

# selfbuilder + homemaker

SEP/OCT 2024

## Low energy, high comfort

Andrew Currie explains how underfloor heating is both a cosy and sustainable solution for heating your home

## Seasoned self-builders

John and Sue recently completed their fifth self-build, with a sixth project not off the cards

## INSIDE OUT

Cathy Dean explains what interior architecture is and how it can change the way you live

# *Making the most*

With their first baby on the way, Lucy and Marc were in need of a bigger family home but with house prices on the rise they knew a renovation was going to be their only option

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Firman Glass, 19 Bates Road, Harold Wood, Romford, Essex RM3 0JH



**PUBLISHER**

Anthony Parker  
aparker@netmagmedia.co.uk

**ACCOUNT DIRECTOR**

Midge Myatt  
myatt@netmagmedia.co.uk

**MANAGING EDITOR**

James Parker  
jparker@netmagmedia.co.uk

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

Roseanne Field  
rfield@netmagmedia.co.uk

**CONTRIBUTORS**

Alexandra Pratt  
Debbie Jeffery  
Jayne Dowle  
Nichola Hunter

**EVENTS COORDINATOR & DATA ANALYSIS**

Amy Madigan

**STUDIO MANAGER**

Mikey Pooley

**PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS**

Georgia Musson  
Kimberley Musson

**DIGITAL MARKETING & PR ACCOUNT MANAGER**

Suzanne Easter  
seaster@netmagmedia.co.uk

**ACCOUNT MANAGER**

Nathan Hunt  
nhunt@netmagmedia.co.uk

**PUBLISHING ASSISTANT**

Kim Neville  
kneville@netmagmedia.co.uk

**PUBLISHED BY**

Cointronic House,  
Station Road, Heathfield  
East Sussex, TN21 8DF

**ADVERTISING & ADMINISTRATION**

01435 863500  
info@netmagmedia.co.uk  
www.sbsonline.co.uk

**EDITORIAL FEATURES**

jparker@netmagmedia.co.uk

**PRESS RELEASES**

editorial@netmagmedia.co.uk

**REGISTRATION & CIRCULATION ENQUIRIES**

info@netmagmedia.co.uk



# FROM THE EDITOR...

This is my penultimate issue steering the content of Selfbuilder + Homemaker, as I will be handing the reins to the very competent Roseanne Field as editor the end of 2024. She has been writing for and working on the magazine for several years, and knows the ropes, to say the least. I hope you will be keen to contact her (rfield@netmagmedia.co.uk) to suggest projects to cover, as she is as interested in celebrating great self-builds as I am!

This issue has the usual rich mix of great case studies and advice, and another success story in our Selfbuilder Diaries on page 8. Sally and Nick managed to get their build off the ground in Devon changing a Class Q planning permission for a barn conversion into a full demolition and rebuild. It's a very informative piece for anyone in the same boat.

Our Home Styling on page 6 is a thought-provoking one about how taking an architect's approach to your interior can transform the way you live. Among our product features, a stand-out for eco-focused self-builders is an article putting the case for natural insulation, such as wood fibre. If the budget can take it, this has to be a serious choice on the grounds of not only your build's sustainability, but also aspects like acoustics and the crucial factor of creating a breathable fabric.

It's important to remember that futureproofing such key elements can actually save money over the long term. Enjoy the issue!

**JAMES PARKER**

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

**NATIONAL SELF BUILD & RENOVATION SHOW**

11 - 12 OCTOBER, SWINDON  
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**HOMEBUILDING & RENOVATING SHOW SOMERSET**

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**THE NSBRC GUIDE TO SELF BUILD PROJECTS**

16 - 18 NOVEMBER, SWINDON  
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**ON THE COVER...**

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## REGULARS

06

### Home Styling: Making your home work for you

Cathy Dean of interior architecture and design firm Studio Dean explores how thinking in architectural terms about your interior design can change the way you live your everyday life

08

### Selfbuilder Diaries

A few considerable bumps in the road haven't deterred Sally and Nick from persevering with their self-build, knowing that the end result means having turned their dream into a reality

12

### Ask the Expert: Underfloor heating systems for comfort

Andrew Currie of Schlüter-Systems discusses the benefits and installation options for underfloor heating systems, a cosy and energy-efficient heating solution

16

### Interior Inspiration: Bedrooms

For many of us our bedroom is our sanctuary – the ultimate space to switch off at the end of a busy day. Whether you're creating your own relaxing retreat, a functional yet fun kids' room or a peaceful nursery, we've assembled a choice of products for every kind of bedroom

67

### Classified & Directory

## PRODUCT FEATURES

47

### Making it clear

Graham Lindsay of Weru UK outlines six key areas to think through when considering upgrading and installing new windows

53

### A natural choice

Neil Turner of Ecological Building Systems looks at why sustainable insulation really is the natural choice for modern homes

56

### Sustainable steps forward

Simon Bower of Percy Doughty discusses how the stove and fireplace industry has worked tirelessly to reduce emissions and improve sustainability

65

### Making a splash

From innovative fixtures to minimalist designs and emerging colour palettes, Hayley Bowman of Frontline Bathrooms explores what's trending in the bathroom world



28

18

# CONTENTS SEP/OCT 2024

## PRODUCTS

**FINANCE & INSURANCE** 37

**SITE PREPARATION** 38  
Drainage & Septic Tanks

**STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS** 38  
Floors 38  
Structural Timber 39  
Waterproofing/Basements 38

**BUILDING ENVELOPE**  
Doors & Windows 47  
Glass & Glazing 49  
Roofing 46  
Rooflights 46

**HEATING, VENTILATION & SERVICES FOCUS** 48  
Fires & Fireplaces 55  
Radiators 57

**INSULATION** 54

**INTERIORS**  
Bathrooms 65  
Coatings, Sealants & Paints 57  
Doors & Door Hardware 66  
Kitchens 57  
Stairs 66  
Tiles 66

## CASE STUDIES

18

### Sustainable solutions

Lucy and Marc Hudson's sustainable renovation successfully blends period style with modern textures and materials

28

### Upwardly mobile

Donald and Anne Alden have transformed their tired semi-detached Devon bungalow into a show-stopping two storey contemporary home benefitting from country views

40

### A wealth of experience

A few previously unencountered bumps in the road on John and Sue's fifth project were no match for the seasoned self-builders

58

### A total transformation

Building projects are not renowned for being 'joyous adventures,' but for David Dines and Suzanne Tyler it's been exactly that

# MAKE YOUR HOME WORK FOR YOU

Cathy Dean of interior architecture and design firm Studio Dean explores how thinking like an architect about how your home functions can transform the way you live your everyday life

I love this definition of architectural interior design: "if you were to take the space, turn it upside down and shake it, the interior architecture is everything that doesn't fall out." Of course, interior architects also manage all the things that do fall out, but we just get to it after transforming your everyday life, with functional spatial planning.

Interior architecture is an 'inside out' approach to your home. We work with our clients to truly understand the clients' lives, needs and daily actions and fix any

problems that their current space causes. It really is about living in your home, not looking at it. I am forever reminding clients that the outside is important but the inside is what you interact with every single day. Of course we want the outside to be beautiful, but your neighbours look at your house, you live in it, so prioritise what you need.

With an 'interior architectural head' on, we will always think first about how you move most efficiently within a space. How can the flow be changed to ensure all of your real estate is being used effectively? It's about making sure you use every single inch of your home.

## PROBLEM SOLVING

Embarking on a self-build or renovation journey enables you to rethink the way you live your everyday life. We often ask a family to keep a tally for a week of how many times they use each room in their house. They are often amazed at how many spaces are unused. Interior architects also create spaces to help you. If you use a Peloton for exercise in your bedroom every day but have an unused guest room, why not create a mini gym?

We think about how you move through the space, whether that range cooker is really the best option, if the staircase being where it is going to cause flow issues. Do you need bifolds or simply a large window to connect to the outdoors – fully glazed walls look great, but create a whole surface that you can't use for anything else.

It takes a lot of thought to perfectly landscape your interior. Using CAD



interior architects will often work through 30 or 40 iterations of a layout, looking at how you will move within the space, and what is most effective for function, cost and finally, aesthetically.

## DESIGN FOR LIFE

Getting your interior architecture right not only improves your life, it also increases your home's life, enabling





## *Moving your kitchen to the east side of your house might elevate your mornings*

you to be happy there for longer. By solving spatial problems at the root, you eliminate everything that annoys you, making it less likely for you to need to renovate ever again.

In short, interior architects question everything, and really think about the changes that will truly elevate daily routines for clients. A large family bathroom might make your evenings

more enjoyable, bringing more benefit than an ensuite that gets used twice a year. Moving your kitchen to the east side of your house might elevate your mornings and solve more issues than even considering an extension. Do you need a dining room if you hate formal seating and much prefer entertaining in your kitchen? And don't get me started on the life-changing benefits of adding

an upstairs laundry room to any home!

Remember, it's not always about creating new space by extending or drastically changing layouts and plans, it is all about making the most of the space you already have to play with.

*Cathy Dean is CEO and founder of Studio Dean and homeware brand The Studio Dean Edit*

# selfbuilder Diaries

Navigating a few significant bumps in the road hasn't deterred Sally and Nick from persevering with a conversion from a Class Q to a full planning permission in Devon, knowing that dream can now become a reality

People ask why we decided to undertake a self-build. Well, when we moved back to Devon we rented a property where the landlord was about to have a house built, he offered part of his land to us to buy and build one for ourselves. We had not even thought about it, but were having such difficulty trying to purchase a house of any decent quality within our budget that we thought, why not? We did a huge amount of research on self-build, and decided we should try and do this.

The landlord later rescinded the offer of the land, but we still wanted to go ahead with the self-build. It caused quite a delay to us. We eventually found a plot of land with an old open barn with an expiring Class Q planning permission to convert. We met with the farmer, set in place an Option Agreement for him to reserve the land for us and put in an application for full planning to enable us to demolish the barn and rebuild it. This hadn't been done in Devon at the time, but there were a few cases elsewhere in the country where people had been successful in changing a Class Q permission to full planning. Two planning applications later we obtained the full planning and purchased the land. Since then we have obtained further permission to move the house completely off its footprint from the edge to the centre of our piece of land.

As we weren't living onsite we started by building our garage and workshop so that we had storage and some inside space. As we are doing most of the build ourselves this building has given us the chance to practise and try out some products to use on the house. We have also put in all our services including a bore hole. It was a very exciting day to say the least when they



drilled the bore and struck water!

Our build is on a tight budget, (even tighter since Covid as all our costs seem to have doubled), so we have had to do as much as possible ourselves. We have had contractors in for the big things (foundations and concrete slab) but we have done everything else. We decided to build the house with a woodcrete ICF block from Italy as, with this, we could build it ourselves. The shape of the house is similar to the barn, so quite simple. We dug out hundreds of tonnes of soil to give us a flat area on our sloping site and started the build.

All was going slowly but well until March 2023 when we were waiting for our ICF blocks to be delivered and we found out that the UK distributor

(to whom we had paid a considerable amount of money to) had gone into liquidation. The shock of this took a few days to sink in and then we realised we had no money and no blocks. The power of Facebook and self-build forums meant we managed to get in touch with other people in the same situation and this helped us to work out a way forward. We were lucky as I had part-paid for my blocks by credit card, so I was able to get all of the monies refunded, but again this delayed us.

Finally our two artic lorries of blocks arrived in June 2023 and 93 pallets of blocks were unloaded onto our slab and land, giving us just enough room to start laying the perimeter blocks. Lots of moving and carrying of blocks has





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happened, and finally we are down to three pallets as both the internal and external walls have gone up. The first pour of concrete into the two metre walls was nerve wracking, but the walls were well braced and everything went to plan.

So now we are at the roof stage. Our trusses have arrived and we are about to start on the roof which is very exciting. Once the windows and doors are in, having the house watertight will be a game changer – and something that’s been a long time coming.

If I have learnt anything from this experience it would be:

- Don’t do anything until you need to as you may change your mind
- Labour is very expensive and the quality varies so research the company or learn to do things yourself
- If you do it yourself, don’t underestimate the physical toll – we wish we were 20 years younger!
- Always try and pay at least part of an invoice by credit card so you get the payment security
- It’s going to take longer than you thought and will definitely cost more



- than you budgeted for
- As you progress the little wins are really big wins (e.g. water, electric connection) – celebrate them!

Will it all be worth it in the end? Definitely! We should end up with a

house which is wholly ours from design to build completion. It will work with our current and our future needs. It’s a dream that is becoming a reality, and it’s a great position to be in. You can follow our progress on Instagram @selfbuildsouthwest

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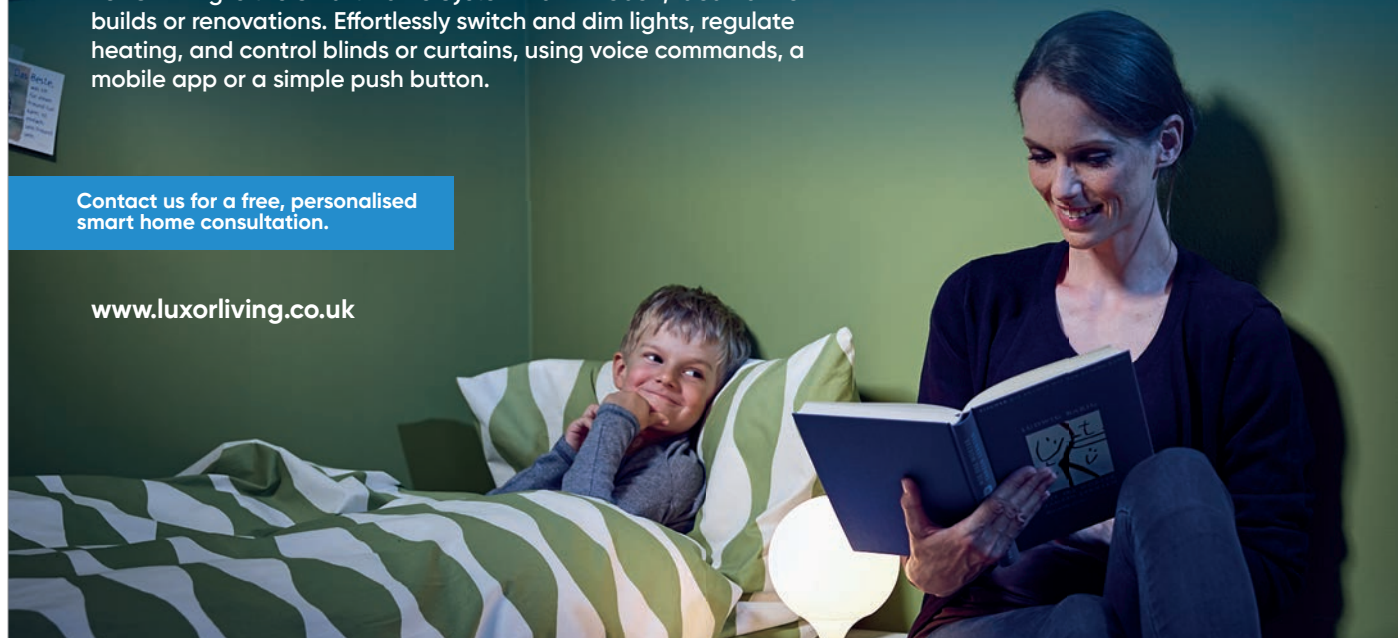
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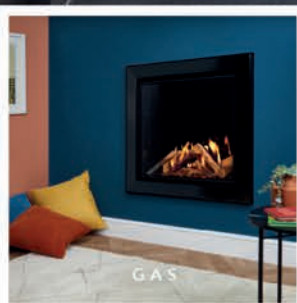
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# The comfort factor from underfloor heating



Andrew Currie of Schlüter-Systems discusses the benefits and installation options for underfloor heating systems, and how to create a cosy and energy-efficient heating solution

## WHAT ARE THE KEY BENEFITS OF USING UNDERFLOOR HEATING SYSTEMS COMPARED TO TRADITIONAL HEATING METHODS?

It all depends on the system. Water-fed (hydronic) systems are designed to operate as a primary heat source, meaning the installation of these systems can directly replace alternative heat sources such as traditional radiators. Electric systems are intended to be used as a secondary heat source, meaning they offer added comfort to floor surfaces like tile by keeping them warm, but they are not designed to heat the air temperature in the room. In this scenario, an electric system would be used alongside another primary heat source such as a radiator system.

Water-fed systems have low supply temperatures of around 30°C to 55°C, whereas a traditional radiator operates on temperatures as high as 60°C or even 70°C. This in turn means lower energy consumption, bringing down the heating costs for the home. The even heat distribution of a water-fed underfloor

heating system means the heat is dissipated into the room more evenly while with a traditional radiator, heat is dispersed into the room starting from the closest point to the radiator, leaving cold spots within the air due to movement.

Electric floor heating systems can be configured by different zones, allowing for greater flexibility when it comes to adding comfort to areas within the home that are more frequently used. The low assembly height of electric underfloor heating also makes this type of system suitable for renovation projects or retrofitting.

Underfloor heating also adds comfort to the home, particularly in scenarios where the floor covering is prone to being cold during the winter months, such as tiled floors. With a floor electric heating system underneath warming the tile, it is much more comfortable to step out of the shower on those cold winter mornings!

There are also hygiene benefits to using underfloor heating, particularly

in wet areas such as showers which are prone to condensation or a build-up of mould growth. The warmth dries out the area after use, creating a more hygienic and healthier environment.

## HOW DO FLOOR HEATING SYSTEMS CONTRIBUTE TO ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND REDUCED UTILITY BILLS?

Lower supply temperatures than is required from a traditional system like a radiator, means that it is cheaper to run as the water temperature does not need to go up to such a high level.

A low height build-up of some systems reduces the distance between the underfloor heating and the floor covering, making it faster for the heat to reach the surface and reducing heat up and cool down times.

It is also possible to run certain systems using regenerative energy sources, such as heat pumps, which are more energy efficient than alternative heat sources.

## HOW DO THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SYSTEMS DIFFER IN INSTALLATION AND OPERATION?

Electric underfloor heating systems use wires which are connected to the mains power supply that generates heat to warm the floor covering.

Typically, this type of underfloor heating is available in two different formats – as a loose cable installation or by using mats. Loose cable installations offer more flexibility in the layout of the cable.

Electric systems are controlled by a thermostat and can be adjusted as required to maintain the desired temperature using floor sensors.

Hydronic systems use a network of pipes through which hot water is circulated. These pipes are typically connected to boiler systems, but they can also be connected to other heat sources such as a heat pump. Connecting the pipes to a heat source requires a manifold and mixing valves depending on the heat source.

## ARE THERE ANY CONSIDERATIONS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN CHOOSING BETWEEN SYSTEMS?

There are a few considerations to bear in mind: the type of floor covering, how the underfloor heating will be installed (new build or renovation), the cost of installation, and ongoing cost of running and maintenance. The biggest question to answer is whether you are looking to heat the air space within the room or


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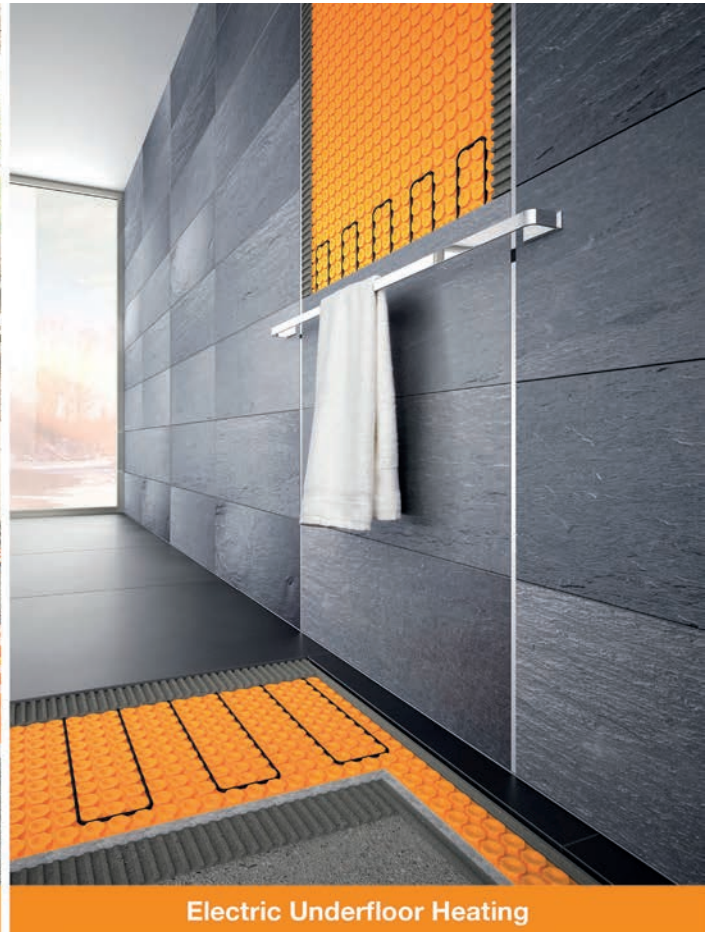
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warm the floor covering.

It's a common misconception that electric systems can be used as a primary heat source and will heat an entire room and often it will be installed with this intention, only to not perform as expected. In reality, it's only intended to keep surfaces warm and add comfort to the floor covering.

While the majority of floor coverings can be used with underfloor heating, it is important to take care with certain coverings. For example, not all carpet is suitable for all underfloor heating, particularly thicker carpets with high tog ratings.

Another key consideration is the type of project where the underfloor heating is required. If a renovation or retrofit project, where height build-up plays an important role in the decision, electric underfloor heating can be more suitable as a secondary heat source. It is additionally more suited where it is only being installed in a few select areas. On the other hand, for new builds or where the entire home is being heated, opt for a hydronic system.

While electric underfloor heating systems are cheaper to install, water-fed systems have lower running costs.

### ARE THERE DIFFERENT OPTIONS BASED ON THE TYPE OF FLOORING MATERIAL USED?

Different floor heating systems are suitable for different types of flooring. Electric and hydronic systems work well with a variety of floor finishes such as tile, laminate, hardwood and vinyl. However, some floorings, like carpet and polished concrete, require specific heating systems that are designed to accept those floor coverings.

### CAN IT BE RETROFITTED INTO EXISTING HOMES?

Electric underfloor heating systems are ideally suited for renovation or retrofitting into an existing property. Due to the low construction height, there is minimal build up requirements, with many systems being as low as just a few millimetres. These are perfect for scenarios where you may just want to add a bit more comfort to the room by warming the surface of the floor covering.

### WHAT ARE THE MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS, AND ARE THERE ANY POTENTIAL CHALLENGES TO BE AWARE OF?

Maintenance requirements for floor heating systems may vary depending on the type of system installed. Both electric and hydronic systems generally have lower maintenance needs.

During the installation phase of electric systems, it is important to check the cables are tested before, during and after installation. Afterwards, ensure the thermostat works accurately and that it's been set up to your requirements.

The main challenge associated with either system is identifying and repairing faults. Since both systems will be installed underneath a floor covering, fault finding should be carried out to identify any fault within the system, with removal of the floor tile being the last resort.

It is recommended to consult with the manufacturer's guidelines and seek professional advice for ongoing maintenance.

*Andrew Currie is training manager at Schlüter-Systems*



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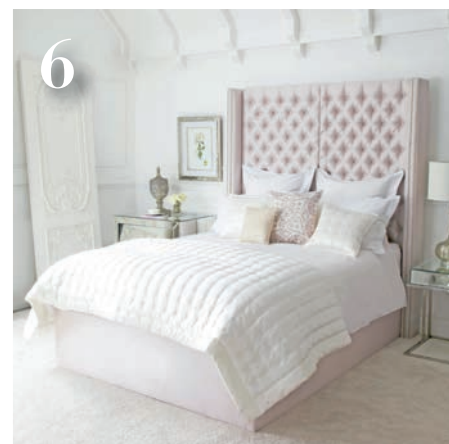


# INTERIOR INSPIRATION: BEDROOMS

For many of us our bedroom remains the important sanctuary – the ultimate space to switch off at the end of a busy day. Whether you're creating your own relaxing retreat, a functional yet fun kids' room or a peaceful nursery, we've gathered a choice of products to work in every kind of bedroom

1. The **Leander Classic Cot** from **Naturalmat** is a practical, stylish and dynamic piece of furniture, growing with your child from newborn to three years thanks to its adaptive functionality. Start off with the classic cot form, then from 6-18 months lower the base as they learn to stand and roll. Once they've grown a little more, the side rails are removable, before finally fully extending the bed with the included extension kit, from a 120 cm cot into a 150 cm junior bed. Available in a grey, walnut, white or whitewash (pictured) finish. Price: £869 [www.naturalmat.co.uk](http://www.naturalmat.co.uk)





2. Go au naturel with the **Evans Bedside Table** from **Where Saints Go**. Carefully crafted using solid elm wood, the table features natural rattan drawer fronts and a wood grain which adds to the rustic appeal. Thanks to the dual compartments, it provides plenty of storage space that doesn't come at the expense of aesthetics. Working well in natural spaces, this boho bedside table has a retro, vintage feel that pairs well with rich textures. Price: £269 [www.wheresaintsgo.co.uk](http://www.wheresaintsgo.co.uk)

3. This **Mathy By Bols Tent Bed** from **Idyll Home** provides the perfect adventure in any kids bedroom. The cloth side wall opens up as a canopy, either held up by two poles or easily taken down and the cloth rolled up and fastened with strips – perfect for a bit of peace and quiet! It also features an optional pull out sliding second trundle bed underneath, making it great for sleepovers. Price: £995 [www.idyllhome.co.uk](http://www.idyllhome.co.uk)

4. **Atkin and Thyme's Toshi Chest of Drawers** brings practicality and style to any space. Made from mango wood with a cement finish and brass inlay to the central drawer, it's the perfect

combination of urban industrial teamed seamlessly with a luxe metallic look. The brass handles lend the chest of drawers a functional finish. Price: £599 [www.atkinandthyme.co.uk](http://www.atkinandthyme.co.uk)

5. Create a stylish and functional dressing area with the **Bampton Dressing Table** from **Laura James**. It features a chic alabaster white finish complemented by a warm oak effect tabletop and brass effect tabletop and brass effect handles. With ample storage in its three drawers, you can keep beauty essentials neatly organised. The spacious top provides the perfect place to display your favourite perfumes, jewellery, or makeup brushes. Price: £149.99 [www.laura-james.co.uk](http://www.laura-james.co.uk)

6. **Sweetpea & Willow** designed the **Paris Bed** to recreate the dramatically high hotel luxe look. It has sumptuous deep buttoning, individually applied studding and a height of approximately 190 cm, creating a stunning centrepiece for your master bedroom. The headboard is available in a range of fabrics and colours, and the bed ranges in size from single up to Emperor. Price: From £3,990 [www.sweetpeaandwillow.com](http://www.sweetpeaandwillow.com)

# MARRYING OLD & NEW, SUSTAINABLY

Lucy and Marc Hudson's sustainable renovation of a west London Victorian terrace successfully blends period style with modern textures and materials

TEXT ALEXANDRA PRATT IMAGES PIERCE SCOURFIELD/MITCHELL + CORTI

With their first child on the way, Lucy, a doctor by profession and her husband Marc, a film editor, knew they needed a larger home. It was 2017 and "prices were skyrocketing," recalls Lucy. "So, we were looking for somewhere to gut." The solution was an end-of-terrace, Victorian property in west London. It was a former rental property, and, on paper, the house seemed very promising.

"It had tall ceilings, and we liked the light and height in the rooms," explains Lucy. Yet, when she saw inside, Lucy's reaction was disappointment.

"I thought 'this is awful,'" says Lucy. The kitchen was an afterthought; tiny and cold. There was a 1970s fitted banquette in pine, which was hideous. We had wanted to move in and live with it while we saved up to do the work, so initially, I said 'no.'" The project was saved by Lucy's mum, who intervened and helped Lucy see that she and Marc could do something amazing with the house.

Naturally, Mum was right. After four years and two phases of renovation work, the couple now have an elegant and sophisticated home that successfully marries the original details of the Victorian house with modern sustainable and textural finishes.

The first of these two phases of renovation took place as soon as Lucy and Marc completed the purchase. As that was only one week before their son was born, they didn't move in until he was five months old. The couple's original plan was to be in before he was born, but the purchase dragged on for many months.

Unsurprisingly, one of the first things to go was the banquette. Lucy and Marc then turned the cold downstairs bathroom into a utility room. Upstairs, the four bedrooms shared one shower room located off a corridor that was so poky, "we had to walk sideways to get into the room," recalls Lucy. They turned it into an ensuite off the master, and made the tiny fourth bedroom into an ensuite for the second bedroom.

With everyday life more tolerable, Lucy and Marc began to look for an architect to take the house into phase two.

Budget considerations and a sustainable approach were key, so Lucy and Marc approached RIBA for a recommendation of eco-minded architects in their area. Andrew Mitchell and Ester Corti of Mitchell + Corti were a great fit. "They have energy and understood us, our design goals and were open to our suggestions," says Lucy.

The couple's brief to Andrew and Ester was to extend without losing too much outdoor space. The solution was a loft conversion granted under permitted development rules to incorporate a new bedroom, which doubles as a work-from-home space, plus an ensuite bathroom. Downstairs, planning permission was required to extend the kitchen by widening it to incorporate the side return with a small projection into the garden. Ester and Andrew designed the scheme and layout in detail, managed the planning application process, put the building contract out to tender and project managed the build, although Lucy was onsite regularly. The family moved out during the second phase of building work but were lucky to save on rent by moving in with Lucy's parents, who live close by.

The new kitchen and dining room is connected to the garden by large, glazed doors, a picture window, and a long skylight. The black framed Crittall-style glazing to the rear in this new space is aluminium, although the replacement windows in the older part of the house are all timber sashes. New radiators were installed throughout, except for the new kitchen and dining room, which has underfloor heating.

The new skylight runs the length of the kitchen to one side and underneath the architects designed a geometric lattice of slender oak beams, or "fins." This intriguing design feature casts an ever-changing pattern of shadow and light across the space. "That part is south-facing and it adds a level of intricacy you don't often

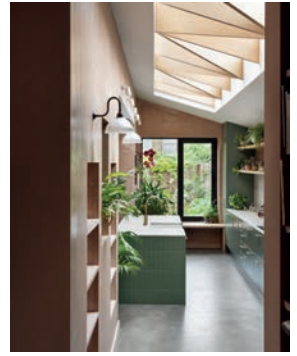
## HIGH POINT

Seeing their favourite space in the home – the kitchen – come together.

## LOW POINT

The mould, rotten woodwork and electrics that had to be replaced.





see," says Lucy. "Everyone comments on it when they come round."

Geometric shapes are a recurring theme throughout the new design of the house, as Lucy and Marc's architects drew inspiration from the original Victorian tiles in the hallway, giving their home its unique identity. "At first, we weren't keen on the tiles, but then we saw the interesting colours and shapes, which are now drawn throughout the house," says Lucy.

The couple were keen on optimising space inside the home, too. "The amount of stuff we were accumulating with a baby and a dog was amazing," laughs Lucy. Every inch inside is used, with extra shelves between boxed-in pipework and the upstairs of the loft staircase also turned into useful cupboard space. Outside, secure

storage extends along the side boundary to the road, accessible from both the front garden and the kitchen.

With sustainability high on the agenda, Lucy and Marc re-insulated the house on all the external walls, using Warmshell wood fibre boards. Made from waste sawdust, these dense 'biocode-free' boards are breathable, maintaining a cool home in summer and a warm one in winter. While this work hadn't been strictly necessary, Lucy and Marc wanted to replace their gas boiler with an air source heat pump, which requires a well-insulated home to function effectively.

Unfortunately, installing the heat pump became a bit of a "nightmare," Lucy explains. Not only was the location of the unit a stumbling

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block, but to take advantage of the Government incentive scheme available at that time, the couple needed to find an accredited installer. With huge waiting lists meaning extensive delays to their project, Lucy and Marc investigated the possibility of paying for their builders to become accredited, but found the process would be too complicated and expensive. Finally, they had to admit defeat and install a new gas boiler.

In the end, Lucy concluded that for them installing the heat pump in their period building was "too difficult, there's too much legislation and no space." Furthermore, adds Lucy, "there was no guarantee it would produce enough energy to heat the house, despite the extra insulation."

A stand-out feature of the Hudson's renovation

is their innovative use of materials, both inside and out. Lucy found inspiration for the interiors on a trip to Sicily in 2019. "We absolutely fell in love with the very old, glamorous architecture and their use of stark, modern textures and materials," she recalls. Applying this juxtaposition of old and new to the Hudson's own period home, Ester and Andrew suggested cladding the exterior of the kitchen extension and loft in Green Coat Plx. This sustainable steel cladding is finished in Swedish rapeseed oil and is highly durable. Not only does the geometric design of the standing seams echo the tile-inspired theme, but this most modern of finishes delineates the new from the old in a sympathetic manner.

Internally, Lucy and Marc chose to simply seal

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the raw gypsum plaster in the kitchen/diner and use that as the final finish. This showcases natural variation and adds a softness to the room, which contrasts with the dark micro cement floor from Eco Porcelainic. This flooring is durable, flexible, UV resistant and seamless, making it perfect for the couple and the demands of their busy family life!

The soft pink on the walls of the kitchen works also beautifully with the kitchen cabinetry. In a bid to keep costs under control, the architects suggested that Lucy and Marc buy standard carcasses off the shelf and have a joiner make the doors, which are painted in Green Smoke from the Farrow and Ball range and finished with brass handles from Dowsing & Reynolds. The beautiful green tiles on the waterfall sides of the island are from Mandarin Stone.

"Apparently, raw plaster and a green island are a new trend," laughs Lucy. "I saw a photo

of a green island and that was a trigger. Now, green flows through the whole house." The stair balustrades are painted green and the attic ensuite shower room is tiled in various shades of pink, these all tie into the colours found in the hallway tiles.

"We like to be bold with colour and give the house some real character, but we also tried to make the most of the features in the house," says Lucy. "We've kept fireplaces, tiling, etc. and pay homage to that. It works well." The couple also incorporated vintage items, as they believe having a nice mix of old and new gives character to a home. "We have a lovely vintage dresser in our kitchen that works really well with the more minimal kitchen cabinets and concrete floor," says Lucy, who also gave a great deal of thought to lighting. In the master bedroom, kitchen and living room they installed some big bold lights, such as modern chandeliers, bringing the



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rooms together.

Sustainability was a factor in all of the couple's decisions, with the paint chosen from non-toxic manufacturers. Lucy also sourced reclaimed flagstone for the landscaping.

"We were trying to avoid cement. Drainage was also an issue. The garden was a mud pie, so we had to install new drains, as we wanted to keep a garden for insects."

With so many details to focus on, it was one simple build decision that Lucy credits as the nicest thing the architect proposed, and that is creating a sightline from the front of the house to the rear. It meant changing their newly created utility room during phase one, but, "the vista does make it into a home." The same is true for Lucy's decision to open up the living room into the kitchen, which improves the flow. "That's the nicest thing – everyone can do their thing, but we still feel like we are together. I love

being in the kitchen."

Although Lucy and Marc hoped to be back in their newly renovated home before the birth of their second child, it wasn't meant to be. Supply chain delays caused by Covid meant the project ran over time by six months. Other issues also caused delays. Typically, when renovating a period home, these only became apparent when work begins and included mould, rotten woodwork and electrics that needed replacing. "That was a low point," admits Lucy.

The high point, however, was seeing their show-stopping kitchen come together, with the skylight and the beams in particular making a real difference to the feel of the space. Marc took a carpentry course and hand-built their new kitchen table, using ash from Lucy's family farm in Dorset. Celebrating the recent arrival of their third child, Marc and Lucy finally have the space they need to grow as a family. ■

## LUCY & MARC'S TOP TIPS

- \* Set aside a good percentage of your budget for contingencies
- \* Make sure you have decided on your plans before going to tender
- \* Think about storage!
- \* Think about the evolution of the house; is it your forever home? Can it grow with you and adapt to additional family members and their needs?



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# UPWARDLY MOBILE

Donald and Anne Alden have transformed their tired semi-detached Devon bungalow into a show-stopping two storey contemporary home – in a design which reveals spectacular views of the countryside

TEXT DEBBIE JEFFERY IMAGES TOM HARGREAVES





“One minute we had a bungalow, the next we had a pile of rubble,” recalls Donald Alden of his family’s Salcombe home. “We’d never tackled a building project before, so it was unnerving to effectively demolish our life savings and start again, with just one main wall left standing.”

With Donald and his wife, Anne, determined to update the tired single-storey holiday bungalow they had owned for 30 years, one factor limited their options: the building is semi-detached. With no hope of demolishing and rebuilding, the couple knew that any changes would need to be in keeping with both the wider setting and the property next-door.

They had purchased their modest bungalow thirty years before, after searching for a holiday home in the area. “I first fell in love with Salcombe back in 1976, when I joined my family for a holiday in the town,” recalls Donald. “I was nineteen at the time, and met Anne shortly after at university.”

The couple married in 1981 and had three children together. “We found that taking small children away to far-flung places on holidays could be stressful and expensive,” says Donald. “Devon’s South Hams is so beautiful, and we had enjoyed some wonderful times there over the years, so we decided to use our savings to buy a holiday home in the UK instead.”

Located right at the top of Salcombe, enjoying

far-reaching views of rolling Devon countryside to distant Dartmoor, the bungalow they found was empty and in a poor condition, making it affordable to the family. They inherited furniture with the property and then gradually made improvements as funds allowed.

“It was a big step for us, and we had to take out an extra mortgage on our existing home in Hertfordshire in order to buy the bungalow,” says Donald. “Later, we replaced the kitchen and bathroom but took our time, because we were never going to let out the bungalow to others on a commercial basis.”

The single-storey brick property had been solidly built in the 1960s, with a compact garage, a kitchen, one bathroom, a separate living room, two bedrooms and a dining room which Donald and Anne used as a third bedroom. They enjoyed spending time together as a family in Salcombe, which is situated in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the banks of the Kingsbridge Estuary and has been named Britain’s most expensive seaside town. Renowned as a holiday hotspot, the area is a mecca for those who enjoy sailing and water sports.

“The children learnt to sail dinghies during their holidays,” says Donald. “Then, 20 years ago, we all voted to buy our first basic boat, and although we were nervous at first, it really completed the whole Salcombe experience.”

## HIGH POINT

We never expected to enjoy the project, but can honestly say it was a fantastic experience from start to finish.



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The children had grown up finding holiday jobs in the Salcombe area, and are extremely fond of the town, but after many years of providing relaxed holiday accommodation for the family, the bungalow was beginning to show its age and required extensive renovation.

"We were heading towards retirement, and knew we'd need to invest considerable money on the wiring, windows, kitchen and bathroom," says Anne. "We love the location, though, and our plan was to spend more time there as a couple with visiting family, but the bungalow wasn't really suited to long-term living."

Exploring a major redevelopment led the couple to Barc Architects through a friend, who recommended the practice. "We did the sensible thing and approached several architects, but it was Caroline and her team at Barc who impressed us with their enthusiasm and ideas," recalls Donald.

Caroline Shortt is an award-winning chartered architect and the director of Barc Architects, who specialise in the design and delivery of contemporary buildings, extensions, renovations and interiors in the south west. "For me, buildings are all about the people who occupy them, and I love getting to know my clients, learning about their lives, passions and interests, and using this knowledge to create an individual design tailored specifically for them," she says.

Donald and Anne had never previously tackled

a building project, and were led by Barc on the design. The property needed to be in keeping with its surroundings, taking full advantage of far-reaching views to the rear. It was important to introduce plenty of natural light, as well as much needed off-road parking and smart storage solutions throughout – providing ample space to host visiting family.

"Initially, we explored the possibility of constructing a flat-roofed two-storey extension," says Caroline. "However, given that Melliker is semi-detached, it was essential that the finished home would sit harmoniously alongside its neighbours. Therefore, we adapted these plans to incorporate a pitched slate roof design to accommodate two new bedrooms and a bathroom for family and guests upstairs. Internally, we retained most of the existing walls, and extended the bungalow towards the rear with a glazed, flat-roofed dining area, which is open plan to the main kitchen and living space."

The former garage was transformed into an inviting entrance hall, crowned by a new skylight, and the newly created kitchen-dining area opens seamlessly onto a rear terrace, establishing a fluid connection to the outdoor space. The master bedroom and a snug were included towards the front of the house, while on the new first floor two additional bedrooms and a bathroom have been added to accommodate visiting family and friends, as the property will

## LOW POINT

Covid meant site visits were restricted, and we felt guilty about our noisy building work impacting on the neighbours' summer.



## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

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not be let out on a commercial basis.

"From the moment we met Caroline Shortt and her team, we knew we were in safe hands," Anne recalls. "We told them that we wanted to turn our holiday home into a proper home, and how we thought this might be achieved. They assuaged our concerns about potential planning limitations and asked us to trust them, which fortunately we did. Their suggestions invariably saved us money and always improved the property, so we cannot thank them enough."

The planners approved the design, which involved creating a new first floor in timber frame and extending the ground floor in blockwork, clad in cedar boarding and an insulated render system. Party wall agreements were then secured from the neighbours on both sides.

"Everyone told us that we'd need a project manager, but we soon realised that this wasn't the case after being introduced to our builder, Will Lansdale of Lansdale Building," says Donald. "We've always trusted our gut instinct on these things, but after meeting with Will we decided it would be sensible to interview another builder. This only served to confirm that we were making the right choice with Will, who was recommended to us by our architects. Not only is he passionate about building, but he lives locally and is deeply committed to the community."

Lansdale Building took responsibility for the demolition work, which involved taking down all but the front external wall of the bungalow. "Seeing our home reduced to rubble was sobering," says Donald, "and the fact that lockdown was introduced the day after work

began meant that site visits were impossible for us, and we needed to rely on phone and video calls with our team from 250 miles away."

The builders adhered to strict Covid regulations on site, completing the groundworks and preparing trench-fill foundations for the extensions. Structural steelwork was introduced to support what remained of the building; new walls and roofs were completed; windows and doors installed, and the exterior finished in a combination of crisp insulated render and cedar boarding.

"I had suggested traditional New England style clapboard, fixed horizontally and painted light blue, but Caroline assured us that vertically-hung cedar boards would create a more contemporary finish as well as being low maintenance, as it would fade and weather to a soft grey colour," says Donald. "We were happy to be led by her, and trusted our builder implicitly. The attention to detail was incredible, and we were so impressed by the quality of workmanship."

It was the builders who recommended that the couple should invest in new internal doors, rather than reusing the existing ones, which were showing signs of wear and tear. Donald and Anne had worried about the impact of Covid on costs and the availability of materials, but fortunately the builders ordered ahead and managed to avoid most of these issues, using mainly local trades and suppliers to complete the project.

Glass plays an important role in the design, and it was Anne who expressed a wish for the rear of the house to be almost entirely glazed to appreciate the views, whereas previously



only three small windows had looked out onto the surrounding countryside. Fixed and sliding aluminium doors were specified, with timber replacement windows to the front elevation, and skylights dropping additional light onto the dining area and landing.

“Building right beside other homes during lockdown did fill us with guilt, when people were trying to enjoy time out in their gardens and make the most of the good weather, but our neighbours were so understanding – particularly the owner of the attached bungalow,” says Donald. “To allay fears of overlooking, we invited the relevant neighbours on site as soon as the new bedroom level was completed, so that they could go upstairs and see our outlook for themselves. Since completion, we’ve received many compliments on the design from local people.”

Externally, the property is now unrecognisable, and the interior has also been transformed with the removal and repositioning of walls, which has dramatically improved the layout and flow. The entire house was also rewired and newly plumbed, with underfloor heating installed in several rooms.

“Our project didn’t qualify as a new build, despite only leaving one wall standing, because we were using existing elements such as the foundations, so it was categorised as a remodel and extension, which meant that we

did not need to pay VAT,” says Donald. “Overall, we spent around £400,000 on the building and remodelling work, with additional money for the fit-out, including the kitchen.”

Matching the colour of the kitchen island to other paintwork has created a cohesive feel, and although the couple chose muted internal shades, with predominantly white walls for most rooms, they followed the advice of the painter, who suggested a darker and more dramatic colour for the snug to the front of the house.

Donald found the grey plank-effect ceramic tiles, which have been laid over underfloor heating through many of the rooms as a hard-wearing and practical flooring. His suggestion of an open tread staircase was vetoed, however, and instead a specialist carpenter crafted the substantial feature staircase.

“We moved into the completed house in 2022, and the snagging list since then has been minuscule,” says Anne. “Without exception, every member of our team has been fantastic, and they all worked together from start to finish to deliver a home which surpasses our expectations and has allowed us to breathe new life into a property that means so much to us as a family. We didn’t want to create a show home, and although the interiors are fairly pared back and minimal, it is most definitely a place where we feel relaxed.” ■

## TOP TIP

★ Trust your gut instinct as much as anything else when choosing your team, then listen to what your architects, builders, and craftspeople have to say – and be open to taking advice.

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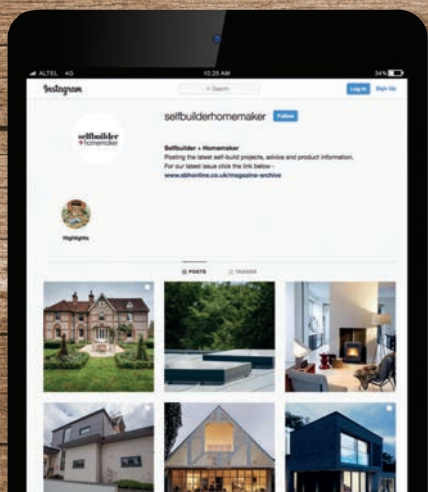
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## Innovations for a self build project

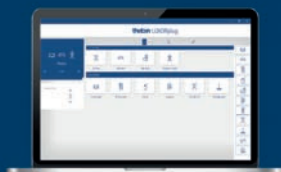
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CASE STUDY

# PUTTING EXPERIENCE INTO PRACTICE

A few previously unencountered bumps in the road on John and Sue's fifth project were no match for these seasoned self-builders

TEXT JAYNE DOWLE IMAGES CILLACAM PHOTOGRAPHY









As a veteran self-builder, John Askew has plenty of advice to share. When he and his wife, Sue, built their current home – the fifth self-build they have completed – they opted to sell their previous house and move into an onsite caravan for nine months.

“We got one with an apex roof, rather than the flat-roofed kind,” says 69-year-old John. “There is no insulation in a flat-roof caravan, so you don’t want one of those. It was quite cosy, but however you sealed it up you couldn’t keep the dust out.”

This was at the end of February 2022, when building work on their new detached farmhouse had been going on for around four months. John couldn’t wait to get closer to the action – he and Sue, also 69, have always been hands-on, doing everything from digging foundations to driving plant hire. It was difficult to source a caravan to buy in the first place, John says, because in the aftermath of Covid, there was huge demand from holiday parks and people opting to take a break at home instead of travelling abroad.

Such challenges are all in a day’s work for John, an arable farmer with 550 acres, and Sue, a retired practice manager, who have two adult sons with their own families; one lives 3,500 miles away in New York, the other in the nearby village of Guyhirn.

John and Sue’s new home, Beech House, in Marshland St James, near Downham Market, Norfolk, was finished in September 2022. It’s called Beech House because John and Sue planted a row of native beech around the perimeter, to provide an attractive natural hedge and help shield their home from the winds that race across the tranquil East Anglian landscape.

Beech House, its garage and an accompanying

agricultural shed was built under Paragraph 79 (now Paragraph 80) and agricultural provision planning permissions, another challenge to be negotiated. The new house would stand a significant distance of a couple of miles from the development area boundary around the village of Marshland St James, but needed to be there as it is central to John’s farming operations.

This presented an issue with the rules of Paragraph 79, which allows individual new-build homes in rural areas only in exceptional circumstances and when a number of conditions, including external appearance and sustainability, have been met.

The Askews’ architect, James Burton at Swann Edwards, an architecture practice in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, explains that the justification for agricultural provision was hard to achieve because John’s farming business is arable; as such there is no requirement for him to be present on the site to tend to livestock.

James argued that in appearance and sustainable terms, the new house would meet the criteria of Paragraph 79. “John and Sue have lived in the local area all their lives. Their brief was for a modern home that reflects the fen landscape and its agricultural nature,” he says. “We spent time exploring the area and the typology of agricultural buildings, in particular grain stores and how they have evolved over time. Typically, these will be a single span building with concrete grain store walling up to a height, with a simple cladded structure above.”

The house is faced with steel trapezoidal cladding to reflect the rural vernacular. John and Sue and their architect discussed the potential construction options available and the pros and cons of each.

## HIGH POINT

“Definitely realising how this house is set out with the views. We’ve never had views like this before, the glazing lets us see so much.”

– John Askew

“The glazing. You get all the skylscapes, all the weather, and even the moonscapes as well!”

– Sue Askew



## LOW POINT

"We never have a low point, there's only been problems which we've got round. The most important thing with housebuilding is to plan ahead – and run it like a military operation!"

John was wary of building on a steel frame, for example, partly because of the cost and partly because he admits he's a traditionalist who likes "solid walls". So masonry construction with a suspended block and beam ground floor and timber upper floors and roof was chosen as the build method.

A masonry build allowed John to best utilise his wide range of local contacts in the building trade, who were all familiar with this traditional way of housebuilding. It also created "decent levels of thermal mass," James adds, to contribute to the sustainable performance of the building.

To help meet the terms of Paragraph 79, in terms of energy demand, maximum efficiency has been achieved by designing Beech House around the path of the sun, reducing the frequency and size of openings to the north, east and west sides of the house, which are the most exposed to colder temperatures and strong winds.

Good levels of insulation and airtightness were non-negotiable. For the floor, 150 mm Kingspan K103 was chosen to provide high thermal performance balanced with the overall thickness and cost.

The walls are insulated with Knauf Dritherm 32 to provide full fill insulation. "This is a commonly used product, understood by all and simple to use and install, ensuring thermal continuity can be maintained," says James. This material is also non-combustible so is a safe and fire regulations-approved choice.

The multi-pitched roof is constructed from Kingspan KS1000 RW, steel-faced composite roof panels that provide good levels of insulation and airtightness. It also achieves the

desired rustic appearance for the new house. "Again, this is a material that is readily used in agriculture and John and the local workforce are experienced at using this," says James. John adds that he didn't want a strictly 'tin roof' because the noise of rain would drive him mad.

The flat roof of the balcony, off the main bedroom, comprises Kingspan Kooltherm K107 and K1118 insulated plasterboard to provide a level threshold from bedroom to balcony.

A Mitsubishi Ecodan 8.5 kW air source heat pump and water cylinder powers ground floor underfloor heating, radiators upstairs and hot water. There is also a ground-mounted solar PV array. With efficient additions such as LED lighting, the resulting operational energy of the dwelling is as low as possible.

To add weight to the agricultural aspect of the planning proposal, the land on which Beech House and its new farm building was to be built on included a former farmyard, so it was classed as brownfield. Also, there had been a farm dwelling on the site previously and neighbours nearby.

"We worked closely with John and Sue, and Adam Case, a partner at local estate agency and chartered surveyors Cruso Wilkin, to develop the agricultural justification," says James. "The National Planning Policy Framework had been updated at the time to allow for succession planning and we worked with the local authority – Borough Council King's Lynn and West Norfolk – and presented the case at the Planning Committee, with the scheme being approved subject to an agricultural tie."

This is the first time in their self-build history, John says, that he and Sue have stood back and let the architect take the lead.



"Normally, we'd have to work round the dining room furniture!" he laughs. "We'd had it since we were first married, and one of Sue's rules was that the dining room in any of the houses had to fit her furniture. She has finally allowed us to get rid of it!" Sue and John's only intervention was to make the house a little bit smaller than James first designed it, so it's now 317 sq m. "Why?" says John. "It doesn't cost as much money then, does it?"

The build cost was just under £400,000. Other cost-cutting measures John recommends include keeping everything in a self-build house as square as possible, as curves cost more to design and build. And although he and Sue are utterly delighted with the large windows that provide ever-changing views – "you can see right the way up into the sky, you can watch the birds fly from one side of the view to the other" – John would never go for vast expanses of glazing, again because of the cost: "You can have big windows, but do it in sections. Even though some of these here are big spaces, the spaces have been filled cost-effectively. Huge windows can easily cost £40,000 to £50,000 each which makes a big hole in the budget. There are ways around it."

Sue especially likes the cosiness of the sitting room, which also benefits from the views, and they both like the free-flowing open-plan space which James designed for them.

The Askews met James when Swann Edwards was appointed to work on the rebuild of a local community centre, and immediately felt that they could trust him to interpret their ideas for a new farmhouse.

"Jamie asked us what we wanted in the house and then drew the house around it," says Sue. "You need certain rooms, certain things, so the

design came from that really." On the ground floor, the house has an open-plan kitchen/dining/family room, a snug/living room, an office, a utility room and a plant room.

Upstairs, there are three bedrooms and a bathroom. The main bedroom has a dressing room and ensuite, and a balcony leading off, with an additional door also giving access from the landing. This provides panoramic views of the surrounding countryside and offers shade to the terrace below. The balcony is held up on brick pillars that provide an attractive design feature to the exterior of the house.

"Futureproofing was an important part of the design considerations with John and Sue anticipating remaining in this home," says James. "As such, level access is available throughout the ground floor, from the large front door onwards. Openings are sufficiently wide should wheelchairs be required in future. In addition, the first floor has level access thresholds onto the balcony and there is space incorporated for the future installation of a lift and accessible bathrooms.

The garage has been built with attic trusses and a mezzanine floor. "We've got that as a junk room," John says, "but it could easily be turned into an extra bedroom if required."

The flexibility he's learned through a lifetime of farming has equipped John with a very pragmatic attitude to self-build. He uses agricultural suppliers to source materials when he can. One of his top tips is to have all materials onsite a week before they are needed: "As soon as the wheat went out of the shed, we filled it up with stuff."

He and Sue undertook their first self-build project in the early 1990s, when they needed to upscale for more space for their two growing

## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

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boys. John remembers an early self-build project – they started off in a bungalow, then built their first house, followed by four more, as well as many other renovation projects along the way.

“We had the building inspector come round to see the footings one afternoon,” John says. “He wasn’t happy with them and asked for them to be redug. So I sharpened my spade and set to work. I got Sue and my sons taking the muck away with the wheelbarrows and we got it sorted there and then. I rang the building inspector the next morning and told him it was done. He couldn’t believe it.”

All the couple’s projects have been built around this pocket of West Norfolk. Over the years they have assembled a crack team of builders – Warnes and Edwards from King’s Lynn did the brickwork, with Jamie Lunney on windows and roofing – and other local tradespeople they trust, including carpenter/joiner Wayne Jackson, decorator Darren Johnson, and BJ Plant Hire in Wisbech. Everybody pitches in, working together, with professional services brought in as necessary.

For Beech House, 4D Structural Engineered Design Solutions, a structural and civil

engineering company in King’s Lynn, were commissioned to undertake a soil test and do the structural design. The soil conditions comprise medium plasticity silty clay so a traditional strip foundation at one metre depth was specified.

“Sue can drive a forklift, she’s got a teleporter (telescopic handling) licence,” John says proudly. “We’ve done groundwork – it’s almost second nature to a farmer, digging foundations. I can weld. As I’ve got older, I’ve done a bit less. I’ll have the trades in, the brickies and the doors, all the finishes, plasterers as well. But there is a hell of a lot you can do, I was on the roof with the chippy, screwing things together.”

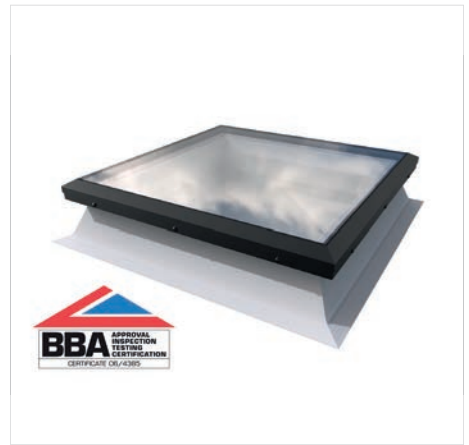
Local contacts are vital, he says. “Two of the boys we had on this one said they weren’t going to do any more self-build projects, but they came to work for us, and I think that says something.”

So is this fifth self-build their final project? “Never say ‘never’,” John laughs. “I enjoy it, it’s good fun. You’ve got to organise your finance, you’ve got to organise the boys, and then you’re off. And Sue cannot sit still, she likes a challenge. We enjoy doing them, they fill the Saturdays and Sundays up.” ■

## Brett Martin's flat glass rooflight receives BBA approval

**Brett Martin** is pleased to announce that its Flat Glass Rooflights have recently secured BBA Approval. An industry recognised certification denoting the product's quality, safety and reliability, Brett Martin is one of only few UK rooflight suppliers to obtain this certification. A modern alternative to the Roof Lantern, the Flat Glass Rooflight range offers a stylish means of bringing light into contemporary building designs. As well as more than 100 standard sizes, Brett Martin is now offering bespoke sizing and new colour options, meaning the Flat Glass Rooflight is fit for any refurbishment or new-build project. The Flat Glass square and rectangular rooflights in the range can now be coated in RAL 7016 grey and RAL 9005 black, in addition to the white that was previously available. The company's recently launched Flat Glass Access Hatch is also available in the same colour options, for applications where access is required. All Brett Martin's rooflights are manufactured using laminated glass which is engineered not only to resist breakage as much as possible but – if it does break – to break in a way that is both safe and secure. Constructed from two panes of float glass with an added polymer layer bonded between, laminated glass will not shatter into individual pieces on impact. Instead, it will form a characteristic spider's web pattern, reducing the likelihood of the broken rooflight falling on anyone below.

daylight@brettmartin.com [www.brettmartin.com/daylight-systems/our-products/product/flat-glass-rooflight](http://www.brettmartin.com/daylight-systems/our-products/product/flat-glass-rooflight)



## Introducing the Guardian Flat Roof

**Guardian Building Systems** has added another high-quality solution to its home improvement portfolio with the new Guardian Flat Roof system, offering a simple to specify and install option for homeowners looking for a more modern finish to their Guardian Home Extension. The system features a timber beam and furring system with plywood external deck board, bespoke insulation layers, and battens. It is finished with internal foil-backed insulated plasterboard. This can be covered with a range of membranes, as suitable for the location and climate. Guardian Flat Roof achieves leading thermal performance with a U-Value of 0.10 W/m<sup>2</sup>K – which has been verified by third-party testing done by the BRE (Building Research Establishment Ltd). The body also assessed its condensation risk and found that there is no year-on-year build-up of moisture, and no indication of interstitial condensation, even in the more severe climates. It is also compatible with the Guardian Roof Lantern – a stylish, thermally-broken roof lantern that adds real visual impact in any open plan space. Like all of the company's solutions, the Guardian Flat Roof can be designed bespoke to each project within Guardian's dedicated software and all elements are produced and then preassembled in dedicated facilities. This means that once it arrives onsite, all the components will fit together quickly and accurately.

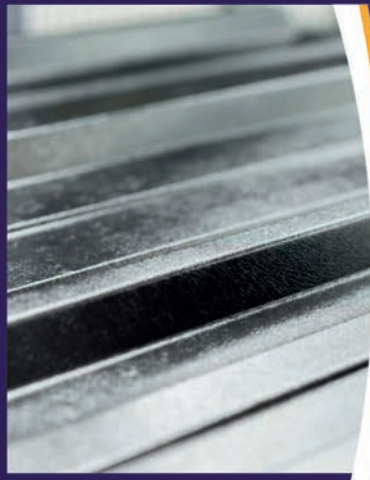
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Beech House, for Sue & John Askew, features AS35 composite panels supplied by Trimform.



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# Making it clear

Graham Lindsay of Weru UK outlines six key areas to think through when considering upgrading and installing new windows



Your windows, along with your front door, often create the first impression of your home. But replacing older, tired, window systems will not only enhance the appearance of your home, it can also impact your monthly bills, increase your home security with burglary deterrent features and improve acoustics through effective soundproofing.

## WHEN TO UPGRADE OLD WINDOWS

Almost all UK homes are now double-glazed and with the advent of energy-saving glass, which has been mandatory since 2002, most homes already have that significant benefit. The last decade has seen huge growth in 'replacing the replacements' which now offer big kerb appeal with lots of colours and contemporary styles that stand out from the crowd.

Surprisingly, however, this switch

has remained on the whole very cosmetic, with disregard to thermal performance. Almost all remain double glazed still even in new homes. It was expected that 2023 changes to Building Regulations would enforce using triple glazing in all new homes and phase-in for the replacement sector soon after. Although this didn't happen, but the new Future Homes Standard expected in 2025 indicates it will certainly happen thereafter. The message here is to take care, and don't spend twice.

## DIY FIXES

If you're renovating and upgrading existing windows, you should either be upgrading to a true third generation window designed to use effective triple glazing (minimum 40 mm). If you're not ready to replace, consider DIY or a cosmetic upgrade to get you another few years out of your existing windows. DIY

can cover decoration and on older, tired frames, easily applied draught sealing products can make a big impact on room comfort and heating bills. You could also consider retrofit locking devices.

## CHOOSING WINDOW STYLES

Today's huge choice of window types and materials ensures that even traditional properties can upgrade and benefit from the effectiveness of triple glazing, while making your home more comfortable and secure.

When choosing windows, there is a huge variety of bespoke options to consider – foil or paint finish, light or dark colours or matching your internal colours to your external ones. The colour is really up to you, but we do advise customers to consider the location and environment of their home and look at the other homes in the area. If you are looking for an extremely modern and contemporary



finish, your window choices are one of the first components of your renovation which need to reflect this.

**COMPARING WINDOW MATERIALS: PROS & CONS**

Over recent years, there has been a drop in PVCu and a significant increase in demand for aluminium windows – which now offer a choice of over 5,000 bespoke

shades across the RAL and NCS colour swatches – and hybrid alternatives. There are extremely innovative hybrid solutions available on the market, can deliver superb quality and unrivalled thermal and acoustic properties.

For example Weru UK manufacture a hybrid alternative to aluminium, which is 25% lighter and allows for a

30% increased aperture than PVCu. The system has load-bearing hardware components screwed into the steel at several points, ensuring enduring functionality and long service life of the window. This steel reinforcement, paired with the GFP high-tech material in the sash, is designed to provide outstanding stability and tensional rigidity. For the customer this reinforcement means exceptionally large windows can be installed, allowing up to 30% more daylight to enter the home.

**SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS**

In many cases, window hardware is often overlooked, with a higher focus being placed on the glass itself. However, we are starting to see that built into most of the latest, innovative designs are various burglary deterrent features, with Resistance Class 2 tilt hardware and security corner transmission hardware becoming standard.

This advancement in technology is becoming a staple with homeowners and UK architects, as the remarkable strength and durability provide a greater level of burglary deterrent, ensuring ultimate protection for the home.

*Graham Lindsay is managing director of Weru UK*



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Panasonic Heating & Cooling Solution's Aquarea M Series air-to-water heat pumps are now available. The latest series has set a benchmark for efficiency, sustainability, and impressive operation in the industry. The M Series 9,12 & 16kW Single or 3 phase has been designed with a modular concept that allows for a variety of application choices. It provides four options in the line up, Standalone Remote Controller, Control Module, Hydro Box and AiO units, providing tailored solutions for every user. The system utilises the natural refrigerant

R290, known for its low Global Warming Potential of just 3, making it a more environmentally friendly choice. The hydraulic connection between outdoor and indoor units simplifies installation, eliminating the need for F-gas certification.

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CaberDek, from West Fraser, is well-suited for the unpredictable climate in the UK. It combines their leading particleboard flooring with a durable, waterproof, and slip-resistant film. Meeting BS EN312: part 5 standards, CaberDek provides a secure working surface with its robust film that withstands impacts, punctures, and tears common on construction sites. For optimal bonding, CaberFix D4 adhesive is recommended for securing flooring to joists and within tongue and groove joints, as

well as along exposed edges. CaberDek holds full BBA approval for up to 42 days of exposure when applied according to instructions. CaberDek, together with CaberFix D4, achieves an impressive 44dB sound reduction.

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# A low energy home which responds to its woodland plot



**A**R Design Studio (AR) created a striking contemporary home, Woodland House, built with angular blocks clad in black larch and featuring VELFAC aluminium/timber windows on every facade. Designed for newly retired clients, the minimalist home offers flexible living spaces, energy efficiency, and has won the 2023 Build It Award for 'Best Timber Frame Home.'

The house reflects its rural Devon setting, nestled in a valley surrounded by woodland. AR carefully positioned VELFAC windows to capture natural light and frame scenic views. Architect Tom Ford explains, 'We tracked the sun's path across the plot to determine

the best location for each room and the ideal placement of VELFAC windows. This maximized daylight and connected the interior with the surrounding landscape.' In the music room, windows capture morning and evening sunshine, while a large window in the main bedroom frames a treetop view. The home achieves an impressive U-value between 0.13 and 0.16W/m<sup>2</sup>K, supported by VELFAC double glazing.

As long-standing users of VELFAC, AR found it an easy choice to specify the system for Woodland House. 'VELFAC glazing offers durability, aesthetic appeal, and excellent energy performance,' says Tom. The unique design also included VELFAC

trickle vents, which allowed AR to box and plaster the windows into the walls, creating a frameless 'cookie cutter' effect.

AR emphasized the importance of using experienced VELFAC installers to ensure air tightness and performance, which was especially important in this low-energy build.

Woodland House is not just an example of modern design but also of timber craftsmanship, from the larch cladding to the seamless interior finishes, creating a unique, energy-efficient home.

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# The natural choice

Neil Turner of Ecological Building Systems looks at why sustainable insulation offerings present a 'natural choice' for self-builders

**N**atural insulation materials are experiencing a resurgence as self-builders are increasingly seeking sustainable materials that can offer similar performance, but with lower environmental impact.

There are many performance benefits associated with natural insulation materials, which are becoming more widely known. These include low thermal diffusivity, which results in a reduction in summer overheating due to high specific heat capacity, high density and reasonable thermal conductivity. In addition, natural insulation materials like wood fibre can lead to a reduction in airborne acoustic noise and greater moisture diffusion openness, otherwise known as breathability. In addition, they have better carbon profiles than many other insulation materials.

Wood fibre insulation is currently experiencing a resurgence. An excellent insulator, it is made from post-industrial recycled wood chips, which may otherwise go into landfill and is suitable for a wide range of internal and external applications, as long as it is above ground level.

Natural insulation has a very low cradle to end of life Global Warming Potential (GWP) of 93.36kg CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent/m<sup>3</sup>. Wood fibre insulation can also often be recycled at the end of life and when these impacts are taken into account (Section D of the life cycle assessment) Gutex Multitherm, for example, has a better than carbon zero GWP rating of -91.94kg CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent/m<sup>3</sup>.

## WHAT IS NATURAL INSULATION?

Natural insulation materials originate purely from renewable resources and, as such, they have a significantly lower carbon footprint and a higher sequestered biogenic carbon content compared to conventional insulation options, such as foam or mineral wool.

Its environmental credentials are undeniable. With woodfibre insulation, when converting these waste wood chips into insulation, all of the sequestered biogenic carbon is locked into the building (1kg of dried timber can sequester 1.8kg CO<sub>2</sub> Eq/kg). At the end



of their useful life, these materials can often be recycled, contributing to a more circular economy and further boosting the Global Warming Potential (kg CO<sub>2</sub>/e) EPD rating for the natural fibre insulation product (Section D of the life cycle analysis according to EN15804).

## THERMAL REGULATION

The thermal mass and humidity-regulating properties of natural insulation can play a crucial role in maintaining comfortable indoor temperatures and reducing the risk of moisture-related issues in a home.

Compared to many other insulation materials, natural fibre insulation possesses a high specific heat capacity, which when combined with a relatively high density and reasonable thermal conductivity allows the absorption and storage of large amounts of thermal energy. This thermal mass can play a crucial role in mitigating overheating during the summer months, providing a more stable and comfortable indoor environment.

By choosing an insulation which is naturally able to store large amounts of thermal energy, self-builders can benefit from a high level of comfort all year round.

Natural insulation materials also help with acoustics, by absorbing sound waves, which reduces the transmission of noise between different spaces within a building. The lower density natural insulation products have excellent airborne noise reduction properties and the higher density products can be used to reduce impact noise reduction. It is the low dynamic stiffness and porous fibre structure, plus natural insulation's inherent density that reduces airborne and impact noise and improves acoustics within a home.

## BREATHABILITY

One of the main characteristics of natural insulation materials is their breathability (low moisture vapour diffusion resistance) and high moisture sorption/desorption properties. This provides more flexibility in designing building elements as there is no requirement for highly moisture vapour resistant barriers, which makes them a good solution for solid masonry construction. It also prevents the build-up of moisture within the building envelope, reducing the risk of interstitial condensation, mould, rot and other related problems. In combination with an effective ventilation system, natural insulation also contributes towards

healthy indoor air quality, by allowing moisture from everyday activities, such as cooking and bathing, to escape from the building envelope via controlled diffusion.

In addition to being moisture vapour diffusion open, natural fibre insulation products tend to have a high degree of hygroscopicity. This allows moisture vapour to be absorbed, distributed, stored and then harmlessly released with changing indoor and outdoor climate conditions. This absorption and release of moisture by the insulation also helps regulate temperature fluctuations, hence providing a more comfortable living or working space.

The environmental impact and other performance benefits of natural insulation often outweigh the marginal differences in thermal conductivity. With careful design the inherent breathability of natural insulation means there is less need for maintenance as moisture build-up is prevented, so there are fewer damp issues.

**FIRE SAFETY**

As well as moisture prevention, natural fibre insulation has fire safety benefits too, as the products char on exposure to flame, rather than undergoing an explosive burning process. This surface



char provides protection to the structure and slows down the penetration of heat and flame through the structure. It is possible to achieve an REI rating of up to 90 minutes tested from inside and outside according to EN13501-2 (BS476 Part 20-22).

**A SUSTAINABLE, ENERGY EFFICIENT, NATURAL INSULATION SOLUTION**

While it may be the case that the initial cost of natural insulation can be higher

than some synthetic options, this perspective often fails to consider the long-term benefits and the potential cost savings associated with these materials. The enhanced thermal and moisture management properties of natural insulation can lead to reduced energy consumption and lower maintenance costs over the lifetime of the building.

When it comes to choosing the best insulation material for a project, natural insulation makes a compelling choice. When you take into consideration heat capacity, breathability, thermal performance acoustics, fire safety and environmental impact, it is easy to see why natural insulation materials are rising in popularity.

The growing demand for more environmentally responsible materials is having a very positive impact on the variety of natural insulations available which means there is now a specific type of insulation available for most applications.

By harnessing the inherent properties of natural insulation, buildings can be created that not only reduce energy usage but also that contribute to a greener and healthier future.

*Neil Turner is UK technical manager at Ecological Building Systems*

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## SHORT CHIMNEY = CHIMNEY FAN

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

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

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

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

Source: Document J Building Control Combustion appliances and fuel storage systems page 30 - 92.8 - "Height of flues"

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# Sustainable steps forward for fires

Simon Bower of Percy Doughty discusses how the stove and fireplace industry has worked tirelessly to reduce emissions and improve sustainability

On 1 January 2022, only wood burning stoves that comply with the Ecodesign Regulations were able to enter the UK market. This regulation (welcomed by all stove manufacturers), meant that all stoves placed on the market after this date must be compliant with the regulation. If you purchased a stove before this date, the regulation did not apply.

The Ecodesign provision for local space heaters came into effect in 2022 on a national basis, while replacing existing provisions under the Clean Air Act 1993, which applied only in smoke control areas. The regulation derived from the European Union's broader efforts to update their standards to improve air quality and reduce emissions through more environmentally friendly products that we use and rely on every day, covering a wide range of products including boilers, space heating appliances and wood burning stoves.

In 1993 the EC Directive 2009/125/EC on energy-related products or ErP (which replaced the Energy using Products or EuP directive at the time) provided a mechanism for setting minimum criteria including air quality pollutant emission limits. The focus was energy efficiency/carbon reduction, included several products with combustion emissions and the process aimed to set minimum standards for air quality pollutant emissions. The EC Regulations included emission limits for NOx from gas and oil-fired appliances initially but laid the foundation to include small solid fuel appliances and non-solid fuel room heaters.

Defra's Clean Air Strategy 2019 (section 6.3.2 on page 59), published on 14 January 2019, promised that in 2022 the new EU Ecodesign regulations would come into force, and meant that all new stoves would need to meet agreed emission standards, regardless of where they are used. The aim of this was to



raise the standard of appliances across the whole country, and not just in smoke-controlled areas.

These new emission limit requirements for solid fuel appliances would be coupled with an effective approach to testing. Measuring emissions of particulate matter from wood stoves was a recognised challenge and Defra set about working with industry sectors to review different methods for testing stove emissions to determine which test methods are most reliable and most importantly, effective.

The industry in anticipation had already made several advances in testing and in collaboration with the Stove Industry Association, it introduced its Ecodesign Ready brand ahead of the implementation of the Ecodesign provisions due to be introduced in 2022.

This showed consumers which stoves were already compliant with the key components of the new legislation.

This information was crucial for consumers and subsequently it demonstrated that you could achieve up to 90% lower emissions than an open fire or old stove when purchasing an Ecodesign ready stove.

Education was also a focus and part of the key delivery strategy, to show how the new limits were met. In some cases, manufacturers such as ourselves went a step further and exceeded the set emission levels.

Manufacturers also worked with chimney sweep organisations to provide advice to chimney sweeps and householders. The industry came together to relay a consistent message, developing informative websites and various guides to provide clear advice on how to save money and reduce pollution by following certain simple rules. Doing so also improved the energy efficiency and enhanced the durability and recyclability of the stove.



Manufacturers have worked tirelessly with industry bodies such as HETAS and the Stove Industry Association supporting their dedicated campaigns and Defra Government campaigns to inform retailers of the Ready to Burn and Ecodesign Ready branding, providing free point of sale information for consumers and technical bulletins for the industry and trade.

This is alongside updated training requirements for teams in direct liaison with the consumers and working with education providers to ensure that stove retailers and installers understand their role in educating the consumer on the benefits of buying the right stove and using an accredited installer, using the correct fuels, and ensuring regular servicing/chimney sweeping.

The goal throughout was to safeguard consumers, which is the best way to impact positively on the level of emissions from domestic burning. This education on how to use and operate wood burning stoves also had a positive impact on air quality, and gave the consumer some confidence, knowing that the chimney and stove would last longer.

The impact on stoves means that they must be designed to burn wood more completely, resulting in a higher heat



output and improving their efficiency, with less waste. It also sees cleaner operating stoves meeting stringent emission standards, significantly reducing the amount of particulates released into the air.

The emissions are measured and broken down into four contributors and measured in milligrams per cubic metre.

- Particulate matter (PMs)
- Organic gaseous compounds (OGC)
- Carbon monoxide (CO)
- Nitrogen oxides (NOx)

- Milligram per cubic metre (mg/m<sup>3</sup>) is a unit of measurement for concentration. It is generally used in measurement of pollutants in the air.

In comparison to traditional non-Ecodesign wood burning stoves, studies show a reduction of 80-94% in emissions when comparing a direct replacement with an Ecodesign stove, and a whopping 90% reduction if swapping to a stove from an open fire. The fuel consumption is also greatly reduced giving the consumer a sound economic benefit too. This cemented our existing approach to designing stoves with the environment in mind.

We all have an environmental responsibility, and the importance isn't to be underestimated. By reducing our emissions we can help improve the air quality, mitigate the effects of climate change through positive contribution of efforts against it, and in the reduction of wood needed, thus promoting better sustainable forestry practices. All of which represents a significant step forward in making home heating more sustainable and environmentally friendly, making an Ecodesign stove a great choice for your home and the planet.

*Simon Bower is technical director at Percy Doughty*

## Selfbuilder & Homemaker website



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

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

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

## K3 rads for selfbuild projects



K3 radiators from **Stelrad** – with three panels and three sets of fins – are an ideal solution for selfbuild projects with air source heat pumps – providing 50% more metal heating surface than a standard K2 for example, but from the same size radiator footprint. Alongside high levels of insulation, these radiators can provide the solution required to keep the temperature at the level needed in a home. Radiators are very much fit for the future and offer a simple to fit, effective

heating appliance. For more information on the choice of radiators available and for selection and fitting tips head for the website or go to the Stelrad videos on YouTube.

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## Functional, bespoke utility kitchen collection



Keller's Bolton range in Sage Green

**Keller Kitchens** is home to an extensive range of utility room furniture in numerous finishes and configurations. Designed for clever but stylish solutions, this range can also be used within storage and laundry rooms too. With the range of tall, base and wall units, along with complementary interior fittings and handles, the homeowner can create a truly personalised utility room, where ease of use and great design go hand in hand. The units can be combined with Keller's existing kitchen ranges for an overall,

streamlined scheme. The base units in the utility range are extra deep so that there is plenty of room for appliances such as washing machines and dryers while laundry baskets come as standard.

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

## A whole new look with V33



If you feel that the appearance of your fridge, freezer, dishwasher, kettle or other household appliance is letting down the look of your kitchen, have you ever considered painting it? Available in satin, matt, gloss and metallic finishes, **V33 Radiator & Household Appliance Paint** can be applied directly to metal or PVC, providing a perfect long-lasting finish that is highly resistant to all the bumps and scratches your radiators and household appliances can take. It is also available in a spray for precise and easy

application. The paint requires no undercoat and is heat resistant up to 100oC with no flaking. With high adhesion when applied directly to metals and PVC, it is ultra-washable.

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CASE STUDY

# A TOTAL TRANSFORMATION

Building projects are not normally renowned for being 'joyous adventures' but David and Suzanne say their experience in Fife has been exactly that

TEXT NIK HUNTER IMAGES ROBERT PERRY





The couple's self-build adventures commenced in August 2021 when the couple purchased a bungalow in the coastal town of Anstruther in Fife. "Covid made us realise we could live somewhere other than London," David recalls. The couple had been thinking about retiring and while they loved the sea, had already discounted Cornwall or Devon as being too touristy. "We have friends who live in Cellardyke, and we'd been coming up here a couple of times a year for about 10 years; we thought why not buy a house by the sea?"

However, finding a home by the sea wasn't as straightforward as David and Suzanne anticipated. In 2021 David did a motorbike recce around the Fife coastline and quickly realised that there weren't that many properties by the sea or that fitted their wish list, which included having some sort of garden. "I think we always thought we'd buy an old fisherman's cottage but as we started viewing them, we realised that they're located right on the street with no parking and no garden," Suzanne remembers. "They also have very beautiful, thick walls, small rooms, crazy staircases and limited

scope to renovate."

Limited scope wasn't what this couple were looking for, they wanted a project and when a traditional-style, 60s bungalow came on the market in Anstruther it seemed to tick all the boxes. David and Suzanne sent friends to have a look and the feedback was that it was all about the view. The couple didn't see their new home in the flesh until after they had purchased it. "It was clear from the outset that we had bought a view with a not very attractive little bungalow attached to it. However, we thought it had the potential to be a beautiful house with a view," says Suzanne.

Before the ugly duckling could become a swan, there was a lot of dirty work to be done. Initially the couple had thought they would stay in London while the renovations were carried out, but the excitement proved too much, and they moved into a rental property across the road from their new home. In December 2022 the builders moved in.

The couple had interviewed a couple of builders and settled with Robert Moncrieff of RM Contractors. "We just really liked him," says

## HIGH POINT

"I think the overall look externally is much better than I thought it would be. The house didn't have a very attractive exterior when we bought it and I'm surprised how different it actually looks now. I also think it was the people we worked with that made the experience; it was good to spend time with them and see how they work."

— David Dines

"Now that it's complete it's transformed the way we live. It's an entire change of life, of rhythm and different priorities."

— Suzanne Tyler



## LOW POINT

"Suzanne dropped her phone in her coffee cup twice! But there weren't really any low points in terms of the actual build."

— David Dines

"It was hard living in the house across the road and David hated it. I was travelling a lot, and he was here on his own, that was difficult."

— Suzanne Tyler

Suzanne. "He has a small team of about four, he knows all his subcontractors really well and the finish was fantastic."

For the bungalow redesign, David and Suzanne worked with Fermín Beltrán Dos Santos at Fife Architects and their brief was relatively straightforward, as Suzanne explains: "As light as possible, maximise the views, space for all our paintings and let's try and do it as environmentally friendly as possible."

While the builder and architect hadn't worked together previously, all three parties quickly established a good relationship as Suzanne recalls: "We were totally swayed by the feeling that you can trust and relate to someone. When we spoke to Fermín, I had that feeling and it was the same with the builders. I felt very trusting of all the people that worked with us."

To get the ball rolling, the couple provided Fermín with some sketches of their own and while they were in agreement about a large open plan living space, they had located the kitchen at the front of the house. "Fermín told us that everywhere we were going to live during the day should be at the back to enjoy the views," says Suzanne. "'Put the bathroom at the front – you don't need a view from the bathroom.' However, I did have a romantic notion of putting the bath at the window so I could look out to sea – and then I remembered we also overlook a golf course!"

David continues: "We wanted to give Fermín a chance to design something with some scope, and that was what he wanted too. We didn't push him, but he quickly realised what we liked." Some of Fermín's suggestions included the overhang over the deck, the sheltered outdoor space outside the bedroom and the Crittal-esque windows. "So many new builds along the coast have balconies and they never get used because it's too windy. As Fermín lives locally, he was accustomed to the wind direction, and he knew precisely where to give us shelter."

Fermín's redesign also included extending and converting the original garage into a kitchen, pantry and utility space and adding an extension along the back of the house to incorporate a large dining area and outdoor terrace. The spare room is also located to the rear of the property and dolphins have already been spotted from the window. At the front of the house is the main bathroom and a TV room.

On the upper storey is the principal bedroom with that all important view out to sea and a second spare bedroom.

While the aim was to be as environmentally friendly as possible there have been a few concessions as David explains: "There's still a lot of steel and concrete in the building but we've eliminated gas by installing an air source heat pump and solar panels." Triple glazing has been fitted throughout and the house is now



efficiently insulated. A wood burning stove and underfloor heating ensure that the ground floor is kept to a pleasant, ambient temperature.

While the couple were happy to take on Fermín's ideas about the location of the rooms, David and Suzanne had clear ideas about how their new open plan kitchen and dining space would come together, as Suzanne explains: "In our house in London (a three storey townhouse) the kitchen and dining room were separate. David does all the cooking, and I would drag a chair through to the kitchen and get in his way." Suzanne's vision for the new space was for a large dining table where she could sit and keep David company while he cooked and with lots of space for entertaining. "This is exactly what I envisaged. The living room is a more formal space, but the dining area is where everyone comes and sits around the table." The dining table is also a rather special focal point as the wood to make it came from The Smuggler's Inn in Anstruther. A friend's son who is a furniture maker made the table out of it.

As head chef, David took the opportunity to design a generously proportioned kitchen, with a large cooker, lots of workspace and low-level storage. "Initially, I worried there wouldn't be enough storage without wall units, but we also have a walk-in larder with sliding

doors along with a utility room, so space hasn't been an issue."

Before David even made it to Anstruther he had started planning and researching his kitchen and he was keen to try a plywood version. "I discovered there were many companies that work with IKEA kitchen carcasses and customise plywood doors to fit them." David narrowed his search to ThreeFourFive Furniture in Glasgow which comprised a group of former art students who were now building their own kitchens. "We visited their workshop and chatted to them for a couple of hours, and we came away knowing that we were going to get our kitchen hand-built."

The finished kitchen is a combination of oak veneer and ply with laminate and composite worktops. "ThreeFourFive were so flexible. They bought the orange pieces when they were doing another kitchen and said we'll just build yours when you're ready and that's exactly what they did."

With an aversion to traditional corner cupboards and a large collection of ceramic dishes that deserve to be on display, the quirky corner detailing and shelving is the perfect solution. Surprisingly, this hand-crafted design didn't break the bank either, as Suzanne explains. "It was very competitively priced – and

## CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

### ARCHITECT

**Fife Architects**  
fifearchitects.com

### BUILDER

**RM Contractors**  
rm-contractors.com

### FLOORING

**Porcelanosa**  
porcelanosa.com

### KITCHEN

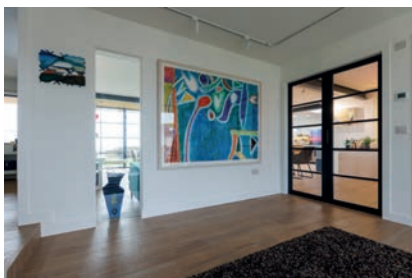
**ThreeFourFive Furniture**  
threefourfivefurniture.co.uk

### SOLAR/AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP

**MB Services Group**  
mbservicesgroup.com

### TILES (SHOWER)

**Mandarin Stone**  
mandarinstone.com



it's great quality as well," she enthuses.

Suzanne continues: "It's quite funny when people ask us about the project, and we say that the house was finished before it was meant to be because we had the best builders in the world." However, although the build came in on time, unlike the kitchen it didn't come in exactly on budget as Suzanne explains: "The budget was blown but that was entirely up to us. Every single time there was a choice, we'd look at what was specified, start shopping around and find something three times the price!"

It has been worth it however, as Suzanne describes the move as "life changing." After taking up residence in July 2023, Suzanne decided to take her retirement a couple of years earlier than planned and finally left London in December. Since then, she's been taking full advantage of her seaside location. "The light has been a revelation! We've been

up at 5 am, because it's so light, and the light is different here; it's lovely. The other great thing is jumping over the wall and going for a swim." Her social life is also expanding as she explains: "David has already started making a good circle of friends but mine is understandably smaller because I haven't been here as much, but that's changing now. You have to make the commitment."

David is also enjoying his new life and his new home as he explains: "I really enjoyed the project; however, we thought it was going to be a relatively small job but essentially it's been a rebuild." says David. "Living across the road, I was very involved. There were a few stressful moments but overall, it's been really enjoyable." Suzanne adds: "We are so lucky to have had great architects, so lucky to have found a great builder and have great neighbours – all in all it really was a joyous adventure." ■

## Dulux unveils True Joy™ as its Colour Of The Year 2025

For 2025, Dulux is asking architects, specifiers and designers to embrace yellow and infuse a sense of optimism, pride and imagination into their projects. As a guiding light to introduce these bold, positive shades to clients, the paint manufacturer has announced True Joy™ as its Colour of the Year for 2025, which is complemented by three versatile ColourFutures™ palettes. Over that last two decades, the Dulux Colour of the Year has been chosen through extensive trend research by Dulux colour experts and international design professionals. The 2025 selection, True Joy™, is a bright and positive yellow that reflects people's desire to break free, reset, and create something new and exciting. As well as embracing True Joy™, Dulux is also encouraging designers to share the joy of yellow and help clients to leap out of their comfort zone – and feel confident in doing so. Yellow shades like True Joy™ can be used as a bold statement colour or an accent hue. However, to help designers advise their clients on the best colour pairings, Dulux has created three supporting ColourFutures™ palettes. To support specifiers and provide additional guidance on the use of True Joy™, Dulux has created the Dulux Trade Colour of the Year 2025 Specifier Guide which includes mood boards that can be used to help create the perfect space across any sector. Architects, specifiers, and designers can also use the Dulux Trade Colour Schemer for colour inspiration or to create specifications for projects.

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# Making a visual splash

From innovative fixtures to minimalist, seamless designs and natural colour palettes, Hayley Bowman of Frontline Bathrooms explores likely trends for 2025 in the bathroom to help inspire your choices

As we near the end of the year, we start to think about what 2025 will bring for the world of bathrooms. 2024 will no doubt be remembered as the year of the so-called 'spathroom', with warmth, tranquillity, and character considered the must-have bathroom trends. Looking into next year, expect these styles to remain popular and very much in style.

To create the feeling of an at-home spa, more consumers have been incorporating things like mood lighting, vanity units perfect for pampering, towel heaters and even heated flooring into their bathroom renovations. It's clear that homeowners want to indulge themselves a little and create spaces that keep them feeling relaxed and rejuvenated.

Another top trend the industry expects to see more of in 2025 is the dominance of earthy colours and natural materials such as marble, wood, ceramic and clay. These sort of shades and textures help to create a more raw, pared-back bathroom style.

Not only is choosing the right bathroom important for you when it comes to living in the home, it's also worth noting that bathrooms can add up to 5% onto the value of a property.

## MUTED COLOURS

Bathroom manufacturers are seeing a shift in popular colours and patterns being used in a bathroom space as white



and grey finishes are slowly moving towards more muted tones. Taking Frontline Bathrooms' Midi Furniture range for example – in 2023 matte white made up 60% of sales, however this year, it's decreased to 42% with taupe and graphite closely behind.

Colours such as soft grey and cashmere will continue to trend as they provide colour to the bathroom without overpowering it; providing more natural, muted and earthy tones to create a feeling of sanctuary.

Providing a timeless feel that suits every design style, shades such as taupe and beige can also create the perfect backdrop, adding a cosy and warm atmosphere in the bathroom. Complementing those colours with bolder bathroom tiles and materials like wood, rattan and stone can also be used to add a more organic feel.

## TASTEFUL TEXTURE

The trend for texture continues; the demand for knurled brassware and handles is constantly growing. The Azar brassware range, for example, has seen sales of the matte black basin mono increase almost 175%, from 22 units a month to 60 units a month. It's predicted that this will be the case throughout 2025, but with softer shapes and grooves which are much less domineering than the slats trend of 2024. While wall panelling itself may be nothing new, this traditional design has made its way into bathrooms with vertical slats in the tile providing texture, while maintaining a stylish 'tone-on-tone' colour palette.

Instead, it's thought we'll see the emergence of seamless finishes, with arches and curves contributing to a softer and more fluid bathroom design



which breaks down the monotony of straight lines and angles, adding a touch of elegance. The best-selling Kyoto vanity unit range with soft fluted curves is one of our most popular furniture launches ever; not only has it out-sold other vanity units two-to-one, but it's generated 17% of overall furniture sales this year to date.

We also predict that the mitred tile trend will carry over from this year to

next, as customers look to create fewer joins and lines in their bathrooms. Chamfered doors, for example, help to create that perfectly smooth, sleek handleless design.

**LET THERE BE LIGHT!**

LED lighting and flash plates also add to the ambiance of a bathroom, reflecting light around the room beautifully. A popular way to get this look would be

to use adhesive LED strip lighting which is super easy to install and can really transform a space without making any major modifications or work.

Mirrors with lighting around the full perimeter are also very popular right now, particularly those with colour-changing controls and built-in heated demisters which add more depth and ambiance.

**LUXE FOR LESS**

Amid the cost-of-living crisis, customers are looking to achieve the luxe look without spending the earth. As we head into 2025, it's anticipated sales will increase on larger vanities of 1,000 mm+, along with stone wall mounted basins, which are great for creating a boutique hotel look at home for a lot less than you think.

**WALK-IN SHOWERS**

Finally, we expect that walk-in showers and wetrooms will see a continued upward curve in their popularity next year. While baths – particularly free-standing models – remain very much on trend, shower enclosure sales have soared recently.

*Hayley Bowman is marketing manager at Frontline Bathrooms*



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