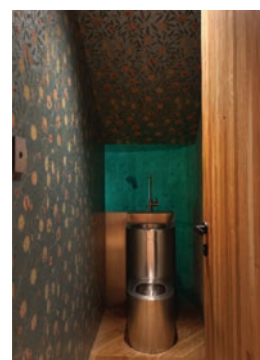
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wind and rain that the coastal site would experience," explains Aaron. The colour of copper also "responded to the natural colours in the area," making it in line with Michael's architectural concept.

Covid was another obstacle the team had to surmount. "New Zealand went into lockdown for around six weeks, which slowed us down," says Aaron. Fortunately however, all the materials needed remained readily available, enabling work to continue throughout the pandemic.

#### UNIQUE DESIGN

The completed copper-clad home is an impressively sculptural form comprising unusual curves and features that successfully references the local landscape. The cladding material is Nordic Standard copper, supplied by Aurubis in a 0.7 mm 'mill finish' and installed by New Zealand firm The Architectural Roofing Company. It was installed in a combination of modern long-strip technology and hand-worked details; ranging from copper louvres to a rainwater hopper with lipped weir overflow.

The home is made up of three floors. As you approach the main entrance of the building on the ground floor you are met with a 'cave-like' doorway with subtly inclined walls clad inside and out in copper. This leads to the building's largest room – an open plan, double-height kitchen/living area. This room is filled with intricate timber detailing, and features "incredibly comfortable" custom built-in furniture around the windows and dining table which gets "constantly used," says Aaron.,

A large central island made of solid brass sits "like a jewel" in the kitchen, says Aaron. He adds: "My family loves to cook, and having this island works perfectly for us."

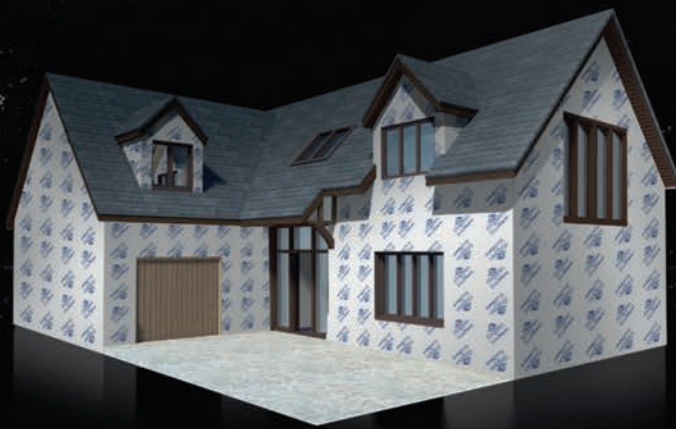
While the large bespoke windows at the front flood the room with natural light – and provide stunning views of the bay and harbour – they are set back in their reveals giving the family added privacy. "People on the beach and in the park next door can't see us and we can't see them, unless we intentionally go up close to the windows."

The ground floor also houses one of two garages, this one doubles up as Aaron's office. Adjacent is youngest daughter Emma's room which includes a quirky loft space where friends and family can stay the night. Following the curved structure round from here, next is the 'rumpus room' which is designed as a quiet teenage retreat and music room.

On a mezzanine level is Aaron and Christine's master bedroom, offering great views over the bay. Eldest daughter Laura's room is next door, featuring a curved oak timber wall that "tapers to regal gold curtains." This room provides access to a French 'loft net' and there are views out of a skylight to the north." Aaron sums up the varied mix of internal rooms: "Every bedroom is different, and each space is very special in its own way."

The basement level is just as intriguing as the rest of the design. Here is the second garage, a laundry, an under stair stainless steel 'prison-style' toilet for guests, and an unusual bookshelf filled with a variety of old cameras. This shelf





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actually functions as a secret doorway to a home cinema.

"Every night we all retreat to the underground cinema, it's an amazing escape and it feels like you could be sitting in a theatre anywhere in the world."

#### NATURAL CURVES

Despite its unorthodox curving form and peculiar elements, the design of the home works for the Greens, helping them to function well as a family.

"The flow through the home is incredibly natural and easy to live with; the curves are natural and the proportions of the spaces are perfect," says Aaron.

While there may not be particularly striking eco features within the home, the Greens and their architect have produced a building designed to last "many generations," and the high quality of the structure means that it will require little maintenance, believes Aaron. "If you design a house right, it should never need to get torn down like so many homes do these days when they get to 30 or 40 years old."

Now that the family have been living in their

*"The flow through the home is incredibly natural and easy to live with"*

new copper home for over a year, one of the interesting things they've noticed is that the building's look is changing to different degrees, depending on where the facade is. The exterior copper has changed considerably in some areas, weathering to a duller crimson/brown than its original shiny hue.

Aaron concludes: "Different sides are ageing differently; as you walk through the peeled-back entrance way, you can see the range of copper oxidation change from highly weathered, to a front door that still looks new." ■

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industry awards in a key category. The Lo-Carbon Heat Save is an ideal solution for single room or whole house heat recovery ventilation in existing homes" explained Tom Wodcke, Product Manager at Vent-Axia.

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# Paving the way forward

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and key SuDS techniques have been a planning requirement for several years now. But the current focus on climate change makes them more important than ever, as Chris Hodson of Interpave, explains

**W**ith climate change, we are experiencing more frequent and heavy rainstorms, resulting in flooding from rainwater runoff. This is made worse by 'sealing up' our towns and cities, which stops rainfall soaking into the ground. Our old drainage systems simply cannot cope, causing downstream flooding. In addition, roads, car parks and drives collect pollution – from car exhausts and oil leaks, as well as from wearing brakes and tyres – including electric cars. These are washed into drains with rainwater, damaging our rivers and streams.

## THE TROUBLE WITH SEALING-UP

Water table levels drop causing water shortages, streams and ponds to dry up, and trees to be deprived of water. This can also affect the foundations of your home, particularly on clay soils as they dry out and shrink. These problems are made worse when gardens are sealed-up and water runs straight into roads and sewers. Although one small area of sealed paving in isolation may not cause major flooding – the cumulative impact of many homes in a city can. Simply allowing rainwater to run straight off roofs and paving into drains is no longer an option.

For many years, it has been recognised that SuDS are essential in curbing flooding and pollution from rainwater runoff. SuDS manage rainwater by slowing it down and cleaning it up – copying, as closely as possible, the natural drainage from the land before any building work or paving takes place. SuDS manage rainwater near the surface and as close to its source as possible, slowing the flow and providing additional benefits including clean water for wildlife, irrigation or other uses. Typical SuDS include 'green' roofs and other planted features like rain gardens.

## MULTIFUNCTIONAL SUDS

With decades of predictable performance, concrete block permeable paving has shown itself to be a

particularly reliable and multifunctional SuDS technique, offering attractive hard surfaces for people and traffic, combined with effective rainwater drainage. There is a growing choice of concrete products available on the market, designed specifically for permeable paving. Essentially, they have the same impressive performance as other precast concrete paving products, being slip resistant, durable, strong and sustainable. And today there are more shapes, styles, finishes and colours than ever to give real freedom of choice.

The difference with concrete block permeable paving is enlarged joints, filled with a permeable grit aggregate, and materials below the blocks specifically selected to accommodate water, all without clogging. Concrete block permeable paving is unlike – and not to be confused with – permeable materials, like resin-bound aggregates, which behave differently. Concrete block permeable paving can be laid level and still avoid puddles, or adapt to slopes, all without the need for drainage gullies. It also provides a safe surface for everyone, unlike gravel and other loose material.

## SUDS RULES

For new developments, SuDS and techniques like permeable paving will generally be required as part of the planning process, although details will depend on which part of the country. Local policies affecting planning applications will generally demand SuDS. For example, the London Plan says that: "Development proposals for impermeable paving should be refused where appropriate, including on small surfaces such as front gardens and driveways."

For existing homes, installing drives or other paving anywhere in your garden used to be considered 'permitted development' – in other words an automatic planning permission. But changes a few years ago took away



these rights from much new or even replacement paving, unless it's 'permeable paving' or drains onto a permeable garden area or soakaway within the property. The aim of the requirements is to hold back water on the property during heavy storms to avoid downstream flooding and treat it to trap pollution.

Alternatively, you will need to apply for planning permission, involving an application, drawings and a fee. With policies in favour of SuDS, an application should be rejected. And if you go ahead, this could result in local authority





*With decades of predictable performance, concrete block permeable paving has shown itself to be a particularly reliable and multifunctional SuDS technique*

enforcement action or legal problems when the house is sold.

**STRAIGHTFORWARD GUIDANCE**

Inerpave's 'Paving for Rain' guide offers straightforward advice using either concrete block permeable paving or rain gardens, where conventional paving simply drains to a landscaped depression, maybe with plants. In both systems, water is held back on your property during heavy storms to avoid flooding and filtered to remove or trap pollution. What happens next depends on the ability of

the ground to absorb water and whether you want to make use of the rainwater, for example for irrigation.

**PAVING AND TREES IN HARMONY**

Climate change has highlighted the importance of trees and other plantings for carbon storage, urban cooling, shading, biodiversity and wellbeing. But irrigation is important – particularly in summer – and permeable paving can provide a gradual supply of clean water. Although urban trees and paving have traditionally been seen as in conflict, this

is not the case with concrete block permeable paving which works in harmony with trees, allowing air, as well as water, to reach tree roots, so that they grow downwards and don't damage the paving over time.

*Chris Hodson is consultant to the trade association Interpave*



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CASE STUDY

# DIG FOR VICTORY

A mother and daughter collaboration created a bespoke city pad that shows just how much can be achieved on brownfield sites, even picking up a design award

TEXT & IMAGES EWEN MACDONALD





Bristol has long been a trend-setting place. So, it is not surprising that the Royal Institute of British Architecture (RIBA) would find something award-worthy among the city's recent residential projects.

And they have found it in Corten Courtyard House. This L-shaped building has transformed a derelict piece of brownfield land to create a new home for Jane Krivine, who was searching for a permanent home near her daughter, Sophie, partner and new grandson, in the now-trendy St Werburghs district of the city.

But even she was surprised just how close she would find herself to her daughter, after choosing to take on a long-derelict piece of waste ground next door to create what would turn out to be an award-winning home. Jane lived abroad at the time and liked to visit at least

four or five times a year, but her long term plan was to move to Bristol.

"Sophie lives in the last house in an Edwardian row, and next to it there was a triangle of land, surrounded by a high wall and hardly big enough for a house, never mind a house and garden, but it was up for sale." Despite these challenges, she was immediately intrigued by its possibilities, pondering whether "maybe, with the right architect, something could be done."

The site had held a car body shop, but it had been derelict for decades, and its outside walls were covered in graffiti. "The entrance in the wall was wide enough to drive a car through," she says, "or perhaps in Edwardian times, a cart or a carriage."

Despite being a self-build first-timer, Jane wasn't daunted, partly because her daughter







had some experience, "I had no experience with renovations, but my daughter had just added a floor to her house." Sophie, despite being a new mum, oversaw the building work on Jane's site, being next door. To avoid mother-daughter disputes, Jane agreed Sophie would be pretty free to make decisions.

"The single thing above all that made it doable for me was my mum's character," explains Sophie. "She is both adventurous but also very understanding. I never for one moment worried that she would be angry or upset with me if I made a big mistake, so it allowed me to make all sorts of decisions with a kind of self-belief that people do not readily get from their bosses or clients.

I worked in television for a number of years, so lots of 'spinning plates' doesn't really worry me. Of course, there was the odd bit of bickering and the occasional disagreement, but we would take a straw poll where necessary! I had a bit of a vision once Barefoot (the architects) had realised their own, so I ploughed through with it!"

## THE DESIGN

While many people will choose an architect based on case studies or even ideas, Jane and Sophie made it from a more original source. "My daughter met Sam (Goss, director at Barefoot), and as soon as he saw the little cobbled courtyard, his excitement became completely infectious, and she convinced me that this was the company to go with. We were very keen for the property to be eco-friendly, and that was key when we were finding an architect," adds Jane.

"The initial brief for the project was to convert and extend the 1.5 storey old garage on the site," explains project architect Martina

Goluchová. But the size, shape and location of the existing building didn't lend itself well to a dwelling. "We proposed a new build courtyard house, and Jane was up for it straightaway."

Being a brownfield site, there were plenty of challenges that went beyond its unusual shape – not least the significant foundations, which were formed by 15 concrete piles 10 metres deep and a 250 mm concrete raft slab. This was because of the proximity of large trees and the poor ground conditions in the area.

Jane describes it as her only low moment in the build. "We had to dig 10 metres into the ground because St Werburghs is basically built on sand. A lot of the project cost went to the extravagant measures we had to undertake, most frustrating since all the other houses in the neighbourhood have stood for 100 years on one-metre deep foundations!"

The interior layout – around 82 m<sup>2</sup> in total – has been designed around the client's limited mobility and includes a dining kitchen, with the main bedroom and a small living room at each end of the L-shape. Stairs provide access to a second bedroom and a roof terrace, which sits under a big plane tree that had to be accommodated into the design, and with open views along the street and across a nearby park.

The house is timber frame construction, clad in Corten weathered steel, which rises up above the brick boundary wall and descends down into the courtyard.

This Corten-clad wall was the biggest extravagance. "We agonised over it, being the one single item which could push us over the limit," admits Jane. "But when we suggested dropping the Corten steel and reverting to brick, we were moved by the expression of sorrow on

## ABOVE

The richly coloured Corten cladding co-ordinates with the brick of the Edwardian terrace it sits at the end of

## HIGH POINT

"The Corten steel wall – expensive, but worth it. 'We simply made other reductions, and I have no regrets.'"





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The house is built in an L-shape, which allowed space to include a small courtyard

© Sophie Kaye

*"I am especially proud of the fact that we built on a brownfield site. I see so many other derelict areas which could provide wonderful imaginative homes"*

the architect's face. So, we simply made other reductions, and I have no regrets."

The overall look of the finished building is industrial modern/Edwardian classic. "If there can be such a combo," explains Jane. "The Corten steel and ceiling height windows overlooking the courtyard are blended with Edwardian brick flooring on a tiny outside courtyard, and all surrounded by the original wall."

The interior is modern, practical and simple. "My daughter insisted on the best quality for everything, which she argued we would be grateful for in the long run. So, we went for colour, simplicity, practicality and quality," explains Jane. "We were looking for a contemporary feel to match the exterior but we knew we didn't want a cold look or feel with the decorating, so we went for a warm neutral colour, iron shelving, lots of plants and some bursts of bright colours in the furnishings."

"Before the build started, the entrance had been painted mint green matching the colour of a little greenhouse in the corner round the back of the derelict property," she says. "We really wanted to keep some of that colour running through, especially since the ground floor rooms looked onto the courtyard and the entrance. So, we used mint green for the courtyard entrance, which we had designed to look like the entrance to a factory rather than a classic wooden door, as well as for the staircase inside

and the tiling throughout."

Perhaps one of the more unusual decisions they made was to retain the graffiti on the outside wall. "I am so pleased we kept the Edwardian outside wall with all the original graffiti, which as all Bristolians know, is par for the course," says Jane, alluding to Bristol's most famous resident artist, Banksy. "We also have an original Edwardian postbox, which was built into the wall, and is still used."

The main reason for keeping the wall was that the site felt like an urban oasis; the design was aimed at preserving as much of this quality as possible. "The contrast between the busy street and the quiet courtyard was striking," says Martina. "From a practical point of view, the wall provides good protection to the site which is otherwise very exposed. It is covered in graffiti which is part of the local character and we were realistic about the fact that anything new would get covered in graffiti very quickly." It also fits in with Barefoot's philosophy to re-use as much as possible of what is on site to reduce the environmental impact.

In fact, the wall was discovered to be in poor condition and is now cleverly supported by attaching it to a new timber frame.

Jane has plenty of favourite features in the award-winning home. She says: "The other wonderful feature is the roof garden, which on one side overlooks the characterful street life, and on the other, Mina Park with its trees



## LOW POINT

"The 10 metre deep foundations: 'Frustrating, since all the other houses in the neighbourhood have stood for 100 years on one-metre deep foundations.'"



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The small courtyard offers a view of the street and the park



© Greg Pittam

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© Sophie Kaye



*We had to dig 10 metres into the ground because St Werburghs is basically built on sand*

shading part of the roof garden."

The architect agrees on the roof terrace's success. "One gets to see all the key elements of the project," explains Martina. "The shape of the house which is a natural response to the unusual shape of the site, the Corten cladding so carefully executed by the amazing project contractor, the quiet patio paved with the old bricks and the contrasting busy street behind the uneven wall."

## BUILD & RESULTS

The build began in April 2019 after Bristol Council approved the design and took seven months to complete. "Our inspiration was the existing character and feel of St Werburghs," explains Jane. "The neighbourhood is bursting with creativity and talent and we wanted to complement this as best we could."

Now a proud holder of a Royal Institute of British Architecture (RIBA) South West Special Award 2021, it's clear Jane chose well when it came to her designers. "I am absolutely thrilled with all the accolades the house has received. But to be honest, I see this entirely as the achievement of Martina and Sam at Barefoot and our fantastic builders – Space Framing – who put it all together so professionally. My involvement was minimal."

For the architects, it turned out to be a match made in self-build heaven. "We loved

working with Jane and Sophie. Jane is a really amazing client, she was brave to make unusual decisions, such as having her house clad in rusty metal," says Martina. "She was decisive, and her optimism was a driving force of the project."

Among the stand-out features is the specially commissioned industrial double entry door. "We took inspiration from the turquoise colour of the door and reflected it in the house," adds Jane. "The dining room/kitchen with full size windows overlooking the little courtyard, reflects the entry door with turquoise tiles in the kitchen, it really is quite a feature."

And her advice to others considering self-building their home? Look for brownfield sites, which offer several practical benefits. "I am especially proud of the fact that we built on a brownfield site. As I look around, I can see so many other derelict areas which could provide wonderful imaginative homes. It makes me sad that people feel they have to buy new houses on large residential estates built in the countryside."

"People should also remember that if you build from scratch, there is no VAT on material, and if the area is completely derelict, you won't even have to pay stamp duty!" She adds: "From a financial perspective, in my case, there was not much difference between building from scratch and buying a finished building." ■

## CONTACTS/SUPPLIERS

### ARCHITECTS

**Barefoot Architects**  
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### CONTRACTOR

**Space Framing Limited**  
www.spaceframing.com

### TILES

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# Brick by brick

Jason Hughes of Imperial Bricks looks at the different brick options available to self-builders, and reviews new alternatives to reclaims



A self-build project is one of the single largest investments most people will ever make. Now, thanks to the pandemic, building a home is even more important because we're spending so much more time in it. Our homes need to suit the ever-changing needs of the family and adapt to prolonged or even permanent home working. It can be tempting therefore to focus on the internal layout or big-ticket items such as windows, kitchens or bathrooms. But the structure and facade need as much attention – if not more so. It's the one thing that can't be changed (unless with great expense and difficulty) once built – and gives that vital first impression.

Brick is the most popular construction material for a reason – offering structural strength, durability and character. But choosing the right brick for your build can require more thought and research than initially anticipated. Bricks make up approximately 2-3% of your total build cost, but they're the one thing that can't be changed afterwards. Spending a little more to get a better quality, regionally appropriate brick will not only look better but will also significantly increase the value of the return on your finished home.

Traditionally manufactured bricks offer longevity, quality and an aesthetic appeal that cannot be matched by mass-produced machine-made bricks. Each brick is truly unique which creates instant character and kerb appeal for any property.

Whether you are planning a renovation or an extension, or a complete new build, homeowners and self-builders need to ensure their brickwork matches the existing building and/or complements surrounding properties. More importantly, planners can stipulate this, particularly if you're in a conservation area or are working on a listed building.

Even if your build has a contemporary design, choosing regionally appropriate bricks will ensure your home sits well with the surrounding properties.

## RECLAIMED BRICKS VS NEW

'Reclaimed' bricks can be used to match existing brickwork for an extension of a period house (generally anything built before the First World War) or for self-builds in listed or conservation areas. But reclaims are often difficult and expensive to source. Availability depends on the frequency of period property demolition and often, the exact quantity of bricks

from a site is unknown until the bricks are sorted and packed. These bricks are usually allocated in advance (before the building is demolished), come at an inflated price point and quality cannot be guaranteed. Many reclaims haven't been manufactured or tested to meet modern standards for compressive strength and frost resistance.

Damage in transport can also result in up to 20% wastage per pallet of bricks, which in turn increases the volume of bricks required. This is largely why it's rare for reclaims to be used in developments larger than a couple of homes, as continuity of supply is difficult to secure.

Modern handmade bricks have none of these problems; if sourced from a reputable company these will be UKCA/CE marked, fully frost resistant and available on reliable lead times.

## REGIONAL CLAY VARIATIONS

There are now 'kiln-fresh' options available for almost every region in the UK – historically bricks have varied considerably across the country in terms of colour, size and texture. Yellow Stock is particular to London (often blackened by pollution), for example, while buff colours are found in Oxford and Cambridge, with





reds and oranges in Cheshire. Additionally, while all buildings constructed before 1965 used imperial rather than metric measurements, the imperial sizes for bricks in the North are larger than that in the South. Different regional manufacturing methods also resulted in bricks with more creasing, or coal-spotting, or a smoother face. So it's worth taking the time to research the bricks in your area to get the right match.

Choosing to build with weathered, blended bricks achieves a truly authentic look. Weathering will darken and age bricks as appropriate, while blended brick pallets mix different colour shades. For example, London Yellow Stocks could

include some red or pink shades in the blend, which are also weathered to match the natural ageing and colour variations you find on period properties in the capital.

#### TUMBLER BRICKS - AN EXACT REPLICA OF RECLAIMS

Tumbled bricks go a step further, offering a true alternative to genuine reclaimed bricks. New, traditionally produced bricks from established ranges are weathered and aged first, then put through a finishing method which recreates the demolition process reclaims go through. This results in softer, rounded edges – and much more character.

This unique process produces handmade, extruded and pressed bricks which are identical in appearance to reclaimed bricks, but are reliably available in the quantities and quality required for easier project management and planning.

#### QUALITY STANDARDS

Anyone choosing bricks for a project should look for certain quality marks and accreditations that ensure brick manufacturing processes are robust and reliable. How products are made and supplied is just as important – if not more so – than where they come from. Some of the highest internationally

*Anyone choosing bricks for a project should look for certain quality marks and accreditations that ensure brick manufacturing processes are robust and reliable*

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*Jason Hughes is managing director at Imperial Bricks*

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The result? Enjoy big, beautiful windows, light-filled rooms, no draughts or cold spots, a consistent internal temperature – and, of course, reduced energy bills.

## A BEAUTIFUL BARN-STYLE FAMILY HOME - FEATURING VELFAC TRIPLE GLAZING

This beautiful four-bedroom family home, built by owners Tom and Frances Edwards, combines impressive sustainability with innovative design. The two-storey timber-frame construction deliberately reflects the architecture of local barns with its use of ironstone and cedar cladding, and a seamed metal roof. The home also features VELFAC composite windows throughout, installed to maximise daylight across the open plan interior and deliver excellent insulation, a stylish and contemporary finish, and uninterrupted views.

Right from the start Tom and Frances knew they wanted triple glazed composite windows: 'As an engineering director with many years' experience I knew of the benefits of aluminium / timber glazing,' says Tom. 'When researching potential suppliers we looked for the ideal balance of budget, performance, quality and design. As the house is built to Passivhaus



principles, air tightness and insulation were also key priorities. The slim VELFAC frame design immediately stood out from the competition, as did the uniformity and symmetry of every VELFAC window, even when fixed and opening lights were combined in the same unit. Thermal values were also very good and, just as important, the VELFAC system was within our budget.'

VELFAC triple glazing is installed in every room, carefully positioned to flood open plan living spaces with natural light and with VELFAC SUN glazing (which features a clear reflective coating) helping minimise solar gain: 'Around 35% of wall area is glazed,' says Tom, 'and VELFAC was the only supplier able to deliver triple glazed units in larger sizes without mullions. This meant we could install an extra large 3m x 2m fixed glazed panel in the living room, and I have to say that the performance of the windows is phenomenal. They are draught free and the internal pane never feels cold. As a result the house maintains an internal temperature of around 21° all year round, and we don't need additional

heating until late November, and then only two or three times a week.' Impressive insulation also delivers great acoustic control: 'Although external noise was never a concern, now the windows are installed you really notice the difference,' says Tom.

The versatile VELFAC system also allowed Tom to specify a different frame finish inside and out: 'As we used walnut for window sills and other joinery we opted to paint the internal VELFAC frames in white, to avoid a mis-match in tone,' Tom explains. 'External aluminium frames are finished in dark grey to complement the cedar cladding, which was bright orange when installed but is now a beautiful silver,' and VELFAC front and side doors, finished in navy, added the final touch. The house was shortlisted for a Built It 2021 Award for 'Best Self-Build Home', recognition of Tom and Frances' commitment to sustainability and their innovative approach to design.

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CASE STUDY



# KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

It took blood, sweat and tears for Gill and Tim Denham to transform a derelict 19th century cow barn in County Durham into what is now a stunning five bedroom holiday let

TEXT HEATHER DIXON IMAGES DAVE BURTON



Perched on a hillside overlooking miles of glorious countryside near Barnard Castle is a converted barn, aptly called Skyline. Unlike many converted farm buildings, however, this one has been a marathon – a true labour of love and determination which tested relationships, budgets and commitment during the eight-year transformation.

Despite the challenges, Gill and Tim Denham, who acquired the 200-year-old former cow barn through the family, both agree that the results have been worth the highs and lows of a journey that started back in 2010. Their home is perfectly located for the Yorkshire Dales and market towns like nearby Barnard Castle, but also just a short drive from Teesdale and the Pennines.

The former livestock building looked nothing like it does today. 'There was planning permission to convert it into a dwelling but we didn't like the design,' says Tim. 'We met with architect Mike Rassmussen and reworked it, creating more light and space and using the height of the building to create

the wow factor.'

They decided to do most of the conversion work themselves, with the help of family and friends, so they could save money and get the results they wanted. "We had no time constraints," says Gill, a practice nurse.

"We were both working full time and living on the farm, so we could work on it whenever we had time, which was mainly weekends and evenings. Without the pressure of a moving in date, we could enjoy the process and do it exactly as we wanted. There were no rash decisions and therefore fewer mistakes."

The first job was to demolish a small, unwanted outbuilding and preserve the materials – including stone mullions – for re-use later. It then took three years just to restore the stone slate roof. Part of it, which was covered in tin, came off all together to be replaced with more slates. Rotten timbers and huge beams were replaced – the green oak A-frames dried out and made on site by their friend and joiner Martin Blenkin,







## *This was a true labour of love which tested relationships, budgets and commitment during the eight-year transformation*

who used traditional methods to fit them.

"Every single feature and every bit of work that's been done has a story behind it," says Gill. The building sits in an exposed location at the top of a hill, with wide open views across a valley. There was one particularly cold winter when Tim was up on the roof in howling gales, "just trying to hang on while he was working."

With the roof finally finished, and with the help of daughter George, her husband Neil, and builder Trevor Wright, they turned their attention to the floor. Together, and over a period of many months, they dug out the entire ground floor to create depth for under floor heating, insulation and screed, topped with limestone.

"We just fitted it in around everything else," says Gill. They were determined to do everything we could to the highest quality, using traditional methods and materials. "It was never going to be something we would rush through, but it meant many years of extra work to gradually renovate the property."

The handmade windows were also made over a period of time by Tim's school friend Peter Grieves and the original stone walls were rough rendered. Internal walls were dry lined and insulated, and new plumbing and electrics

installed along with a biomass heating system.

Gill's vision for the interior was to create a warm, welcoming home which would withstand a rural lifestyle. They are a family of dog lovers and love the outdoors, so we wanted the house to be as resilient and practical as possible without compromising on the style and comfort. "We also wanted to make it accessible to everyone, so we included ground floor bedrooms and a bathroom."

Still conscious of saving money, Gill embarked on the mammoth task of single handedly decorating the entire house - even though she's scared of heights! "The main living area was the biggest challenge," she recalls. "I used scaffolding for the high areas but it was still a challenge - and then I realised I'd painted the accent colour on the wrong wall. I could have cried." It took two or three coats to paint it white again before finishing it in a dark rustic grey, but she says "it was worth doing - it looks amazing now."

But after priming, undercoating and top coating every room in the house Gill never wanted to see another paint brush or roller again. "It was like the Forth Bridge - never ending," she says.

### HIGH POINT

"Welcoming the first guests and receiving their wonderful comments. After all the years of hard work and commitment it was quite an emotional moment."

- Gill Denham





## LOW POINT

"Working on the roof in terrible winter weather. It was a thankless task and quite dangerous – the winds were so strong and the sleet was coming down almost horizontally at one point."

– Tim Denham

But the best bit was still to come. "I have absolutely loved turning it from an empty building into a beautiful home," she says. "It's a bit wind-swept up here so I wanted it to be really cosy in winter, yet modern and bright in summer."

Gill and Tim chose their pre-painted kitchen units and appliances from Wren but had a family friend and joiner install them. They maintained the country style by replacing wall units with open shelves and including feature lights over the breakfast bar. They laid the floor with Bastille Blue limestone tiles from Perfect Homes and Gardens.

Tim then set about making the huge dining table. "In a large space like this you have to think big with everything," says Gill. "The furniture in our farmhouse was too small, so we started again with everything."

The table was created from a steelwork base, made by Tim, and a huge piece of oak which had cracked down the middle. It wasn't quite wide enough for the proportions of the room, so Tim sliced the wood in half, along the length of the split, and inserted a strip of steel to which the wood is clamped.

"I made it in the shed and it took me a fortnight, but it's perfect for the space and easily seats twelve, which is ideal for family get togethers," says Tim.

The dining table, along with two seating areas, help to divide the large ground floor living space into comfortable independent areas, without losing the natural character of an open plan barn. All the beautiful original beams were sanded and oiled by son-in-law Neil. Gill chose earthy accent colours for the main walls to reflect the property's rural location and heritage, but she sought the help of Niche Living, in Barnard Castle, to furnish the rest of the home, sourcing most of the accessories and soft furnishings from there, including bespoke headboards, dressing tables, drawers and mirrors.

There are two bedrooms on the ground floor separated by a wide, welcoming entrance hall which is tiled in stone, and features a wide sweeping staircase. Tim designed, made and fitted the industrial style railings to create a striking feature in the hall. "I had help from a welder and it was one of the quickest parts of the whole project."

The integrity of the former cow barn is also evident in the exposed stone walls which continue into some of the bedrooms, including the main bedroom on the ground floor where an exposed stone wall adds warmth and texture to the room. Elsewhere, thick pile carpet from Floors for Living make the spacious rooms seem cosy all year round.





## *They decided to do most of the conversion work themselves, with the help of family and friends*

All the bathroom fittings were supplied by daughter George's plumbing company, Howsons Heating Services, including these in the main en suite. They chose Chester Grey floor tiles from Perfect Home and Gardens, Sildon.

The first floor bedrooms are linked by a mezzanine style landing which overlooks the spacious double-height entrance hall. In keeping with the Denhams' philosophy of recycling and re-use, they have fitted handmade oak doors

and kept original beams and wall niches, to give each room a sense of light and space. Even a compact children's room in the eaves is made to feel light and open with a Velux window.

Now the renovation is complete Gill and Tim have no intention of ever parting with it, but it earns its keep as a holiday let – with Gill and the family spending get-away time there themselves whenever they can take a break from the tenanted farm, which has been in the family for generations.

"There were times when the whole project seemed never ending," says Gill. "Being so involved, for so long, it becomes very personal."

She adds that in getting to know every single bit of the property inside and out, quite literally, "you develop a love-hate relationship with it." Gill concludes: "There were many times, in the deepest of winters when the winds were howling round the stone walls and the rain coming down in sheets, that we wondered what we had taken on. It's only now that we are able to take a step back, really appreciate everything we've done, and love it for the very special place it's turned out to be." ■

## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

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**Howson Heating Services**  
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# Burning the misconceptions

Fire and stove suppliers Charlton and Jenrick address the misconceptions around wood-burning stove emissions, and the important new Ecodesign regulations due to come into force this year



**W**ood burning stoves have been delivering a sustainable, renewable heating method for a long time – long before the carbon reduction and air quality targets were introduced. It's been estimated that there are over 2 million stove and fireplace installations in the UK, which represents an investment of around £2bn in peoples homes. Stoves don't just provide warmth, they make a genuine contribution to economic growth.

## MISINFORMED CONCERNS

As mentioned in the media, some misinformed campaigners wish to ban the sale of wood-burning stoves. A great deal of these misinformed concerns come from the fact that "domestic burning" is far too broad-brush and covers both the burning of wood in highly efficient wood-burning stoves and also bonfires

and open fires too. Burning wood in an Ecodesign stove vs open fires and bonfires is an incredibly bad comparison. An Ecodesign stove will emit virtually no visible smoke, and up to 90% fewer emissions than an open fire and up to 80% less than a 10-year-old stove.

## BE AS GREEN AS YOU CAN BE

To make sure your Ecodesign stove remains at its optimum level of efficiency, it's important you burn correctly seasoned wood, namely wood that is at or below 20% moisture, such as "Ready to Burn" certified wood. If you are burning unseasoned "wet" wood, regardless of what stove you have, you will be creating totally unnecessary pollution.

People who have misinformed concerns need to consider these two points:

- Domestic burning covers both hugely inefficient open fires and bonfires

plus Ecodesign stoves. You need to be aware of the stark differences.

- If you burn wood on an Ecodesign stove, you need to make sure you burn correctly seasoned wood

## CONFUSING MEDIA COVERAGE & SOME MISCONCEPTIONS

If the above points were not frustrating enough, there is more misleading information still circulating in the media.

Here are three to be aware of:

- Burning wood accounts for 38% of PM2.5 emissions, compared with 12% from road transport.
- Emissions of fine particles from domestic wood burning more than doubled between 2003 and 2019, from 20,000 to 41,000 tonnes.
- An Ecodesign stove will emit 750 times more pollution than an HGV vehicle.

The SIA (Stove Industry Alliance) states that the figure of 38% of PM2.5 in the UK is caused by domestic wood burning is "greatly exaggerated" because it is based on an incorrect assumption of the amount of wood fuel used. This figure comes from a government survey back in 2015, which incorrectly estimated that 6 million tonnes of wood are burnt each year.

Recent figures published by Defra show that in fact 1.75 million tonnes of wood fuel is burnt indoors each year. This number is much more closely aligned with the SIA's own research, which gives a figure of 1.85 million tonnes. If Defra's latest wood fuel volume figures were combined with the correct emission factors, the real percentage of PM2.5 attributable to domestic wood burning would be less than 10%.

## 750 TIMES MORE POLLUTION THAN AN HGV?

The statement that an Ecodesign stove emits 750 times more pollution than an HGV is misleading and incomparable. Furthermore, this 'erroneous' test was





based on an HGV in a laboratory test environment, measuring exhaust fumes, while the stove emissions were measured when on full output.

The big issue surrounding the test is that it didn't measure the emissions from HGVs, which come from their brakes and tyres (as they wear during use). According to Emissions Analytics, pollution from tyres can be up to 1,000 greater than emissions from exhaust fumes. HGVs are

incredibly heavy vehicles, often running 18 tyres on one vehicle, so it's very easy to see how this statement of "750 times more pollution" simply does not add up!

#### ECODESIGN 2022

The new Ecodesign Regulations for solid-fuel space heating appliances came into force on 1 January 2022. Any appliance manufactured from this date must now comply not only with increased appliance efficiency targets (75% minimum) but also provide an 88% improvement on permitted CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. There are also strict emission limits for particulate matter (PM), organic gaseous compounds (OGC) and nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>).

#### WHAT IS 'READY TO BURN'?

The Ready to Burn initiative is for wood and log producers, having a distinct certification category for dry firewood. Ready to Burn logs are marketed as such, and they are guaranteed to have a moisture content at or below 20%. This should not only give confidence among consumers that they are buying correctly seasoned wood, but the initiative should also help raise awareness of the importance of correctly seasoned wood too. Some stove owners may not be aware of the vital importance of correctly

*An Ecodesign stove will emit virtually no visible smoke, and up to 90% fewer emissions than an open fire and up to 80% less than a 10-year-old stove*

seasoned wood. Burning seasoned wood correctly significantly lowers emissions from a stove.

Stoves are a key part of the future of heating. As we move towards Ecodesign Ready, the way forward is only burning seasoned wood, and avoiding open fires.

*Charlton and Jenrick are suppliers of Ecodesign stoves and fires*

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OPTIMAL DRAUGHT

## 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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## CASE STUDY

# JOINING THE DOTS

Craig and Hilary Joiner had no intention of embarking on a massive building project in the Eastern Highlands – or to spend five years in the planning system – but they went with the flow and reaped the benefits

TEXT NIK HUNTER IMAGES RUPERT SHANKS





Hilary Joiner has been holidaying in the Cairngorms since she was very young. Her aunt had a house in the area and her family regularly visited to take advantage of the excellent skiing. Therefore, when Hilary and her partner Craig decided to look for a second home as well as an investment property, this region of the Scottish Highlands was high on their wish list. However, after searching for several years to no avail, they were ready to quit. "After yet another disappointment of a sale which fell through, we decided it was time to close the book on our search," Hilary recalls.

Or so she says. A sneaky last peek online, and Pityoulish Estate – nestled between Nethy Bridge and Coylumbridge – caught her attention. "The owners at Pityoulish Estate were breaking up some parts of the estate and Pityoulish Steading was part of this. We made an appointment not to view the steading itself, but a small farmer's cottage next door."

Hilary had seen the steading (a group of farmstead buildings) in the particulars, but knew right away it would be madness to take on something so large, and in such a state of dilapidation. However, when the agent suggested that she and Craig take a look, they didn't refuse. "We still really had no intention of buying it, but we found ourselves making an offer and when it was accepted, there was no going back."

The renovation began in 2016 and quickly hit a snag – in the form of bats. "We hadn't understood just how important bats are in projects, and how time-consuming it is to obtain the necessary licences. We were at a snagging stage before lockdown hit, but it took us such a long time to even start because of how much getting the bat licences delayed the build. You can only do surveys while they're nesting, and bat surveyors are very busy. It took about a year and a half before we could get the survey







## *“Every time we do something we find something new, and the steading reveals more about its past”*

arranged and then it had to be incorporated into the plans before we could finally apply for planning permission.”

The couple's initial idea was to retain all of the buildings, including a barn which dates from around 1847. Although the buildings' quality was evident, the estate had gone through good and bad times. “Historically, Pityoulish had been a very fertile and wealthy estate; you can tell that because the buildings had huge architectural consideration,” says Hilary. “It was simple, but it had been given due care and attention.”

Sadly, that attention had lapsed over the last few decades and the original, horseshoe-shaped layout of buildings with stabling for cows and horses – plus a huge barn in the centre – was in a state of severe disrepair. The couple had hoped to restore the barn, “but ultimately it had to come down.” Fortunately, they have in the main managed to retain the original footprint of the steading, and in the barn's footprint have built a sunken, walled garden where a sheltered seating area has been created and a hot tub installed. “I feel we've put the space to good use; you can still see a presence of the barn and we were able to reuse the natural Cairngorm stone, slate tiles and the massive lintel stones from the barn in the building's restoration.”

Another unexpected bonus was the removal of several large pine trees in front of the

steading. “They cast a lot of shade on the house and made it really dark, but they weren't ours to remove.” As luck would have it, a project to install ‘super pylons’ in the area deemed the trees dangerous, and they were cut down. “It completely opened up the aspects to views, wind and breeze, it was an unexpected surprise.”

This wasn't the only surprise – as the grounds around the steading continue to throw up new discoveries on a regular basis as Hilary explains: “Every time we do something we find something new, and the steading reveals more about its past.” Groundworks unearthed mill stones, leading to speculation that there was a horse drawn mill on the site at some point. “In the front porch we've re-used bits of wood that we found during the restoration, which are signed by farmworkers dating back to the late 1800s. We've repurposed one of the mill stones as a table too.”

Having not intended to take on such a large project, finance was an issue, as Hilary explains: “We had a limited budget, but we wanted to ensure that we invested in details which would be there for a long time. Even though we ripped out the interiors completely, what we put back had to have integrity and character, and we've tried to reincorporate original timbers wherever possible. We

### **HIGH POINT**

“Finding this place! We have to pinch ourselves as we can't believe how lucky we are to have found this incredible building in such an idyllic location.”





## LOW POINT

"Definitely the issues with the Victorian private water supply (before the estate created a borehole); at one point we had to bathe in the Loch, which loses its novelty after a while, as does filling buckets of water for dishwashing and toilet flushing."

didn't want to put in fake beams, and there were certain pieces we could take out and reintegrate to form part of the structure, albeit in a different format."

## THE SAME PAGE

Fortunately, the Joiners' builder and architect were on the same page as the couple and were equally keen to retain the property's original character. "Once the project began, we had a brilliant builder (Chris Robinson) and a great architect (John Craig), and we all worked well together. Once we handed over to Chris it was really a dream build; it really matters to have someone with a solid reputation and an established network of trades and suppliers."

The couple's practical approach to the renovation has also helped. "We're not property developers, and although we've done small scale renovations, we've never tackled a project of this magnitude, so I suppose what I'm most pleased with is how we've managed to achieve something that we're proud of."

Tackling the project in a systematic way – the build, the garden, even clearing out the barns, was their plan from the get-go. "We had to do it one step at a time, or we would have been overwhelmed by the scale of the project. It's like owning a key to a huge number of hobbies and a list of new skill sets that we've had to develop." She adds: "I've always wanted to do a self-build as I come from a family of self-builders; I've seen it as part of my DNA. This level of restoration has been close to self-building." And although everything has taken longer than they had anticipated, taking that time has also afforded them a greater understanding of the building and its relationship within the estate.

*"We had to do it one step at a time, or we would have been overwhelmed by the scale"*

Taking advantage of their new expansive views, the final layout, which is over two floors, incorporates a kitchen/diner, utility room, bathroom, snug and double bedroom on the ground floor with a sitting room and further two bedrooms and bathrooms upstairs.

Once the building work was complete, creatively minded Hilary was keen to get started on the interior aesthetics, and after five years in the planning (when you include lockdown), she more than a little amount of vision of how the result would look. "By this time, I had a massive Pinterest board! Also knowing the area so well and being aware of its strong connection with Scandinavia, crisp, clean lines and simple uncluttered design was the obvious way to go."

Although Pityoulish is now an investment which will raise income, the couple and their family very much intend to use it as their second home, and Hilary looked upon it as a fresh start. "My own house probably has too much in it, and this was a chance to have a clean slate and have the style without the clutter that we accumulate for everyday living."

That style includes little touches like luxurious deer hides and sheepskins and the odd quirky wall covering (from Scottish supplier Timorous





Beasties). "I've used their Thistle wallpaper in one of the bedrooms. I think their designs are just enough for one wall. I've also used another design which features stags but with wind farms too and I like that little ironic twist."

Although Craig, Hilary and their two teenage daughters retreat to Pityoulish whenever they can, when it's empty it is available to rent, and a few more extras have been added to the property. What the couple assume was the former dairy (it was the only building with a proper floor) has been made into a games room which is just the right size for a game of darts or table tennis. A further two outbuildings have been built into the exterior to incorporate storage for bikes, skis and kayaks. Hilary drew on her experience from her own family holidays to ensure this was a holiday home that ticked all the boxes, including for practicality.

While keen to embrace an open plan design, Hilary was pragmatic about the weather conditions in the Highlands. "The climate can be brutal and open plan living impractical when you need to store so much outdoor kit," she explains. The solution was to make the main living spaces open plan but with an abundance of storage and a large boot room and drying room to ensure everything is dry for the next

***"We've tried to reincorporate original timbers wherever possible"***

day's adventure.

"I love the interior of the steading; it has come together so well, but equally we spend so much time in the garden. The next project is to further develop the outdoor space and create areas where I can plant meadows and wildflowers."

For the family, the restoration of Pityoulish has been a long, eventful journey, but it's now on the homeward straight and Hilary and Craig have created a property with integrity that they can be justifiably proud to share with guests. "There have been times of tension and worry but overall, it has been a really mindful, wonderful project and I feel we owe this building so much." These kind of last sneaky peeks at properties on the internet aren't for the fainthearted – who knows what path they will lead you down. ■

## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

### MAIN CONTRACTOR

**CR Construction**  
(Jamie and Chris Robinson)  
CRconstructionltd.uk

### ARCHITECT

**Highland Rural Design**  
(John Craig)  
01540 662458

### STONEMASON

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# VICTORIAN VALUE, UNLOCKED

When Amanda and Kevin decided to renovate their Victorian home in south London to provide better space for their family, their chosen architects managed to unlock the home's full potential and achieved a trouble-free project

TEXT ROSEANNE FIELD IMAGES LORENZO ZANDRI

When a London couple bought their Victorian era home in Wandsworth, it was in desperate need of modernisation. Needing more space for them and their children, they bought it with the intention of doing a full renovation. "It had been owned by the same family for about 20+ years so when we bought it it hadn't been modernised for a while," explains Amanda.

When they purchased the house it had four bedrooms, which Amanda says wasn't really sufficient. "With three children and family staying with us quite often, we definitely needed extra bedrooms," she says.

They've since transformed the house into a six bedroom family home, achieved by rejigging the internal layout along with a side return extension, loft conversion and full basement excavation. "It was quite a major renovation!" Amanda says.

One of the most important things to sort for the couple – and key to the success of the project for them – was finding the right team to work with. Amanda had for some time had a particular practice in mind – Matthew Giles Architects. "10 years ago they appeared in an article in The Sunday Times listing the 'top 50 architects in the country'," she explains. "We intended to one day buy a house which needed work, so I kept the article."

Amanda and Kevin had a clear vision of the aesthetic they wanted to achieve, and finding an architect who would understand that was essential. "I did my research, I wanted an architect that had the same kind of aesthetic and philosophy that we did," Amanda says, continuing: "We wanted a modern, clean, minimalist home with a very natural palette, and they fit into that." This was confirmed by looking into previous projects Matthew Giles had completed, and the fact they were based not far away was an added bonus. Amanda

adds: "It all played out really nicely."

## DESIGN & PLANNING

Sharing a general design aesthetic with the architects, the couple found getting the design drawn up and finalised to be a stress-free – and even enjoyable! – process. "We didn't really have to say that much," Amanda says. "I think that's why finding an architect who aligns with your design philosophy is so important. We gave them quite a free hand to come up with the design because we trusted in what they would produce." Sure enough, the design presented to them by Matt and Tom was exactly what they were after, utilising natural light and natural materials such as wood and stone.

They had a few key requirements; an open plan living space at ground floor level, a polished concrete floor, and a freestanding bath and walk-in shower in the family bathroom. "Victorian homes can be quite narrow and tight but credit to them, they managed to fit in all our space requirements!" Amanda says.

The couple had holidayed in France a lot and the designs they saw during trips there inspired their home's design. "There's a lot of emphasis on natural craftsmanship and living in a space that complements the natural environment, and we really liked that," explains Amanda.

As well as the polished concrete floor, their home has exposed beams, timber cabinetry, brickwork, parquet flooring, Corten steel, and white Carrara marble. However, the couple also wanted to ensure this would blend harmoniously with the Victorian period features of the home. "The architects did a beautiful job of that," says Amanda.

"Very modern elements that fit seamlessly with the period features – we've kept the original mouldings and ceiling roses in the front room."

With a design finalised the next step was to

## HIGH POINT

"Seeing the design that you've seen on paper take shape in the flesh. And the house design process itself was very fun."

– Amanda









tackle planning, but they encountered no major stresses during this process – thanks again to the architects’ help. “They took all the pain out of it!” Amanda says. “It was quite straightforward from our perspective. We didn’t really have any issues, because if there were any they just took care of it for us.”

## WORK BEGINS

By mid-2019, they were ready to begin work. Amanda and Kevin opted to live offsite, just down the road in a rented property. For the most part the project went relatively smoothly and ran to schedule, which Amanda credits in part to their living elsewhere. “It was a massive project, the builders were simultaneously doing the basement and the loft, and us living elsewhere helped with the timeline because the builders didn’t have to work around us,” she says.

Work was in full swing on the house when Covid hit in 2020. However, Amanda gives full credit to their contractor, Miles Builders, for continuing to work throughout. “They carried on, they were very professional,” she says. “It was seamless, in spite of the pandemic the works were done within 12 months, keeping the project in line with the schedule.” They were also lucky to have started work early enough that the majority of materials and supplies had already been ordered in before supply shortages and delays started to bite. “We were very fortunate with the timing,” Amanda says. The family moved into their new home in July 2020.

Thanks to the good work of contractor and

architect, Amanda and Kevin experienced a very stress-free build. The architects project managed the build, explains Amanda: “Because it was quite a big project; we needed a project manager.” The architects also found the main contractor, after putting together a scope of work and going out to tender – they had previously worked with the chosen firm. Miles Builders then took care of the subcontractors. “They’re a big company so they employ a lot of their own and then subcontract some of the work – but we only ever interfaced with them,” says Amanda.

So professional were the builders that when the water table was accidentally run into during construction of the basement, the couple were barely even aware there was a problem. “It could have potentially delayed matters by quite a lot but they were super professional, kept us up to date and got extra men onsite to deal with it,” Amanda says. “They didn’t make it our problem, they just did what they needed to do to solve the problem.”

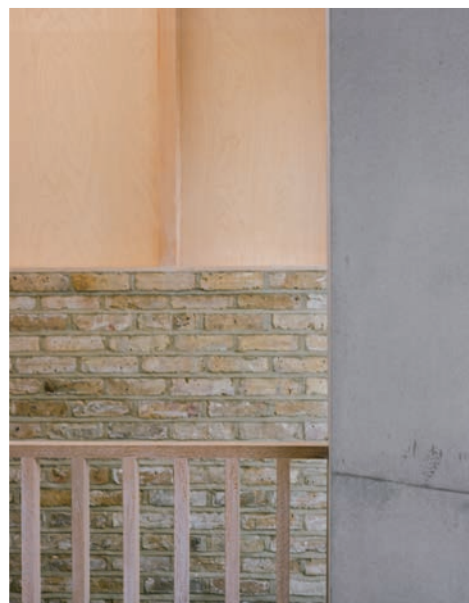
Their trust in the builders and architects – along with lockdown restrictions – meant the couple weren’t onsite too often. “We kept a safe distance, we would only really come down when we were choosing materials and wanted to visualise the space,” Amanda explains. “They gave us regular updates and we became friends, they would pick up the phone and let us know if there were any issues.” This included a complaint from a neighbour at one point about noise levels. “We never had issues with neighbours apart from that one complaint,”

## LOW POINT

“Really it was just neighbours, but with a build of this size you’re going to get people complaining about the noise. You will always get one or two people who will never be happy. And with lockdown, people were upset with being stuck at home listening to builders next door!”

– Amanda





says Amanda. "I think that was just because of lockdown and people just getting annoyed – the builders always kept the workspace clean and the road clear, we never had issues on that front."

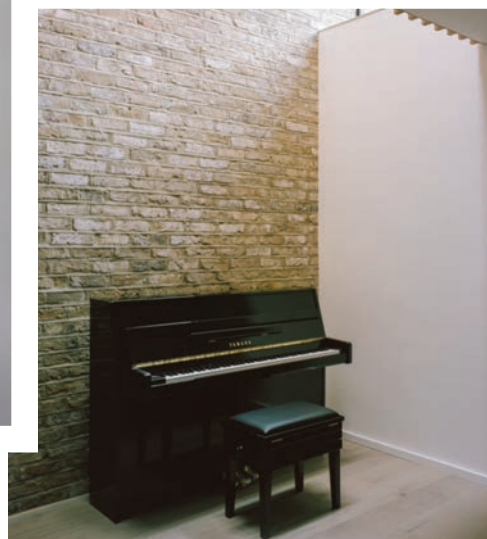
As is often the case with large projects, Amanda estimates they went over their initial budget by 10-15%. "In the end it was a fine balance between separating the 'must-haves' from the 'nice-to-haves,'" she says. One such example was deciding not to include any smart home technology: "We're not very gadget-savvy!" she jokes. One addition that dented the budget slightly was the inclusion of a fire sprinkler system – necessary due to the removal of the wall between the living room and kitchen. "There was discussion about how to embed that into the design so it wasn't an eyesore, and looked sleek and contemporary," explains Amanda. "We got a misting system which cost a bit more but ensured the integrity of the design was maintained."

***"The builders were simultaneously doing the basement and the loft, and I think us living elsewhere helped"***

#### **INTERIOR DESIGN & LAYOUT**

The removal of the wall between the living room and kitchen means visitors to the house can see right through to the garden through the large sliding doors at the back of the kitchen. The hallway features parquet flooring, while the kitchen has polished concrete floors that continue seamlessly into the garden,





allowing the two to be utilised as one large space in summer.

Downstairs is the basement area, built to the same footprint as the house and including a guest bedroom with ensuite, utility room, separate toilet, and a large family room. A large lightwell was designed in the corner, allowing Amanda and Kevin to look down into the space from the kitchen. A skylight allows natural light to reach the basement level. "We can always keep an eye on the children and it means the basement space is not pokey at all, the light and airflow works really well," Amanda says. They debated not going ahead with the excavation, but couldn't be more pleased they did. "It's an expensive outlay but we're really glad we went for it, it's such a useful space. It's probably the most 'hardworking' room in the house because it's a family room, and the children can be down there – all the mess stays down there!"

On the first floor is the family bathroom and a bedroom, and up a small second flight of stairs is the master bedroom and another bedroom. The fifth bedroom sits on a "little mezzanine," and another guest bedroom with ensuite is in the converted loft space.

When designing the interior spaces Amanda says architects Matt and Tom helped them select the materials and colour palette, and offered advice on what would look good in certain areas based on the size of the space. "By and large the styling and interior design was a combined effort," she says. "I enjoyed it!"

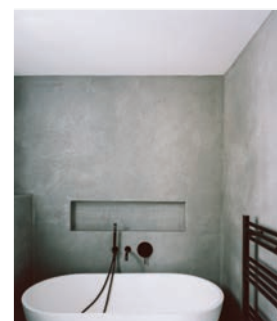
As well as helping with decisions, the architects also assisted with sourcing products. Amanda spent time researching in magazines and on social media, and let the architects know

## ***"Finding an architect who aligns with your design philosophy is so important" – Amanda***

things she liked – such as terrazzo tiles which they used in the bathroom – and they would recommend companies. "In the age of social media it's actually really easy to do research," she says. "It was actually quite simple in terms of what we wanted. We were quite decisive because we knew the look we were going for."

Having been living in the house for over a year, Amanda says they're thrilled with the final result. "It's probably even better than we envisioned," she says. "It's such a light space, we've had friends round and you can cook and entertain at the same time." She's also pleased with how functional it is as a family home, while still looking nice.

The open plan ground floor is her favourite part of the house. "It doesn't feel like a Victorian home, it's such a wide expanse of space," she explains. "They can feel a bit pokey but it doesn't have that feeling, because of the design the architects put together – the light and air flows beautifully. It really is a product of clever design." ■



## **AMANDA'S ADVICE**

"Choose an architect who shares your design philosophy and values, because then you can trust them and give them a free hand with the design. Then even the build process becomes much easier – things like selecting materials because they know what you like. It becomes a very positive experience as opposed to constant battles – it can be very fraught if you don't share the same vision."



## Gainsborough relauches shower range



**Gainsborough** has relaunched in the UK with a new line-up of nine electric shower models, and a complete rebranding across its entire range. With a selection of power options, home owners can choose the most appropriate model for their household showering needs, with three colourways to complement all bathroom interiors and styles. The range is available now. Simple to install, the Gainsborough SLIM shower range has been designed to easily replace any brand of electric shower, with four (SLIM Mono) or eight (SLIM Duo) multi-fit options for maximum versatility. The SLIM Mono and Duo showers are backed by a two year guarantee and Gainsborough's expert Customer Support and Service teams.

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Easy Stair is a temporary site staircase which is now extremely popular and in widespread use across the UK housebuilding industry.

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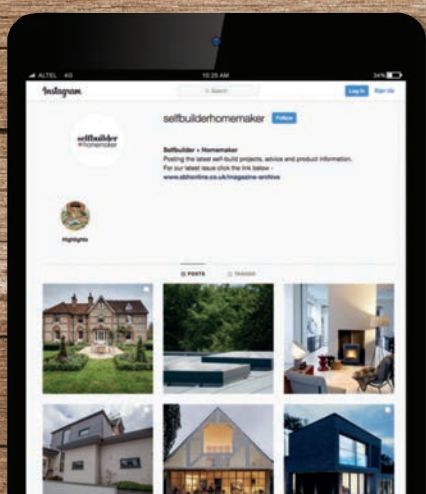
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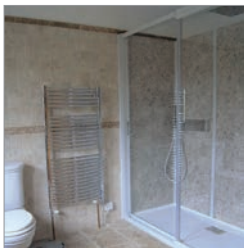
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**Door Superstore**, part of the CMO Group, has expanded its already extensive product offering with the launch of its new own-brand doors that are affordable, stylish and super easy to install. The new range of hollow core and solid fire doors comprises a choice of two popular styles – The Millbridge, an elegant five-panel Cottage door and The Burrington, a classic Victorian style four-panel door. Both styles are available as white, primed doors, ready to be painted to suit individual design

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# Talking trends

Joanne Bull from Königstone discusses what she predicts will be the leading trends of 2022, focusing on the hub of the home – the kitchen



There is no doubt that 2020 and 2021 were unpredictable years so, as we jump into 2022, we, as a nation, are a changed and more refined group of consumers. This is relevant for most aspects of buying – whether it's home, kitchen, garden, tech products or even the type of transport people use to get to work.

Focusing on the home, homeowners are now savvier than ever and do more in-depth research when specifying materials for their projects. Particularly with hygiene being high on people's agenda – everyone wants easily cleaned surfaces, kitchen doors and handles to keep those pesky germs away – people are opting to have fewer items on display. Choose a handleless, gloss kitchen paired with a low porosity, Quartz surface that is easy to clean and will not harbour bacteria.

People will return to holidays but, historically, big events, such as the Covid pandemic, can change people's priorities. More value is now being placed on spending quality time with family and friends in the home therefore creating a space for gatherings has increased in

importance. Instead of going out, people want to ensure their home is a safe, hygienic and beautiful place to entertain for guests.

Looking toward 2022, we are seeing a continuation of making the kitchen an extension to the living spaces in an open plan layout. People are choosing to hide away large appliances from view and we are seeing more homes with islands that include cutouts, bottle coolers, power sockets, pop up knife blocks and pop up TVs. Customers are asking for workstations to be incorporated into their kitchen designs; our large bespoke kitchen islands are being specified with pop-up sockets and rebate channels for cables. The kitchen continues to be the hub of the home, be it the home office, an entertainment space for friends, a homework station or simply a place to cook and unwind after a long day.

With online research for home-planning increasing with the likes of Pinterest and Instagram, demand for personalisation has also increased; designs are starting to move away from safe whites and greys so that the new kitchen stands out on a

*With a focus on protecting the planet and moving away from a throwaway culture, the average lifespan of a kitchen is increasing*

social media news feed. The design configuration that a stone work surface offers is also being explored more regularly with an increasing call for elaborate edge details, recess drainers and mitred stone end panels.





When it comes to tones and colours, there has been a rise in sales of more earthy tones with people wanting to get back to nature and create a peaceful home environment. We predict furniture in bottle/British and racing/sage greens to be a favourite colour throughout 2022, evoking nature, calm and tranquillity.

Now, more than ever, we are all more environmentally aware with every purchase we make – and the kitchen is no different. Ensuring items are as sustainable as they can be is non-




negotiable for many buyers. For example, there has been a massive demand for carbon neutral kitchens.

With a focus on protecting the planet and moving away from a throwaway culture, the average lifespan of a kitchen is increasing. Homeowners are looking for materials that will last longer and are more durable so stone work surfaces are being added to kitchen wish lists. With customers focused on the environment and maximising the lifespan of their kitchen, retailers and manufacturers need

to educate buyers on longevity by emphasising the quality and durability of their products and should encourage buyers to ask these types of questions and expect a qualified answer.

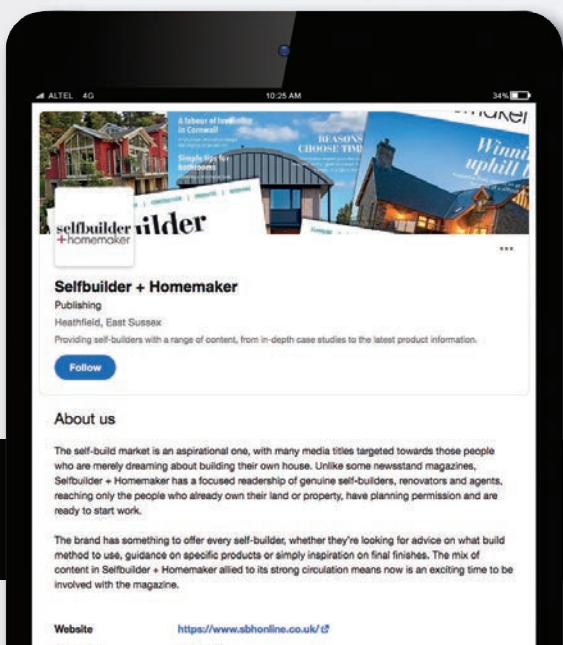
Recent inflation rates have been causing havoc to budgets up and down the country. We expect to see this trend continue into 2022 but level off soon enough, much in the same way as it did in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. As the cost of building materials has risen, homeowners want value for money and opt for more daring or impactful designs on features such as worktops and cabinet handles.

*Joanne Bull is marketing manager at Königstone*

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