



The Industry Advocate:  
Brian Berry on the  
perfect storm facing  
the sector  
Page 12



White paper:  
Where are  
housebuilders on  
flood mitigation?  
Page 39



Case study:  
A modular solution  
to housing London's  
homeless  
Page 24

# HOUSEBUILDER & DEVELOPER

APRIL/MAY 2022



## RAISING THE STANDARD

Stonewood Group explain to Jack Wooler how they have brought in luxury features 'as standard' in a new 38-home scheme in Wiltshire



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# APRIL/ MAY 2022 CONTENTS

ALSO IN  
THE ISSUE:

**4-8**

INDUSTRY NEWS

**10**

THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

**12-20**

COMMENT

**22**

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

**24-34**

CASE STUDIES

**39**

INDUSTRY VIEWFINDER

**67**

SHOW PREVIEW: FIT SHOW

**69**

SHOW PREVIEW –  
UK CONSTRUCTION WEEK  
(LONDON)



**24**

CASE STUDY

## MICRO SOLUTIONS TO MACRO PROBLEMS

A new modular build to rent scheme which offers young homeless people the chance to have a home in central London at a reduced rate has broken ground.

FEATURES:

**39**

INDUSTRY VIEWFINDER

## FUTURE-PROOFING AGAINST FLOODS

Housebuilder and Developer surveyed readers to discover their opinions on – and experience of – introducing SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems); the key means of mitigating schemes' impact on flooding. Here are the revealing survey findings.

**53**

BUILDING FABRIC

## GET ON TOP OF THE PART L CHALLENGE

Changes to Part L of the Building Regulations are planned to come into effect later this year as part of the Future Homes Standard, meaning a 31% reduction in new build carbon emissions. Stuart Nicholson of Marley explores why the inclusion of solar PV roofing could be a key solution.

**63**

FINANCE & INSURANCE

## THE RIGHT COVER

Dean Stritch of LABC Warranty describes what to look for when choosing a warranty provider for your development, including for MMC projects.

PRODUCTS:

Appointments & News.....	20
Building Fabric.....	50-61
Finance & Insurance.....	52-64
Groundworks.....	61-65
Heating, Ventilation & Services.....	66-75
Insulation.....	75



**30**

CASE STUDY

## RAISING THE STANDARD

The developers behind an award-winning development in Wiltshire talk to Jack Wooler about how they have included higher-end features as standard, and blended with the historic context.

**73**

HEATING, VENTILATION & SERVICES

## A HEALTHY APPROACH TO INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Stephan Lang of Daikin explains how 'whole-building approaches' to heating, ventilation and air conditioning in new build homes can balance energy efficiency and the vital need to improve indoor air quality.

**79**

INTERIORS

## THE LEVELLING-UP AGENDA

Neil Sanders of F. Ball and Co talks through the steps to ensuring a flawless finish when installing floorcoverings using Luxury Vinyl Tiles.

**87**

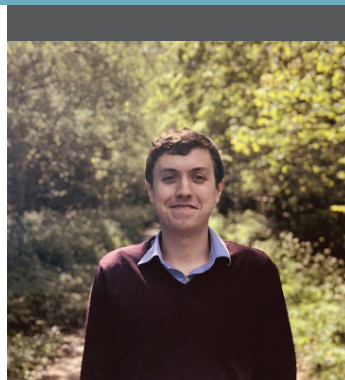
LANDSCAPING & EXTERNAL FINISHES

## ALUMINIUM: THE BEST FOR BALCONIES?

With combustible materials banned in the external walls of high-rise buildings, the industry has had to adjust to a new design environment. However as AliDeck's Richard Izzard explains, it hasn't always been a smooth transition for balconies.

Interiors.....	75-84
Landscaping & External Finishes.....	83-88
Safety & Security.....	89
Structural Elements.....	88-90
Classified & Directory.....	90





Jack Wooler

# FROM THE EDITOR

With bleaker news of the war in Ukraine arriving each day, even the pressures of the pandemic are being overshadowed for many of us.

Meanwhile, builders are currently contending with a range of other – and not entirely unrelated – growing threats, from inflation, to supply chain failures, and a lack of skilled workers.

Considering this combination, it is perhaps forgivable to forget that we are still living in a time of climate crisis. Regardless of whether we focus on them or not, however, the changes are coming, and in the UK, the most severe consequences we can expect to see short-term will be increased 'flood events.'

While flooding is nothing new in the UK, and currently one in six homes already sit at risk of flooding in England, a warmed climate is predicted to severely exacerbate this. Warm air brings both more rainfall from extra evaporation, and by drying the earth, a reduction in its capacity to soak that rainfall up.

Studies have shown that over two-thirds of flooding is currently caused by surface water runoff (or surcharge from overloaded drainage systems). So, this would seem a sensible place to begin bolstering already compromised natural processes. This is especially true for housebuilders and developers, who more than most can make a direct contribution, for better or worse.

Thankfully, proven solutions already exist. Sustainable Drainage Systems (known as SuDS) are a 'palette' of approaches designed to assist and manage the drainage of surface water – and therefore are designed to tackle the problem of runoff in flooding events. To the wonder of many however, especially considering the upcoming dangers discussed above, such systems are not yet ubiquitous in this country.

In order to find out why this is, as well as the barriers and the benefits of SuDS in general, Housebuilder & Developer has conducted a piece of reader research to find out how developers are embracing the solutions. The results are shown in our white paper on page 39.

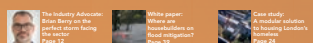
The research (conducted with Edge Insight) revealed that, while 79% of housebuilders and developers have become more aware of flood risk management in recent years, 38% install Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in their projects only occasionally, and 15% have still never done so.

As well as regulatory issues, with most of those surveyed believing these should be expanded, our respondents also argued that the Government has not done enough on SuDS in general, both in engaging the industry, and in not spending enough money.

To give the Government some credit, the above issues are of course weighing heavily on them too, but despite this, it is clear there is real work to be done to help housebuilders and developers fully adopt these crucial approaches, in a difficult business context. If the Government truly wants to 'level up,' as it claims, the industry is likely to need a helping hand.

Jack Wooler

## ON THE COVER



### HOUSEBUILDER & DEVELOPER

APRIL/MAY 2022



#### RAISING THE STANDARD

Stonewood Group submit to Jack Wooler how they have brought in luxury features to standard in a new 285-home scheme.

Somerbrook, Stonewood Group – go to page 30

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# Sunak announces removal of VAT on energy efficiency upgrades



Chancellor Rishi Sunak's Spring Budget announced a removal of VAT on energy efficiency measures for homeowners, in the context of high inflation and lowered economic growth projections.

Sunak explained that homeowners won't have to pay the 5% VAT on "energy saving materials, such as solar panels or heat pumps," but this would only be a five-year arrangement.

He also confirmed the introduction of "cheap" taxpayer-backed loans to help homeowners install heat pumps, solar panels and other energy efficiency measures such as insulating properties to combat rising fuel bills. The Spring Statement also cut vehicle fuel duty by 5 pence per litre, but there has been a muted response from business in general to the fiscal moves announced.

While Sunak said that the economic effects of the war in Ukraine would only become clear later, he announced a cut in the UK's growth forecast from 6% this year to a modest 3.8%. He said the projections for growth in 2023 were of an even more disappointing 1.8%.

This is against a challenging economic backdrop where inflation has reached 6.2% and is expected to continue growing to 7.4% by the end of this year, according to the Office of Budget Responsibility.

Matthew Pratt, Group CEO of Redrow, commented: "We welcome the Chancellor's focus on boosting growth and supporting consumers with the rising cost of living. As the UK moves toward net zero,

it is positive to see tax breaks to help consumers install energy efficient technology to reduce their bills and energy usage in the long-term."

The Chancellor also unveiled a plan to increase the threshold at which people start paying national insurance contributions by £3,000 to £12,570 from July, and a 1p cut in income tax.

## Construction reacts to Sunak's spring offerings

The housebuilding and wider construction sector has given a general welcome to Chancellor Rishi Sunak's Spring Statement, in which he announced the removal of VAT on energy efficiency measures for homeowners, as well as a new tax plan to ease the rising cost of living, and a cut in fuel duty.

Brian Berry, chief executive of the Federation of Master Builders, said that Sunak's VAT cut was an important move: "The VAT cut will help householders insulate their home at a time when energy bills are escalating. It will also provide a much-needed boost to local builders operating in the retrofit market."

Berry added: "The Government now needs to build on the VAT cut and implement a long term National Retrofit Strategy to provide business certainty." He also said that the Chancellor's commitment to improve the UK's skills system was "encouraging, notably the push for greater numbers of employers to train up staff. This is particularly true for construction, a sector that has suffered long-term skills shortages."

However the FMB chief executive said that the Government's measures "should focus on providing long-term solutions that incentivise more businesses to play their part in training the next generation of tradespeople."

Marc Vlessing, CEO of micro-home developer Pocket Living, warned that major issues remain for home buyers despite Sunak's Budget announcements: "The 14% increase in house prices in England shows again just how dysfunctional the UK's housing market is, and why real change is needed now."

He said house prices, when combined with the cost of living crisis, were resulting in "a significant loss of opportunities for those desperate to get

onto the housing ladder." Vlessing added: "We need the Government to act now to unlock affordable housing delivery, especially for first time buyers who cannot otherwise afford to buy. This can only be achieved through reform of the planning system that will enable innovative developers to deliver, without requiring any additional state spending."

Phil Hurley, chair of the Heat Pump Association, gave an expected welcome to the removal of VAT on energy efficiency measures, calling it "great news for the heat pump industry, and households." He added that the HPA had been "working hard behind the scenes calling for financial incentives to tackle the barriers to heat pump uptake."

However Hurley warned that "this decision alone will not be enough to enable all households to access technologies such as heat pumps," while it "will play a role in helping to accelerate the switch to low carbon heat." He said that a further step that still needed to be taken was "the removal of illogical environmental levies on electricity."

Bradley Tully, senior public affairs officer at RICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors), commented on the remaining barriers to low carbon building adoption: "Our findings from the market suggest that the biggest barrier to improve the energy efficiency of homes is cost – for 85% of respondents in fact. However, the road to achieving net zero always required the retrofitting of existing homes across this country to make them greener, and discounts for homeowners looking to support these ambitions have been a long time coming." He added: "We are delighted the Chancellor has finally listened to our call and taken action to cut VAT."

Trevor Morris, principal at architects SPPARC, said: "While I am pleased to see the Government's new programme of cheap loans for retrofitting projects, I am concerned that this seems to be a reincarnation of the failed Green Homes Grant. If the Government invested the same amount they are spending on the Palace of Westminster refurbishment into low-carbon heating solutions and insulation, almost 19 million homes could be upgraded by 2030!"

He added: "Retrofitting, however, will only go so far in greening homes and protecting households from the downsides of the UK's dependency on fossil-fuel heating. Government and industry must harness the impact that higher building standards will have so that we can ensure the delivery of high-quality and sustainable homes that are fit for a net-zero future, and seek genuine renewable solutions."

# Three-quarters of buyers would consider a 'green' home

New research has shown that more than three quarters (77%) of home buyers are likely to choose a green home for their next purchase, and 70% of people looking to get on – or move up – the housing ladder are also willing to pay more for better energy efficiency.

The 'Green Homes Report: What Buyers Want', commissioned by law firm Shakespeare Martineau, included a survey of more than 500 first time buyers and those on the property ladder looking to move into their next home this year.

Top reasons for wanting a green home included it being "better for the environment" (39%), that it would "save me money in the long run" (27%) and also that "I want to reduce my energy bills" (35%).

More than a third (34%) of homebuyers also wanted to reduce their carbon footprint and get ahead of the curve, stating: "I think eventually all homes will need to be green, so I will preempt this."

Despite a significant uptake, more than one in three (35%) respondents who were likely to purchase a green home said they wanted to understand more about how it would benefit them in the future, indicating a "gap in knowledge and understanding."

When it comes to availability, just 14% of respondents in the Midlands said there were green homes available in their desired location, compared to 25% and 24% in the north and south, respectively.

The results also showed that age was an "influencing factor" in demands and expectations of green homes.

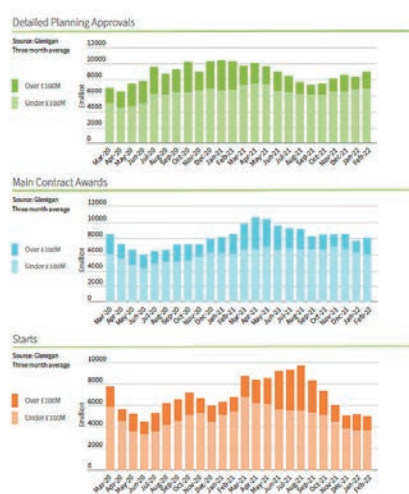
The age group most likely to consider a green home was 35 to 44-year-olds at 84%, for example, followed by 25 to 34-year-olds (78%). More than three quarters (76%) of 18 to 24-year olds would opt for a green home, in contrast just 64% of respondents aged 45 and over.

First time buyers were also more likely to consider a green home (80%), compared to 73% of second-time buyers. Currently the average age of a first time buyer is 34.

Neil Gosling, head of residential development at Shakespeare Martineau, commented: "Our results show that not all is lost when it comes to getting more people

on board with green homes. I believe those on the fence can be convinced with the right information and education."

## Ups and downs in activity recorded for February



The value of underlying and major project starts experienced "sharp declines" in the three months to February (-17%), over a quarter lower on 2021 (-26%), but a "rallying development pipeline should give the sector reasons for cautious optimism, according to Glenigan's March 2022 Construction Review.

Covering all projects with a total value of £100m or less, the report revealed that the value of detailed planning approvals rose by 11% to average £8,991m against the previous three months. Major project approvals "performed strongly" against the same period (+26%); and underlying approvals witnessed growth of 10%, standing 2% higher than a year ago.

Despite a "modest" industry-wide dip in main contract awards (-5%), those for "major projects" were up, increasing by 36% during the three months to February.

Partially offsetting what Glenigan said was an "abnormally weak start to the year" in terms of construction performance, this boost in planning approval and contract awards sits in line with Glenigan's most recent forecast, indicating "potential market revival in the second half of 2022."

### OUTPUT RISING

According to Glenigan, a gradual increase in construction activity during the last three months suggests a sector "on the brink of resurgence."

The latest ONS figures showed overall construction output during the three months to January increased 3% against the preceding three months, up 6.9% higher than a year ago.

Glenigan said that repair and maintenance (R&M) output increased, rising 1.4% during the same timeframe and up 5.4% on the previous year. Growth in this area was predominantly driven by a 2.9% rise in non-housing R&M, and a 1.1% increase in public housing R&M work.

New work output also increased 4.0% against the previous quarter, and 7.9% compared to the previous year. A rise in industrial work has been a main driver, growing by 11.2% and 30.4%.

Private housing and infrastructure also strengthened. Infrastructure output grew 5.2% against the last three months and 30% compared to a year ago. Private housing output increased 3.4% and 11.3% in the same periods.

Finally, commercial output rose 5.2% against the preceding three months but fell 7.4% compared with the previous year.

### MIXED SECTOR PERFORMANCE

Glenigan said that many construction sectors were still heavily affected by materials and skills shortages, caused by ongoing supply chain issues and "geopolitical disturbances."

Overall, housing was one of the worst performers in the three months to February, with project starts 21% lower than the preceding three months (Oct-Nov 2021), plummeting 46% compared to the same period in 2021.

Private housing starts fell once again (-23%), contributing further to the ongoing downward trajectory which has characterised this sector over the last few months. Social housing project starts fared little better, falling 16% during the three months to February.

### REGIONAL BREAKDOWN

The North East managed to buck the declining trend, experiencing 6% growth on both the preceding three months to February and on the same period in 2021. This was, in part, attributable to a number of large projects coming online, said Glenigan.

Scotland and London also saw growth on the last three months, at +13% and +9% respectively but were still down -36% and -26% on figures a year ago.

Elsewhere, the majority of regions have performed poorly during the three months to February, Glenigan reported.





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# Developers need to face council 'health test'

Property developers seeking fast planning permission for "major building projects" should face a "health test" imposed by local councils to see if their plans will promote healthier living in the area, new research has proposed.

Major developments that can show they will deliver a "net health gain" by supporting better air quality and healthy lifestyles could be granted accelerated planning permission, according to Dr Caglar Koksall, based at the University of Manchester.

Koksall made the proposal in a briefing for the Social Market Foundation, where he spoke at an event the think tank is hosting with Policy@Manchester.

He argued that good developments improve wellbeing and encourage healthier lifestyles, whereas bad-

ly-designed buildings can "encourage over-crowding and reliance on cars for transport instead of walking or cycling." He explained that overcrowding has been linked to the spread of diseases including Covid-19, while places with high rates of car use can have poor air quality and higher rates of obesity.

Local councils should set higher health-related standards before giving permission for big developments, Koksall continued. But those developments that actively incorporate design features that support healthier lives should be rewarded with fast-track permission.

He said the proposed "health net gain" could vary according to the area, and include any acute local health issues such as respiratory diseases or obesity.

## Survey winner

Rfseda Sadi has been randomly selected as the winner of £250 after completing *Housebuilder and Developer's* Industry Viewfinder survey on flood mitigation.

The data gathered has been used to compile our 'Future-proofing against

Floods' white paper, which you can read on page 39. If you would like to sign up to our dedicated research list to give your opinions and insights, please scan the QR code. Congratulations to Rfseda!

We often conduct reader research which forms the basis of Industry Viewfinder white papers which grow sector knowledge on current issues. If you are interested in giving your opinions & insights on key construction topics please scan here.



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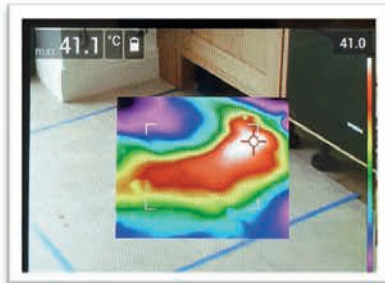
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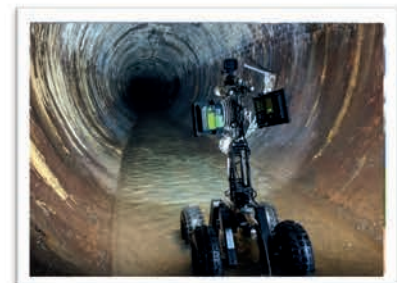
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**Customer Reviews**  
4.9 out of 5



# A net gain for the nation

John Richards of Cala Homes details the company's journey so far in achieving the increasingly essential requirement of biodiversity net gain, across its Thames region



John Richards, land director at Cala Homes (right), with Keith Betton of Hampshire Ornithological Society

According to a 2021 study, it is estimated that the UK has lost almost half of its native biodiversity. As one of the country's largest housebuilders, reducing our environmental impact is a key priority, which is why we've launched our first Urban Wildlife Strategy at Cala Homes Thames. It outlines our plans to incorporate biodiversity improvement measures into every new home in our region, and to achieve 10% biodiversity net gain ahead of the introduction of new Government legislation which will introduce a mandated increase.

Last year, we started working with Hampshire Ornithological Society and Hampshire Swifts, who both provided valuable insight and expertise throughout the development of this strategy. Together, we created a network of interventions which will ensure that our new developments play their part in delivering diverse ecosystems for species such as swifts, bats, bees and hedgehogs to help them thrive in urban areas. This means every new home we build will have bird nesting features, specialist hedgehog fencing, bat boxes or bat roosting tiles and native tree planting.

Our King's Barton development in Winchester, currently onsite, will be one of the first to benefit from the strategy. We are building 2,000 new homes along with a neighbourhood centre which includes retail, community centre, nursery, pub and care facilities. All of which follows the delivery of a new primary school which opened in September 2020.

The need for initiatives like this has become all the more apparent recently, with research revealing that since 2000, the UK swift population has fallen more than 50% and hedgehog numbers have fallen by around half, as have the number of bats. This illustrates why our Urban Wildlife Strategy is an important piece of work to help Cala Homes Thames deliver houses that will aid in restoring these numbers and making our homes more hospitable for Britain's wildlife.

For example, 'swift bricks' are hollow, rectangular boxes made of a breathable material (called woodcrete or stonecrete). Also known as 'universal bird nesting bricks,' they can be integrated into walls

but don't compromise insulation. The only part visible from the exterior of the house is the small entry hole that allows small birds, such as swifts and other species, to nest there. Additionally, we will install hedgehog-friendly fencing in gardens that adjoin other gardens or open green spaces to allow hedgehogs to move more freely.

We're already developing new ways that will enable us to consistently achieve 10% biodiversity net gain on each new site. By implementing the measures outlined above into our planning applications, our customers are assured we're doing everything we can to protect the environments they live in. We're supporting our customers to do their bit too, by providing information on how they can help protect the wildlife living in their communities.

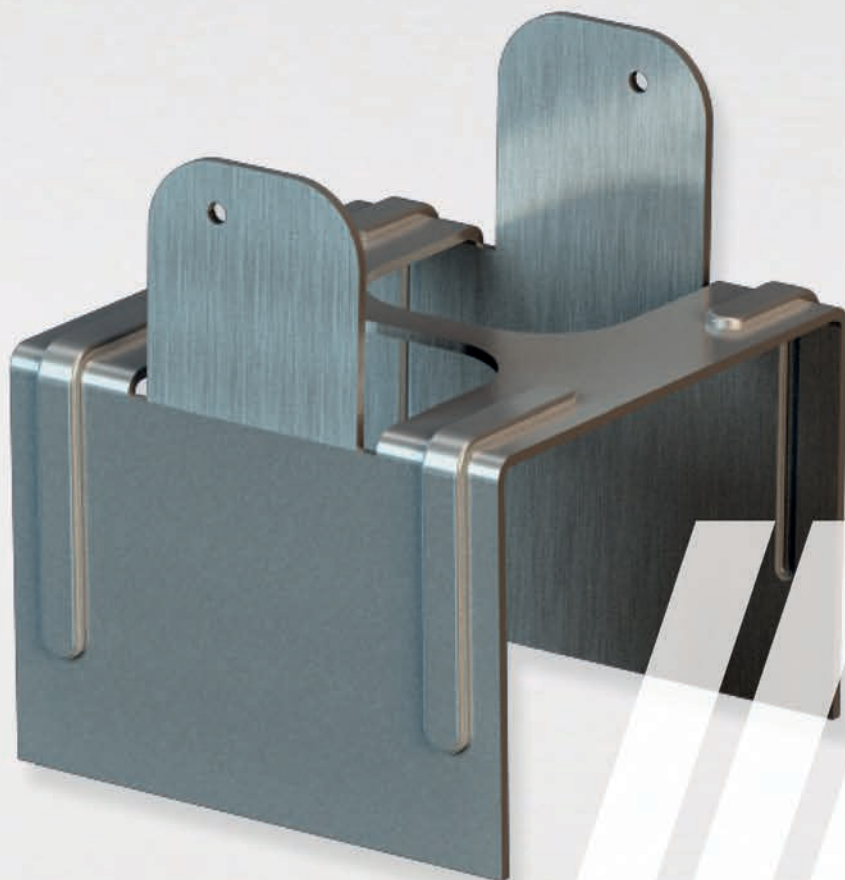
We are at an important point in our sustainability journey at Cala, as we continue to take action to achieve our environmental goals. We aim to formulate a UK-wide strategy and action plan to enhance biodiversity across all Cala sites by the end of this year. Therefore, the Urban Wildlife Strategy does not represent the extent of our aspirations from a biodiversity and habitat creation perspective, but it is a crucial step forward on our journey as a regional business, establishing a baseline of urban wildlife opportunities to be included in each of our housing plots moving forward. Other Cala regions are looking at how they can adapt the strategy for implementation across developments throughout the Cala business in Scotland, the Midlands, and the Home Counties.

We're passionate about seizing every opportunity to enhance biodiversity in all new developments, and this strategy is another step forward to achieving our goals. Cala Homes Thames is set to deliver 500 homes per year across Dorset, Hampshire, Wiltshire, west Surrey and Berkshire – we have the capability to deliver tangible impact. We're grateful to the wildlife groups we have worked with to develop and deliver this strategy and are proud to support wildlife living within our communities.

John Richards is land director at Cala Homes (Thames)

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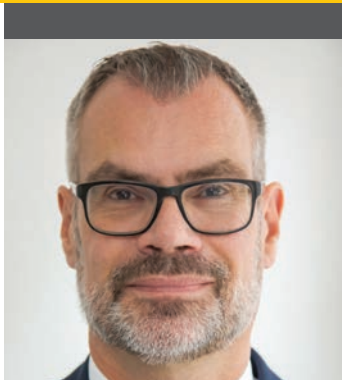
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Brian Berry, chief executive of the Federation of Master Builders

LAST YEAR, BUILDERS' MAIN WORRY WAS GETTING THEIR MATERIALS, NOW IT IS WHETHER THEY CAN AFFORD MATERIALS

## THE INDUSTRY ADVOCATE

# THERE MAY BE TURBULENCE AHEAD

Brain Berry confronts some of the myriad challenges that housebuilders are facing at present, including rising prices, inflation, shortages and new regulations.

**N**ot for the first time, small, local housebuilders are facing some tough months ahead. While the industry closed out 2021 on a relative high with workloads doing well, it has since been hit by soaring inflation, a rise in energy costs, and a war in Ukraine which is sending fuel and some materials costs sky high.

Last year, builders' main worry was about getting the materials, now it is whether they can afford those materials. With costs rising fast, the growing concern is that the future viability of sites will become a very real issue over the next year.

### SIGNIFICANT CHANGES AHEAD FOR BUILDING REGULATIONS

This June will see significant changes to Building Regulations. These are aimed at improving the energy efficiency of buildings to help the country move towards its targets for net zero carbon by 2050. Essentially, what this means is that the Government wants newly built property to have less carbon emissions – with inefficient buildings being a major contributor, this is an important step. Even more changes will be coming in a few years to make buildings more energy efficient, but these measures are a stopgap until then.

The idea of these interim measures is to make the changes that will be introduced around the middle of this decade less severe for builders, and also to go some way to cut carbon emissions in the meantime. While the FMB welcomes the interim changes, and the fact that large scale changes weren't introduced all at once, the new measures do nevertheless present a real challenge for SME housebuilders. Costs will inevitably go up and some in the industry have said that these changes are the most significant they've ever seen, despite being a stopgap to bigger measures ahead.

### WHAT'S GOING ON WITH RED DIESEL?

The construction industry has normally used red diesel in the machines it runs 'off-road,' and many firms have their own tanks and

pumps to refuel vehicles in yards before they are transported to site. From April, no machines engaged on a construction project will be able to use red diesel. This means builders will be switching to fuel products without any rebates, which will hit them hard in their pockets. With rising costs putting many SME construction firms under increasing pressure, the majority will inevitably turn to regular diesel, which will not deliver this policy's objective to cut carbon.

The industry has been calling on the Government to delay this policy to help our beleaguered sector, hit by price rises elsewhere. To maximise the green potential of this policy change, a positive way forward would be to see the Government end the rebate of biofuels, as biodiesel emits up to 90% less carbon than regular diesel but on average costs 10-15% more. This change would help as electric and hydrogen-powered equipment alternatives are not yet readily available.

### WAR IN UKRAINE

The distressing events in Ukraine are now sadly familiar to all of us, creating the biggest humanitarian crisis in Europe since 1945. There is also the impact on both the construction industry and consumers within







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the UK. The war is pushing prices up, exacerbating an already tough market. The most well publicised cost increase is oil, but other materials such as copper, bitumen and neon which are used in the manufacturing process of many building materials are also set to be disrupted.

The squeeze on the availability of these raw materials will push up costs on many building materials from wiring through to insulation. We know builders won't be able to absorb these costs, as even before the war began 74% of FMB members had to increase prices because of pressures on their bottom line. This creates an unenviable situation for builders, as they see their costs soar and are left having to explain this to a customer base also at the sharp end of rising prices.

#### A TURBULENT TIME AHEAD

I noted in my last article that this is a year of great potential for SME housebuilders, and I remain hopeful that the levelling up agenda will work in our sector's favour. But the industry is being hit hard from all sides and will need significant support to get it through the year unscathed. I'm also yet to see the Government implement its levelling up plans, which for the moment are not much more than a comprehensive research report – the contents of which highlighted many issues but weren't so



clear on how to solve them.

As always, SME housebuilders stand ready to help boost local economies and train up the next generation of skilled tradespeople, but we must recognise it is an embattled sector that has been on

the decline for some time. A recovery for small local housebuilders, helping the Government to hit its targets of greater housing diversification and playing a critical role in levelling up, will be a struggle without significant support.

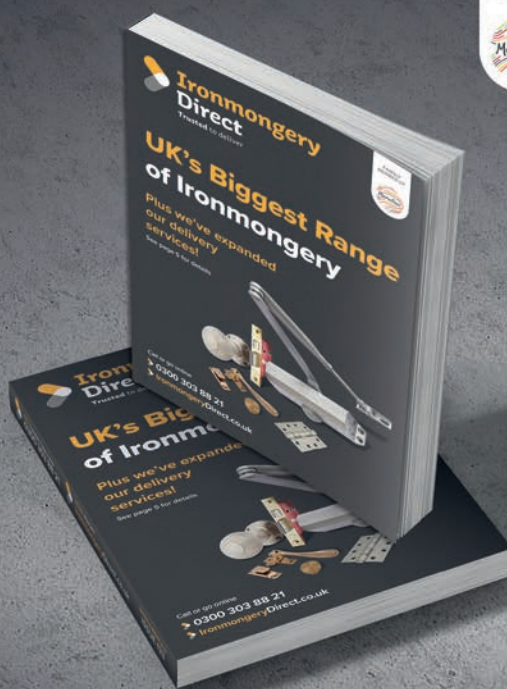
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Neal Allcock

## COMMENT

# A SCHOOLING IN PLANNING STRATEGY

Neal Allcock, partner at property consultant Carter Jonas Birmingham, discusses how strategic planning could help address the current shortfall in student accommodation being built across the UK.

**T**he shortage of student accommodation is well known. Recently we have seen some students forced to stay in hotels, and would-be students incentivised to defer for a year because of a lack of accommodation. In September 2021, Durham, Exeter, Bristol and Leeds universities, among others, offered as much as £10,000 and a year's free accommodation to students who agreed to postpone by a year.

Inconsistencies in the planning system are part of the reason for this under-supply. More specifically, an absence of forward planning to assess the emerging need for purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) results in too few units being developed, and thus a reduction in overall supply.

This is further compounded by the disparity of approaches taken by local authorities. For example, Birmingham City Council, which has five higher education institutions, produces an annual supply and demand report in relation to student accommodation. This is based on current and future demand. The last paper, produced in December 2020, stated that potential future demand for student bedspaces could increase by between 5,439 and 6,439 over the next five years. Additionally, there is a shortfall across the city of 12,000-13,000 beds when shared houses (HMOs) are excluded, illustrating the role that HMOs continue to play in the student accommodation market.

Conversely, in Nottingham, home to nearly 71,000 students in 2019/20, the council recognises the scale of student numbers within its 2020 adopted Local Plan Part 2 (policy HO5), but it does not provide annual monitoring or projections of future demand. In Leicester, again a two-university city, the council's current draft policy (HO08) is based on 'at the time' data and a general locational policy.

## CLASSIC LOCAL PLAN

The approach taken in Nottingham and Leicester is a classic 'Local Plan' position: a policy is produced during the Local Plan process but is not updated until the next Local Plan is adopted. In effect this means a five-year gap

before policies are replaced – by which time the requirements of HEIs are out of date. In a scenario in which student figures are rising year-on-year, this can cause considerable problems for HEIs – as was seen recently when universities resorted to effectively paying students to take a year out.

Another factor in this complex scenario is that the required number of units for PBSA tends to be more fluid than for traditional housebuilding because it prioritises sustainable sites close to educational institutions which are often not allocated for redevelopment in the Local Plan process. The lack of a clear requirement then often leads to a backlash from local communities, as local residents cannot understand the need for housing in such numbers. The negative perception of 'studentification' is often coupled with fears of anti-social behaviour, and 'empty periods' out of term time.

PBSA operators have been very assiduous in mitigating the 'town versus gown' antipathy that can exist in student cities – for example, in providing 24-hour management of their facilities and engaging with communities.

But strategic planning is at the heart of this issue. The situation could be improved considerably if local authorities set clear minimum numbers for PBSA as part of their annual monitoring report. Approached in a similar way to a 'General Housing Supply Position' document, this could assist significantly in providing a breakdown of PBSA delivery alongside future demand. Analysis on previously delivered PBSA numbers, projected/annual requirements and details of the wider student population residing in HMOs and at home, could then allow elected members to make decisions based on a clear and up to date information, generated by the council, rather than relying on emotive arguments made on a case-by-case basis.

If put in place across multiple local authorities, this approach would introduce more consistency, and as such, would be a significant improvement.

A DECEMBER 2020 PAPER FOUND THAT DEMAND FOR STUDENT BEDSPACES COULD INCREASE BY BETWEEN 5,439 AND 6,439 OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS



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## THE SOCIAL NETWORK

# AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Patrick Mooney explores how contrasting news on planning approvals, new homes and public finances are providing a confused picture of the future housing market.

**I**n many respects the housing market was remarkably unaffected by the Covid pandemic, with strong demand fuelling higher prices, as buyers competed to take advantage of stamp duty savings, historically low interest rates and a plentiful supply of mortgages. But will the cash-rich volume housebuilders be able and willing to plug the growing gaps within public finances that are threatening to undermine future growth in the market?

Already, inflation and interest rates are edging upwards amid talk of a cost of living crisis (fuel and energy price rises leading the way), and the situation in eastern Europe is bound to create uncertainty and possibly lead to a price correction, or at least a cooling in market conditions.

Last year we saw planning approvals for new homes bounce back to one of their highest totals in the past 15 years, and property companies have been reporting bumper profits on the back of record house price levels.

Britain's biggest housebuilder, Persimmon, recently announced its profits for 2021 jumped by nearly a quarter to £970m due to "positive pricing conditions" in every region in which it operated. Vistry announced it had more than tripled its annual profits to £320m, while back in March the Halifax reported that prices were rising at their fastest rate since 2007 with the average house price hitting a record high of £278,123.

### PLANNING PERMISSIONS BOUNCE BACK

Sector analysis by real estate debt advisory specialists, Sirius Property Finance, has shown that while the level of new homes being granted planning permission dipped during the first year of the pandemic, this negative trend reversed in 2021 with the third highest annual total of approvals seen since 2007.

Over the last year a total of 319,000 new residential homes were granted planning permission, an eight per cent annual increase on the 295,000 figure in the previous year and the third highest annual total since 2007.

London looks set to see the biggest boost to new home stock levels (if the approvals are built), with planning permission granted for 60,200 new residential units over the last year, accounting for 19 per cent of the total. The

South East saw the second highest level with permission for 46,500 new homes, the North West saw permission granted for over 40,000 new homes, but in the North East, just 13,800 planning applications were granted.

However, this rosy picture on approvals could be jeopardised by the severe hits that public finances have taken, with local government suffering the most severe Covid related cuts to their income. This followed a year of austerity cuts, and could in fact damage the planned infrastructure improvements upon which many large housing developments are reliant.

In the capital, Transport for London's finances have taken a battering as a result of passenger numbers falling through the floor since March 2020. This is threatening planned investments which are vital for creating new homes and jobs, across London and the wider South East. Examples of these are set out below.

The planned Bakerloo Line extension, with its 25,000 new homes and 15,000 jobs, has already been put on hold due to lack of Government funds, as has the development of up to 200,000 new homes across London and the South East that Crossrail 2 was expected to spawn.

In addition, work on the Docklands Light Railway extension to Thamesmead has been delayed, leading to uncertainty for 20,000 new homes and the creation of 8,000 jobs. A further 6,000 homes planned for Colindale station in Barnet are also believed to be in doubt.

Similar delays and hold ups are being discussed across other urban conurbations throughout the country, with local authorities unable to fill the huge funding gaps that have appeared in housing budgets. It is unlikely Homes England can replace all of the missing funds, which is why the volume developers are likely to be asked to cough up and forego some of their profits.

### LEVELLING UP

A further complication for developers may come in the shape of a "health test" for the new programme of Levelling Up schemes. This is a new policy area for the Government but could see significant changes in how billions





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of public funds are allocated, accessed and spent on services like education, health and housing.

Property developers who want planning permission for major house building projects could face a new test being imposed by local councils to assess whether their plans will promote healthier living in local areas and tackle inequalities. Where developments can be shown to deliver “health gains” such as better air quality and healthier lifestyles, they could be granted accelerated planning permission.

Writing for the Social Market Foundation, Dr Caglar Koksall of Manchester University says good developments can improve residents’ wellbeing and encourage healthier lifestyles, while badly designed buildings can encourage overcrowding and reliance on cars for transport instead of walking or cycling. Overcrowding has already been linked to the spread of diseases including Covid-19, while places with higher rates of car use often have poor air quality and higher rates of obesity.

Local councils with planning powers should set higher health-related standards before giving permission for big developments, Dr Koksall says. But those developments that actively incorporate design features that support healthier lives should be rewarded with



fast-track permission. This can save the developers money.

Dr Koksall said: “When the demand for housing remains exceptionally high, developers have very little incentive to promote health with their schemes. The primary concern of most house builders is to deliver profits for their investors. However, local authorities can motivate and inspire developers to work together and create healthier places.” Things might be about to change!

#### HIGHER PRICES FOR HEALTHIER HOMES?

The proposed “health gain” could vary by area and include any acute local health issues such as respiratory diseases or obesity. Dr Koksall added that local authorities could set “robust design standards,” supported by the National Planning Policy Framework, to positively influence design quality. These could include a well-connected network of attractive, safe, convenient transport

corridors with separated pedestrian and cycle routes, high-quality open and recreational green spaces, and decent homes built to the highest standards.

Dr Koksall added: “Delivering healthy homes and high-quality neighbourhoods requires a strong steer from local leaders, who are responsible for establishing a unifying vision for their area and helping planning departments and public health teams inside local authorities work together to implement the shared vision.”

James Kirkup, director of the SME, said that Dr Koksall’s research and ideas could be used to deliver on a key Levelling Up promise of longer, healthier lives. “Giving Britons longer, healthier lives will require making the places we live healthier. The relationship between building, local environment and health is hugely important, and understanding it better is vital to delivering better, healthier lives.”

Ministers led by Michael Gove have promised that average Healthy Life Expectancy will rise by five years by 2035, with an interim target to narrow the gap between local areas where it is highest and lowest by 2030. The ‘64,000 dollar question’ is how much housebuilders will contribute to this, and will buyers pay extra to deliver the funds for developing homes and neighbourhoods that lead to longer and healthier lives?



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## Aqualisa appoints Mat Norris



British bathroom specialist **Aqualisa** has announced the appointment of Mat Norris as Chief Executive Officer. With an extensive career in the manufacturing and engineering sectors, Mat brings a wealth of experience from leadership roles at high-profile organisations including Ford Motor Company, Philips

and most recently, ventilation firm Titon Holdings plc, where he served as UK CEO. Mat will work closely with Aqualisa chairman Kevin Sargeant, and will lead a senior management team of eight specialist executives who have been recruited over the last three years as part of the company’s transformation. Mat has ambitious plans for the growth of the organisation, and will spearhead Aqualisa’s product expansion and innovation strategy.

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## NEW DEVELOPMENTS

# Avant Homes begin work on 65-home development

**T**he construction of a 65-home development on a 10-acre site in Ingleby Barwick, Stockton-on-Tees, has been started by housebuilder Avant Homes.

The first phase of the new development, located on Round Hill Avenue, three miles from Thornaby town centre, received planning approval from Stockton Council in March 2021 before Avant Homes acquired the site in October 2021.

The first collection of homes will feature 23 new-build properties across a mixture of three, four and five-bedroom family homes. Once complete, the development, which is set to be named Copper Gardens, will comprise 65 homes across a selection of nine Avant Homes' signature house types.

It is estimated that the first homes will be released for sale in June and be ready for occupation in late summer. The approximate build length of the development is expected to take around two years, and is expected to create up to 200 jobs.

In addition to the properties, Avant Homes is providing a community contribution of £300,000 towards a local heritage park, open green space and off-site affordable housing provision.

Situated just three miles from Thornaby town centre, the location provides commuter links to Middlesbrough and Darlington, and is also well situated for local education and amenities.

Avant Homes North East managing director, Don Anderson, commented: "We're very pleased to have works underway on the first phase of this new development in Ingleby Barwick.

"The development will make a great addition to the area contributing further to the provision of much-needed family homes in Stockton-on-Tees and creating job opportunities for local people."

Based in Sunderland, Avant Homes North East is part of the Avant Homes group. Copper Gardens is the second site currently under construction in Stockton-On-Tees by the regional builder, and the wider group currently has 55 developments across its five operating regions.



## Work begins at Westwood Park

**K**eepmoat Homes has officially started work on site at Westwood Park, Glenrothes, which kicks off the eight-year building programme to deliver 420 residential homes to the area.

The range of two, three and four-bedroom houses have been designed to cater for a range of needs and lifestyles, along with access links for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles within the development and to the wider area.

The site will feature usable amenity space and children's play areas, intended to deliver a safe, pleasant and user-friendly public realm, encouraging active lifestyles and a community feel.

Derek Wilson, regional managing director of Keepmoat Homes said: "We have designed the development to respond to the local surroundings, while also holding a strong character and sense of place."

He continues: "We are thrilled to have started work on the site at Westwood Park and we are looking forward to bringing a thriving new community to the area."



**"WE ARE THRILLED TO HAVE STARTED WORK ON THE SITE AT WESTWOOD PARK AND WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO BRINGING A THRIVING NEW COMMUNITY TO THE AREA."**





NEW HOUSE - WINDLESHAM



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## CASE STUDY



# Micro solutions to macro problems

A pioneering modular build to rent scheme, which offers young homeless people the chance to have a place they can afford in central London, has broken ground. Jack Wooler reports on the project.

**D**eveloped by charity Centrepont, Reuben House is a scheme that is intended to provide a reduced rental model for 'micro-homes' that will help combat homelessness in London. The new, 33-home modular development is being specifically created to house people experiencing homelessness in Peckham, south London.

Centrepont is the UK's leading youth homelessness charity, and the project seeks to provide 300 young people a home and an entry level or apprenticeship role that could lead them to full time employment, all as part of its wider Independent Living Programme.

In order to help meet all needs, the homes are designed to not just be speedily constructed, low-cost and functional, but also comfortable, stylish, efficient and cost-effective. Arguably most importantly, they are also designated for locals, and situated close to the centre of Peckham to avoid tenants having to relocate – or being priced out of the area.

The scheme is the latest part of the charity's ambitious programme of ending





youth homelessness by 2037. The homes' rental will be approximately one-third of tenants' salary according to the charity; typically meaning a 20-year old tenant earning minimum wage (£6.56 per hour/£1,050 per month) would pay around £350 rent for a self-contained apartment. This would "tackle the shortage of quality affordable accommodation head-on, and free up much-needed hostel beds," commented Centrepont.

#### **SMALL, BUT COMFORTABLE**

Reuben House is named after the Reuben Foundation, who have supported the project with over £1m to help fund the development.

Inside, each 21 m<sup>2</sup> home has a small yet functional kitchen, dining area and a bathroom, as well as space to sleep and relax, making the homes comfortable for young people to live in independently.

It is hoped that, with these basic needs met, the young residents can have a chance to plan their future, such as the possibility of saving for a car, or a mortgage – all the things that become next to impossible without stable accommodation.

Katelin, a 19-year old resident in one of the programme's other schemes in East London, said that she believes "it's incredibly important for there to be affordable

housing for young people, especially people who have not had the easiest upbringing or the easiest background."

Katelin added: "Everyone has high expectations for people my age but we can't be expected to reach those expectations without a solid foundation."

#### **MODULARITY**

The most recent iteration of these designs has now been brought to site, with Hull-based modular specialist M-AR completing the build of the 33 homes offsite.

With work on site now well underway, M-AR will continue linking the homes together and landscaping, ahead of the projected May launch.

Working on a turnkey basis, M-AR have taken care of every aspect of the build programme to make the whole process as smooth as possible for Centrepont. According to M-AR, the modular nature of the project will mean that the homes will be rolled out 40% quicker than if they were using traditional methods, achieved through the overlap of units being assembled and fitted in a factory in Hull while the site in Peckham is prepared.

The units are also said to be very sustainable by its builders, as they are based on templates and models, which means that any unused materials can be







recycled and reused on other modular housing units to minimise waste and stop excess parts ending up in landfill.

Delivered to site fully fitted with the kitchen and bathroom, and all electrics and plumbing installed, as well as being fully decorated throughout, the reduced construction times can significantly reduce costs.

Commenting on their role on the project, Ryan Geldard, operations director at M-AR, said it was “a privilege” to be able to do their bit to help Centrepont in its mission to end youth homelessness by delivering the new safe and secure independent living units. He added that he “can’t wait” to see how the units look once they’re on site, and ready to have the finishing touches needed to make them homes.

#### THE PROGRAMME

Explaining the concerning drivers behind building this important project, Centrepont explained that 15,000 young

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people are facing homelessness in London at present, with 122,000 16-24 year olds across the UK either homeless or at risk of being so. The pandemic has only increased the risks.

The wider project was started in November 2019, when (Centrepont patron) The Duke of Cambridge officially opened the organisation's first Independent Living Programme offering, Petterson Haberdashers Apprenticeship House. The residential community housed seven young people who are enrolled in apprenticeship programmes in Lewisham.

Since then, the programme has rapidly expanded, and Centrepont is currently in talks with councils in Barnet, Hounslow, Waltham Forest and Manchester.

Despite this progress, however, the charity is warning that one in five young people using its services are ready to move on but they are still unable to do so due to a shortage of affordable homes and reductions in local authority benefits.

To help counteract this, Centrepont's intention is to work with ethical employers to help ensure young people are earning above minimum wage. This would typically mean that someone in London earning £18,000 per year would pay around £500 per month to live independently.

#### LOOKING FORWARDS

According to the charity, this is only the beginning – Centrepont has the ambition of creating 300 homes across London and Manchester within the coming year alone.

As part of growing its programme, Centrepont says it is interested in connecting with land and development opportunities and industry partners to further expand its Independent Living Programme.

Sally Orlopp, director of the programme, said: "I've been working with disadvantaged people for over 25 years, and this is the most exciting and innovative programme I've seen, with tangible results in transforming young people's lives."

She added thanks to the Reuben Foundation for funding the project: "Without this generous sum," she said, "the development would not have been possible."

The Reuben Foundation commented: "To see Reuben House come to life is truly amazing; with each development Centrepont comes closer to reaching their ambition to end youth homelessness for the next generation, and we are so proud to be a part of this journey".

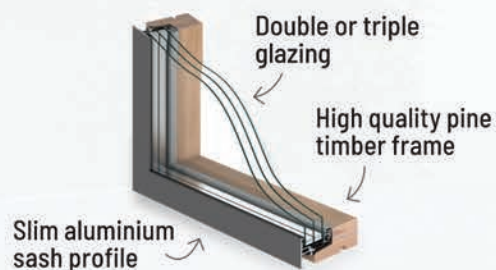
**THE HOMES ARE ALSO DESIGNATED FOR LOCALS, AND SITUATED CLOSE TO THE CENTRE OF PECKHAM TO AVOID UNNECESSARY RELOCATION**



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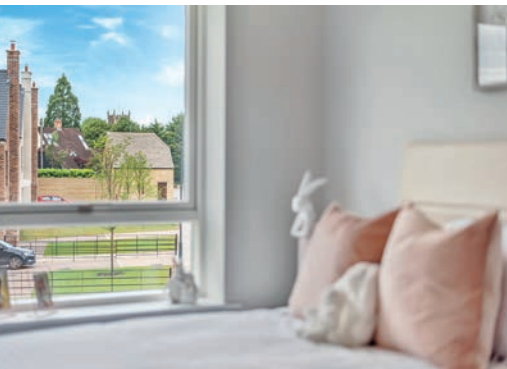
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## CASE STUDY

# Raising the standard



The developers behind an award-winning development in Wiltshire talk to Jack Wooler about how they have included higher-end features as standard, and blended with the historic context.

**S**omerbrook is a collection of 28 private and 10 affordable homes in Great Somerford, a picturesque village in Wiltshire. Developed by the Stonewood Group – which has Building, Design and Partnerships arms – the project comprises two to five-bedroom

homes with a mix of terraced, link-detached, or detached.

The design employs a traditional style to blend with the adjacent village and the neighbouring Brook Farm – despite the latter, which was established in the 1500s, causing a number of challenges throughout the project.

Intended to set a high standard across all the house types on the development, Stonewood has kept the themes consistent, regardless of house size. That means all homes have generous circulation spaces, higher than average ceiling heights, and a focus on natural light throughout, as well as high spec finishes.

“It is important to us that the core product is at a standard that’s higher than other housebuilders,” says Gavin Calthrop, director of Stonewood.



“That is why,” he says, “we have very few sales extras available, as we include these in the home as standard, for example, underfloor heating and oak floor finishing.”

It is in part because of this high attention to detail that the development won the Federation of Master Builders (FMB) South West House Builder Award, with the trade association hailing the project as Somerbrook “setting the bar high for future projects,” and underlining the builder’s credentials as “a top-tier house builder.”

### THE RIGHT LOCATION

“Working as part of Stonewood Group, we were first introduced to the prospect of working in new-build development through a former client of our contracting arm, Richard Cherry, ex Countryside Properties,” says Calthrop.

According to the director, the company is always looking to diversify, and so, through him “opening their eyes to the prospect,” the company realised there was a potential to create a “niche, high-quality and community-led scheme” that was in keeping with its core brand values.

“We wanted to find the right location that would enable us to create a quality product that stays true to the Stonewood brand, so we focused on rural locations that would be resilient to market fluctuations,” he continues.

As such, when the opportunity arose to build Stonewood’s first development in Great Somerford, Calthrop tells me it felt like the “natural choice.”

“Working with Stonewood Design and funders the Housing Growth Partnership we feel that we have developed a finished product we can all be truly proud of,” he adds.

### SITE ACQUISITION & PLANNING

When it came to acquiring the land, Gavin says it was fortunate that Stonewood had an existing relationship with the landowners, which ensured a “smooth conditional purchase,” facilitated by Savills.

There was existing planning consent for the land, but this was somewhat obsolete, so the team spent time improving it, to ensure the development was more in keeping with the vernacular of the village.

According to Calthrop, there were some access challenges to overcome with the site access extending through the old farm, but other than that, he reports that it was a “straightforward” site, with little remediation required.

In terms of planning, he tells me the biggest challenge was landscaping and boundary treatments, as the team had to balance requirements around security and policy, while trying to retain the unique character of the rural setting.







### ACCESS

With access to the site being a potential issue – especially being through a part of the site which required refurbishment of listed buildings – early engagement and research was needed to ensure a smooth process here.

“Our good relationship with the owners of the farm meant that we were able to work with them to facilitate the phasing plan of the building and accommodate site storage,” explains Calthrop.

He continues: “Due to our position in the Stonewood Group, who specialise in the restoration and refurbishment of listed properties, we were able to seek advice and expertise from our colleagues and navigate this accordingly.”

### DESIGN

From a design point of view, the farm provided the bulk of the context for the design of the scheme, and this reportedly became a key selling point for potential buyers.

“We wanted to focus on simple but elegant architectural form whilst adding character to the homes with premium quality materials and architectural points of interest, for example datum lines, generous window openings, natural slate roof finishes, natural stone,” explains Calthrop.

The team worked closely with ‘partner architects’ Stonewood Design to generate the house types and – “most importantly,” he says – to understand how the scheme would work as a great place to live. This meant plenty of green space, generous gardens and public open space that would add great connections to the existing village.

“In all our schemes we look to the location to give the design cues for our houses and materials. Somerbrook is a mixture of

render, red brick and stone which mirrors the village’s material mix,” says Gavin.

### CONSTRUCTION

As Somerbrook was the builder’s first development in the area, the team went with a traditional construction method, with a range of brick, stone and roughcast render, focusing on high-quality craftsmanship.

As such, Calthrop tells me that Stonewood paid “real attention” to detail on all finishes, ensuring that they were done to the highest standard.

“We have the ambition to be the most sustainable SME developers in the industry,” he asserts, “so we are increasingly looking at how we can achieve these same results but with more modern and sustainable methods, and our upcoming development near Cirencester is our first scheme to be built using timber frames,” he says.

### SUSTAINABILITY

This attention to detail continued through the development’s approach to ecology and sustainability, though Gavin says that – given the nature of working within the existing planning consent – the team were “somewhat constrained” in terms of adding value on sustainability focused aspects of the scheme.

However, he says that this development has already given them a platform to develop a sustainability led housing scheme at their ‘Orchard Field’ development near Cirencester, which is reportedly achieving exceptional standards in energy efficiency.

In future, Gavin adds that Stonewood is committed to exceeding the future home standard across all its schemes from 2022 onwards.

**IT IS IN PART BECAUSE OF THIS HIGH ATTENTION TO DETAIL THAT THE DEVELOPMENT WON THE FEDERATION OF MASTER BUILDERS (FMB) SOUTH WEST HOUSE BUILDER AWARD**





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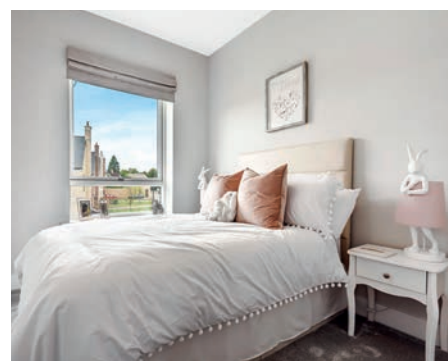
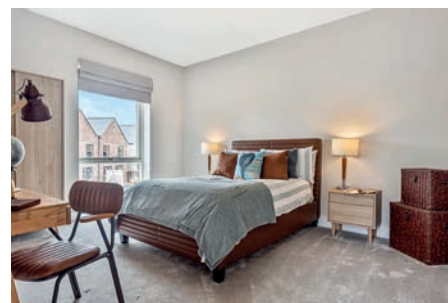
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### QUALITY ACROSS THE BOARD

An example of how the developments wanted to provide a high quality experience for buyers all round, beyond the homes themselves, Stonewood has presented all its buyers with vouchers to the village pub, which also helps to support a local business.

“We then arranged for an all-weather surface to be installed at the Walter Powell Primary School so that their outdoor play equipment could be used all year round,” he continues, “and we also worked with the school on a time capsule project, encouraging pupils to write messages and draw pictures that were placed in a capsule buried in the centre of the development, allowing the students to leave a lasting mark on the community that will be discovered many years later.”

Calthrop tells me that the builder wanted to drive community engagement throughout the development process, while celebrating and promoting existing businesses in the area, advertising them across their social media channels, and in the development’s show home.

“We really feel like we have left a positive mark on the community that will last for generations to come,” he adds.

### SUCCESS

According to Gavin Calthrop, much of the development’s successes are down to both this strong community engagement, and the collaboration between Stonewood’s subsidiaries.

Over its 50 years of experience, the firm believes close collaboration between its design and building branches enables this family firm to both move quickly, and more effectively, with in-house expertise on every stage of the development process.

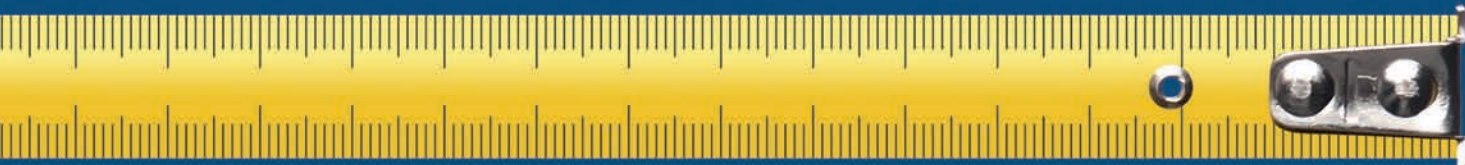
It also puts focus on canvassing the views of the community, and as such has endeavoured to engage them throughout the process on this scheme. “Working closely with the communities in which we build is really important to us, as we recognised that by building within a community, we are becoming part of it,” says the director.

According to Gavin, this is why the team made “great efforts” to support local schools and businesses wherever they can, aiming to work in partnership with the locality. “That’s what construction should be about – leaving behind something solid, and enduring.”



**“WE HAVE VERY FEW SALES EXTRAS AVAILABLE, AS WE INCLUDED THESE AS STANDARD, FOR EXAMPLE, UNDERFLOOR HEATING AND OAK FLOOR FINISHING” GAVIN CALTHROP, DIRECTOR, STONEWOOD HOMES**





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## Sahtas' growing presence in the UK



Sahtas has had a presence in the British construction market for over 20 years, supplying handmade clay plain tiles and hand-thrown clay bricks through its network of stockists and distributors. Indeed 2021 was a landmark year when the company reached a total of 100 million roof tiles delivered to new and refurbished properties across the country.

The last two years has been a huge investment period for the company culminating in the construction and commissioning of a new 22,000m<sup>2</sup> state of the art factory on a

3.5ha site at its base in the Izmir Region of Turkey on the Aegean coast. As well as the UK, the company now has a global presence and supplies customers in the USA, Australia, Ukraine, The Middle East and throughout Europe.

During recent years the product offering has expanded and become more diverse as products which were previously sold into local Mediterranean, Aegean and Middle Eastern markets are now readily available to the company's global customer base. These include

paving bricks, terracotta floor tiles, cover cladding tiles and glazed ceramic tiles.

Steven Blewitt, Sahtas UK Ltd Director commented: "The company's growing presence in the UK is now extended to working directly with house builders, architects and developers to deliver a consultancy solution for the selection of roof tiles, bricks and architectural faience at all phases of a development, from choice of colour blends to scheduling deliveries by working with main and sub-contractors. We also offer free estimating and technical support services."

Recently Sahtas has worked closely with several high quality developers to ensure that choices of materials are appropriate to local planning requirements and meet the local architectural vernacular.

Over 500,000 Brookhurst handmade clay plain tiles were chosen by Argent Developers Ltd for their beautiful development in Benfleet, Essex.

Dave Lawrenson, Managing Director, Argent Developers Ltd: "We decided to specify Sahtas Brookhurst tiles for our prestigious development of 42 houses at Solbywood Farm as we wanted to create a scheme of high quality detached family homes with the right combination of handmade aesthetics and modern design. Sahtas were with us right from the start and we worked together to match the roof tiles to the bricks and render, finally settling on the Classic and Multi blends. Sahtas then worked closely with our appointed roofing contractor to ensure that deliveries were made in accordance with our build schedule. They





were on hand at all times to ensure that the site progressed according to schedule.

At the beginning of 2021, Rydon Homes Ltd commenced work on a new development of 16 family homes in the village of Balcombe, West Sussex. It was paramount that the designs and external finishes blended in seamlessly with the local area and similar planning constraints were enforced when Rydon commenced work on another new development of 21 plots at Hope Orchard, Hadlow, Kent.

Both sites were developed in sensitive areas and great importance was placed on the choice of location for both developments of family homes in a range of layouts to suit all buyers, with the emphasis on building to a high standard and choosing the best materials and finishes available. After much deliberation and discussions with local planners the Sahtas Southdown clay plain tile was chosen for both sites with additional areas of contrasting vertical tile hanging giving a close match to the local architectural styles.

Another two local developers that are working in close co-operation with Sahtas are Evecross Ltd, based at Clavering, Saffron Walden and Akehurst Construction who are based near Maidstone.

Both are currently developing superb sites in Arkesden, Essex and Heathfield in East Sussex respectively. Evecross and Akehurst concentrate on building extremely high quality homes for the discerning buyer and have a clear emphasis on selecting the best materials to meet local planning demands as well as providing their properties with fabulous kerb appeal.

Tristan Frampton, Director of Evecross told Housebuilder Magazine that they chose to work with Sahtas to deliver the best available package of handcrafted clay roof tiles and genuine hand-thrown clay bricks for their development of three very large houses.

"Sahtas were involved with our project right from the start and helped us to select a brick blend suitable for the local area. They also worked closely with our roofing contractor to create a blend of roof tiles, bespoke to our exclusive development. Unlike other suppliers they were flexible enough to deliver materials in full shipping containers directly from the docks taking cost out of the supply chain"

Guy Cook, Director of Akehurst, said "Sahtas were involved at the inception of our project and spent time with us over the selection of both roof tiles and bricks for our development. They provided accurate estimates of external finishes so that we had clear costings for the project before work commenced. They have continued to work closely with us and provide an excellent delivery service".

Sahtas has achieved zero waste certification for both its factories and clay pits and recycles all waste materials and fired clay waste. The factories use washed clay in all production facilities, a process that mixes the raw clay with water before passing the resultant slurry through a fine mesh to remove all deleterious material. The clean slurry is then forced through a filter press, removing the majority of the water leaving a clean, fine grained clay devoid of contaminants and soluble salts which can cause efflorescence.

In addition, Sahtas is now a full member of Sedex, an organisation which warrants



that members comply in all respects with internationally recognised standards particularly those that govern human resources

and employment law.

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## RESEARCH STUDY

# FUTURE-PROOFING AGAINST FLOODS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In its first national assessment of flood risk for England, in 2009, the Environment Agency revealed that 5.2 million homes, or one in six properties, were at risk of flooding.

Our warming climate is only set to intensify this problem, with higher temperatures increasing evaporation, increased evaporation bringing more cloud formation, and increased cloud formation bringing more rainfall, all of which is compounded by warmer, drier ground absorbing this water far less efficiently.

Unfortunately, many in construction have failed to give enough focus to such issues, and the housebuilding industry in particular has been hampered thanks to the challenges of meeting spiralling housing demand. As such, the temptations to build on areas already deemed at risk of flooding are ever-increasing.

Even when building outside flood plains, covering greenfield land – originally a soft, water-permeable landscape – with the hard, impermeable surfaces that tend to be installed around developments, results in higher peak flows of water runoff as rainwater fails to penetrate the ground, bringing serious risks to our already vulnerable, often antiquated sewerage systems.

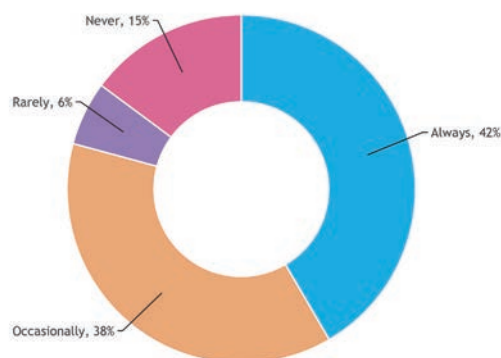
Sir Michael Pitt's Review into the floods of summer 2007 revealed that over two thirds of the 57,000 homes affected were flooded not by swollen rivers, but by surface water runoff or surcharge from overloaded drainage systems.

Large-scale solutions to flooding from rivers and seas, such as flood walls and barriers, are well known, but other, smaller-scale solutions have arguably failed to be given prominence. But housebuilders and developers can in fact help matters tremendously when it comes to excess rainfall, by employing a range of relatively simple measures available to deal with the water runoff that comes through their sites.

Sustainable Drainage Systems, or 'SuDS' for short, is the collective name for a range of solutions designed to manage the drainage of surface water, and provide an alternative to, or work alongside, traditional drainage systems.

While SuDS can require a change of approach for some builders and developers – with change to normal processes being an alarming proposition to many – the techniques have been around for a long time now, and have been proven time and again to be

How often do you utilise SuDS in your projects?



an effective choice, specifically targeting surface water runoff.

With advances in products, and their more frequent adoption, SuDS have now been proven to be cost effective too. On a wider scale, a few years after the Pitt Review, the Environment Agency declared that schemes adopting the techniques can in fact reduce expected damage of flooding by "at least £8 for every £1 spent."

So, with a clear need for action against flooding, and a proven, affordable solution to addressing it in the built environment, why are SuDS not a 'given' in housing developments the length and breadth of the country?

Housebuilder & Developer has undertaken a survey to help answer this question, asking 106 housebuilders, developers and specifiers – 41% at director level – if and how they have used SuDS, the barriers they have faced in doing so, and their opinions on the need for further regulation around flood prevention.

The results from the survey sample has shown that, while the industry is progressing towards the adoption of SuDS – with 79% saying they had become more aware of flood risk management in recent years, and 42% always adopting SuDS as standard in their projects already – 38% only install SuDS in the projects occasionally, 6% rarely do so, and 15% never do so at all.

There were a variety of barriers cited as reasons for this lack of uptake, with costs the most common among our respondents (as has often been the case in our recent research surveys). This was followed by a lack of understanding, and a lack of clarity on responsibility.

Despite the presence of these barriers, however, it is imperative that ways to overcome them are found. If England is to be prepared for the flooding that is a certainty now, housebuilders, developers, councils and Government must work together to implement the solutions we already have.

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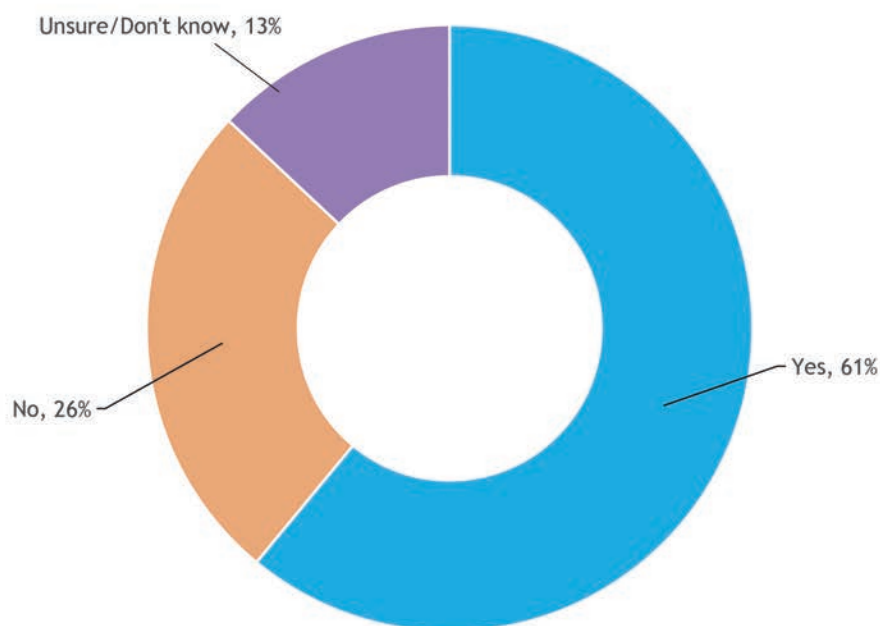
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Is the housing demand by UK Government causing homes to be built with higher risk of flooding?



# INTRODUCTION

## THE HISTORY OF FLOOD CONTROL

Flood control has been around in some form for almost as long as agriculture itself, from the Ancient Egyptians planting extra vegetation alongside the Nile to retain water, to protective earthworks in Medieval England, used first to increase available farmland, then to protect existing settlements.

Fast-forwarding to England in 1946, predecessor bodies to the Environment Agency officially started collecting detailed information about flooding incidents. Then, in 1953, a tidal surge saw the loss of around 300 lives along the Thames Estuary, and the issue was brought front and centre to the agenda of the UK Government as a whole. Since then, Whitehall increased its attention on longer-term flood solutions, funding the Thames Barrier in 1984, for example, and introducing legislation to limit the impacts of development.

One of the challenges the Government has faced in approaching flood remediation, is the sheer number of possible causes of flooding. These include risks from rivers unable to cope with the water draining in from the surrounding land, to tidal surges along the coast, to surface water flooding from overwhelmed drainage, and groundwater flooding – where water levels in the ground rise above surface levels.

Unfortunately, the UK is particularly prone to many of these types of flooding, an island with settlements largely ranged around the watercourses stretching through its borders. being

## FLOOD CONTROL TODAY

In England, it is estimated that at least one in six properties are at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea. This means that, statistically, your home is more likely to be flooded than burgled.

The Government has not ignored this issue, and currently spends around £2.6bn on flood defences in England alone. This is argued to be insufficient, however, including within the construction industry – with 81% of our respondents agreeing that the Government should commit more money to flood protection.

As the country faces the development demands of a housing crisis and rising population, as well as a lack of available land outside of places deemed at risk of flooding – especially in the densely populated south – more and more homes are being built in areas at risk. At the same time, our changing climate brings more and more danger.

According to the landmark Environment Agency report in 2009, *Flooding in England*, at the time of publication there were around 2.4 million properties in England built on floodplains. The report warned of the dangers of continuing to build in such areas, and implored the Government to commit further spending.

Fortunately, this urgency has not passed the industry by. From our survey, 61% of respondents argued that housing demand is leading to more homes built with a higher risk of flooding.

Despite this, however, a recent report from LV=Insurance revealed that in 2021 alone, more than 5,000 homes in England had been approved to be built in flood zones before the end of November.

Complicating things further, with a target of 300,000 new homes a year just to keep up with population growth, many

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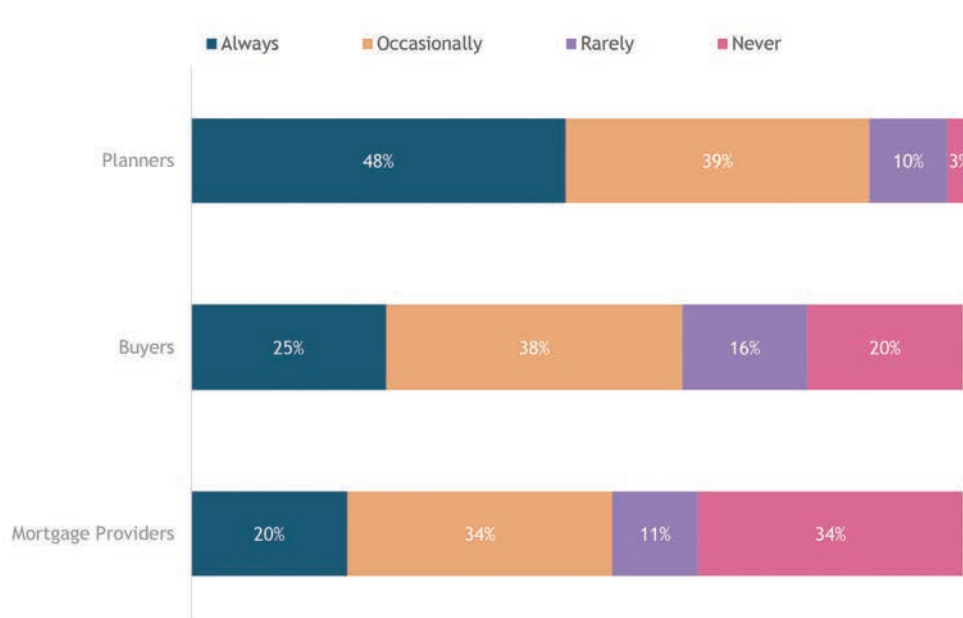
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How often do the following stakeholders ask SuDS to be included?



argue that we should not be putting up any further barriers to development. A quarter of our respondents (26%) cited ‘reaching the Government’s housing targets’ as a major barrier in addressing flood risk in their developments.

### SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS

Whatever the barriers, the need for sustainable drainage is clear. There is however – an existing set of solutions that can reduce the built environment’s impact to local flood risk, while allowing for a continued pace of development.

SuDS cover a broad range of solutions – often replicating or mimicking natural processes, swales, for instance, direct rainwater through soil and vegetation. Other common solutions include permeable paving, or green (and ‘blue’) roofing, all of which aim to allow water to filter through otherwise impenetrable parts of a development.

By and large, SuDS focus on combatting the tendency of urban development to compromise the natural permeability of the ground. Put simply by CIRIA, (the Construction Industry Research and Information Association), SuDS aim to “capture, use, delay or absorb rainwater, rather than eject it as a nuisance or problem.”

Further, there are now many related products that can bolster the effectiveness of traditional drainage, with improved piping and drainage systems able to cope with higher levels of water runoff – especially useful in developments where other SuDS products may not be practicable.

### LEGISLATION

Despite their now long-standing and proven effectiveness, the legislation around SuDS is less than clear, and largely toothless – though this is chiefly England’s shortfall among UK nations. Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have all pushed far ahead with their policies on SuDS, including the 2016 Water and Sewerage Services Act in NI, or the 2005 Water Environment

(Controlled Activities) Regulations in Scotland.

While the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in England states that SuDS should be included in all major housing developments, “unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate,” the adjoining National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) however states that compliance with the technical standards is “unlikely to be reasonably practicable if more expensive than complying with Building Regulations,” meaning that all developers have to do to avoid changing their ways is to find a cheaper alternative.

This means that it is often up to planners to advocate inclusion of SuDS in applications. Despite this, according to our research, less than half (48%) of our respondents reported that planners ‘always’ ask for SuDS to be included, with 39% occasionally doing so, 10% rarely, and 3% never.

### WHAT’S NEXT?

While flooding is already a serious issue at present in the UK, our changing climate is only going to bring further risks for people and property.

Our survey revealed that there is reason for hope, however, indicating that housebuilders and developers are becoming more accustomed to employing SuDS, and that awareness is rising of the future of flooding and the changes that global warming will inevitably bring.

When asked, for example, if our respondents had become more aware of flood risk management in recent years, a significant majority 79% said yes, with just 14% saying no, and 7% saying they were unsure. When asked if this was because of increased climate change awareness, again, 79% said yes, with 15% saying no, and 6% unsure.

Further to this, when asked if our respondents believe that climate change will increase the need for SuDS systems in the UK in the coming decades, 83% said yes, with just 6% saying no, and 11% being unsure.

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# Greener environmental solutions

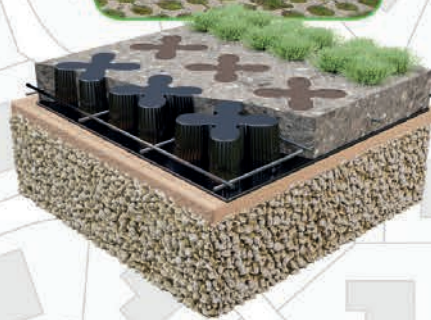
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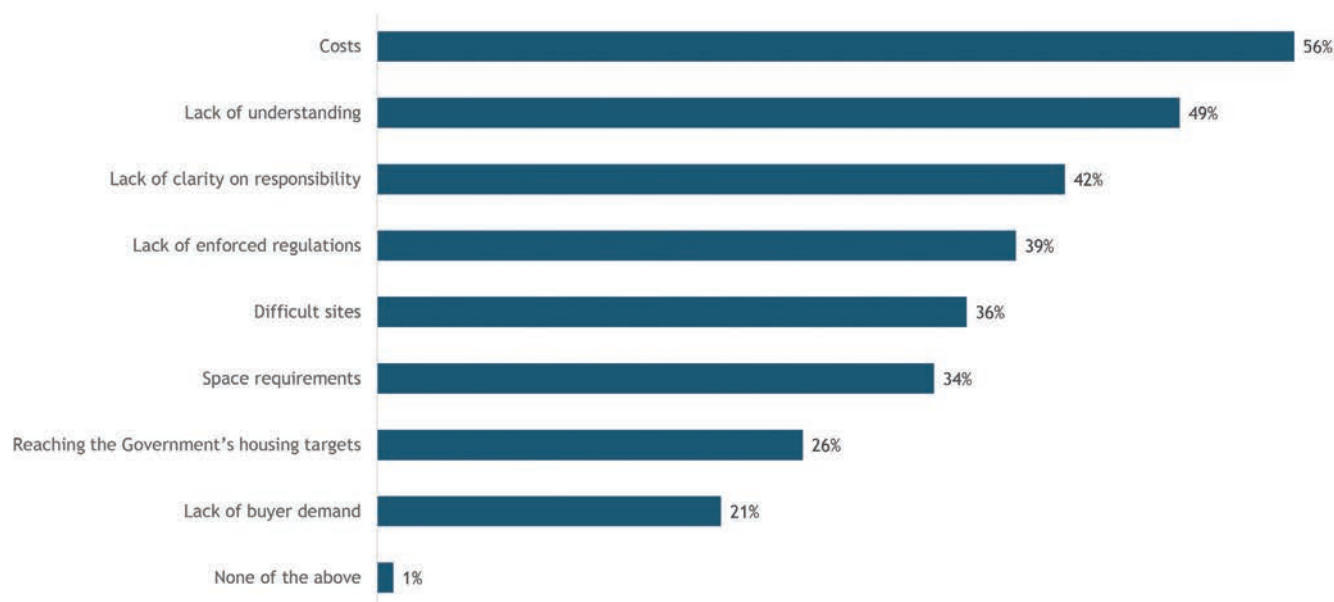
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What are the main barriers to introducing SuDS into your projects?



# ASSESSING THE PROBLEM

## THE NEED FOR SUDS

In order to explain the significance of the relatively slow adoption of SuDS, it is important to first understand more deeply why flooding is such a serious issue in the UK, and will continue to worsen as time passes.

Flooding is causing severe problems in this country. In 2007, for instance, a 'flood event' at Tewkesbury's Mythe Water Treatment Works left 140,000 homes without clean water for up to 17 days, necessitating a shut down of Castle Mead's electricity sub-station, leaving 42,000 people without power in Gloucester for 24 hours. More recently, throughout 2020, 17,505 flooding incidents were reported – largely during storms Dennis and Ciara – and 111 people lost their lives.

Sadly, this is just the tip of the iceberg; while already warmer climates will suffer more from the rising temperatures far more strongly, in Northern Europe, heavy rainfall and rising sea levels are likely to become the major issue.

According to worrying reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global temperatures have already risen by about 1.2°C, and if this increases to 3°C, the number of deaths from coastal flood damage alone will increase by "at least" tenfold, says its recent report.

Unfortunately, at present England is woefully underprepared to deal with such changes – especially increased rainfall, with

a lack of strong legislation around flood risk, and a continued pace of development creating impermeable surfaces on land at high risk.

In the housebuilding industry in particular, it is clear that action must be taken to prevent all developments from aggravating this situation, and the responsibility to reduce surface water runoff and therefore reduce unsustainable building practices needs to be widely grasped, to make the difference.

With the future and current need to address this problem being clear, and the effectiveness of SuDS in doing so proven, as part of our audience research we hoped to ascertain why they are not being specified as standard.

## THE BARRIERS TO ADOPTION

When asked how often our respondents utilise SuDS in their projects, the majority (59%) only occasionally, rarely or never do so.

When asked what the main barriers were to introducing SuDS into their projects, a wide variety were listed, with costs the most common, cited by 55% – arguably unsurprising, especially given the lightweight regulatory framework at present.

There was some implication among respondents that the Government should weigh in, with 81% arguing that the Government should commit more money to flood protection, and only 9% disagreeing with this, and 10% being unsure.

Continuing the main barriers in descending order, some common issues listed included a lack of understanding around SuDS (49%), a lack of clarity on responsibility (42%), and a lack of enforced regulations (39%).

This lack of clarity around responsibility was also evident in responses to multiple other questions in our survey. When asked who should be responsible for the maintenance of SuDS, for example, the three options available received fairly similar levels of support, suggesting some confusion as to an industry preference – 41% said the responsibility lay with builders and developers,

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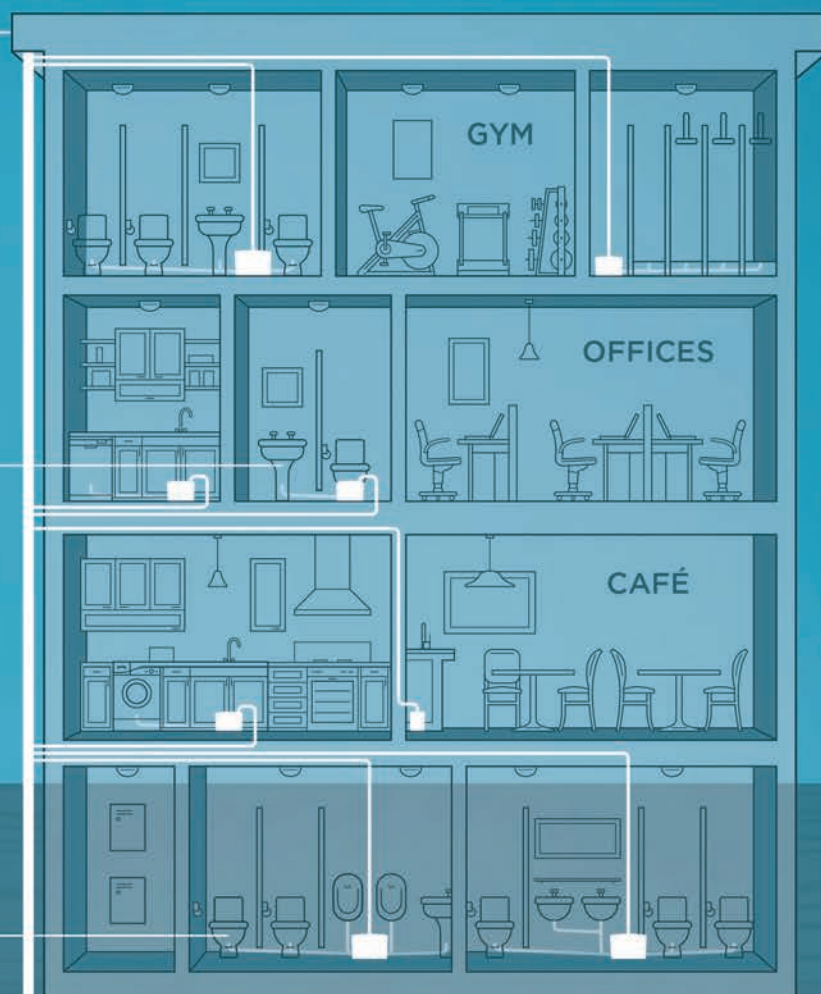




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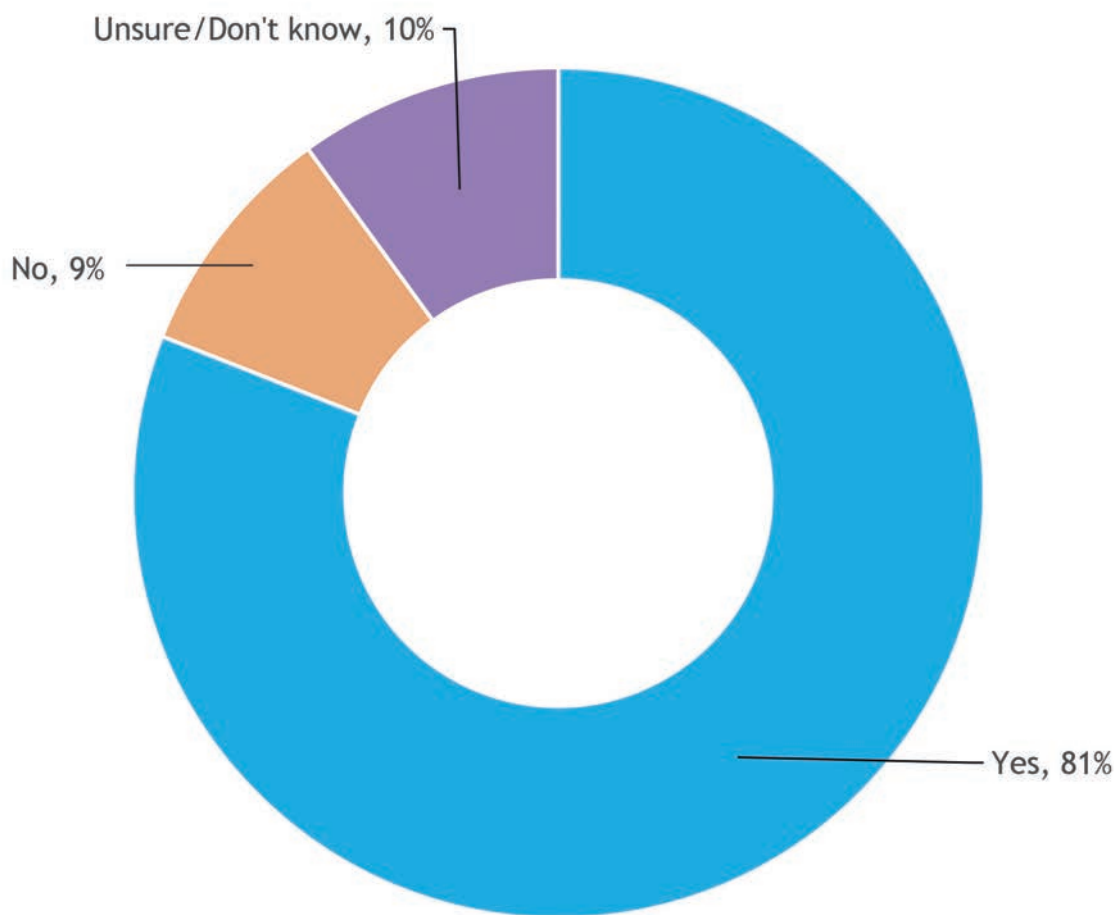
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Should the Government commit more money to flood protection?



45% with owners, and 61% councils. Then, when asked if the Sewers for Adoption guidance had helped clarify this, just 43% said yes, with 23% saying no, and 34% being unsure.

The issues around weak regulations and collaboration were also reinforced later in the survey. When asked if the NPPF should be expanded from just covering 'major' developments to all developments, for example, 75% agreed, with just 14% saying no, and 11% being unsure. When asked if there was enough collaboration between Government, developers, councils and planners around SuDS, the results were fairly evenly split, with 29% saying yes, 37% no, and 34% being unsure – again an unclear result.

Returning to the remaining barriers cited, respondents' next most common listing was the difficulties presented by sites, (35% of respondents), with space requirements at 34%, and a lack of buyer demand at 21%.

Further to that last obstacle, in a later question respondents were also asked how often buyers, planners and mortgage

### **38% OF RESPONDENTS ONLY INSTALL SUDS IN THE PROJECTS OCCASIONALLY, 6% RARELY DO SO, AND 15% NEVER DO AT ALL**

providers requested SuDS to be included. Planners, they said, 'always' ask for SuDS less than 50% of the time, however when compared to buyers and mortgage providers, this was relatively high. According to our respondents, just 25% of buyers always ask for SuDS to be included in a project, 38% occasionally do so, 16% rarely and 20% never. For mortgage providers, 20% reportedly always do so, 34% occasionally, 11% rarely, and 34% never.

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# INDUSTRY VIEWFINDERS



netMAG research has partnered with audience research firm Edge Insight to survey our readerships on key topics which matter to them. From offsite construction, to Passivhaus, to remote monitoring of social housing, our survey findings are captured in sponsored white papers and circulated among our audiences to develop specific market knowledge.

## EXPLORING CURRENT THINKING ON MODERN METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION

While not a new technology, modular housing is seeing a resurgence in this country, and many argue that it has the potential to address all these issues. With 40 per cent of housebuilders still having never used offsite methods, however, it appears the technology is not being utilised to its full potential. This research aims to find out why this is, what housebuilders and developers currently think of the differing forms of offsite building, and what are its main benefits and barriers.

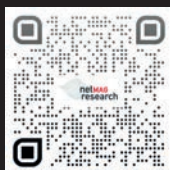


## DELIVERING THE FUTURE HOMES STANDARD

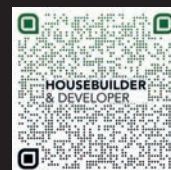
The Future Homes Standard (FHS) 2025 – a series of measures written into legislation that within four years – will see new housing producing 75-80% less carbon emissions than 1990 levels. Despite the laudable ambitions, the FHS is not without its opponents, and it will prove challenging to achieve for many construction firms in the UK. Housebuilder & Developer has conducted a survey of over 100 UK building professionals (over 80% of whom are in managerial roles).



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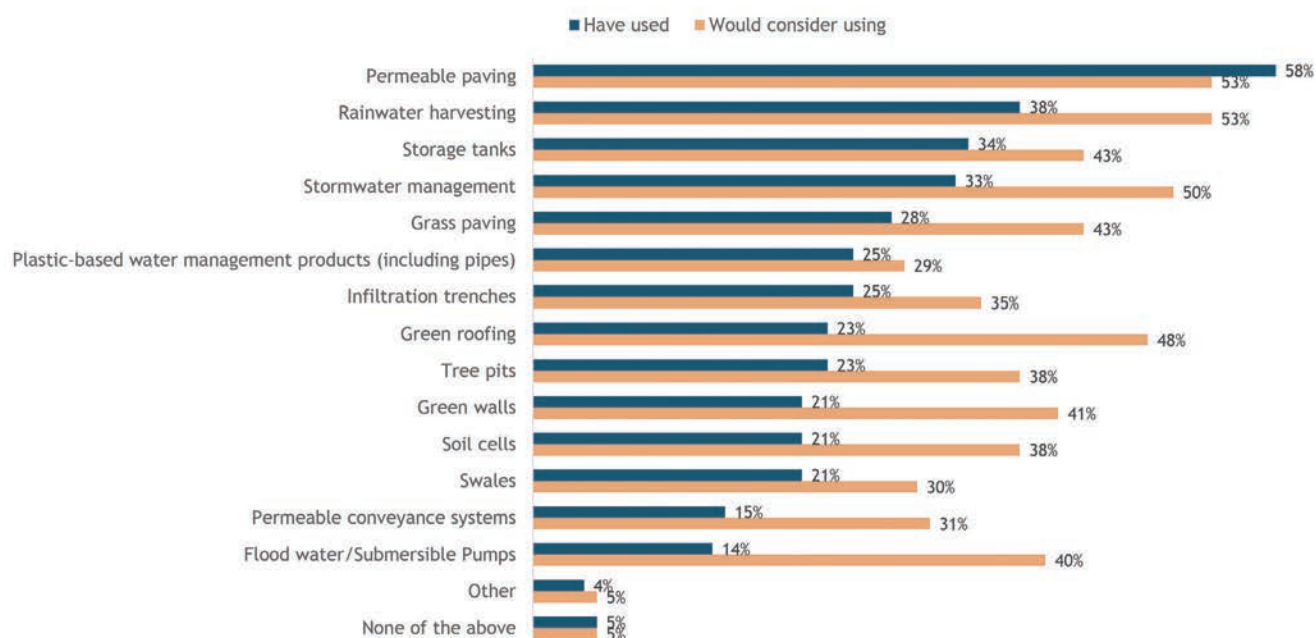


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Which of the following flood protection products have you used in your builds, and which would you consider using in the future?



# CONCLUDING SUMMARY

Flooding is a major ongoing issue in England, bringing untold misery and extraordinary cost to thousands of people each year, and this is only going to be magnified as our climate warms, with risk spreading to more and more sites.

Meanwhile, the country is undergoing a housing crisis, and, in a scramble for attractive sites, properties continue to be developed in already existing flood zones. Many are arguably being constructed without any preparation for the increasing rainfall that's likely to cause further serious problems in future.

There are however many solutions available to dealing with the excess rainfall that is expected, with SuDS the leading, proven approach allowing developers to build sustainable – permeable – housing schemes. As well as a robust way to counter flooding in homes, Sustainable Drainage Solutions bring positive benefits to the infrastructure of the surrounding area, reducing the strain on local drainage systems, and therefore further reducing the chances of flooding.

Despite this, SuDS have not yet been adopted by all in the industry, and some builders and developers are reluctant to change their ways, for a variety of reasons. Less than half of our respondents install SuDS as standard in their projects, listing costs, a lack of understanding, and a lack of clarity on responsibility to be the most common barriers to adoption.

Despite these barriers, our research does show that awareness is increasing – largely due to increasing acceptance of the impact of climate change as a whole. And most of our respondents argued that the current regulations around SuDS should be expanded, and that the Government is not currently committing enough funds to flood protection.

It appears that, if SuDS are to become widespread in England, Government, councils, planners and the industry itself need to collaborate much more closely to bring about changes – in legislation, clarity of regulation and accountability, and in industry attitudes.

While we wait for this, and impermeable developments continue to be built, the clock is ticking. The time for those responsible to act is now.

## SURVEY SPONSORS

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## Tradelink marks 30 years in industry



Established back when the Queen was celebrating her Ruby Jubilee and Barcelona hosted the 25<sup>th</sup> Olympic Games, **Tradelink Window Solutions** can reflect on three decades of success supplying trade installers with PVC-U, aluminium and composite frames, as well as conservatory roofs and a growing selection of technologies.

Reflecting on the landmark, new MD Stuart Judge, who was appointed last year, commented: "Tradelink has traded very strongly throughout the pandemic, reflecting the activity in the housing market generally which has largely been due to home working and a desire for more space. Looking ahead, we are seeking to strengthen support for our customers."

[tradelinkdirect.com](http://tradelinkdirect.com)

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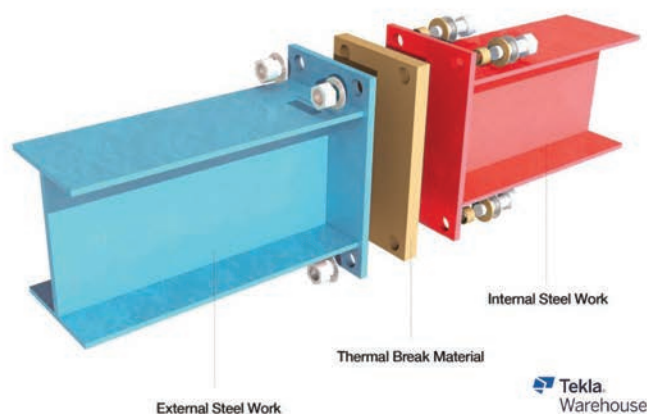
Following the demand and success for its airtightness membranes, Wraptite and Procheck A2, **The A. Proctor Group** is launching two additions to its range of high-performance A2 fire-resistant membranes. Probreathe A2 combines breathability, good water resistance, fire resistance and airtightness in one membrane. Probreathe A2 Air is a woven glass fibre

membrane designed to provide the building fabric with excellent water resistance and breathability. Another benefit of both membranes is that they are robust and durable and serve as temporary protection for the building until the primary external covering can be installed.

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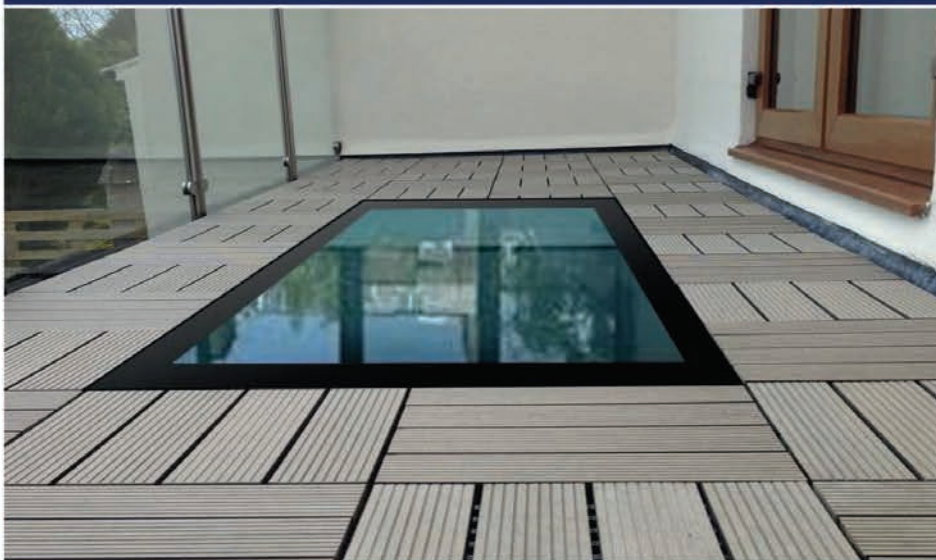
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The Wraptite external air barrier system from **A. Proctor Group** has been chosen for an exciting low energy homes offsite project for developer Osco Homes. The superior airtightness performance of the Wraptite membrane from the A. Proctor Group is the perfect solution, delivering significant benefits to the combination

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## Roller doors continue winning streak



**Garador's** GaraGlide roller door continues to grow in popularity as it is quick to install, easy to transport to site and precision engineered for durability. An affordable price point has also made it a popular product amongst builders and homeowners alike.

The door curtain rolls up into a neat box at the top of the opening, giving optimum space around the door and the ceiling area, and is operated by two remote hand transmitters. Find out more by visiting the Garador website.

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# GET ON TOP OF THE PART L CHALLENGE

Changes to Part L of the Building Regulations are planned to come into effect later this year as part of the Future Homes Standard, meaning a 31% reduction in new build carbon emissions. Stuart Nicholson of Marley explores why the inclusion of solar PV roofing could be a key solution.

With the climate emergency once again having been highlighted at COP26 in Glasgow, the UK's Net Zero Strategy – to be achieved by 2050 – is now beginning its transformation from plans, policies, and aspiration into an everyday reality that will influence and impact the way we live, move around, connect and work.

According to the Government's Climate Change Committee, the built environment accounts for around 40% of UK greenhouse gas emissions, with approximately 14% of this coming from the 28 million homes in the UK. As a major contributor to carbon emission damage, the role of households, and the need to make the nation's housing stock more energy efficient, is central to the Net Zero Strategy, and that puts the future construction of sustainable new homes front and centre.

As part of the move towards the creation of more energy efficient homes, 2022 sees changes implemented to Part L of the Building Regulations. They come into force (with a one-year transition period where the old Part L rules can still be followed) with the primary objective to direct the construction of new homes so they produce 31% lower carbon emissions.

The Part L changes are among a raft of other amendments in preparation for the introduction of the Future Homes Standard in 2025. From that point, housebuilders and developers will be required to ensure all new homes are specified and constructed to be highly energy efficient, use low carbon heating solutions, and, ultimately, be 'zero carbon ready.'

As a result, housebuilding teams, along with architects and specifiers, need to design sustainably and seek out the product solutions that will allow them to meet the robust carbon emission targets the sector is now faced with. The decisions currently being taken, as well as those over the coming months and years, will help to define future achievement and the



housebuilding industry needs to be fully acquainted with the range of sustainable product answers it can access today.

## THE ROLE OF SUSTAINABLE ROOFING SOLUTIONS

Improvement in new home energy efficiency – and resulting lower carbon emissions – cannot simply be delivered by enhancing the building fabric alone.

It is widely anticipated the specification of solar PV, with an efficient gas boiler or a heat pump, will be the route favoured by housebuilders to achieve the required levels stipulated by Part L for this year.

Housebuilders need to recognise that, in the short term, solar PV on the roof – combined with an efficient gas boiler – appears to be the most time efficient and cost-effective way for the sector to meet the new 2022 Part L carbon reduction obligations. This is in part because some

will already have a supply chain and trusted installers in place to enable an increase in specification to be implemented.

## SOLAR PV – FOR NOW AND THE FUTURE

While many in the sector may have had prevailing concerns about the aesthetic appearance of solar PV, innovative advances in both the look and performance of solar PV means legacy concerns can be overcome.

The latest and fully integrated solar PV roof systems offer a more visually appealing, cost effective, and easier to install option. The integration benefit means solar panels can simply replace a section of existing roof tiles to create a sleek aesthetic, and deliver a seamless solution as part of the overall roof visual appeal. This type of integrated solar panel can also be installed at the same time as the roof tiles and dovetail with the busy build sched-





ules on development sites.

Solar PV technology is tried and tested, readily available and has become much more affordable in recent times, making it a highly attractive solution ahead of the imminent Part L changes. Solar Energy UK predicts the modification to Part L could lead to a five-fold increase in the number of new homes built with solar technology as part of long-term sustainable construction strategies. This demand is expected to be maintained during the coming years as gas boiler installation in new homes is phased out to meet the new 2025 Future Homes Standard.

At this point, the specification of heat

pumps is predicted to become the sustainable heating solution of choice on new builds as housebuilders are obligated to meet the requirements of the new standard. Again, the combination of low carbon heat pumps together with solar PV on the roof will help drive the energy efficiencies and the carbon cutting success the Government and homeowners want to see.

In addition, during a period of escalating energy prices that could affect all households for the foreseeable future, solar PV will play its part in minimising high energy running costs for buyers of new homes and sustainably support changing household requirements such as increased demand for charging points for electric vehicles.

#### A NEW ERA

As a new, sustainable housebuilding era begins to emerge as both the Part L changes and the forthcoming Future Homes Standard impact the market, the environmental and low carbon performance of buildings will become a top priority for housebuilders and developers.

Critically, this is now the time for the sector to engage with and work alongside sustainable product manufacturers – including those delivering integrated solar PV solutions – to better understand product innovation, while also tapping

## IT IS ANTICIPATED THE SPECIFICATION OF SOLAR PV, WITH AN EFFICIENT GAS BOILER, OR A HEAT PUMP, WILL BE THE ROUTE TO ACHIEVE THE REQUIRED LEVELS STIPULATED BY PART L

into the technical expertise they can offer to provide operational and commercial benefits.

Informed choices will help to define future success for the construction and roofing sector. Taking advantage of the current technical expertise, product solutions, and project support on offer from manufacturers can support housebuilders as they strive to deliver the energy efficient and low carbon homes the nation will require in the future.

Stuart Nicholson is roof systems director at Marley

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## Senior's on the rise in the London residential market

Senior Architectural Systems has taken its aluminium fenestration solutions to new heights after being specified on the new Oaklands Rise mixed-use residential development in London, which is not only one of the UK's largest regeneration projects but also one of Senior's largest contracts to date.

Designed by CZWG Architects and constructed by the Vistry Partnership, the £175m scheme comprises three major tower blocks which vary in height from ten to 27 storeys. The buildings accommodate some 605 homes, 40 per cent of which are affordable housing, in addition to dedicated commercial space. Senior's stylish and thermally efficient aluminium doors, windows and curtain wall systems have been specified throughout, with the manufacturer collaborating closely with its

supply chain partners. Senior partnered with specialist contractor OCL Facades to deliver the fenestration package for the first phase residential scheme and with specialist contractor Soundcraft on the commercial elements.

Located in the Old Oak's area of Willesden in North West London, the development's striking curved architecture has helped breathe new life into the local area. Senior's slim profile SF52 aluminium curtain wall system has been used to create the striking faceted curved elevation, with the smooth rounded corners of the balconies and corner apartments further accentuating the design. Senior's robust SPW500 aluminium commercial doors were used externally and installed to the fire exits and main entrance, with SPW600 aluminium doors fitted internally throughout communal areas.

With the need to increase energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint of the scheme, Senior's patented low U-value PRe® aluminium windows and PRe® SLIDE patio doors were also chosen for the scheme. As well as contributing to lower energy bills for the residents, the slim sightlines of the PRe® aluminium windows and doors perfectly frame the development's far-reaching views over London and the attractive green streetscape below. The stylish PRe® SLIDE aluminium sliding doors also provide select apartments with access to individual roof terraces, creating a seamless link between the interior and exterior spaces.

Senior's aluminium fenestration systems were



also powder-coated to provide extra durability and to complement the aesthetic of exterior brickwork which pays homage to the rich industrial heritage of development's surroundings and close proximity to the Grand Union Canal and a historic Grade II railway bridge.

Oaklands Rise has been developed by Genesis Housing in partnership with West London football club Queens Park Rangers, which has expressed interest in creating a brand new stadium in the area. Constructed over several phases, Senior Architectural Systems first became involved in the scheme in 2016, with the total fenestration package value estimated to be in the region of £7m, making it Senior's most substantial contract win to date.

01709 772600 [www.seniorarchitectural.co.uk](http://www.seniorarchitectural.co.uk)



## greenteQ Orion retains its Integrity

The popular greenteQ Orion TS007 3 star profile cylinder from hardware specialist VBH is now available in bespoke keyed alike suites. Until now, keyed alike cylinders were available in factory-produced pairs or batches of 10, but all the cylinders were matching in size and finish. With the new option to open and re-pin Orion cylinders, customers can now have cylinders of different sizes and finishes, all operated by the same key; perfect in a home with a composite front door, an aluminium bi-fold and a PVCu back door, for example. Orion keyed alike sets are processed and despatched usually within 3-5 working days.

Dan Powell, Head of Sales at VBH, who has been heavily involved in the development of Orion says, "We are delighted to advise our existing customers and the market at large that everything is now in place to produce customer-bespoke keyed alike sets. Orion has proved incredibly popular with door manufacturers and installers, as well as the locksmith industry, since its launch in 2021. The key alike option will only enhance its appeal." Orion cylinders are approved to Kitemark TS007 with a full 3 star rating. They are available in key/key, and key/thumb turn variants.

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# Wienerberger: The changing shape of biodiversity in the built environment



**W**ith developers facing greater pressure to improve sustainability and biodiversity measures, Wienerberger has launched a new specialist report exploring the role of Eco-habitats in the drive for Biodiversity Net Gain.

The Changing Shape of Biodiversity in the Built Environment has been prepared by environmental specialists at Wienerberger, addressing the challenges faced by the construction industry as they seek to meet enhanced Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.

It sets out the regulatory drivers that are shaping modern developments, including the National Planning Policy Framework and Environment Act 2021, as well as changing consumer attitudes to outdoor spaces.

The specialist report introduces the benefits of Eco-habitats such as bird boxes, bat boxes and bee bricks, providing a range of fuss-free solutions that can provide supplementary enhancements within a Biodiversity Net Gain report. Experts from Wienerberger also offer installation and placement tips to help maximise nesting opportunities.

It is available to download for free from Wienerberger's website, providing a vital resource for anybody involved in the planning, design and construction of new buildings.

## WHAT CAN DEVELOPERS DO?

Homebuyers and commercial property tenants have become more aware of both the environment as well as their own wellbeing, therefore, buildings that support local wildlife to create better outdoor spaces will become more attractive to buyers and users.

By planning for nature, developers can help building users to reconnect with nature. But

this relies on making informed, data-driven decisions on projects which are shaped by early communication and collaboration.

There are of course a number of measures that housebuilders and developers can take to achieve the required ecological enhancements and help ensure biodiversity net gain. Often these will work together to contribute to the net gain required.

The most important point is that such measures no longer need to be costly or complex. Housebuilders and developers now

have access to a wide range of solutions to help achieve the necessary ecological enhancements and ensure biodiversity net gain. Often these will work together to help contribute to the net gain required.

For example, Eco-habitats provide a fuss-free and inexpensive option, ready to be integrated into the fabric of a building as it is built or renovated, they are produced with care to make installation easy.

## ECO-HABITATS

Eco-habitats are supplementary measures that can help to promote biodiversity at a development site. Whilst they don't specifically earn credits in Biodiversity Net Gain calculations, they provide a simple way to supplement biodiversity improvements and can still be included within a project's Biodiversity Net Gain report.

Eco-habitats can be introduced as supplementary enhancements to provide durable and discreet habitats for British birds, bats, bees and other species.

Bird boxes are tailored to individual species such as swifts, starlings and sparrows, providing space for nesting and roosting which is safe from predators. These are usually constructed using insulating concrete block which provides an internal roost space, with access holes to suit different species, before cladded with a brick face to match the building fabric.

Bat boxes are also solid boxes made of insulating concrete that provide an internal roost space and cladded appropriately. Suitable for most species commonly found in the UK, the single chambered unit features an integrated V system to increase the surface for bats to roost against, whilst allowing freedom of movement.

Other eco-habitats include solitary bee bricks, produced to UK brick size format so they







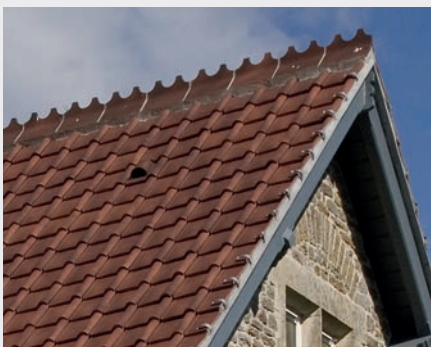
can be easily installed in place of a standard brick. These feature holes of varying sizes to provide resting space for different species of solitary bee. Solitary bees lay their eggs in these cavities before sealing the entrance with mud and chewed-up vegetation. The offspring then emerge in spring and the cycle repeats.

Wienerberger's range, in partnership with Habibat, is produced in the UK and can be faced in any brick type or stone, regardless of manufacturer, stone finish or suitable for render - and roofing eco-habitats are also available. All solutions can be made bespoke to suit individual requirements for each individual project.

### EXPLORING DEMAND

Although there is currently no quantitative value assigned to Eco-habitats, they are still anticipated to be included within the Net Gain Report in the Environment Bill. All of the solutions listed above provide a fuss-free and low-maintenance way to help achieve ecological enhancements on developments, but the legislative requirement for biodiversity net gains is not the only driver which is increasing the popularity of integrated wildlife boxes.

With CSR firmly on the agenda for all organisations, Eco-habitats already form an important part of sustainability strategies for many developers. Wildlife is in a state of decline across the UK, with 41% of species declining in numbers since 1970. Bats have fallen dramatically in numbers over the last 50 years and our most common bat, the common pipistrelle, has declined by almost 70%. House Sparrows have declined by around 50% in the same period and are now red-listed as a species of high conservation concern. The number of swifts fell by 53% between 1995 and 2016, and starlings by 66% since the mid-1970s – also red-listed as a bird of high conservation concern.



It is also marketing tool. As home-buyers and commercial property tenants become more environmentally aware, developments that support local wildlife will become more attractive. There is also an argument that COVID-19 has brought people closer to nature and, in particular, more switched on to their personal outdoor spaces. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) recorded a 69% increase in web traffic between March and May 2020 compared with the same period in 2019, including a tenfold increase in view of 'build a bird box' web page.

### WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

Biodiversity is no longer a 'nice to do' in new developments. Recent changes in planning frameworks mean Biodiversity Net Gain is now a critical requirement in order to secure planning consent for new developments. Under the NPPF, developers are at risk of not securing planning consent if they do not integrate biodiversity improvements within their design.

There is currently no quantitative value assigned to Eco-habitats through Natural England Metric 3.0, but wider biodiversity benefits must also be considered, including the provision of Eco-habitats.

That is why project teams are increasingly turning to these thoughtfully-designed solutions as proactive solutions, creating spaces for wildlife rather than displacing them.

Easy to install, low-maintenance and ticking all the boxes for ecological enhancement, it's clear to see why these discreet solutions are proving increasingly popular throughout the value chain on new developments across the UK.

Although Wienerberger's solutions have been on the market for 15 years or more, they have been seen by many until now as a necessary addition only when special ecological requirements demand them.

Against a backdrop of increased ecological attention, now is the time for these thoughtfully-designed solutions to be installed as proactive solutions, creating spaces for wildlife rather than replacing them.

Download Wienerberger's specialist report, *The Changing Shape of Biodiversity in the Built Environment – Exploring the Role Of Eco-Habitats in the Drive For Biodiversity Net Gain*, for free today. Visit [www.wienerberger.co.uk/biodiversity-report.html](http://www.wienerberger.co.uk/biodiversity-report.html)

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## Sapphire Balconies bring urban village design to life

The architectural vision for Acton Gardens, an award-winning urban village in West London, has been brought to life with 87 bespoke balconies designed, manufactured and installed by Sapphire's team of experts. The project's key design challenges were to improve privacy for residents and reduce the effect of wind felt on balconies to higher floors. Since specifying laminate glass balustrades to address these concerns was not an option due to the combustible cladding ban, Sapphire worked with the project architects to devise a solution that would maintain both compliance and aesthetics. Sapphire's designers created a unique balcony solution featuring vertical bar balustrades with an internal and external mesh panel to the bottom, together with matching privacy screens. A bronze metallic powder coating to balcony guarding, top rail and fascia trim adds a unique finish that complements the warm tones of the façade and gives the whole building a golden glow.

Balconies for Acton Gardens were produced using Sapphire's Glide-On™ aluminium Cassette® system utilising the latest offsite manufacturing techniques. Having tested the balconies against the highest specifications and quality standards, Sapphire's logistics team ensured smooth delivery of the preassembled Cassettes® to site, ready for installation. Upon arrival, balconies were lifted out of the lorries and installed directly onto the pre-erected support arms, reducing time and effort on site.



Using Sapphire's innovative Glide-On™ balcony Cassette® system at Acton Gardens had numerous benefits for the project contractors. It helped reduce time on site as balconies arrived on site fully assembled, cutting down on installation time. Delivering the balconies just before installation also minimised the need for on-site storage. Additionally, producing Cassettes® in a factory environment ensured a high level of quality control during manufacturing and assembly.

Offsite manufacturing also helped reduce costs while increasing the quality of the finished balconies. As a further benefit, Sapphire's Glide-On™ method of balcony installation reduced the duration of scaffolding on-site, resulting in a direct cost saving to the contractor. The easy installation process also eliminated the need for workers on-site, minimising the risks involved while working at height.

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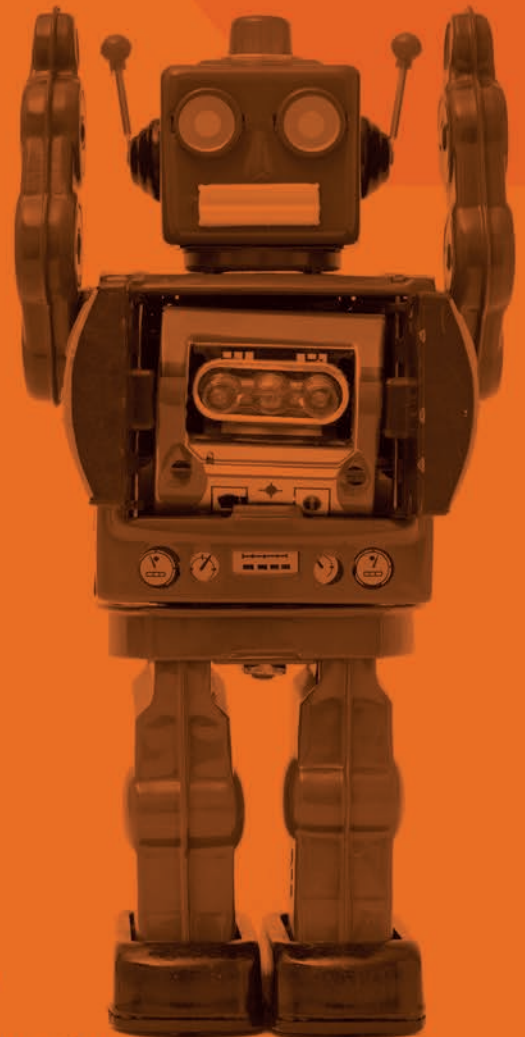
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# THE RIGHT COVER

Dean Stritch of LABC Warranty describes what to look for when choosing a warranty provider for your development, including for MMC projects



**W**ith a range of options on the market, how do housebuilders and developers choose the cover that is right for their development?

A structural warranty covers latent defects – issues with a building's construction that cannot be reasonably foreseen – and the period of cover is usually 10 to 12 years. The first thing to note is that not all structural warranty providers offer the same level of cover; some differences may be subtle, others more dramatic. It is therefore important to ensure you are fully protected and supported throughout the build process, while mitigating risk.

A risk management surveyor from a reputable structural warranty provider will look beyond foundations, tolerances and wall ties. As part of a broader commitment to best practice, they will take into consideration the safety and tidiness of a construction site, its

general organisation, engagement levels and communication. All the quality measures a housebuilder or developer would look for, and should expect.

Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) is also an ever increasing subject of interest in the industry, but how does MMC affect warranty, if at all? As this area of construction continues to grow in popularity, it is important to know that your warranty provider can support you with any innovative systems you may look to adopt.

Keeping on top of inspection findings, actions and updates on a plot-by-plot basis can be an administrative nightmare. A good warranty provider will make this as easy as possible, perhaps through a digital customer portal, to keep track of progress.

Homeowners in newly built properties need to know where they stand, just as

**AS MMC CONTINUES TO GROW IN POPULARITY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT YOUR WARRANTY PROVIDER CAN SUPPORT YOU WITH ANY INNOVATIVE SYSTEMS YOU MAY LOOK TO ADOPT**

much as those in older homes. A warranty provider will make it clear to all parties what their rights and responsibilities are under the insurance policy. Advice





on running-in a new home, knowing the difference between snags and defects – and what to do should the worst occur – should be automatic.

Good providers offer their own dispute resolution service, and some insurance policies will provide alternative accommodation if required, as well as covering professional fees. This all means both the homeowner and developer can enjoy peace of mind.

So, when you get planning permission for your next development of new quality homes, what features should you

be looking out for in a structural warranty provider?

Check the size of the organisation – do their inspectors and risk management surveyors have local knowledge to back up their technical expertise? Having local or regional representation can also make them more responsive.

How long have they been trading? Structural insurance is also a niche sector, making it more exposed to market volatility. A more established provider will have built relationships and processes to withstand this.

Check the rating of their insurer – A-rated insurers give you the greatest peace of mind. Larger providers will have a panel of insurers. Given the long duration of the policy, it is important to know they are reliable, experienced and secure.

What technical support and service can they provide beyond risk inspections? Remember that the warranty provider will be working alongside you so how can they support you, for example, with changing Building Regulations or adopting MMC?

Look for insurance policies that meet the specific needs of your developments, as well as the 'extras' such as cover for mechanical and electrical inherent defects, contaminated land, debris removal, alternative accommodation, and professional fees which are included as standard.

## WHAT IS A STRUCTURAL WARRANTY AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

A structural warranty covers latent defects and is an insurance policy that ensures any major damage caused by structural defects in the design, workmanship or components of the building, are rectified in the first 10 years from completion. Generally, a structural warranty is split into two periods. The first is the Defects Insurance Period (DIP) – typically this is the first or second year of a policy in which the builder is responsible for fixing any defects deemed to be a failure to comply with the warranty provider's standards.

The second is the Structural Insurance Period (SIP) – generally eight years following the DIP – during which time the warranty provider is responsible for dealing directly with any claims. Providing the claim is valid, the provider should then organise any necessary repair work, or pay for such repairs.

Dean Stritch is UK sales director at LABC Warranty



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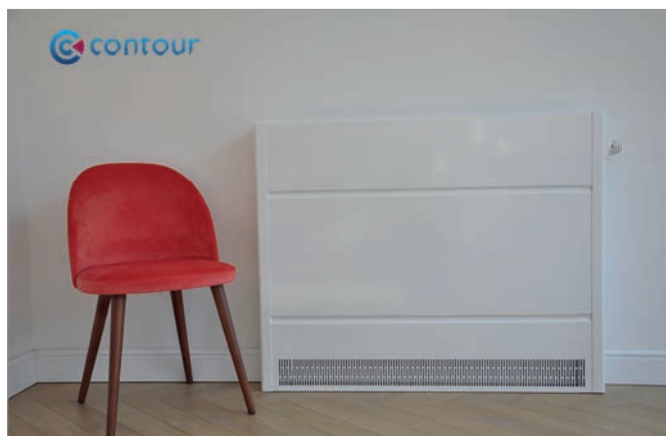


## Hörmann UK to showcase at FIT show

Hörmann UK will be displaying its range of garage doors at the FIT show, together with their premium entrance doors and Smart technology – an impressive portfolio of products which provide exciting opportunities for both fabricators and installers. Taking centre stage will be the new RollMatic T which has been designed to be fitter friendly and address the requirements of an increasingly competitive UK roller door market, whilst maintaining the high standards expected. On show for the first time will be the new RollMatic 2. Introduced as a new and improved version of their well-established RollMatic roller door, RollMatic 2 has been developed by Hörmann to address the industry wide problem of scratching associated with roller doors. Two Hörmann automated sectional garage doors will on display, one featuring the new Slategrain finish, which replicates the natural finish and structures of slate, alongside a door illustrating the innovative and creative 'Duragrain Individual Print' (Pictured). Hörmann's premium range of Thermo45/65 steel and aluminium entrance doors offering good looks and exceptional security, alongside impressive U-values as low as 0.47 W/m²k will be displayed. Visitors to the stand will also be able to see the most advanced automation systems which feature Bluetooth technology.

01530 516868 [www.hormann.co.uk](http://www.hormann.co.uk)

**FIT Show Stand No S11**



## New low surface temperature radiator

Contour Heating has launched a brand-new low surface temperature radiator that is set to provide the education sector with a cost-effective alternative to their current heating solutions. Covora Lite launches alongside a range of other new for 2022 safe heating products as part of the all-new brochure made available earlier this year. Aimed at helping school and nursery refurbishments working to tight budgets and timelines, its launch is in line with specification for summer projects. "Covora Lite is our most affordable low surface temperature radiator to date" said Commercial Director Robin Mansell. "With all the features expected from Contour's extensive range, Covora Lite is still a premium product, but one that makes safe heating much more affordable." Covora Lite low surface temperature radiators are available with a much shorter lead time than other Contour products, helping get projects get completed far quicker. If you're interested in learning more, you can visit the website or speak to the team directly.

01952 290 498 [www.contourheating.co.uk](http://www.contourheating.co.uk)



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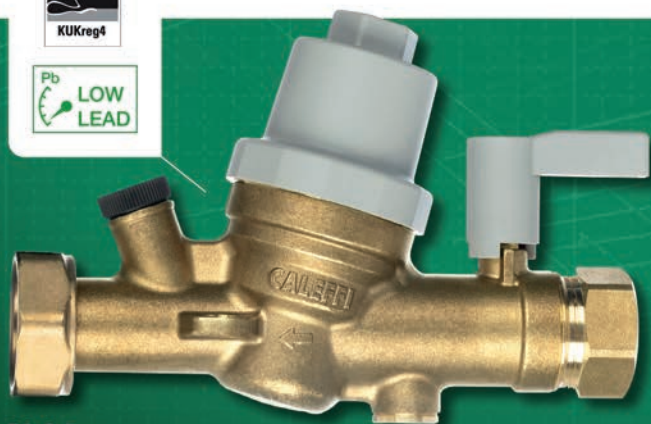


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# FIT SHOW 2022

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OR FLAT ROOF  
ALTERNATIVES,  
YOU'LL BE ABLE  
TO TRY THEM OUT  
FOR YOURSELF**

## SHOW PREVIEW

# GET FIT IN 2022

FIT Show has been compiled by the organisers for 2022 to bring “every link in the fenestration supply chain together under one roof” – for the first time in three years

**F**IT Show returns to the NEC Birmingham from 10-12 May, as “the UK’s number one trade show for the glass and glazing industry.” For installers or fitters of windows, doors and conservatories, as well as hardware, gates and garden rooms, this is an event not to be missed.

FIT Show enables visitors to see the latest products, as well as speak directly to the people that manufacture them, and network and “upskill alongside the best in the business.”

### 200+ BRANDS ON SHOW

Get ready to see over 200 brands display the very latest products and materials for use across domestic, commercial, private and public sector building and renovation projects. Expect to see the likes of door manufacturer Doorco, glazing experts Glazpart, window systems giant Kommerling, Roseview Windows, lantern roof and bi-folding door experts Made For Trade, Morley Glass, Ultraframe, VEKA and machinery giants Haffner Murat, Stuga and Emmegi.

And it's not just familiar faces who will be showcasing the best products – there will be lots of new brands on display. Examples include composite decking supplier Ronjack, metal door manufacturer Strongdor, and modular steel outbuildings manufacturer Telluria. They'll be joined by FIT Show first-timers ICB Fabrications, “sustainable merchandise supplier” Media HUT, Checkatrade, and Solar Calibre Doors.

### SAVE MONEY & MILEAGE

The organisers say: “Save time trawling the country trying to find the best products and suppliers on the market. We're bringing them all together, under one roof, across the three days.”

They continue: “You'll also be able to access exclusive offers and discounts at the show. Our exhibitors are pulling out all the stops to bring you the best deals and discounts – which you will only be able to benefit from by attending.”

And if you are looking for a new piece of

machinery – or perhaps you want to expand your portfolio to include outdoor living, you'll be able to find the answers at FIT Show 2022.

### FANCY A 'LATE NIGHT' LOCK IN?

Time means money – and you might not want to take time off from the day job.

That's why the organisers are staging a 'Late Night' event on Wednesday 11 May – until 8pm. “This means you've got plenty of time to finish up in the office and head over to the NEC for some after hours shopping and networking.”

PIGs (People in Glazing) will also be hosting its infamous PIGs Bar on the Certass stand for refreshments, and there will be plenty of opportunities to network and celebrate with the whole industry.

### TRY, TEST & DEMO PRODUCTS

“Not only will you be able to see the latest products up close, you'll be the very first to see them,” say the organisers. Exhibitors are planning more new product launches for the 2022 event than any previous year, according to the show's organisers. Visitors will be able to test out products including smart home technology, as well as watch live demos with the people behind these amazing innovations. Whether it's the latest bi-folds you're after, lantern roofs, or flat roof alternatives, you'll be able to try them out for yourself.

And it's not just about the latest windows, doors, glass and hardware, we'll also be bringing you the best tools and equipment to help install them.

There will even be opportunities for you to roll up your sleeves and take on the experts with live time challenges, and you might win some prizes!

You will also be given access to the event's CPD approved learning programme which will tackle key industry issues around the latest legislation and Building Regulations, plus advice and support on how to build your business, and access to “experts from every corner of the fenestration industry.”

Register to attend at [WWW.FITSHOW.CO.UK](http://WWW.FITSHOW.CO.UK)



## Stelrad adds product videos to YouTube



Installers are reacting warmly to the addition of a number of new short videos covering the **Stelrad** radiator range on its YouTube Channel. The latest additions feature four of its new towel rail products and the latest release – its new range of Cast Iron radiators. The new products featured include the Lecco, the Como, the Concord Side Concept and the Concord Side Chrome. "It's a library of information

that is growing all the time as we add more information to help installers and specifiers choose the right radiators for each job," said Sarah Baker.

0800 876 6813 [www.stelrad.com](http://www.stelrad.com)

## Altecnic joins online innovation portal



**Altecnic Ltd**, a leading supplier for hydronic solutions and part of the Caleffi Group, has been chosen as an innovation partner for a new self-service, interactive and intelligent marketplace for sustainable

technologies. The Wates Innovation Network (WIN) portal will connect companies directly with partners that can offer solutions to help meet sustainability targets. As an innovation partner, Altecnic will feature their SATK32107 HIU on the WIN portal.

01785 218200 [altecnic.co.uk](http://altecnic.co.uk)



## JACKON building systems show the future of housebuilding at UKCW Stand: D32

**JACKON's** two construction systems – JACKODUR® Atlas and THERMOMUR® Insulated Concrete Formwork (ICF) – will be on display on the company's stand at UK Construction Week.

These products exceed the u-value targets of the new Part L building regs which are coming into effect in June this year. JACKON's THERMOMUR® 350 Super block is the most energy efficient building system currently available. It has a U-value of 0.15 straight out of the box, ahead of the required maximum of 0.16 U-value on external walls - part of the requirement that new homes emit 31% less CO<sub>2</sub> under the new Part L.

JACKON brings its 60 years' expertise in EPS (moulded expanded polystyrene) and XPS (extruded polystyrene) manufacturing to the market. JACKODUR® ATLAS uses XPS (extruded polystyrene) to create an insulated floor slab, while THERMOMUR® ICF uses EPS (moulded expanded polystyrene) to create the formwork. ICF is a modern construction method, which is rapidly growing in popularity in the UK. It integrates insulation materials into the concrete formwork, totally revolutionising the way a house is constructed.

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

UKCW Stand No D32

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LONDON

3-5 MAY 2022 | EXCEL

## SHOW PREVIEW

# BUILDING CULTURAL CHANGE AT UKCW

UK Construction Week (UKCW) comes to London on 3-5 May at ExCel, with the promises of a major face to face event for the construction industry for 25,000 expected visitors.

**T**he organisers have developed a key focus for UKCW London 2022, namely “how the industry implements new behaviours, best practice, and a true cultural shift in how it builds for the future.”

The organisers comment: “There are many changes facing architects this year, including potential new CPD requirements, changes to the education system, huge expectations around the role of architects in achieving the country’s net zero objectives, and a continued push to improve diversity, equality and inclusion in the profession.” They add: “Coming at the same time as new legislation on building safety, this event will be a well-timed opportunity to come together to learn, network, inspire, debate, and discuss practical ideas to address these changes.”

The organisers believe that UKCW London is likely to be “the biggest construction event the capital has seen in many years,” with over 40,000 m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space, and more than 300 exhibitors. It says there are planned to be 10,000 products on show, as well as 300 expert speakers, seven theatre stages, multiple specialist hubs, and 150 hours of CPD content.

The event will provide insights into the issues affecting the way in which buildings are designed and the “emerging markets, technology innovations and global design trends to watch.” Some of the major companies signed up include HS2, ABC+ Warranty, Bosch, Hanson Plywood, Xero, Entserv UK and Construction Industry Solutions.

### CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Day one will include updates on the new rules around public procurement, the new regulatory regime on building safety, the forthcoming Building Safety Act, and the new

ways in which the industry is pursuing projects as wide ranging as prisons, hospitals, road and rail infrastructure, education buildings and housing. Day two promises a “deep dive” into digitisation, net zero and “energy futures,” and day three will focus on people – diversity, health and wellbeing, and recruitment and retention.

The main stage will be sponsored by construction software firm COINS, while CEMEX will be sponsoring the Infrastructure Hub. Expert speakers from the Infrastructure Projects Authority and Barbour ABI will showcase learning from major projects including HS2, Thames Tideway, Royal Docks London and the West Midlands Growth Engine, as well as analysing government policies that will affect infrastructure over the next 10-15 years.

The Sustainability Hub includes sessions on best practice in low carbon building and European retrofit, plus “regenerative design” and “biomimicry,” as well as hydrogen innovation, 3D printing, dealing with waste, and building for disassembly.

The Digital Construction Hub, in partnership with Build in Digital, will deliver practical workshops on digital strategy, BIM, cloud computing, cybersecurity, use of Big Data, and how technology can improve efficiency, productivity and profitability.

The Offsite Alliance Hub will share learning from Alliance members who work alongside leading organisations, as well as government, local authorities and housing associations, to increase the uptake and delivery of offsite technologies across the residential sector.

*Free registration to UK Construction Week London is now open – one badge also gives access to the Offsite Show, Concrete Expo, and Grand Designs Live.*

If you’re interested in attending or participating, visit

**[WWW.UKCONSTRUCTIONWEEK.COM/MAKE-AN-ENQUIRY](http://WWW.UKCONSTRUCTIONWEEK.COM/MAKE-AN-ENQUIRY)**



# Hybrid inverters are key to increased energy independence for homeowners

**D**emand is soaring for solar energy technology as homeowners look to save money on energy bills. Greg Rhymes, Sales Manager at GoodWe UK discusses how hybrid inverters are the gateway to energy independence, and what installers need to know.

Without doubt, one of the most worrying challenges facing the nation right now is the energy crisis. Sky high wholesale prices are driving up costs for consumers, and the energy price cap has risen significantly.

To put this into perspective, the price cap from winter 2021-22 to summer 2022 has jumped by some 54%. In monetary terms, that's £693 for default tariffs being paid by direct debit (£1,277 to £1,971, with the difference rounded up).

In the meantime, a very different challenge has hit people up and down the country – namely, the intense, unexpected storms that the UK has experienced since November 2021.

Storms Arwen, Dudley, and Eunice have all made notable headlines. The latter brought record-breaking wind speeds of 122mph that ripped up trees, left the O2 Arena's roof in a state of disrepair, and brought down power lines that disconnected thousands of people from the grid.

With these two prevailing challenges seemingly not going away any time soon, how can homeowners safeguard against both energy costs and power outages? A key solution lies in solar power, and more specifically, new hybrid inverter technology.

## HYBRID INVERTERS ARE THE IDEAL 'HALFWAY HOUSE'

Hybrid inverters blend two technologies into one. These inverters combine both functions of solar inverters and battery inverters into one unit.

Homeowners are already rushing to fit solar panels and solar power technology – 61,455 UK properties had solar panels installed in 2021, up 71 per cent on 2020, according to Microgeneration Certification Scheme. This



means the time is ripe for installers to consider how hybrid inverters can take consumers one step closer to microgeneration.

As solar installers will already know, most inverters send power to appliances for immediate consumption, or back to the grid if not used. However, the key difference between hybrid inverters and standard string inverters is that homeowners can use the former to augment their grid supply, but also later add a battery should they choose to upgrade to a full energy storage solution. For example, GoodWe's EH Series Hybrid Inverter can be upgraded at any time from purely inverter-only functionality to include a battery storage solution, and all that is needed is an activation code.

With smart hybrid inverters like the EH, homeowners can choose to either immediately consume the energy they generate from their PV (photovoltaic) panels or harvest it and store it in the battery. This then allows for better flexibility with energy tariffs, and the ability to use the battery's energy to power appliances during peak times where electricity is sold at a premium.

For installers, this is a key development, and as the popularity and awareness of these inverters grow, so too must installers know how to specify and install them. The 3.6-6kW EH inverter is compatible with high voltage batteries in a range of 85-450V, and it is always recommended to analyse homeowners' usage patterns before specifying the system capacity to prevent over-sizing and inefficiency.

## A BACK UP TO WEATHER THE STORMS

Another key benefit of hybrid inverters is that if they are connected to a battery, they can continue powering nominated back-up loads or appliances in the event of a power outage. As already alluded to, with the frequent power outages that the UK has experienced and will continue experiencing, the benefit of this function is clear. People would potentially be able to ride out storms and better manage power outage situations.

During installation, it is necessary that installers know what appliances should be connected

as back-up loads. Typically, appliances that use little power should be chosen (e.g., router/modem, lights, television, computers, and fridge/freezer). More power-intensive appliances (e.g., washing machines, stoves, ovens, and electrical heating) will often exceed the maximum capacity that can be connected as backup loads and are therefore not recommended to connect as backup loads.

The number of appliances connected as backup loads will also limit the time they can be sustained during a disconnection from the grid. For instance, if there is a power outage during night-time, the PV panels won't supply any power and all power will be extracted from the battery. If more loads are connected and used, the battery will of course be drained much faster and thereby reducing the time the backup loads can be powered.

In the case of GoodWe's EH Series, the switch to battery storage energy would happen in fewer than 10ms meaning that, in a power cut, most people (and most appliances) won't even notice.

## MOVING PEOPLE TOWARDS MICROGENERATION

On top of the spike in energy prices and recent power cuts, there has also been another big change that has significantly altered society arguably forever, and that is the continued 'work from home' situation that many people find themselves in.

Even though we're coming out the other side of the pandemic, 'hybrid' working is expected to continue, and many offices have already been shut down entirely. As a result, people in such situations are likely to see their own energy costs go up, while a power cut could impact on their productivity and ability to earn. For these reasons, microgeneration and moving to energy independence is critical.

At GoodWe, our focus is on smart energy innovation, and so alongside the EH Series, we have a range of residential-use inverters and batteries to achieve this goal.

[sales@goodwe.com](mailto:sales@goodwe.com)  
[en.goodwe.com](http://en.goodwe.com)



## Panasonic's Domestic AirCon Quick Selector

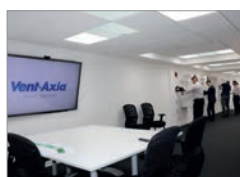


Panasonic Heating & Cooling Solutions has recently launched its brand new Domestic AirCon Quick Selector online tool, specifically designed to help end users find the ideal heat pump for their home and installers to get multi-split tables in just a few clicks. The useful product specifier tool can be found on Panasonic's website. With a simple layout

and straightforward, easy to use navigation, the user is guided through the process and is only required to know either the unit capacity needed, or the size of the rooms. The tool has been created to help choose the right Panasonic unit from its Domestic Single Split and Multi Split range.

01344 853 393 [www.aircon.panasonic.eu/GB\\_en](http://www.aircon.panasonic.eu/GB_en)

## Vent-Axia invests in new training suite

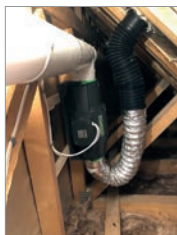


Vent-Axia is committed to best practice and is proud to have invested in a new bespoke training suite for its NICEIC Domestic Ventilation Training Course at its Crawley headquarters. The dedicated training suite offers a comfortable environment for installers to improve their knowledge and under-

standing of domestic ventilation systems with the room featuring an array of working Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) units so attendees can put into action the theoretical skills they learn on the course. All four of the installed MVHR units are fully functioning so delegates are able to complete a commissioning assessment in the training suite.

0344 856 0590 [www.vent-axia.com](http://www.vent-axia.com)

## LINEO QUIET ES making a difference



Owners of a Surrey residential property are already seeing the benefits of installing the new VORTICE LINEO QUIET ES extractor fan in their en-suite. Ventilation specialists Better Indoors were approached by the homeowners to help overcome an issue they had with excessive heat retention on the second floor. A detailed site survey was carried out and an urgent retro fit was required to enhance inadequate ventilation. Better Indoors specified and installed the innovative LINEO QUIET ES in line fan.

The unit which is equipped with electronically controlled EC motors offers an acoustic lining making it extremely quiet to run.

01283 492949 [www.vortice.ltd.uk](http://www.vortice.ltd.uk)

## Purevision stoves by Charlton & Jenrick



The welcoming glow of a real fire completes your build project with beautiful ambience and security. Enclosed stoves are by far the best way to heat using logs, delivering lowest available emissions and best possible output from the fuel. A Purevision is always ready to produce efficient, powerful heat and stunning flame

visuals at your command while treading lightly in the environment by using one of the most sustainable fuels available. Our 4 heritage Purevision models update older designs of the past with ultra-modern low emission, high efficiency combustion techniques courtesy of the C&J hybrid prism baffle system. Visit the **Charlton & Jenrick** website for more information.

01952 200 444 [www.charltonandjenrick.co.uk](http://www.charltonandjenrick.co.uk)



## Wall-mounted ventilation units that adapt to your environment.

### AEROTUBE WRG smart

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[www.siegenia.com](http://www.siegenia.com) - [info-uk@siegenia.com](mailto:info-uk@siegenia.com)





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# A HEALTHY APPROACH TO INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Stephan Lang of Daikin explains how 'whole-building approaches' to heating, ventilation and air conditioning in new build homes can balance energy efficiency and the vital need to improve indoor air quality.

**N**ew build homes must be built in compliance with a vast array of requirements, and in recent times a key focus has been on both the environmental impact and the energy efficiency of these homes.

In December 2021, Building Regulations were announced, for example, and will apply from June 2022, stating CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from new build homes must be reduced by 31% compared to current standards.

Due to the increased airtightness needed to meet these requirements, indoor air quality (IAQ) could be adversely impacted if the house is not designed and built correctly.

## WHY IAQ IS IMPORTANT

Air pollution has long been considered a major health issue. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has often voiced this concern, and has proclaimed air pollution from both indoor and outdoor sources as the single most significant environmental risk to global health, contributing toward the deaths of over seven million people each year.

When coupled with the statistic that people spend an estimated 90% of their time indoors, the importance of ensuring IAQ is closely monitored is clear.

A wide range of factors contributes to IAQ from various sources, both inside and outside the home – everything from industrial practices to road traffic generates air pollutants, including carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulate matter. These types of pollutants, and natural allergens like pollen, can easily infiltrate homes through natural or mechanical ventilation or through the building's fabric. There are plenty of indoor contributors to air pollution too, such as mould, dust, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)



emitted from the floor and wall coverings, along with furniture and appliances.

The physical ill effects from air pollutants are well documented, but there is also rapidly mounting evidence for the impact on mental health, with conditions like bipolar disorder and depression being linked back to poor air quality. Additionally, it shows detrimental links to children's ability to learn and concentrate.

## HVAC SYSTEMS

The design focus for HVAC systems in new build homes is usually centred around the efficiency of the system and the energy use associated with it. For most clients this is a key requirement, and it also contributes the highest rewarding factors in BREEAM assessments.

However, HVAC systems that maintain high indoor air quality are also rewarded

under the same assessments by controlling humidity, temperature, the management of pollutants, and ensuring a good supply of fresh air. As such, the correct choice of HVAC systems can satisfy both energy efficiency and IAQ requirements.

## HEAT RECOVERY

A significant issue for energy efficiency is the amount of heat wastage through ventilation systems, particularly those that exchange indoor air for fresh outdoor air. However, building effective heat recovery into the system can significantly reduce the effects of this issue and contribute further to the overall energy efficiency of the system and home. Units with this heat retention ability will utilise heat from certain areas of the home and use this air to heat another area. Some units can even

**CENTRALISED HEAT RECOVERY VENTILATION SYSTEMS ARE AN OPTION THAT HOUSE-BUILDERS CAN USE TO IMPROVE INDOOR AIR QUALITY**





use this heated air to help generate hot water for the home.

When grading heat recovery systems, manufacturers usually state Seasonal Energy Efficiency Rating (SEER) figures of 3 and 4; however, it isn't unrealistic for this score to almost double when recovered energy is utilised through the HVAC

system. A good option here is to use Centralised Heat Recovery Ventilation (CHRV) systems.

#### FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

A crucial consideration for designing an HVAC system is the location of the ventilation intakes and exhaust outlets

## THE CORRECT CHOICE OF HVAC SYSTEMS CAN SATISFY BOTH ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND IAQ REQUIREMENTS

situated on the home's exterior. The placement of these intakes is vital, and they should always be situated as far away as possible from sources of air pollution such as road traffic or exhaust flues from the home.

The filtration system is another vital aspect of effective ventilation in the home. HVAC units are fitted with filters primarily to keep the systems dust and debris free to allow for optimal energy efficiency. However, opting for indoor units that feature automatic cleaning filters will ensure that the IAQ is positively affected, along with the energy-saving aspects.

By taking a whole-building approach to HVAC in new build homes, and considering the above, such systems can easily protect indoor air quality, while maintaining energy efficiency, in tandem.

Stephan Lang is product specialist at Daikin

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Call us on 01206 713800 or email [enquiries@titon.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@titon.co.uk)







## Heating company winning new work with CIRCOFLOPRO

Northampton based JD Plumbing and Heating has been growing its business in recent years after discovering the multiple benefits of buying the ready-to-install underfloor heating systems offered by CIRCOFLOPRO, part of the Ridgespear Group. Founder and Director, John Drew explained: "I have been using CIRCOFLOPRO for all of my underfloor heating installations for the past three years, after a builder I do some work for was using it on a job and I was just really impressed with the flexibility of the approach. It appeals because you can't always put pumps or manifolds where they should be ideally and CIRCOFLOPRO makes things easier in a lot of circumstances." The most recent project where JD Plumbing and Heating has chosen to employ CIRCOFLOPRO is an old farmhouse at Brigstock in Northants that had been substantially refurbished following a flood, where another underfloor heating system was installed, but unfortunately hadn't performed well. With a new 40 kW gas boiler already in-situ, John measured up for laying CIRCOFLOPRO ClipRail across the whole of the reconfigured ground floor. He continued saying: "The client is very happy with the way it is all working and we're hoping to do a lot more jobs with CIRCOFLOPRO in the future."

01392 360457 [www.circoflopro.co.uk](http://www.circoflopro.co.uk)



## Kaldewei "Luxtainable" bathroom solutions

Sustainability is a key to Kaldewei, but elegant design and trendsetting style is equally as significant. Colour is an important feature in the bathroom and as such Kaldewei offer a bi-coloured baths variant in three of their freestanding bathtub models: Centro Duo Oval, Conoduo and Ellipso Duo Oval. These produce a dramatic impact within the bathing area and are available in alpine white, alpine white matt, black gloss, and lava black matt – providing an eye-catching combination for today's modern bathroom.

The most recent product is the Superplan Zero a shower surface from Kaldewei, providing a completely floor-level finish. When creating Superplan Zero, Kaldewei considered requests from their customers, which led to the creation of a product that is totally flat to the floor, with zero steps, zero edges, and zero compromises.

Developed by the award-winning Berlin product designer Werner Aisslinger the Superplan Zero maintains Kaldewei's green credentials as with its luxurious steel enamel base it is both durable and 100% recyclable.

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

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

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## No1 design that is ideal for any bathroom



The new bathroom series **Duravit No.1** works well in both a minimalistic and contemporary setting; a compact and comprehensive product range, it is excellent value for money within the entry-level segment. Making it an ideal collection for a first-time buyer through to those working in the project sector.

All the products stem from Duravit's new in-house designers are created by focusing on what is important to the end user. Duravit No.1 opens up a whole host of combination options, creating the perfect foundation for a range of bathroom plans and requirements.

01908 286680 [www.duravit.co.uk](http://www.duravit.co.uk)

## Closet fascination



Now that homeowners can enjoy socialising indoors once again, the downstairs cloakroom will be taking centre stage in terms of a Spring spruce up. It is the one intimate space in which guests spend time – and judge!

**Thomas Crapper** has launched a new range of beautiful closet suites to answer the demand for imagination in this special place. Pictured is the new Bentham basin and high-level 814 cistern WC set.

For further information on Thomas Crapper, please visit the website.

[www.thomas-crapper.com](http://www.thomas-crapper.com)

## Osmo, a sustainable wood finish

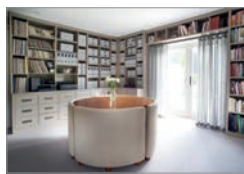


The foundation of **Osmo** wood finishes is based upon purified and refined natural resources which are carefully harvested into natural oils and hard waxes. Osmo products contain natural vegetable oils and hardwaxes to help nourish the wood and retain flexibility. Depending on the product, they

might include: linseed oil, sunflower oil, soybean oil as well as thistle oil and natural hard waxes. Furthermore, Osmo's extensively cleaned pigments have been approved for use in the food industry. At Osmo, it has an FSC-Certification, so in choosing an Osmo product, you can be reassured that the product is not just good for wood, but good for the environment too.

01296 481220 [www.osmouk.com](http://www.osmouk.com)

## Beautiful bespoke spaces from Draks



**Draks** is well known as the go-to prestigious brand for housebuilders and designers when it comes to saving space! Draks creates stunning collections of room dividers, sliding doors, sliding and hinged wardrobe doors, wardrobe interiors, and walk-in wardrobes; all designed to optimise every inch of a

home. The high-quality creations are perfect for busy homes; bedrooms, bathrooms, living rooms and dining rooms can be designed to fulfil all types of today's lifestyle briefs. At times though, Draks' clients need something out of the ordinary too – depending on the shape, space and use required. All budgets and designs are catered for.

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

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For a cleaner conscience



## Affordable City living by Bellway, with Vicaima door design flair



Vicaima are pleased to have been chosen to supply the latest on-trend interior doors, to specialist residential developer, Bellway Homes; for an affordable luxury urban apartment project in the heart of Glasgow. Working in conjunction with partners Rowan Manufacturing, Vicaima's Visual Sensations Cross Directional Woodgrain (CDW) doors, in Alpine Grey finish were selected for use throughout these 1,2 and 3 bedrooomed homes.

Situated in the west end of Glasgow, the Dorchester 183 development, comprises three blocks and over 100 apartments. It sits at the hub of modern city living, where active social amenities blend seamlessly with working, learning and cultural attractions. Designed to a very high standard, Bellway Homes have fashioned the interiors to maximise light and space and have chosen fixtures reflecting contemporary living for the twenty first century. All rooms throughout the apartments

have been fitted with Vicaima performance FD30 Fire Doors, in addition to which entrance doors also meet the highest security with Vicaima Secured by Design accredited specification, giving residents complete peace of mind. In terms of design appeal, doors were chosen from the popular Dekordor SD Visual Sensations range, with the on-trend CDW Alpine grey door. Combining multiple grain direction to striking effect.

Visual Sensations is just one of the many door design collections offered by Vicaima. All products are available in a range of aesthetic and performance specifications, with certified fire doors, security and acoustic solutions to meet the most demanding project requirements. And as befits an environmentally conscious developer like Bellway, all doors are FSC certified.

[marketing@vicaima.com](mailto:marketing@vicaima.com)  
[www.vicaima.com](http://www.vicaima.com)





## Clear the floor for the next generation of Camaro, the new Camaro Rigid Core interlocking LVT



Building on the continued success of rigid core interlocking luxury vinyl tiles, Polyflor is delighted to announce the launch of its new Camaro Rigid Core collection. Positioned under the already established, hugely successful and market leading 'Camaro' brand, Camaro Rigid Core features 18 stunning new designs, spanning 3 formats; plank, tile & herringbone.

The collection features a rigid SPC core

construction which acts as a strong and stable base for the 5G press fit locking mechanism, which allows installation over most existing subfloors without the use of a mallet. The 5G joint is simply pressed down by hand until an audible click confirms the joint is locked to provide a swift and easy installation method ideal for quick turnaround projects.

Other benefits of Camaro Rigid Core include a

built-in acoustic underlay offering 18dB impact sound reduction and eliminating the need for separate underlay, Polyurethane Reinforcement for eased cleaning and maintenance, and the collection is 100% waterproof and suitable for use with underfloor heating.

Thomas Rollo, Marketing Director at Polyflor commented "We are thrilled to have extended our Camaro product portfolio with a rigid core solution that is perfectly suited to meet the needs of busy homes and light commercial environments. Significant investment has been made to ensure the new Camaro Rigid Core range offers a collection of contemporary designs, paired with the very latest technical innovations to create a package that is both visually engaging and extremely efficient to install".

To present the beautiful new collection Polyflor have invested heavily in marketing items, including a 70-page brochure full of inspirational installation photography. A shadecard with a look book insert, a large retail presenter and a table top retail display stand. Sampling can be ordered free of charge on the Polyflor website or by calling the Polyflor Samples Direct Hotline on 0161 767 2551.



0161 767 1111  
www.polyflor.com

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# THE LEVELLING-UP AGENDA

Neil Sanders of F. Ball and Co talks through the steps to ensuring a flawless finish when installing floorcoverings using Luxury Vinyl Tiles.

**T**he increasing quality and variety of Luxury Vinyl Tiles (LVTs) and their suitability for a wide range of settings has seen their appeal continue to grow.

Given high expectations for such installations, ensuring a long-lasting, visually attractive flooring finish is essential when installing them. In line with BS 8203:2017 'Installation of resilient floor coverings,' this should involve following basic principles of subfloor preparation, as well as taking precautions to avoid common causes of floor failure, and selecting the optimum installation products at each stage of the process.

The first step in any flooring installation should be to check that the subfloor is suitably sound, smooth and dry. To avoid costly floor failure, any 'laitance' (particles on the surface) and contaminants should be mechanically removed before proceeding with a flooring installation.

## GUARDING AGAINST DAMP

At this stage, a moisture test should be conducted to determine if the subfloor is dry enough to receive floorcoverings. Excess subfloor moisture, whether residual construction moisture or rising damp, is the leading cause of floor failure, resulting in costly recalls and delays.

The only method of measuring subfloor relative humidity levels with certainty, and the method advocated by British Standards is to use a calibrated hygrometer. Where subfloor Relative Humidity (RH) levels are higher than 75%, a moisture management solution will be required to prevent moisture attacking flooring adhesives and causing resilient floor coverings to blister and lift.

Liquid waterproof surface membranes are available that will isolate excess



subfloor moisture where relative humidity values are up to 98%, with a single coat application, and fully cure in as little as three hours.

## PRIMING

In most cases, the next step in the subfloor preparation process should be to prime the subfloor. When used over non-absorbent surfaces, such as waterproof surface membranes, primers promote adhesion between the subfloor and the levelling compound applied over it. Applied over absorbent subfloors, they also stop the unacceptably rapid drying of levelling compounds.

Priming also prevents 'pinholing.' These are small holes in the levelling compound that have the appearance of pinholes or blisters caused by the slow escape of air from absorbent surfaces as the levelling compound cures.

General-purpose primers are available that can be used over both absorbent and non-absorbent surfaces. There are also specialist primers for use over non-absorbent surfaces, and others for calcium sulphate screeds.

## CREATING A BASE

A levelling compound should then be applied over the subfloor to create a perfectly smooth and level surface onto which LVTs can be installed. This ensures that the visual appearance of the floorcovering is flawless and not

compromised by imperfections in the subfloor showing through.

In heavy-duty areas, where installations will be subject to heavy loads or high foot traffic, the use of a heavy-duty levelling compound is recommended. The high compressive strength and excellent self-levelling properties of these levelling compounds will create the perfect base for the installation of LVTs.

When working over subfloors of plywood or steel, the application of a flexible levelling compound is advised to accommodate movements in the subfloor and prevent cracking in the levelling compound affecting the finished appearance of an installation.

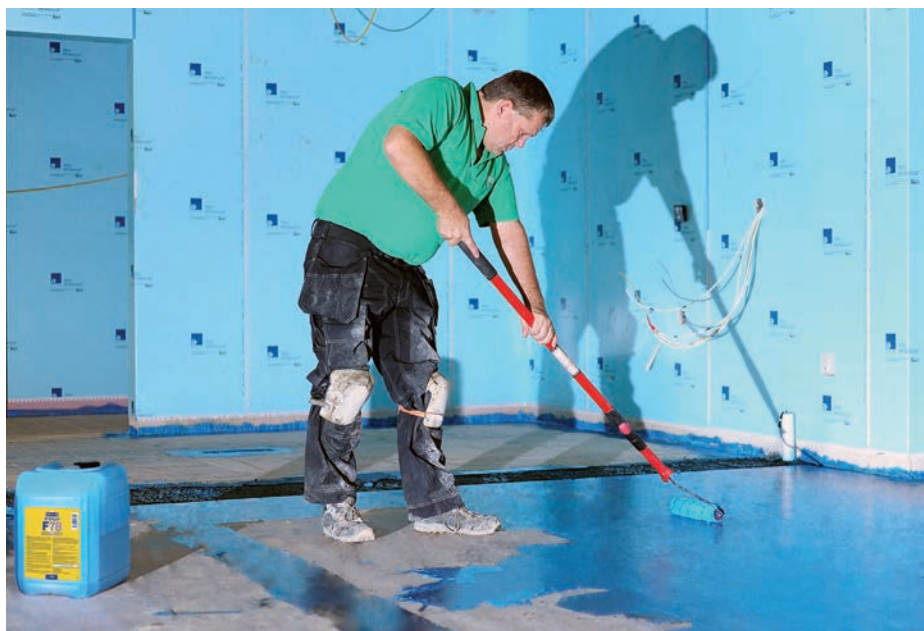
Where an LVT installation is part of a refurbishment and old adhesive residues are present after the removal of old floorcoverings, specialist levelling compounds are available that can be applied straight over old adhesive residues, without the need to prime beforehand, removing the need for mechanical preparation. Normally, adhesive residues need to be fully removed before applying a levelling compound.

## ADHESIVE SELECTION

Pressure sensitive adhesives are often the best choice for installing vinyl tiles or planks. They form an instant grab upon contact, so contractors don't need to worry about tiles or planks moving about when they are working, making them







ideal for where intricate designs or patterns are being created.

Pressure sensitive adhesives are available with a variety of other specialist attributes, including the ability to hold vinyl floorcoverings firmly in place in areas exposed to extreme temperature fluctuations (from -20°C to +60°C), such as conservatories and other heavily glazed areas subject to solar gain.

It is important to remember that some adhesives require rolling with a paint roller that has been coated with the adhesive to flatten the ridges formed by application with certain kinds of trowel. This is to reduce the incidence of these trowel 'serrations' shadowing through thin vinyl floor coverings and affecting the appearance of the finished installation. However, some adhesives do not require

## THE FIRST STEP IN ANY FLOORING INSTALLATION SHOULD BE TO CHECK THAT THE SUBFLOOR IS SUITABLY SOUND, SMOOTH AND DRY

rolling, so it is best to check the manufacturer's instructions.

The temperature of the floor must also be maintained above 10°C throughout the application and drying of the adhesive, and underfloor heating should be turned off for at least 48 hours before, during and after application to enable full bond strength to be achieved.

### COMPATIBILITY CHECK

Finally, it is highly recommended that contractors always check the compatibility of particular floorcoverings and adhesive. To do this, you can consult the floorcovering manufacturer's guidelines.

Neil Sanders is technical director at F. Ball and Co

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on a such a scale. Since they started serving the new build market back in 1992 they have become a trusted partner to many housebuilders and developers, both large and small. Their experience means that they understand the market and can do as much as they can to help you be successful.

01246 854577 [www.designercontracts.com](http://www.designercontracts.com)

## F. Ball supports centre renovation



Products donated by **F. Ball and Co. Ltd.** including the company's Stopgap 1200 Pro levelling compound, have been used to prepare subfloors as part of the renovation of the Coventry Caribbean Community Centre prior to its reopening to coincide with Coventry's UK City of Culture status last year. Commenting on the project, Paul Ager,

Amtico technical training instructor, said: "We were very pleased to offer our expertise to help with this invaluable community project. Using F. Ball's Stopgap 1200 Pro meant that we didn't have to mechanically prepare the subfloors, saving time and avoiding disruption to other trades, helping to complete the renovation in the allocated time frame."

01583 361 633 [www.f-ball.co.uk](http://www.f-ball.co.uk)

## Reginox celebrates launch of Aquadzi tap



**Reginox** is celebrating the launch of its new 4-in-1 tap – the Aquadzi. The Aquadzi tap delivers instant filtered boiling, cold, hot and filtered drinking water all with a simple touch. With an increasing amount of time spent in homes, the kitchen's importance in the family home has never been higher.

With space needed more than ever thanks to pressures of home-schooling and working, as well as the usual cooking and eating, the Aquadzi is the perfect stylish and convenient addition to your versatile kitchen. The effortless tap allows you to choose from four different settings. There is also environmental benefits because consumers no longer need to buy bottled filtered drinking water as it is available by the touch of the tap.

[sales@reginox.co.uk](mailto:sales@reginox.co.uk) [www.reginox.co.uk](http://www.reginox.co.uk)

## Moores transform their corporate site



Leading British kitchen manufacturer, **Moores**, have upgraded their corporate website with a fresh aesthetic and new site structure to better support new and existing customers. The update comes at a pivotal time following the Covid-19

pandemic, which has accelerated demand for digital solutions within the kitchen manufacturing industry. One major adaptation to the website is the clear division between Moores' key customer channels – housebuilders, public sector housing, and tradespeople. The channel specific information combined with simple navigation means the site now offers a more user-friendly experience for their business partners.

01937 842394 [www.moores.co.uk](http://www.moores.co.uk)



## Moores inspire the next generation with a number of apprenticeships

British kitchen manufacturer, **Moores**, has been upskilling and inspiring the next generation of designers, manufacturers, and marketers through offering a variety of apprenticeship schemes. Coinciding with National Apprenticeship Week, the company promoted their schemes as part of their long-term plans to bring new talent into the kbb industry and inspire a new wave of young professionals who are eager to be at the forefront of modern kitchen manufacturing. Alongside their policy for equal opportunities, Moores believe apprenticeships are essential to personal growth and career development, enabling those with passion and drive to get hands on experience within the competitive job market. The company currently has three apprentices working within various areas of the business. Steve Parkin, CEO of Moores Furniture Group, champions the scheme: "To build the workforce of the future we need to inspire the next generation. The kbb industry is an exciting sector that offers a huge range of job roles from shop floor manufacturing through to analytical and managerial roles, making the opportunities endless. But it's not just about careers, it's about helping young people to build their confidence and develop skills that are essential to personal and professional growth."

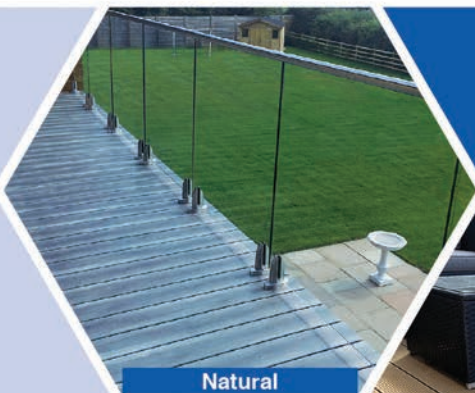
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## Reginox celebrates Tribezi success



**Reginox UK** is celebrating the success of its Tribezi tap. The Tribezi is the ultimate tap that not only saves time, but also energy and space with its compact design. The Tribezi is a brass hot water tap and the perfect accessory to any sink. This stand out product not only operates on 5 volts instead of the standard 12 volts, but it also has a unique ceramic thermos rod which means the water heats up quicker and stays hotter for longer. On standby, it typically uses 1-watt vs the standard 6 watts which makes it highly energy and cost efficient. Designed with a concealed water element meaning it doesn't come in to contact with water, therefore a significant reduction in limescale. It also has a vented tank which reduces the 'spitting' when water leaves the tap.

01260 280033 [www.reginox.co.uk](http://www.reginox.co.uk)

## Intelligent integration in the kitchen



**BLANCO UK** has launched a new concept for the busiest area of the kitchen with a new direction, style and brand campaign – designed to help customers create feature-rich, creative kitchen hubs; and to help retailers with sales opportunities. BLANCO UNIT combines sinks, taps, in-cabinet waste

and organisation systems into innovative and flexible solutions for modern kitchen life. Everything needed in the busy space is all in one place with the new BLANCO UNIT which creates a space-saving, timesaving, creative hub at the heart of the home.

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

## Keller Kitchens make Perfect Sense



New from sustainable manufacturer, **Keller**, is the Perfect Sense kitchen model, a bold design which highlights black and white contrasts. Pictured is a Japanese-styled scheme which cleverly mixes warm timber and solid colour.

Fenix®, in black and white, is used for the door fronts and, thanks to the special technology built into this material, the super-matt finish is soft to the touch. This technology goes further with the surprising bonus of being anti-fingerprint proof while micro-scratches on the surface can be repaired by a simple thermal method. The overall design incorporates full height, one-piece doors and a composite worktop with bespoke edge finishing. For a sleek finish, LED lighting is built into the handleless profiles.

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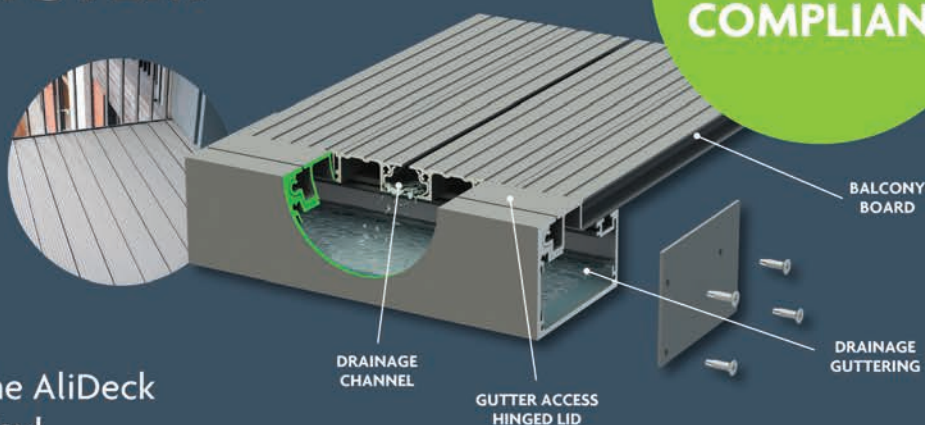
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# ALUMINIUM: THE BEST FOR BALCONIES?

With combustible materials banned in the external walls of high-rise buildings, the industry has had to adjust to a new design environment, however as AliDeck's Richard Izzard explains, it hasn't always been a smooth transition for balconies.

**I**n the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire, and following the Hackitt Review, the specification of non-combustible construction materials in the external envelope of high-rise buildings is now mandated by a revised set of Building Regulations.

With balconies clearly defined as "specified attachments" to the external envelope, the new, and more stringent regulatory environment requires balcony materials to be as fire safe as the rest of the envelope. This removes previously common materials, such as timber or composite decking, from the options available to specifiers.

Architects and specifiers however have rapidly embraced the new opportunities made available to them by metal balcony component systems that manufacturers have delivered to the market in response to evolving legislation.

In particular, aluminium has risen to the fore, with manufacturers reacting to the situation by developing comprehensive aluminium systems for balconies, including decking boards, support joists, pedestals, soffit cladding, balustrades, and more.

## OFF-THE-SHELF' REGS COMPLIANCE

To satisfy the new regulations, all materials must be certified to EuroClass A1 or A2-s1, d0 ratings. Aluminium easily achieves this standard, providing no contribution to fire and, when powder-coated to Qualicoat standards, no smoke emission and no production of "flaming droplets."

The compliance guarantee that these fire ratings deliver to specifiers is invaluable, allowing for essentially "off-the-shelf" specification of products, and providing peace-of-mind that proposals are robust and, most importantly, safe.

It has by no means been a smooth transition, though. As regulations began to evolve following Grenfell, and against a backdrop of the unrecognised implications for balcony design, many new and in-progress developments 'fell between the cracks,' and were completed with timber or composite decking across their balconies.

This has resulted in a huge amount of



almost brand-new timber or composite decking needing to be stripped out and replaced with a non-combustible alternative, creating unnecessary additional expense and waste.

## BUILDING A FIRE-SAFE FUTURE?

These new requirements and their associated costs and upheavals are appropriate responses to a genuine and inarguable set of problems within the construction sector.

New legislation such as the Fire Safety Act and Building Safety Bill has helped to clarify the situation and move us towards a fire safe future.

An additional impact on the non-viability of combustible materials was highlighted by the External Wall Fire Review scheme. Developed by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the Building Societies Association, this scheme (more commonly known as EWS1) was designed to unblock the high-rise housing market by providing lenders with a standard fire survey for buildings above 18 metres in height.

Changing Government advice in January 2020, however, broadened the scope of affected buildings to all multi-occu-

pancy buildings of any height, leading to mortgage lenders requiring EWS1 surveys for many more properties than originally envisioned. This immediately resulted in a new log-jam and huge delays for homeowners and their buyers.

For buildings that fail the EWS1 survey, the only solution is for all combustible materials to be replaced with non-combustible alternatives. While many of these failed buildings have profound fire-safety issues affecting multiple aspects of the entire construction, there have been large numbers of buildings failing simply due to the presence of combustible materials only in the balconies. Lenders have simply refused to accept any risk when it comes to providing mortgages on properties that contain combustible components.

With comprehensive aluminium balcony systems available to directly replace combustible timber or composite decking, this issue has been relatively simple to resolve, albeit at considerable expense. It underlines, though, the importance of manufacturers developing complete and off-the-shelf compliant systems for architects and designers to not only solve these issues but to prevent them from occurring in the first place.





#### SAFE, STRONG, SUSTAINABLE SPECIFICATION

While the non-combustible nature of aluminium is certainly the primary driving force behind its rapid adoption as the go-to material for balcony components, there are other features that play no small part in its overall suitability as the ideal replacement for timber or composite in specification.

Durability, strength, weight, sustainability, and cost are all areas where aluminium performs exceptionally well compared to other non-combustible materials. It's this comprehensive package

of benefits that has made extruded aluminium systems the new de facto standard for balcony, terrace, and walkway design.

Aluminium is a strong and highly durable material, able to withstand decades of use with minimal wear, yet is only a third of the weight of steel, delivering a low structural load and allowing building designs to be streamlined. A further key property of aluminium is that it does not corrode or rust, even when exposed to wet environments over many years, and when powder-coated, it provides a 'near-zero maintenance' solution, with just simple surface cleaning required.

## DURABILITY, STRENGTH, WEIGHT, SUSTAINABILITY, AND COST ARE ALL AREAS WHERE ALUMINIUM PERFORMS EXCEPTIONALLY WELL COMPARED TO OTHER NON-COMBUSTIBLE MATERIALS

In plentiful natural supply and with expected product life spans of up to 60 years, aluminium systems are fast becoming the ideal solution for 21st century construction. As manufacturers continue to develop comprehensive aluminium product lines for all areas of a building's construction, the material's inherent benefits, and the hugely positive contribution it brings to fire-safety, will surely embed this material as the new standard in specification, and for much more than just on balconies and decking.

Richard Izzard is managing director of AliDeck

### Introducing the Cullen Gable Restraint Bracket



ITW Construction Products Offsite was approached by the NHBC and worked in collaboration with the Trussed Rafter Association (TRA) and leading housebuilders to create an NHBC accepted solution with tested and qualified connections for timber gables to masonry walls.

The Gable Restraint Bracket provides significant site benefits to housebuilders. Junctions between elements that make up the building fabric can cause problems. The Cullen Gable Restraint system saves housebuilders time compared with traditional build methods and assures build quality as the simplification of the junction detail removes on-site complexity of the build process during construction.

01592 771132 [www.itwcp-offsite.co.uk](http://www.itwcp-offsite.co.uk)

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Alex Underwood, Head of Marketing at BAL, said: "A straightforward system, our External Tiling Range it provides ease of use and high performance when installing external porcelain tiles, pavers or slabs. As market-leaders for tiling in the UK and supported by the research and development capabilities of the global ARDEX Group, BAL's product range uses the most up-to-date technology is trusted for long-lasting patios and terraces."

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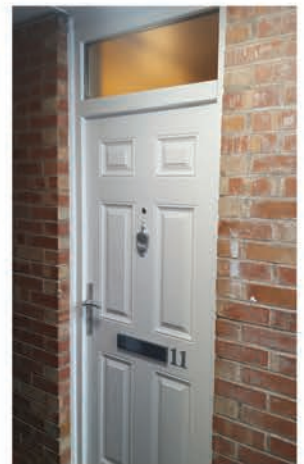
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340,000 new homes would need to be supplied every year to meet demand. Offsite timber frame construction could be the solution for housebuilders and using West Fraser's SterlingOSB Zero is just the ticket in terms of green, speed and cost when considering essential board materials.

[uk.westfraser.com](http://uk.westfraser.com)

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