

selfbuilder + homemaker

NOV/DEC 2024

Ahead of the curve

John and Debra had high architectural and sustainability ambitions for their unique curved self-build

A family affair

Eoghan and Jenny are building their dream home on the family farm in Ireland where he grew up

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Origin's Victoria Brocklesby explores the best ways to bring natural light into your home, and explains why it's so important



Something for everyone

Although Craig and Jane had self-built before, their latest project was the first time they'd had to consider multi-generational living

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FROM THE EDITOR...

Hello and welcome to my final issue of *Selfbuilder + Homemaker* as editor. It's bittersweet as I am taking on a different magazine in the social housing sector (in addition to the two magazines I edit on architecture and housebuilding), so my hands will still be full! I have really enjoyed featuring your fabulous self-builds every issue since I started on the magazine back in 2016, and am pleased to see it heading into 2025 in fine fettle with a new look and name – more on that below.

Despite the melancholy mood from moving on from this great magazine, I'm happy to say that I'm handing over the reins to the very capable Roseanne Field, who's actually been at the company longer than me! She's a trained journalist, and knows the ropes of the self-build world, but more importantly she has a genuine enthusiasm for reporting on the effort and dedication that you self-builders put into projects.

I really enjoy working with Roseanne (and empathising with her as a fellow parent of young kids!), and I know she is looking forward to steering the title as its new editor, and finding great projects. I can't wait to see how the title develops over the coming years, both offline and online. Publishing faces its share of challenges, but I like to think the magazine has carved out a unique niche in a busy market, talking about product solutions as well as inspiring project stories to keep readers fully informed, and enthused about self-build.

Thanks for reading, and to those who have contributed projects and content. Over and out!

JAMES PARKER



COMING SOON...

Introducing 'The Selfbuilder':
A Bold New Chapter for Selfbuilder + Homemaker

We are thrilled to announce that *Selfbuilder + Homemaker* has officially rebranded to *The Selfbuilder*. As we continue to evolve and grow, our new name reflects our commitment to empowering individuals on their homebuilding and renovation journeys. We are excited to begin this new chapter with you and look forward to continuing to be your trusted source for all things related to self-building, renovating and home creation.

ON THE COVER... © ELLIOT ROBERTS



ON THE COVER...

© DUG WILDERS (PAGE 26)



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REGULARS

06

Home Styling: Let the light in

Providing far more than a functional necessity, Victoria Brocklesby of Origin explores the integral role that internal doors can play in maximising natural light within a home.

08

Selfbuilder Diaries

For Eoghan, embarking on a self-build with his wife and son on the family farm where he grew up in County Kildare holds deep meaning, and sees him realise a further ambition to create a sustainable home in ICF.

12

Ask the Expert:

Cooking up your dream kitchen

To support those looking to create their dream kitchen, Debra Hutt of Wren Kitchens shares her insight into how to get the most out of the process.

18

Exterior Inspiration: Outdoor Living

Our gardens can be versatile living spaces, offering both a refuge to relax and enjoy nature, plus a great entertaining space on a warm summer evening. We have compiled a selection of products to enhance your outdoor areas, from dining sets and sofas to firepits and patio tiles, to help you create a stylish, comfortable and flexible external space.

59

Classified & Directory

PRODUCT FEATURES

32

Materials matter

Cedral's Lisa Grosse explains why overheating and resilience are key factors when making decisions about the facade and roof of your home.

40

How to choose a lead-free flashing

Klober UK's Nick King details six things self-builders and their roofers should be aware of when considering lead-free flashing.

49

Boosting thermal comfort & wellbeing

Chris Stammers of BEAMA's Underfloor Heating Group explains how hydronic underfloor heating creates thermal comfort through even heat distribution and efficient heat transfer.

51

Must-have flooring trends for 2025

From subtle, biophilic-inspired flooring to brighter, more confident statement designs, Amtico's Lorna Williams explores the top five trends set to make a splash.



CONTENTS

NOV/DEC

2024

CASE STUDIES

26

A home for the ages

Having built their own home already once before, the world of self-build wasn't new to Craig and Jane, but building a multi-generational house for their family was an entirely fresh challenge.

34

Following a learning curve

Despite the tricky construction challenges presented by a crescent-shaped architectural design, a determined couple have succeeded in creating their dream 'forever' home in the countryside.

42

All in the detail

Jim and Jayne Smith have remodelled and extended a tired 1930s house, including rejuvenating the exterior with rugged local stone.

52

The home swap

Sharon and Jer Holland swapped their family bungalow in County Cork for a traditional stone farmhouse owned by Jer's parents but in need of an upgrade.

PRODUCTS

FINANCE & INSURANCE 20

SITE PREPARATION
Drainage & Septic Tanks 20

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS
Structural Timber 20
Waterproofing/Basements 24

BUILDING ENVELOPE
Brick, Cladding & Stone 32
Glass & Glazing 41
Roofing 24
Rooflights 24

HEATING, VENTILATION & SERVICES
Thermal Comfort 49

INSULATION 48

INTERIORS
Bathrooms & Wetrooms 58
Flooring 51
Stairs 58

LANDSCAPING & EXTERNAL SURFACES
Paints 58

LET THE LIGHT IN

Providing far more than a functional necessity, Victoria Brocklesby of Origin explores the integral role that internal doors can play in maximising natural light within in a home.

Natural light has a significant impact on how homeowners feel in a space. A lack of natural light in a property has been found to harm both physical and mental wellbeing, from sleep quality to general mood, while those who live in bright properties report being happier in their home. So, it's crucial that self builders consider how light will enter and travel around their home during the initial planning stages.

MAXIMISING NATURAL LIGHT ENTERING A HOME

The most effective way to maximise natural light is by incorporating large expanses of glazing, particularly in south facing rooms which will enjoy the most sunlight throughout the day.

Bi-fold doors are a great way to achieve this while creating a seamless connection from the inside to out. We'd recommend opting for bi-folding doors with slim sightlines to let even more light into a property.

When choosing bi-folds, prioritise fewer but larger sashes to minimise the amount of profile seen and maximise the light. For those lucky enough to have very large apertures, bi-fold doors can be made in configurations of up to 12 doors, or can be paired with fixed glazing panels for an ultra-widescreen view of the great outdoors and maximum natural light.

CREATING LIGHT THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PROPERTY

Once this mood-boosting light is entering a home, it's important to consider how it moves around the entire property. After all, it's no good having one light room if the rest of the house is dingy and uninviting.

Opting for glazed internal doors instead of solid options is an effective way to help filter light throughout the entire home without the need for open-plan layouts which are impractical for many modern families' lifestyles.

Internal doors are available in single, French or fixed configurations, and can also be paired with a corner post to create an entire new room made of glass, helping to create separate, functional spaces that benefit from the natural light entering the rest of the property.

FRAMING LIGHT WITH COLOUR

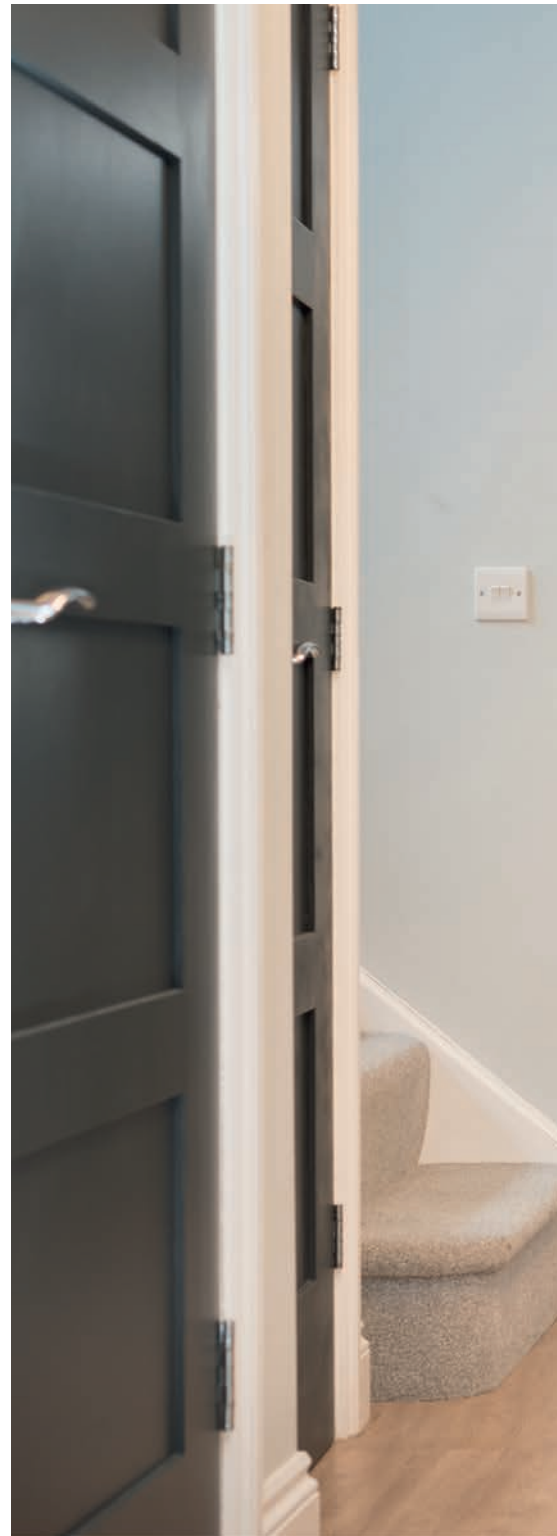
The colours chosen for window and glazed door frames will also influence how light enters and moves through a room, as well as how the views from within the home are framed.

The frame colour of a glazed door can either amplify or contain the light that passes through it. Lighter coloured frames can help distribute light between rooms, so they are especially effective in smaller spaces or areas where natural light is limited. For instance, a white or pale grey door can brighten a hallway by reflecting light from adjoining rooms, creating a more unified and airy space.

Dark coloured doors, on the other hand, will limit the transfer of light but can make a design statement.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHOOSING GLAZED DOORS

When considering external doors, on top of aesthetics, thermal efficiency is a crucial priority to ensure your home is warm in the winter and cool in the summer. The best way to identify the thermal efficiency of a glazed door is through its U-value, which indicates how well a system acts as an insulator



and prevents heat loss from the home. The lower the U-value, the better the thermal performance. When choosing a door for a project, it's worth comparing the U-values across several manufacturers.

The security of external doors is equally as important. Your home is where you rest and entertain, so it needs to feel as safe as possible. Be sure to



look for doors that have multi point locking systems that conform to all the latest security regulations. High quality doors with either a 3-star barrel or a coded magnetic key will protect against snapping, picking, drilling, and bumping to provide ultimate security.

Additionally, materials obviously matter. Aluminium is an excellent choice for door and window frames because

it's lightweight yet strong and durable enough to deal with the wear-and-tear of everyday family life. Plus, it requires less maintenance than alternatives like timber.

CONCLUSION

Internal and external glazed doors are a great way to maximise the amount of light entering and filtering through a property, but quality doors are an

investment. Therefore, we'd always recommend considering them at the very beginning of a project and taking time to research suppliers thoroughly to ensure the doors you opt for are built to withstand the test of time, whatever life throws at them.

Victoria Brocklesby is COO and co-founder at Origin

selfbuilder Diaries

For Eoghan, embarking on a self-build with his wife and son on the family farm where he grew up in County Kildare holds deep meaning, and sees him realise a further ambition to create a sustainable home in ICF.

I'm Eoghan, and along with my wife Jenny and our son Jack, we're building our dream home on my family's farm in County Kildare, Ireland. This has been a long time coming, especially after renovating my grandfather's cottage four years ago, thinking we'd only be there for two years. However, the planning process turned out to be a far bigger challenge than we ever expected, with two refusals and a final third application that felt like our last shot.

While I've always dreamed of living in the countryside, Jenny grew up in a town and loves the vibrant life it offers. But she's excited about the benefits of designing a home that perfectly meets our family's needs and wants, even if the journey has been filled with unexpected delays and challenges.

One of the biggest decisions we made was to build using Insulated Concrete Formwork (ICF). When I first came across ICF, I was amazed by the concept, and the more I researched it, the more confident I became that it was the right choice for us. ICF construction offers incredible insulation, energy efficiency, and durability – perfect for the unpredictable Irish weather. It also allows us to create a highly airtight and sustainable home, which aligns with our long-term goals for comfort and lower energy costs.

We finally broke ground at the end of August 2023, a moment that felt surreal after all the hurdles we'd faced just to get to that point. There was a mixture of excitement and relief as we watched the diggers start work on what would become our family home. Fast forward to today, and we're deep into the second fix stage, focusing on the final finishes inside. It's incredible to see the house



taking shape, especially now that we can really visualise each room and how the natural light fills the space.

One of the most exciting milestones was getting the windows and doors installed and finally having the house fully sealed. It marked a significant step forward, not just in terms of progress but also in making the house feel like a real home. Another milestone was when the stud walls were skimmed. That was the first time we could truly experience the flow and feel of each room, which brought a new level of excitement and anticipation for what's to come.

However, the journey hasn't been without its challenges. One unexpected issue was with the window sills. They caused a lot of delays because we struggled to find someone skilled enough to install them correctly. I'd seen other ICF self-builders face problems with water seeping into the concrete core due to poor installation of the damp proof course (DPC) when fitting the sills, so we were determined to avoid the same pitfalls. Unfortunately, this held up getting our windows ordered and delayed sealing the house, which in turn pushed back our first fix plumbing and

electrical work.

As we push to finish the house, decisions are coming thick and fast. While no small issues have caused major delays, the sheer volume of choices we need to make in a short time has kept us on our toes. Despite these challenges, we're steadily moving towards completion, and the dream of finally living in our custom-built home is becoming more tangible every day.

Throughout this journey, both our parents have been incredible sources of support. My parents live right beside us, and Jenny's are only 15 minutes away, which has been a real blessing. Whether it's watching our son Jack so we can focus on the build or helping out in countless other ways, their support has been invaluable.

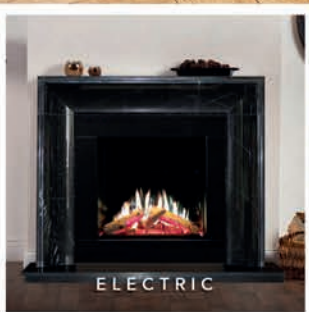
We've also been fortunate to work with some great tradespeople along the way. Every professional we've engaged with has been reliable and skilled, and I wouldn't hesitate to recommend any of them.

Building this home on my family's farm has been a deeply meaningful experience. The lane we're building on has a close-knit community, and I think Jenny has really come to appreciate how kind and wonderful our neighbours are. I grew up loving life here, and I'm confident that our son Jack will enjoy it just as much. This build isn't just about creating a house; it's about creating a life in a place that already holds so many cherished memories. We can't wait to see what the future holds for our family here.

If you'd like to follow the rest of our journey or look back at what we've achieved so far, follow us on Instagram at @silveracrehouse



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A stunning faceted window screen takes center stage in this stylish extension to a family home in Kenilworth. "The brief was to add space," says Paul Tracey, MD of Paul Tracey Construction. "The owner, Eilidh Robertson, wanted to expand the four-bedroom home for their young children and add ensuite bedrooms for visiting family and friends."

The result is a striking curved extension featuring full-height VELFAC windows, connecting the main house to a converted garage now used as bedrooms. "The curved design, by Jonathan Holland Architects, creates an organic flow," Paul explains. Initially skeptical, the homeowners now love it, calling it life-changing.

BESPOKE VELFAC ALUMINIUM/TIMBER WINDOWS

The curved glass wall includes seven bespoke VELFAC aluminium/



timber windows, complemented by glazed doors and sidelights. The extensive glazing required windows that ensured comfort, insulation, and ventilation year-round. "The architect recommended VELFAC, and we loved the sleek, modern look," says Eilidh.

The double-glazed windows, with trickle vents for ventilation, are finished in anthracite grey both internally and

externally, contrasting with the home's existing white-framed windows to create a bold statement.

TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

Installing the curved wall was a technical challenge met by VELFAC Distributor NKG Composite Ltd. They provided a full package including site survey, design, and installation, along with a custom curved aluminium cill to complement the screen. "NKG worked closely with the architect, VELFAC, and us to ensure precise alignment with the steel beams forming the curve," says Paul.

The completed extension has transformed the home. "We love the new space, and the VELFAC windows are both stylish and functional," says Eilidh.

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Cooking up your dream kitchen



To support self-builders who are looking to create their dream kitchen, Debra Hutt of Wren Kitchens shares her insights into how to get the most out of the process.

With homeowners generally upgrading or replacing their kitchen space every 15-20 years, a new kitchen is a substantial commitment, both in terms of time and financially, so it's important to make sure you get the design process right.

Many people are keen to be involved in their own kitchen design from the very beginning, to bring their own thoughts to life with the help of retailers.

WHERE SHOULD YOU START WHEN DESIGNING A KITCHEN?

Making the most of your kitchen space is one of the most important aspects of any design. No matter how big or small the room, you're striving to make efficient use of every square metre.

Therefore, settling on a layout that you're confident will open up the space you have available is a non-negotiable starting point for any

first-time kitchen planners.

Whether it's the positioning of the worktops to maximise room for food prep and home working, or the strategic placement of larger appliances such as your fridge, wine cooler and oven, you should be tactful to ensure the kitchen space works for you and other family members.

In recent years, we've seen an increase in demand for kitchen islands – if that is a feature at the core of your design, be mindful of how you utilise the space around it to make sure it doesn't overwhelm the room.

Self-builders should consider whether they want in-built or free-standing appliances, as these will also impact the space utilised in the overall kitchen.

Bigger, heavier appliances are often installed last with any kitchen fitting, so the best practice is to have your entire design mapped out, so that features like cupboards, shelving and worktops are in place for the appliances to slot in to complete the room.

HOW CAN YOU INCORPORATE THE BEST STORAGE SOLUTIONS INTO YOUR KITCHEN?

Creating smart and efficient space for storage is key to any kitchen design. Maximising available space helps homeowners ensure their kitchens will be safe, practical and tidy.

Consider the positioning and size of your kitchen cabinets, feature units, cupboards and shelves to see what works best. When mapping out the kitchen itself, you may be surprised at the amount of storage space you can find in what appears to be a limited room.

Whether that's installing in-built corner units, introducing draw inserts or including open shelving for a more spacious look and feel, there are so many things you can do to increase the storage potential of your kitchen, without compromising on the style element. Kitchen designers can help any household fine tune their vision to suit their taste and needs.

HOW IMPORTANT IS GETTING THE RIGHT COLOUR FOR YOUR KITCHEN DESIGN?

As much as the practical side of a kitchen is fundamental to any design, it's also important to get the colour scheme and aesthetic right to effectively personalise your space.

Depending on what you're looking to achieve with your kitchen, the colour palette choices can have a huge impact on the overall feel of the room, with more



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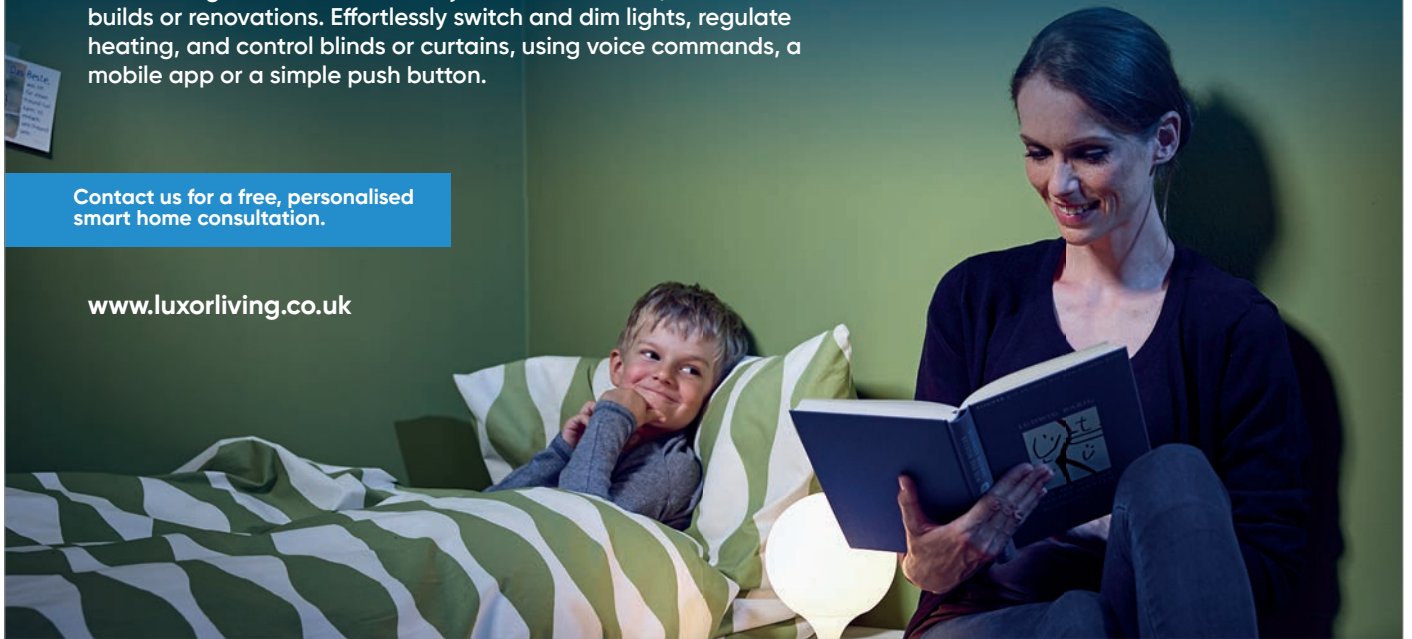
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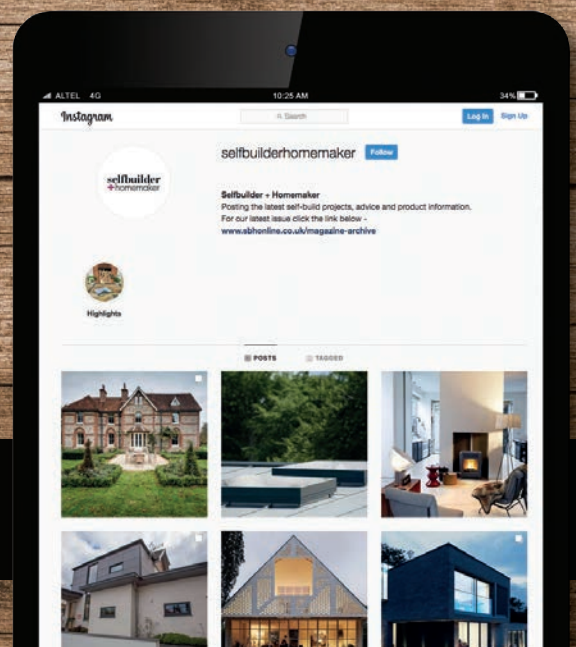
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neutral tones like whites, creams and soft greys opening the room up more. Such classic hues remain popular across Wren's ranges and offer timeless appeal.

However, we're seeing a strong trend toward bolder, more dynamic colours like blues and greens.

As we approach the end of 2024 and head into a new year, homeowners are increasingly seeking the 'wow factor' in their kitchen, choosing rich, striking shades and accents that make a real statement. Fuller, more vibrant colour schemes paired with contrasting worktops are set to become more commonplace across British homes as people embrace kitchens that are

as unique and expressive as they are functional.

HOW CAN YOU MAKE THE MOST OF THE LIGHTING IN A KITCHEN?

The lighting in your kitchen has a huge bearing on the overall look and feel of the space and it's important to utilise the natural light available.

Whether you have access to grand open window frames, sky lights of more subtle sources, the natural light in your kitchen can really complement the artificial light fixtures you choose to give the room ambience and that homely feel.

Not only that, but the right lighting can really help highlight the key features

of the kitchen, such as striking, sparkling worktops, shelving and kitchen islands, to bring the space to life and make it feel bigger in the process.

WHAT ASPECTS OF KITCHEN DESIGN DO PEOPLE TEND TO OVERLOOK?

One thing that self-builders may not consider when designing their dream kitchen is the layout of the utilities, such as water supply, waste and electricity.

When fit a kitchen as part of a renovation, it requires the previous design to be completely removed, leaving the bare shell of a room and a seemingly blank canvas to work from.

However, historical features such as water pipe placements and electrical wiring can be costly to relocate. It's important to consider this when designing your kitchen space from the outset, to reduce the need for supplementary works.

For example, if you are introducing an island and would like a sink, hob or extractor unit in it, you will need electricity, water and waste plumbed supplied to the location before finishing floors and walls.

Having sufficient access to electrical feeds such as wall sockets and charging points is a must when planning any kitchen, but they should be discreetly positioned to avoid looking untidy.

HOW CAN YOU SIMPLIFY THE PROCESS OF DESIGNING YOUR KITCHEN?

The whole process of designing a kitchen can be quite daunting and time consuming, especially for first time self-builders.

To make the process easier, customers can kick start their journey online 3D kitchen planning tools, which can provide a fully immersive service, allowing you to personalise your design to match exactly what you want within your kitchen.

Whether it's a more striking, contemporary look you're going for or a more traditional, homely kitchen space, these tools can allow you to experiment by mixing and matching styles, colour schemes and worktop materials before working closely with trained experts to bring the vision to life.

Wren's planning tool, for example, has become extremely popular among customers at the start of their planning journey, and it's anticipated this will continue to be used extensively in 2025.

Debra Hutt is a kitchen expert at Wren Kitchens



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The National Self Build & Renovation Show

With an unrivalled line up of exhibitors and experts on hand to share advice, this is a brilliant event if you are thinking about finding a plot and building a brand new home, renovating a tired property or even extending your current home.

The event organizers have curated a lineup that is both informative and inspiring. Over the course of three days, attendees will have access to a variety of seminars, Q&A sessions, live demonstrations, and free one-on-one consultations with industry experts. Additionally, over 200 exhibitors will showcase the latest building products and services.

Produced by the National Self Build & Renovation Centre (NSBRC), award-winning Self Build and Home Improvements Visitor Centre, the winter edition of this show promises



three packed days of masterclasses, case studies, seminars, and an unrivalled roster of experts offering valuable advice.

In addition to the 200+ exhibitors within the NSBRC's 'Trade Village,' the 'Professional Services Hub' will provide independent, expert guidance from a wide range of specialists. Visitors will have the opportunity to consult with architects, designers, and professionals

in fields such as planning, project management, and landscaping.

This is a must-attend event for anyone looking to be inspired, gather information, and engage with genuine experts who are eager to offer personalized advice. Whether considering a new build, renovating a property, or creating additional space, there will be talks, tours, and tailored advice available.

Show Highlights:

- Extensive range of independent experts and free one-on-one consultations
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2. The **Ring of Logs 90 fire pit** from **FirepitsUK** makes a great centrepiece, brining warmth, atmosphere and cooking opportunity, coming with a unique detachable swing arm BBQ rack and a shelf for keeping food warm. The rack makes barbecuing without burning simple and there is a second lug fitted to the bowl for use with other accessories. Once your fire has done its work, simply remove the accessories and keep the ash bed dry for next time with a lid, which also converts your fire pit into a useful table. Price: £765 www.firepitsuk.co.uk

3. The **Bellmount Large Corner Sofa Set** with Height Adjustable Table from **Lime Lace** features an adjustable height table with a charcoal ceramic glass table top that is not only visually striking but also functional. With its two small stools this set comfortably seats up to seven guests. The star of this set is the gas height adjustable table – with just a simple adjustment, it can transform from a low coffee table to a higher dining table. The aluminium frame with a grey rope effect and teak-look polywood components provide resistance to the elements.

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4. Perfect for a stylish and detailed outdoor garden space, **Tile Mountain's Porto decor grey patterned tiles** offer a traditional design that is sure to make an impact. The 600 x 600mm porcelain tiles have a natural matt finish and R11 anti-slip rating for slip resistance. They pair perfectly with the Porto grey concrete effect tiles, and have rectified edges for a seamless finish. Price: £26.99 per m2 www.tilemountain.co.uk

5. The **Roma Polished Concrete Outdoor Dining Table** from **Jo Alexander** is a stylish, unique table taking you away from the usual traditional wooden garden furniture and giving your garden a strong, bold statement. The table is available in two sizes: 200cm and 240cm. The fibre reinforced polished concrete table, with an acacia lime washed wooden frame, has a matt finish and a smooth waxy feel to the table top, making it strong and hard wearing. Price: £1975 www.joalexander.co.uk

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Juwo SmartWall Monolithic single skin thin joint building systems to meet the new future homes standards for 2025



Future Homes Standards 2025 are all about improving the thermal efficiency of new homes in the UK and to ensure lower running costs, which in turn will reduce the carbon footprint of a new home. The changes proposed in the Future Homes Standards consultation are to look at the Notional Dwelling specification for carbon emissions, Primary Energy and the Fabric Energy Efficiency Standard closely considering U-values, thermal bridging values (Psi Values), as well as the thermal mass of the structure, which affects internal and solar gains as well as airtightness of the property.

Future Homes Standard in 2025 is suggesting that the heating demand of a dwelling should be limited to 15-20 kWh/m²/year, which would require far higher thermal efficiency in the fabric of the building, in particular the U Value of the walls as well as using materials that can offer better Thermal Mass with potential target U Values being circa 0.15 W/m²K.

Using traditional masonry cavity wall construction to reach these types of U values would need to have wall thickness to be as high as 430-450mm wide with cavities being more than 200mm wide using a full fill insulation system which has implications on the foundation widths used as well as requiring more robust wall ties with design consideration in the structural performance against wind and sway.

The answer is to design external walls using the Juwo SmartWall systems as a Monolithic Single Skin structure incorporating the insulation requirements within the structure of the blocks and to reduce thermal bridging (Psi Values) eliminating mortar or adhesive on the interlocking vertical joints and using a thin bed adhesive bond to the horizontal plane. No Cavities. No Wall Ties. No Additional Insulation. Resulting in a quicker and subsequently less expensive construction to build.

The Juwo SmartWall Monolithic Single Skin clay blocks are manufactured to include all the insulation values required within the system, using one of three main products. The "S" system is our standard aerated product. The "MZ" system which includes mineral wool within the structure, and our "RX" system which uses our PoroTec insulation bead, again bonded within the block.

All our Juwo SmartWall systems do not require a wall tie for structural stability nor a cavity to provide the required U values from 0.18 to as low as 0.11 W/m²K. Manufactured with a tolerance

of 1 mm in height, the Juwo SmartWall range of systems reduces the Thermal Bridging (Psi Value) by over 15% as well as having a high Thermal Mass being a masonry clay based product. In addition, the Juwo SmartWall system comes as a complete package that includes lintels, corner and shaped blocks, insulated mortar, adhesive and applicators.

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Juwo SmartWall systems are structural blocks which can be used to any height required and have been used in the UK and Europe for many years for load bearing and non-load bearing walls, for external & internal applications. They have full approval and comply to BS EN 771-1 and carry both a UK CA & CE mark with an A1 fire rating, making them the ideal building system for low and high rise developments as well as for the self-builder.

The Juwo SmartWall systems are manufactured from Clay therefore possibly one of the most sustainable materials used in construction. It is a natural material that it easy to work with and provides a comfortable living environment.

Juwo SmartWall system delivers a much faster build time. The thin joint adhesive allows you to continually work without being restricted to the number of lifts in a day, on average, up to 40+ m² can be achieved per day.

Juwo SmartWall being a monolithic building system, means that you have just one skin for your building structure, no cavities, therefore minimising areas for complicated detailing and areas for insulation to be missed.

The Juwo SmartWall system provides a thermal bridge free method of construction without the need for complicated detailing.

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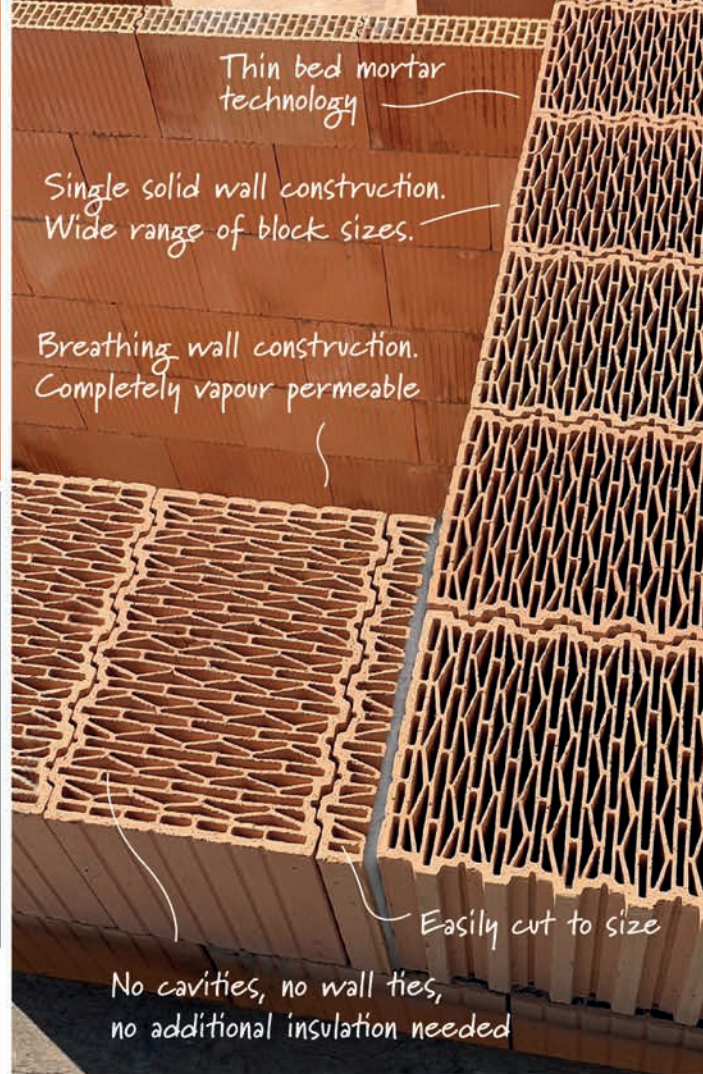
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Keylite's new Fixed Skylight



Keylite Roof Windows has launched a new Fixed Skylight for roofs pitched from 10 degrees upwards that will allow for more daylight and a higher level of security. The innovative design, which is new to the market for 2024, will suit single-story roofs due to its low-pitch installation and offers 44 per cent more daylight than a standard centre pivot window. The Fixed Skylight is also compliant with Part Q of UK building regulations and meets latest guidance in 'Security in dwellings: Approved Document Q' to help resist unauthorised access in new dwellings. The purpose of Part Q is to make a window sufficiently robust to resist its ability to be levered open or from the glass pane being removed intact from the window frame.

www.keylitteroofwindows.com

Crystal keeps faith with Wykamol-Triton range inside & out

Crystal Damp Proofing & Basements is working close to its base in Croydon, Surrey while also employing a selection of products from the **Wykamol-Triton** range with which it is fully familiar. The founder and Managing Director of Crystal Damp Proofing & Basements, Lukasz Mikolajczyk commented: "I have been involved with building and refurbishing basements and using the Triton range for many years but set up my own company in 2021 and chose to stick with what I know is reliable and I have also continued to get very good technical support from Wykamol since it took over Triton last year. Work on this house in Croydon has been progressing well, with very little new excavation to be done, so we are just installing the CM8 and CM20 across the walls and floors to control the penetrating damp. Then, while the floor screeds are being laid by a flooring specialist, we will be erecting all of the internal partitions using metal studs and applying some 130 square metres of render finishes within the basement areas and in the lightwell, we will be installing XPS insulation and more of the CM20. The range really does provide a solution to virtually every challenge we meet." The Wykamol Group is able to offer project specific guidance including site support where necessary, while its website offers comprehensive technical information on the entire Wykamol-Triton range.

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CASE STUDY

A HOME FOR THE AGES

Having built their own home once before, the world of self-build wasn't new to Craig and Jane, but building a multi-generational house for their family was an entirely fresh challenge

TEXT JAYNE DOWLE IMAGES DUG WILDERS





If building a brand-new house in a village conservation area wasn't challenging enough, the new family home of Craig and Jane Devonshire also had to be multi-generational.

"This isn't the first self-build we've done," says Craig, who previously owned and ran a building firm, which built the new house with the help of a team of sub-contractors. "Our last house was of timber-frame, timber-clad construction. We lived in that for four or five years before we sold up. Jane's mum was ill, so we moved in with them – next door to where we are now, living there until the new house was completed."

Craig, 52, now a technical sales specialist for an insulation company, and Jane, 55, a commercial interior designer by training, live with their two children aged 17 and 22, and Jane's 82-year-old father, a retired pharmacist who has dementia, in the village of Teversal, near Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire.

'Next door' is Teversal Manor, a 17th-century Grade II listed mansion said to be the inspiration for Wragby Hall in D.H. Lawrence's 1928 novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Famous literary visitors included Bloomsbury Set writer Virginia Woolf. Some of the manor's most notable residents were the Earls of Carnarvon, including the fifth Earl, who financed the ill-fated excavation of Tutankhamun's tomb in Egypt in 1922.

Jane's mother Janet died in 2017, about a year after her daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren moved in, and then John, Jane's father, was diagnosed with dementia.

Although huge, with up to 14 bedrooms, the manor house – restored and renovated extensively by John and Janet and now being divided up and sold – has several staircases and key rooms on different levels. Therefore,

it was no longer suitable for John's needs, so the decision was made to build a new multi-generational family home.

'Last House,' as they named it, also needed to provide living space for Jane's brother, who lives in Thailand but regularly visits England with his family. "John wanted to build it big enough so all of his family could come and stay," says architect Paul Testa of HEM in Sheffield. So the Oakworth timber frame and brick-skinned detached 360 m² house was built with John at the fulcrum, and various family members contributing to the cost.

The result is a flexible space with five/six bedrooms and a substantial multi-purpose basement. Timber frame was chosen as the build method to speed up construction and provide superlative airtightness and thermal performance.

At the heart of the house is an open-plan living/dining/kitchen area. John has his own ground-floor bedroom, ensuite and separate lounge, with easy access to the central family living/dining/kitchen space. His rooms are flexible to enable them to be used as a main suite, potentially for Craig and Jane, in the future.

There is a further bedroom on the ground floor with an ensuite, plus a separate shower room and a snug. On the first floor, three bedrooms share a bathroom and a large walk-in shower room. All these rooms are connected by a generously-proportioned mezzanine landing.

"In multi-generational living, the key thing is spaces to converge and spaces to retreat to," says Paul. "Even in larger spaces for more communal living, the opportunity to sit apart but in the same space feels important."

HIGH POINT

"The relationship with the local conservation officer and the planning department at Ashfield District Council. I stand by getting the planners on board at the beginning of the project. Building this relationship right at the start ensured that the planning journey went smoothly, saving us money in the long run as we made very few amendments to the original design."

LOW POINT

"I had some sleepless nights, especially building up to the installation of the huge £20,000 triple-glazed sliding doors which had very narrow tolerance."

CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

AGGREGATES

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ARCHITECT

Paul Testa/HEM
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The 100 m² basement/undercroft includes a cinema room, gym, wine store, plant-room, utility area and storage. "My daughter likes to use the cinema room as a bedroom in the height of summer as the basement maintains a constant temperature," says Craig, who was hands-on throughout the build, even laying the carpets.

The Devonshires' new home is built on the former kitchen gardens of the manor house. A 1930s house stood on the 0.6 acre site when they bought it at auction. "When the plot came up for sale, effectively it was a downsizing operation [to build a new house] so we could manage my father-in-law a lot better," Craig explains.

As the whole of Teversal village has been a conservation area for more than five decades – designated as such in 1970 – and the proposed new house is next to the manor house and its walled garden, Craig and Jane assumed that their only option would be to renovate and extend the 1930s house.

"However, we had a site meeting with the Local Conservation Officer prior to giving Paul Testa Architecture (now HEM) their brief," says Craig. "The conservation officer said he wouldn't be averse to replacing the original house. Instantly, we were on a positive footing with them. The only thing he said to us was that he didn't want to see a farmyard/courtyard style development.

Craig continues: "He wanted to see the use of traditional materials and different roof heights." He explains that after architect Paul came to site he "very quickly came back with the original concept design" which only needed a "minor reduction on the size of the single storey wing to

satisfy the planners."

Incredibly, thanks to Craig, Paul and heritage consultant Andrew Witham working carefully with Ashfield District Council planning department, permission was achieved in eight weeks, and for a house at double the footprint of the original one that stood on the site.

The design concept was to create a modern interpretation of a 19th century house form, explains Paul: "It's an H-plan with five prominent and differently coped gables. Each gable is punctuated by different window forms, more subtle and closed feeling to the north and much more open and modern in their form to the south, overlooking the garden."

The 'broken' roofscape of different heights was a planning requirement, to avoid creating a monolithic modernist 'block' and to tie in with the differing roof heights of other properties in the conservation area.

"The mass of the house is stepped down towards the manor to reduce its visual impact on the listed house," Paul adds. "We also kept the architectural expression of the house more modest to the north where it faces the village and conservation area, then opened up the elevations to make best use of the southerly views and solar access."

Brick exterior walls add strength to the insulated timber frame; this was supplemented with additional PIR insulation in the walls and the roof. Although Craig says he's not personally a huge fan of brick, Olde English Wienerberger bricks were chosen because brick is used widely locally and is very characteristic of the conservation area. Various bonds and patterns add subtle visual features.



“The previous house that we built had quite a modern look, all painted white, sleek and clean,” says Jane, who now spends much of her time caring for her father. “This house was a bit more of an emotional response; we had just been through Covid,” she adds.

“This formed the idea for the interior. I wanted it to be more cosy, more homely, more low-key. Some of the colours we’ve used are quite dark. It’s a friendlier house, it feels completely different to the previous one.”

Some of the oak parquet flooring from the original 1930s house was repurposed – as was the structure itself, crushed onsite to provide recycled hardcore used in the landscaping. The shaker-style kitchen, panelling and brass fittings also epitomise the traditional elements of the interior style, with the backdrop of quadruple-glazed Fakro rooflights and triple-glazed Internorm windows, chosen for strength and energy efficiency, bringing in a contemporary edge.

The total build, including demolition of the existing house, worked out at £1,600 per m², costing around £560,000 in total. However, the project was hit with unexpected costs of £10,000 to rebuild a 30 metre portion of the eastern wall, part of the Grade II listed Teversal Manor Gardens. “The previous owner of the original Last House had allowed ivy to grow unchecked for 40 years which destroyed the mortar,” Craig explains. “We carefully took our side of the wall down and rebuilt it with an approved lime mortar mix.”

Also unexpected was the cost of the basement. Craig recognised that the sloping nature of the site leant itself to the new house

having an undercroft, ideal as he wanted to be able to safely store his sit-on mower and drive it straight out into the gardens. This ambition has been achieved through adding a roller shutter door. Encouraged by architect Paul, Craig and Jane agreed that it made sense to extend the undercroft to a full basement.

“We thought it was a good idea, but we got a complete shock when quotations for the work came back,” Paul admits. “It was six figures just to do the retaining structure. We thought, ‘we can’t afford that’. Fortunately, we knew a groundworker in the village who had other groundworkers working with him, so we asked him to price up the job. By doing it in-house, we cut the cost down by just over £100,000 to £25,000.”

The four metre deep hole for the basement was lined with waterproof concrete. The timber frame for the rest of the house sits on top of the inner portion of the concrete basement. To support the open-plan interior spaces internal structural steel beams come off pads at basement level, with some up to six metres high for the two storey part of the house.

Getting this element of the build right was understandably challenging, Craig says: “We had a bit of a conflict between Oakworth and the architects, it was one of those things no-one could have foreseen. The guy dealing with it at Oakworth had a heart attack. He did recover, thankfully, but there was a period of five to six weeks where communication between the architects and Oakworth was a little difficult. There was a structural element that was in the wrong place, but we got round it by bolting a steel onto the concrete wall.”

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The heating demand for the house is 30 kWh/m²; the basement doesn't need heating and neither do the bedrooms, Craig says, because thermal performance is so good. The house's EPC rating is a high B: "We were marked down because we put in two electric boilers. One is for hot water. The other is a dedicated boiler for the underfloor heating which is barely ever on. We essentially ran out of money and couldn't justify the huge cost of ground source or air source pump. We only heat the ground floor anyway."

In retrospect, he says he would have added photovoltaic panels to generate some of their electricity, and wishes that solar shading had been installed to help control summer temperatures on the southern side of the house, which overlooks the garden.

On top of the budget for the house, Craig and Jane spent a further £110,000 on landscaping works, including creating a terraced garden. "When we started the whole project we wanted to work with garden designer Sue Hayward who had done a lot of garden work on Teversal Manor," Craig says. "She had plans from an early stage. We said we wanted it terraced because it slopes down. She came up with a scheme, we took it as an overall concept, and she didn't charge us a huge amount of money. We tweaked some of the

things she suggested."

Jane was very keen on incorporating "grassy banks" leading out from the house into the garden design, but this idea was jettisoned when it was realised that these would be huge and "end up overgrown and messy."

Some form of heavy-duty retaining device would be required instead. Corten steel panels would have been too expensive, but driving down the motorway one day Craig found inspiration; the steel sheet piles used to hold back excavated earth during road construction. In place, filled with plants, they provide a pleasing solution, alongside steps from the terrace to the garden and the entrance to the undercroft.

Jane spends most of her time in the open-plan kitchen/dining/living area where she enjoys the view from the huge triple-glazed sliding doors: "You feel like you're completely connected to the garden, there is all kinds of wildlife, buzzards overhead and deer in the field beyond."

Craig likes this family-friendly space too, as well as the mezzanine landing with its comfortable seating area. Would he consider doing another self-build when family circumstances change? "Yes, but next time it will be smaller. We've found a plot recently and I have talked to Paul, we shall see." ■

Materials matter

Cedral's Lisa Grosse explains why overheating and resilience are key factors when making decisions about the facade and roof of your home.

Homes in the UK weren't designed for the extreme heat that has been setting records, and which is projected to become a regular occurrence. The Local Government Association has found that 20% of homes in England experience overheating issues now, even during cooler summers.

Nearly 38% of the country's residential properties were built before 1946 when the norm was to construct to trap the sun and minimise heat loss during mild summers and cool winters. More recently residential design has featured expanses of glass to maximise the sunlight with conservatories, skylights and large glass doors. At the same time, government data shows that two thirds of the homes in the UK need better insulation which would help mitigate the effects of heatwaves.

With more intense sunshine, higher temperatures and increased radiation, the UK renovation and homebuilding sector is having to re-evaluate material choices as well as design features to ensure that homes are more resilient. Such extremes particularly affect the performance and fabric of south facing facades. Designing buildings that remain cool in the summer and are efficient for colder weather has become more of a priority to comply with building standards.

While most building materials are designed to withstand some degree of expansion and contraction, excessive heat can push these materials beyond their limit. The impact of expansion and contraction on the building's fabric can also adversely affect the quality of the indoor environment and the wellbeing of the occupants.

Heat or over exposure to sunlight, especially for south facing facades, can result in warping and bulging, and can even affect the structure. For example, a timber facade can not only bleach in colour in consistent direct sunlight but it can also warp and expand. This can damage or create gaps in the facade and as a consequence this could result in a leak later in the year. Stone is highly robust, but like wood, can discolour as a result of constant exposure to extreme



fluctuations in temperature.

The materials used for residential roofing in the UK are also facing challenges because of more extreme weather. Increasing temperatures could cause blistering or cracking on roof tiles and slates. The sealants could also be affected. This isn't just about the visible damage caused by heat.

At the same time we are seeing increases in rainfall and wind speeds which could potentially compromise the roof's durability and result in costly maintenance in the future. The Met Office measured the highest amount of rain for any 18 month period in England from October 2022 to March 2024, since its records began. The longer and heavier periods of rain have implications for the robustness of roofing tiles and fixings. Older roof structures, for instance, may not have the capacity to support heavier tiles if there are more prolonged periods of stormy and wet weather.

With the UK becoming warmer, the choice of material and design for a home's facade will make a tremendous difference in creating an energy efficient, climate-responsive building. The most frequently used options include,

either used on their own or in various combinations: timber, stone, brick, metal, weatherboard, concrete, and glass. And a trend we have seen growing in popularity is fibre cement cladding which has undergone stringent testing to ensure its durability under extreme weather conditions. For roofing, the most popular material options have been concrete tiles, clay tiles, asphalt shingles, metal, and increasingly, fibre cement tiles.

Each of these has their own pros and cons in terms of the protection they provide their durability under extreme conditions, their cost and value, both from initial installation to maintenance and replacement.

A ventilated facade makes it easier for your home to be cooler during summer and warmer during winter. An example is the use of a ventilated rainscreen system used with cladding. Having effective ventilated walls can improve thermal efficiency of a home by helping to circulate air flow which in turn helps to regulate the temperature and improve conditions indoors. In hot weather, air can rise to the top leaving space below for cool air to enter and keep the building cool.

Other advantages of installing a ventilated wall include reducing structural movement of the building and extended lifetime of the facade. In wet weather, the air flow allows the exterior walls to dry quickly, preventing a build-up of condensation. Ventilation around windows and doors can also reduce condensation and humidity coming from inside and outside the building.

TIPS FOR ADAPTING YOUR HOME TO A CHANGING CLIMATE

As you are designing and specifying your new home or looking to make changes or upgrades, bear in mind these points:

- Opt for heat-resistant materials where possible
- Ensure that existing structures have some allowance for heat expansion
- Think about the importance of insulation for walls, windows and the roof cavity which can help to stop heat flowing through the building's fabric
- Take the orientation of the building into account, especially south facing walls
- Look at traditional materials and building methods which have been effective in hot climates. These

include concrete, brick, tile and thick plaster as well as the use of lighter coloured materials on the exterior to reflect the sun

- Incorporate active shading to keep the heat out – everything from shutters and awnings to deciduous trees
- The impact of climate change varies by region. Homes in coastal areas, for example, need materials that can withstand high levels of moisture, salt and potential storm surges.

Since 2021 government guidelines for new homes have included minimising excess sunlight in the summer, for example by setting limits for window sizes as a proportion of the floor space.

The new Future Homes Standard's 'fabric first' approach, applicable to all new homes built from 2025, with minimum standard U-values addresses improvements to insulation and efficiency. For existing properties, extensions and the replacement of thermal elements such as walls, floors or windows have to meet the new fabric efficiency standards. Achieving these will be challenging, but innovations in materials and construction techniques are providing new solutions.

Lisa Grosse is brand manager at Cedral



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CASE STUDY

FOLLOWING A LEARNING CURVE

Despite the tricky construction challenges presented by a crescent-shaped architectural design, a determined couple have succeeded in creating their dream 'forever' home in the countryside

TEXT JESS UNWIN IMAGES JOHN NACCARATO



John and Debra Naccarato's decision to embrace a striking and unique architectural design certainly threw some 'curve balls' their way during the journey to make their self-build dream a reality.

Today, curves instead of straight lines and right angles are at the heart of the spectacular crescent-shaped layout and climbing roofline of the couple's now complete award-winning home, The Pump House, in the South Downs National Park.

Yet those same curves presented plenty of headaches during construction, repeatedly pushing former solicitor John and his building team to come up with innovative solutions to quite literally bend a range of different materials to his will.

The couple's self-build story began in 2016 when they spent £400,000 on land that had once been the site of a water authority pumping station. "Plans had already been drawn up when we bought the plot," says John, "and because of planning requirements it would've been

virtually impossible to start from scratch, so we had to be happy with what we saw".

He adds: "We have made some small tweaks to those original plans, but we've always thought it was a beautiful design, so what you see now is pretty much what we saw in plan form then."

With experience gained in refurbishing other properties, John and Debra had decided some time before 2016 that building their own house was the next logical step and was, says John, "the best way of getting a house that could be our forever home with everything we wanted".

However, John admits: "I'd never built a house before and I felt there was an awful lot I needed to learn, so I retired from my job as a solicitor and between 2016 and 2019 I basically researched how to build a house and meet all the planning requirements. You could say I almost did a degree in housebuilding. Google became my best friend!"

When building work got underway, John threw himself into project management: "There was a lot of problem-solving onsite and that's

LOW POINT

"If I had to pick one thing it would be that to be onsite during the build I was driving down from our old house in Hertfordshire and staying in an Airbnb during the week, then going home at weekends. Although absolutely necessary, that was hard for me – but it also meant that Debra had to manage all the family responsibilities without me there."

HIGH POINT

"Going back to the beginning, when we found the plot where our new home now stands, we fell in love with it, so we were delighted when our offer to buy it was ultimately accepted. Fast-forward to the day when we were able to move in at long last, that's an obvious favourite moment too. However, I still get a sense of achievement every day that after years of this site being something of an eyesore it's now something that I think is truly beautiful and which sits so well in the landscape."





something I was used to doing for clients when I worked for a law firm.

"Every day there was something new to grapple with, but I never thought there was anything we couldn't do – there was always a solution and that's what I really enjoyed, working through challenges.

"All the subcontractors were fantastic – there were so many issues we had to deal with but none of them said to me, you've never built a house, so just let us get on with it. We were able to work out how to do things day by day."

While every self-build project presents its own 'bumps in the road', the constantly reoccurring challenge at The Pump House was how to approach the curved elements of the building design.

To create curved walls, insulated concrete form (ICF) – blocks that are essentially a polystyrene 'sandwich' with a concrete filling – was chosen as the building structure system best suited to the task. "It's a great system and the ICF suppliers helped a lot," says John, "but working with ICF was a completely new experience for many of the building team."

Curved walls (and sometimes ceilings too) posed a problem when it came to fixing plasterboard internally or rendering outside. John says: "If anything needed a bend, I got involved. I pretty much learned how to bend every type of material."

He continues: "The roof decking was just one example of the challenges I got involved with. The building is crescent-shaped, so the joists had to be all different lengths. We also had an

essentially flat roof, so we needed to work out how to get the rises and falls of that roof to take rainfall away. Our joists weren't running in the same direction as the falls, so we constructed two layers of decking.

"We laid one layer completely flat, fixed to the joists, and then laid out battens at whatever angles we needed, fixed to the flat deck. Each piece of plywood had to be cut four times because of the curves and then they had to do it twice because we had two layers."

John and his team were faced with another puzzle when it came to fixing plasterboard to the two-storey-high curved ceiling above the lounge-dining area: "I worked out we had to put down strips, fixed to the joists, and then a batten fixed to all of those so there were essentially rails to follow when fixing the plaster board. We also used several layers of a slightly thinner plasterboard too so they would bend more easily."

John's ingenuity was called upon once more when it was realised that aluminium strips on the roof edge would have to be bent in plan and elevation. John designed jigs for a chop saw to cut between 100 and 200 slots in each aluminium strip so that they could be fixed to the roof in the shape needed.

Glazing was yet another aspect of construction that was impacted by curves – on the southern elevation of the house, a convex curve was needed for the windows at second-storey height and then a concave curve for the smaller doors onto the patio. On this occasion at least John didn't have to figure out a solution and

JOHN'S TOP TIP

Be onsite at the build as often as you can and get involved in the detail of everything you can – otherwise, you can't guarantee what you're going to end up with. This was absolutely vital in our case because the design was so unique and outside of what our builders, carpenters and electricians would normally do. We inherited detailed drawings and had even more drawn up and worked very closely with the architects. But even with that it was hard sometimes for the builders to visualise certain parts of the construction. The builders would say to me, what's this supposed to be like? I'd phone the architect and they'd supply a freehand sketch, then we'd give that to the builders and the next day that's what they would build. Something like that happened almost every day during the initial construction phase.



CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

ARCHITECTS/DESIGNERS

LCE architects (now known as Lomax Design)
www.lomax.design

BUILDER (GROUNDWORKS, FOUNDATIONS & SUPERSTRUCTURE)

ICF Contractors
www.icfcontractors.co.uk

BUILDER (INTERNAL & EXTERNAL FINISHES & FIT-OUT)

Akehurst Construction
akehurstconstruction.co.uk

BUILDING SYSTEM MANUFACTURER

ICF Supplies – Authorised Distributor of NUDURA
icfsuppliesltd.co.uk

CLADDING (SWEET CHESTNUT) SUPPLIER

English Woodlands Timber

this bespoke glazing, along with the rest of the windows and doors, was supplied and fitted by 21° (formerly Green Building Store).

Besides accommodating curves, The Pump House features a long list of ‘green’ credentials – something that’s due to John and Debra’s own high sustainability ambitions and also to meet the planning permission conditions for the site. The Ultra Range windows and doors, for example, have helped achieve an annual kWh/m² figure that surpasses the Passivhaus standard, while the majority of the windows are deliberately south facing to take advantage of solar gain and provide warmth in the winter.

The couple’s new house has an SAP (standard assessment procedure) score of 121 and an A-grade EPC (energy performance certificate). While most of the property’s roofing is PVCu, a substantial area has been given over to a green roof that’s seeded with a mix of meadow wildflowers. A 5,000-litre rainwater harvesting system supplies water for roof and garden irrigation – and for all the WCs and the washing machine. Solar PV panels feed a Tesla Powerwall 2 battery, which enables the export of excess solar electricity to the grid and off-grid power at night or during a power cut.

High levels of insulation and airtightness, combined with mechanical ventilation and heat recovery equipment, means near constant

internal temperatures – whatever the external temperature. John reveals: “We have been able to maintain comfortable internal temperatures when the temperature outside has been below 0°C and as high as 30°C without the use of heating or air conditioning.

He adds: “Underfloor heating has been installed throughout, but we’ve not needed to use it so far. Hot water and heating, if required, is provided by a 12 kW air source heat pump.”

The Pump House has also been designed in compliance with the specifications of the Lifetime Homes Standards, which requires, among other things, wide doors, level thresholds and space for a home office.

The build was conducted with rigid compliance to waste management standards which resulted in less than 2% of the waste generated during construction ending up in landfill, while the planting of more than 750 herbaceous and medicinal plants, bulbs, trees and shrubs has helped to increase the biodiversity of the site.

With all work finally completed in 2023, John and Debra are now enjoying the results, living at the property with their two adult children. Their new home, set in beautiful countryside that is just a 10-minute drive from Brighton, has 380m² of living space and includes five bedrooms (one of which is currently being used as an office).



On the western side you find the open-plan lounge, dining space and kitchen, making the most of the height

The exterior of the building is a mixture of timber (sweet chestnut) cladding and silicon render. It's mostly single storey but on the western side it rises to two storeys. Here, making the most of that height, is where you will find an open-plan lounge, dining space and kitchen, while the upper floor hosts more living space and a curved gallery walkway that takes you to the master bedroom, complete with ensuite and walk-in dressing room.

Adjoining this two storey section is a single storey extension, housing an ensuite bedroom with a balustraded terrace area above it. On the north side of this extraordinary house is more single storey space where you can find a cinema room, gym, integral garage and the main entrance. Looking out on superb views, the heavily glazed southern aspect features an attractive lawn and patio.

Not surprisingly, John and Debra are delighted – but their dream home has come at a higher-

than-expected cost. "We did underestimate the cost," says John, "and there are a lot of factors behind that.

"The increase in the cost of materials because of things like Brexit and Covid was of course significant, and certain things took longer to do than anticipated so that cost more. To be onsite I was living in a rented Airbnb and ultimately moved the whole family into a rented house nearby, and that went on longer than expected too." And on the curved designs he admits: "I knew curves would be more expensive than rectangles, but I didn't appreciate exactly how much more!"

The couple had hoped the sale of their former family home in Hertfordshire and other property they owned would entirely fund their self-build but, in the end, a mortgage was necessary to get the project over the finishing line.

"We thought that construction costs would be around £900,000 and it ended up costing

englishwoodlandstimmer.co.uk

DOORS (EXTERNAL)

21 Degrees (formerly Green Building Store)
www.21degrees.com

ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS

HW Electrical

ENGINEER (STRUCTURAL)

J Turner & Associates

ENGINEER (DRAINAGE)

Tier Consult
www.tieruk.com

EXTERNAL PERMEABLE PAVING

SGS Surfacing
sgssurfacing.co.uk

EXTERNAL RENDERING (WETHERBY)

Eeles Plastering
www.eelesplastering.com

HEATING (HOT WATER & UNDERFLOOR HEATING)

Terra Therma
terratherma.co.uk

INTERNAL PLASTERING & TACKING

United Drylining (South East)

KITCHEN & UTILITY ROOM

Showcase Kitchens (Schüller Kitchens)
www.schueller.de/en

MVHR

S L Services (Southern)
slservicesgroup.com

PLANNING CONSULTANT

NextPhase Development
www.nextphase.dev

RAINSCREEN (TRICOYA) MANUFACTURER - CNC ROUTING

Booths Manufacturing

RAINWATER HARVESTING TANK SUPPLIER

Rainharvesting Systems
www.rainharvesting.co.uk

ROOF LIGHTS

Lamilux UK Limited
lamiluxskylights.co.uk/index.html

ROOFERS (SIKA PVC SINGLE PLY)

Richard Soan Roofing Services (t/a Rivercrest)

www.richardsoan.co.uk

SOLAR PANEL & TESLA BATTERY

EnergyMyWay
www.energymyway.co.uk

SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANT

Clear Sky Sustainable Homes

STAIRCASE & INTERNAL BALUSTRADE

Zakuna Architectural Products
www.zakuna.co.uk

TERRACE BALUSTRADE

Southern Rigging Supplies
southernrigging-balustrade.co.uk



around £1.4m but the important thing is that we have a quality build," says John. "I find it hard to do things in a half-hearted way and I wanted to look around and be proud of what we built."

The Pump House has been assessed for mortgage purposes and John and Debra are very pleased with the valuation they were given but, more important than that, they're happy to have realised their dream.

"We love what we have achieved," says John. "Debra was brought up in the country, so this environment is something really special for her. It's taken longer to build than we thought, been more expensive and been stressful at times too, but now we're through that we're both absolutely chuffed with what we've got." ■

QB1-21XE waste water heat recovery system



Showersave, an award-winning manufacturer and distributor of waste water heat recovery systems (WWHRS), has unveiled the Showersave QB1-21XE, its latest innovation designed to help self-builders and homeowners improve energy efficiency and reduce utility costs. Available for installation from December 2024, this new model builds on the success of its predecessor, the QB1-21, and is designed to deliver maximum energy savings, compliance with building regulations,

and ease of installation – key benefits for self-builders and homeowners competent in DIY. The QB1-21XE is an affordable and effective solution for anyone looking to reduce energy consumption.

www.showersave.com

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 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

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How to choose a lead-free flashing

Klober UK's Nick King details six things self-builders and their roofers should be aware of when considering lead-free flashing.

Not all things are made equal, and this saying can certainly be applied to lead-free flashing. From the material the lead-free flashing is made from, to the adhesive backing and how easy it is to apply, through to testing, accreditations and how much wind uplift it can withstand, there are several considerations that self-builders and their roofers should have in mind.

COMPLEX DETAILING

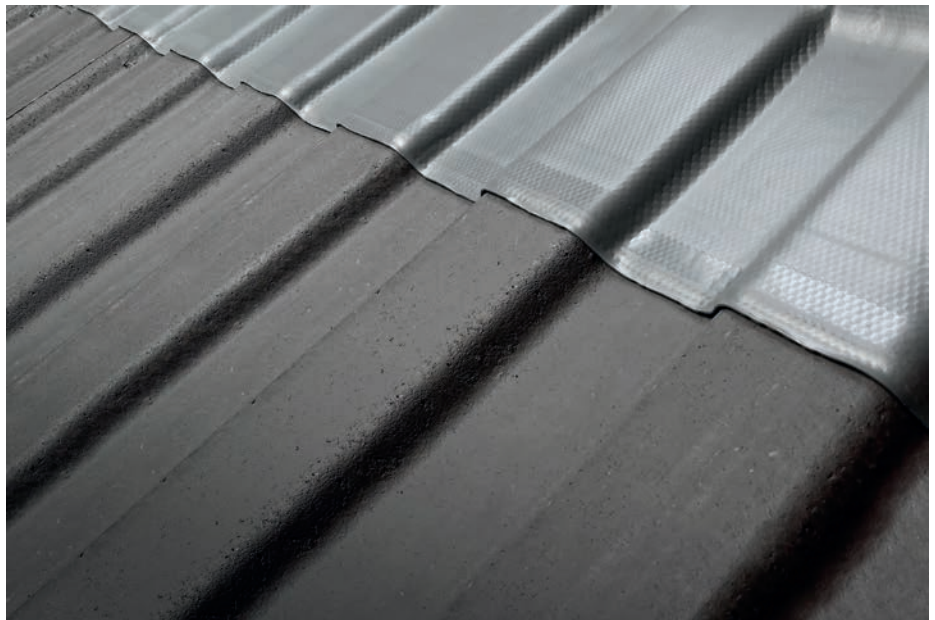
For self-build projects with complex features and considering speed of application, lead-free flashing provides the perfect solution. Thanks to its easy-to-work-with nature, the product can be applied by hand and is much more suited to detailing, such as saddle flashing.

In addition to clay and concrete tiled roofs, lead flashing alternatives can be applied to metal roofs. It can also be used on existing structures, making it a great solution for both refurbishments and new builds. Lead-free flashing can be used on:

- Chimneys – the join between chimney and roof tiles can be perfectly finished off with lead-free flashing
- Roof to wall – providing a watertight solution between roof and wall, such as on an extension or low level roof
- Solar panels – giving a watertight solution for in-roof solar panel systems
- Dormers – giving a waterproof connection between dormer and tiled roof
- Pipes and outlets – can be secured with lead-free flashing and specially designed accessories
- Saddles – designed to help weatherproof vulnerable sections of the roof.

SECURITY

When working on any project, roofers



and self-builders want assurances that the products they are using will be secure once the work is complete. This is not just in reference to weather conditions, but also the risk of theft. Lead theft is a common occurrence, often on significant buildings such as churches, due to the material's high resale value.

The risk of theft is reduced with lead-free alternatives as it has no scrap or resale value. For roofers, protecting their work is the ultimate challenge after leaving the site.

Flashing-alternatives provide roofers with security and knowledge that the products they are using are not going to be stolen by thieves, leading to unnecessary reparatory works.

EASE OF APPLICATION

For roofers, ease of application is one of the major considerations when choosing any material – especially flashing. Many roofers may have previously worked with lead flashing and are well-versed in how to fit the product. So, when it comes to

sourcing alternatives, there may be some understandable apprehension.

However, lead-free flashing alternatives are often easier to manage given they are lightweight and pliable. For example, some solutions on the market use perforated release paper and two butyl adhesive strips to help roofers position and apply the product, which if needed can be installed in wet conditions with the use of M-Glue.

In addition, certain lead-free flashing uses self-welding technology, which instantly welds together when overlapped, becoming homogenous and making it impossible to separate. This saves time and increases efficiency as only minimal overlaps are needed and an instant watertight connection is made.

Lead-free flashing allows roofers to carry out the entire installation process while on the rooftop, without needing to use specialist tools. They will only need to go up on the roof once to measure and fit the product. In contrast to lead, where roofers traditionally measure

and cut the product on the ground or scaffold, and then get back onto the roof to install it, this process makes it much easier for individuals working independently or on self-build projects.

WIND TESTING

A common misconception about lead flashing alternatives is that they are not built to withstand high winds in the same way that their lead counterparts are. However, many lead-free flashings typically have self-adhesive properties which means they can withstand tough weather conditions just as well as traditional lead products.

Since lead-free flashing is typically not as heavy as lead, and is self-adhesive, many roofers may think the product will lift in strong winds. However, that is not necessarily true. Some alternatives have been tested in wind conditions up to 114mph, proving it can match its traditional counterpart and stand up to tough weather conditions. Checking the wind testing of a product is a critical consideration for roofers searching for lead-free flashing alternatives that match the hardness of their traditional counterparts.

PRODUCT CERTIFICATIONS

Following closely with the point above,



manufacturers of high-quality lead-free flashing should be able to share technical guidance around its products, with information including its fire rating, what standard it has been tested to, temperature resistance, and UV stability. Self-builders and their roofers can also consider if the product is BBA certified or not. BBA certification shows that a company has gone the extra mile when it comes to product quality and safety.

To meet the BBA's certification standards, products must endure a rigorous set of tests that demonstrate they are fit-for-purpose. Some lead

flashing alternatives have achieved BBA certification and can provide peace of mind for customers giving the knowledge that the product will provide outstanding performance for decades to come.

For roofers working independently, this assurance is second to none and choosing a trusted, tested, and proven product means they can be confident their work will stand for years to come without the need for reparatory works.

AFTERMARKET SUPPORT & GUARANTEES

Once lead-free flashing alternatives have been applied, roofers will want to know they have guarantees and support in place in case of any complications or issues. Some lead-free flashing alternatives come with 20-year guarantees, providing peace of mind and security long after the job is complete.

Before settling on a lead-free flashing alternative, roofers should consider the quality and material composition carefully to ensure they are buying and working with a high-quality product. This goes hand in hand with a manufacturer's guarantee which signals the product is built to last and can be trusted for years to come.

Nick King is portfolio manager at Klover UK



Swish Building Products unveils NatureClad

Swish Building Products has unveiled the latest addition to its already extensive cladding range, NatureClad, a high-definition, wood effect PVC external cladding system. This new collection is available in Double Shiplap and Double Feather Edge profiles in board lengths of 5 or 6 metres. NatureClad is extremely versatile and can be used in numerous ways, from new build homes and RMI (repairs, maintenance, and improvement) projects to garden rooms, caravans, lodges, and holiday homes. NatureClad's authentic high-definition woodgrain texture has been achieved using premium wood effect foils which guarantee consistency in finish, negating the need for batch matching. Its super-matt surface is available in five contemporary wood tones; Morning Dew Silver, a light grey; Cumulus Grey, a mid-grey tone; Chimenea Charcoal, a dark grey; Coastal Sand, a nature inspired light brown; and Rich Espresso, a dark brown. The range also features matching trims and joints, resulting in a seamless, cohesive finish. NatureClad has been specially designed to combine both style and substance. It's PVDF layer and low surface tension provide greater resistance against dirt and chemicals, resulting in a durable, long lasting cladding system. In addition, NatureClad is lightweight, quick to install, and extremely low-maintenance, making it the ideal for installers and property owners alike.

01827 317200 www.swishbp.co.uk/natureclad



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CASE STUDY

ALL IN THE DETAIL

Jim and Jayne Smith have remodelled and extended a tired 1930s house, including rejuvenating the exterior with rugged local stone

TEXT DEBBIE JEFFERY IMAGES DOMINIC JONES





“We were reminded of a bland 1980s Travelodge when we first viewed the house,” recalls Jim Smith of his detached home in a peaceful Leicestershire village. “It was long and uninspiring, with a row of windows at the top and bottom, but the location is so idyllic that we planned to update the property to create a home suitable for retirement.”

Over the years Jim and his wife Jayne have undertaken a number of projects, including renovations and new builds. The couple have four adult children, and their sons are both in the building trade. “We started working with houses back in 2004, when I first tried to retire,” says Jim, a former engineer, who later set up a family building business with his sons.

“After restoring and remodelling our previous Victorian house, which had 28 acres of land, we realised that the upkeep would prove difficult as we grew older, so we decided to downsize,” explains Jayne. “There were a few issues with the next house, though, such as limited car parking spaces, so we sold that one to friends and moved into rented accommodation while we looked around.”

Finding a house which met their criteria proved difficult, until they viewed a 1930s property in a sought-after road in north Leicestershire. Standing on a substantial plot of two thirds of an acre, the house enjoys impressive country views, and in March 2022 the sale was completed.

With a dated internal layout, an underwhelming entrance, and various unattractive rear extensions, the building was in need of attention. “After sketching out a few ideas we soon realised that it made sense to

employ a professional,” says Jim. “We wanted something more open plan, with enough bedrooms for visiting family and friends, and a more attractive external appearance.”

The couple approached Richard Norwood of Leaf Architecture & Design – a RIBA practice based in Leicestershire which had been recommended to them. Richard became involved at the earliest opportunity, visiting the house with Jim and Jayne prior to the purchase to gain understanding of their lifestyle and needs.

His design concept involved adding a dramatic feature entrance and extending to the rear, while improving circulation and room proportions. Externally, the building’s appearance would be unified with render and local stone, together with crittall-style glazing.

“Strangely, it was the utility room which enjoyed the best views and was located centrally at the rear of the house,” recalls architect Richard Norwood. “Jim and Jayne had sketched out some ideas of their own, but the utility room still claimed the views, so I suggested reorganising the layout to allow the open plan kitchen, dining, and living spaces to enjoy the outlook. The utility room was then moved closer to the garage, which made more sense.”

Designing a single storey stone extension across the entire rear elevation increases the main ground floor living space, with the extension projecting out even further to one end to form a relaxed seating area opening onto a terrace through glazed doors.

Previously, the house had six bedrooms but only two bathrooms. “We wanted every bedroom to have its own bathroom,” says Jim. “Nobody really enjoys sharing a bathroom when

HIGH POINT

“Enjoying all the detailing, such as the joinery, which we spent so much time thinking about and planning.”

— Jim Smith

LOW POINT

“Wet weather meant the site was always muddy, and we spent every day covered in muck.”

— Jim Smith

JIM & JAYNE'S TOP TIP

★ It’s an old chestnut, but costs can spiral so it’s worth having a healthy contingency fund.



CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

ARCHITECT

Leaf Architecture and Design
leaf-architecture.co.uk

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS

**Blackwell Structural
Consultants**
blackwellconsultants.co.uk

BUILDER

Charnwood Country Homes
charnwoodcountryhomes.co.uk

WINDOWS AND DOORS

Cherwell
cherwellwindows.co.uk

JOINERY

Charnwood
charnwoodkitchens.co.uk

KITCHEN AND BATHROOMS

Cole Roberts
coleroberts.co.uk

MVHR

Blauberg UK
blauberg.co.uk

LIFT

Access 2
access2.co.uk

STAIRCASE

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they visit, so we extended upstairs by around 30 m² and revised the layout to create four spacious ensuite bedrooms. Thinking ahead, we also installed a lift, so that we can remain living in the house in the future even if our mobility is reduced."

The addition of a projecting gable to the front elevation has visually balanced the overall appearance of the house, breaking up the long expanse of walling to form an exciting double-height entrance atrium with glass from floor to ceiling. Decorative stonework complements the render and echoes the new rear extension.

"Granite and slate are popular building materials in this area, because we're close to several quarries, so we liked the idea of using natural stone for our plinth and on the single storey extension, which has a flat roof with a parapet around the top," says Jayne.

Planning consent was also achieved for a new double garage and carport on the plot. "Richard took time to work through all the details of the house with us, both inside and out, until we came up with a design we liked," says Jim. "Then he submitted the plans on our behalf, using 3D graphics to support the application. The planning process went surprisingly smoothly, with no alterations requested, and we were so glad that we chose to work with a professional rather than trying to manage by ourselves."

Not long after purchasing the house, Jim had begun work to convert their two double garages into temporary living accommodation – installing insulation and central heating, as well as a bathroom and part of the old kitchen from the main house. "We finished the work in early January 2023, and it was like moving into a cosy holiday apartment," says Jim, who has since

returned the outbuildings to garages.

Their builder son, Tom, took on the role of main contractor, and constructed the new garage using structural steelwork and rendered blockwork. This was then used to store furniture during the project.

One unexpected expense involved the need to replace every original drain, due to leaks, and discovering that all the soakaways were blocked, which meant that water was collecting beneath the house. "We built the retaining wall for the patio first," says Jim. "This then served as a barrier, which prevented most of the garden from being wrecked during the project."

Demolition work on the house commenced, with much of the rear wall removed, together with internal walls and floors. "We needed to add a huge amount of steelwork, and the foundations were also underpinned in many areas, which was all fairly costly," recalls Jim.

The majority of structural work occurred on the ground floor, with the addition of the new extension and a two storey element which enlarges the first floor main bedroom. Two and a half metre deep foundations were needed for this section, due to the proximity of mature trees.

"We didn't want to be able to see any evidence of the steelwork inside, so all the beams needed to be concealed between joists, which made the build quite complicated," says Jim. "Our open plan kitchen space has nine steels, two of which are massive. To lift one of these took 12 men, with hydraulic equipment needed to raise them into place."

The existing floors were also dug out, and underfloor heating installed on both levels, which involved replacing suspended timber



floors with concrete downstairs. "We realised that these costs made renovating far more expensive than building from scratch," says Jim, "but we plan for this to be our last home and wanted to get every detail right – making it as maintenance free as possible."

New walls for the extensions were constructed using dot and dab plasterboard internally on blockwork, with 100 mm of insulation and either stonework or rendered blockwork externally. "We spent two days driving around the area taking pictures of different render colours for inspiration," says Jim.

A specialist stonemason was employed who was already known to the family, and the walling was laid with the stratum parallel to the ground, creating narrow horizontal bands of 200 mm deep stone. This was mixed with limestone, to add both strength and visual interest, and very little mortar was used – creating the appearance of dry-stone walling.

The entire structure has been thoroughly insulated using various methods, including 100 mm of external insulation to the front facade, which avoided reducing room sizes. "Where we installed the lift, the passageway could have been quite tight if we'd lost any more space, so it made sense to insulate outside rather than in," says Jim.

The main roof was in relatively good condition, and any new pitched elements above extensions were finished in reclaimed tiles, sourced to match the originals. A 2 mm thick PVCu roofing membrane was chosen for the rear flat roof, which gives the appearance of lead when viewed from windows above.

Every detail was carefully considered, including setting windows into deep reveals to create a pleasing aesthetic. The crittall-style glazing has aluminium frames, and cost £88,000, but is a main feature of the design and proved far less expensive than quotes for steel.

"We could have economised but were keen that the windows should have authentic detailing," says Jayne. "This meant that we didn't want trickle vents, and instead needed to install a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system to meet Building Regulations for ventilation. It works incredibly well and is really efficient."

Instead of retaining the existing boiler and extending the heating system with radiators, the couple decided to install twin air source heat pumps, and took up the floors to lay underfloor heating.

"We spent far more than we'd originally planned because we chose high quality finishes which would last," says Jim. "In hindsight, it would have cost around £150,000 less to just knock down the house and start again, as we needed to pay VAT on a remodel."

The couple were closely involved throughout the project, with Jim positioning some of the intermediate steels, using his training as an engineer to ensure levels were precise. The large kitchen island has a dropped ceiling above it which houses an extractor unit, and he marked this out and completed part of installation, in addition to building false walls in bathrooms to contain niches complete with concealed lighting.

The newly built grand entrance atrium boasts

a feature staircase with a dedicated library area to the rear. "It was our architect who planned the staircase position, and we were keen to have a cut string design," says Jim. "Jayne was wary of introducing too much glass because of grandchildren's finger-marks, but we are both pleased with the look, and how the side profile of the stairs has been made into a feature. We decided to paint it black, as this is a bit of a theme throughout the house. Whenever we couldn't make up our minds, we chose black!"

Joinery for cabinets and shelving in this part of the house was bespoke, and Jayne had strong interior design ideas for every room. In the kitchen, the pale surfaces of cabinets, quartz counters, and large-format porcelain floor tiles are offset by near-black feature walls.

"The floor tiles are 1200 x 600 mm, and we laid them as a full bond because large tiles tend to have a bend in them, and are never perfectly level once they've been fired," Jim explains. "As they can be around 1 mm higher in the middle, laying them as a half bond could create an edge where you might catch your feet."

Such details are what please the couple now that they are back living in the finished 325 m² house. "We're very proud of the end result," says Jim. "It can be the little things which you notice, like an awkwardly positioned socket, but we've managed to avoid this by thinking everything through early on and working with an architect who understood our vision." ■



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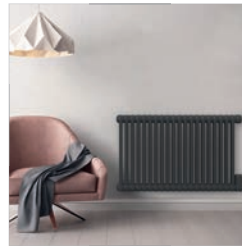


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Electric radiator series sparks huge interest....



The electric radiator series launched by **Stelrad**, has sparked significant interest in the heating sector. The range is currently made up of 13 steel and aluminium radiators and towel radiators, which provide unbeatable quality and design to suit any room or décor. As well as offering effective and functional heating in the home, as you would expect from Stelrad, the radiators in the Electric Series are aesthetically appealing and provide attractive options for the décor in the home and come with a five-year

warranty on the heating parts and a two-year warranty on the electric components. The Stelrad Electric Series provides a range of exciting new options where direct electric heating is the chosen option for a home.

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Boosting thermal comfort & wellbeing

Chris Stammers of BEAMA's Underfloor Heating Group explains how hydronic underfloor heating creates thermal comfort through even heat distribution and efficient heat transfer.

Creating a sense of thermal comfort in a building is essential for the wellbeing of occupants. However, to achieve optimal comfort, it's key to maintain indoor environments that minimise the body's need to regulate its temperature actively, thereby ensuring people occupying the space feel neither too hot nor too cold. Many factors influence whether someone experiences thermal comfort. While it's highly subjective and varies from person to person based on several factors, creating a comfortably warm indoor environment is universally beneficial.

EVEN HEAT DISTRIBUTION

Ensuring an even distribution of heat throughout a space is imperative. The only heating system which can heat all surfaces in the room evenly is radiant heating, specifically hydronic (water-based) underfloor heating. The series of continuous loops fitted under the floor – either within the screed or within specialist panels – creates a large radiant surface that heats a room from the floor upwards. The radiant heat travels upward from the floor to warm the objects and people in the room to create an immediate feeling of comfort rather than only heating the surrounding air.

When there are parts of a room which are much cooler than others, condensation may gather when the warm, moist air comes into contact with cooler surfaces, such as walls or windows. This moisture then provides an ideal environment for mould growth and, therefore, poor air quality due to the mould spores. Pollutants such as dust and allergens can also get 'trapped' in poorly heated areas of a property. While ventilation plays an essential part in good indoor air quality, from energy conservation and security aspects, having windows open during the cooler months



isn't always an option.

As the floor becomes a large heat emitter, it's evenly distributed across the surface, which helps maintain a



comfortable ambient temperature throughout the space, and eliminates hot and cold spots in a room. The nature of underfloor heating also means the heat felt by the occupants is gentle and comfortable rather than overwhelming.

In addition, thanks to the stable and consistent temperatures created by underfloor heating, it maintains and balances humidity levels, further improving indoor air quality and delivering comfortable living environments.

REDUCED AIR MOVEMENT

Radiant heat delivered by underfloor systems directly heats objects and surfaces rather than the air, so it doesn't create convection currents to create thermal comfort. Instead, radiant heat warms the very fabric of a room. Minimising air movement is important to support a sense of wellbeing within the indoor environment, particularly for those who suffer from respiratory problems.

Many aspects of a property and individual rooms can improve or deteriorate indoor air quality. One main culprit is the movement of problematic particles, such as dust and allergens. These particles can't be avoided easily, but when they become airborne, they cause more issues, especially for those with respiratory problems. Underfloor heating prevents these particles from circulating, thus improving indoor air quality.

Plus, because underfloor systems are entirely hidden within the floor, there aren't any hard-to-reach components, such as coils or panels, where particles can gather and be dispensed into the space when the system is active. Regarding aesthetics, they are completely hidden within the floor, allowing for complete interior layout freedom while seamlessly integrating



with almost every flooring material, contributing to a comfortable living space overall. So, in the case of underfloor heating, the term efficiency applies to both system performance and space efficiency.

FLEXIBLE ZONING OPTIONS

Underfloor heating systems must now have zoning capabilities to comply with the Part L low-temperature update to the Building Regulations. Standard thermostats meet the regulations

but commonly only offer a single temperature setting for a whole property, missing out on the energy-saving benefits of zoning, which many smart thermostats are designed to work with.

Zoning allows the end user to create distinct temperatures for each space, each with personalised settings that can be altered and monitored from the thermostat or smartphone. This allows the end user to create the right level of comfort in each space—for example, warmer in the living area and cooler in the kitchen, where heat is already produced from cooking activities. It also ensures that vacant zones aren't heated unnecessarily, helping to save significant energy, especially for larger properties.

Adaptive Start functionality is another smart feature in more advanced devices. It can work with the local weather forecast to activate the heating at just the right time based on external weather conditions. This is another excellent example of how thermal comfort can be delivered by specifying some of the innovative energy-saving features of smart thermostats.

Chris Stammers is portfolio manager for BEAMA's Underfloor Heating Group, the UK's national trade association for underfloor heating



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Must-have flooring trends for 2025

From subtle, biophilic-inspired flooring to brighter, more confident statement designs, Amtico's Lorna Williams explores the top five trends set to make a splash in flooring in self-builds next year.

The big design trend currently, and likely to sustain into 2025, is natural looks driven by biophilia, including in flooring. Woods and stones are set to take centre stage in 2025. Blend the realistic tones and textures of oak, granite and more with the practicality and durability of LVT to add warmth and biophilic beauty to any space.

BOLD COLOURS & INTRICATE DESIGNS

Following a year of 'quiet luxury,' 2025 is set to see a little more drama. We expect it to be a year for colour, experimentation, and intricate design. Statement flooring is the best way to add personality to the home so embrace those bright hues, rich tones and dark, contrasting borders.

EXCITING LAYING PATTERNS

Statement laying patterns, like Herringbone, Chevron and Basket Weave, elevate the home by offering a more personal, artistic touch. Opting for patterned yet timeless flooring can help make your space feel more expansive, offering a dash of the ornate without feeling overwhelming.

With 2025 set to be a year full of striking design, visually interesting laying patterns are ideal for classic and contemporary spaces alike. Balance bold accents with subtle touches for a stylish and well-rounded design.

TRANSITIONS & ZONING

Transitions and zoning are a clever, architecturally-led way to make an impact in the home. With open plan living set to make its return in 2025, contrasting flooring and bold borders are the way forward as they add character to any space.

Defining different areas of the home with subliminal zoning and contrasting tones not only draws attention to focal points, such as archways, kitchen islands or conversational spaces, but helps to set the overall mood of a room.



CONTRASTING INLAYS & MOTIFS

Playful, imaginative and fun; words to live by for 2025. Get creative with contrasting inlays and statement motifs to inject a sense of joy into the home. Add a sense of vibrancy and playfulness with a motif, making your hallway a focal point of the home, or combine colour with a clever border to draw attention to the shape of each room. Mix and match flooring to find your new 2025 style.

Moving into 2025, we expect to see laying patterns used to draw attention to key spaces, adding intricate details which give it that personal touch to finishing off your room beautifully. This year, it's all about expressing personal creativity through design, adding your own finishing touches that make it feel special.

Lorna Williams is head of product design and visual creation at Amtico

CASE STUDY

THE HOME SWAP

Sharon and Jer Holland swapped their family bungalow in County Cork for a traditional stone farmhouse owned by Jer's parents but in need of an upgrade

TEXT ALEXANDRA PRATT IMAGES LYNDA KENNY





This photogenic farmhouse in County Cork in the south of Ireland has been causing a stir online thanks to its effortless modern country style. Yet getting to this point has been a real journey for owners Sharon and Jer Holland.

"It all started in 2018," says Sharon. "Jer's parents lived in the farmhouse and were beginning to think about 'futureproofing.' There we were, living in a bungalow next door. We were a little surprised at first when they suggested an exchange, but it was too good an opportunity to miss."

Sharon and Jer are both teachers. They have three children, two of whom are still at home, and they live on Jer's family farm. At a time when the couple's children were growing and needing more space, the idea of moving into a house with two living rooms and five bedrooms was perfectly timed.

Yet for this stone farmhouse to become a new home for their family, Sharon knew it would require some work. "It was in a good, liveable condition, as it had been renovated in the early 1990s and well maintained," recalls Sharon. "But some things were on the verge of breaking and

certain sections were unheated."

With a full renovation, a replumb and even a single storey extension in mind, Sharon and Jer wanted to make sure their plans held no surprises for the wider family.

"We had to have a conversation about the changes with Jer's parents and they were fine. We talked it all out, which was so important. None of us wanted to fall out." Sharon and Jer had a huge advantage over most home renovators when they started this project – they already knew the building thoroughly.

"We knew what did and didn't work before we committed to the extension," says Sharon. "Taking that time made us more confident." Although the extension was the most significant part of the project, it began only about six months after the family had moved in. Sharon's first step was to ask a structural engineer to look at the fabric of the building; there wouldn't be much of a budget for a new kitchen if the roof needed replacing. With the all-clear on that, Sharon, who took on most of the planning, sourcing and project management of the renovation, hired a local building firm that she



knew had experience with period buildings.

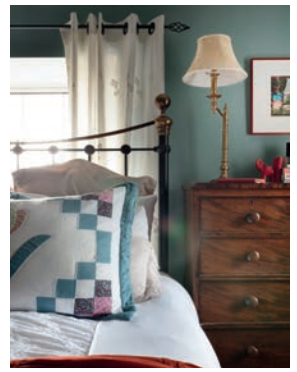
A large part of the project was replacing the existing heating system. For Sharon, this was a priority. An old Stanley range in the kitchen supplied the home's radiators, but it was overworked and inefficient. The couple considered alternatives such as air and ground source heat pumps, but the realities of retrofitting these systems into a solid-stone house gave them doubts over such a system's effectiveness. Sharon also worried about pulling up and re-laying the original tiles in the hall for underfloor heating. "You have to be sensitive with building work."

Ultimately, Sharon and Jer opted to keep the old range, as they love its character, which is so appropriate in this old building. "It's like a hug in the kitchen," laughs Sharon. Now, however, it heats just the newly extended kitchen, the utility room and the guest bedroom on the floor above. The rest of their home has new eco cast iron radiators, which can be plugged in, using a standard three point plug. Again, Sharon was in the unusual position of being able to trial one radiator by asking her in-laws to install it

"in the coldest room of the house" for a year before committing to the entire house. "It was very successful, and it gave us the confidence to go on with ElectricCast," says Sharon. "The company was fantastic."

Although Sharon decided to keep the kitchen range, this room saw the biggest transformation. The original space was dark and small, with only a glazed door for natural light. Sharon's builders recommended a local architect to design the new kitchen, now much larger thanks to the new extension. Sharon also hired a kitchen designer with an excellent reputation. Having both experts working on the project at a time when most meetings were online due to Covid restrictions created an unusual, yet very fortunate outcome.

"We all worked in tandem," explains Sharon. "The kitchen designed the exterior, not the other way around. We made changes to the room dimensions by one metre, and this increased circulation space around the island, giving us better flow. Plus, I could make the banquette seating extra deep at 70 cm, which creates a really wide, luxurious feel, even though



I didn't spend more on finishes. Small margins made a big difference."

This is now a large yet homely space, with the Stanley range in the centre creating a 'broken-plan' layout. The kitchen cabinetry is constructed from solid timber and the worktops are Silestone. At just 20 cm in depth, Sharon feels these are "more contemporary, less blocky," than thicker countertop slabs. Although Sharon's original budget didn't stretch to upstands and splashbacks in the same stone, she realised that the cutting out of her countertop had left sections which could be used for these marginal areas; and at a comparable cost to tiles, adhesive and employing a tiler. "Penny pinching doesn't always pay off," says Sharon.

The eye-catching "lovely, dewy, sorbet-pink," kitchen cabinetry was a significant decision by Sharon, especially as Jer was against the colour choice at first. "But now he loves it!" laughs Sharon. Colour is an important feature throughout the house and Sharon embraced the process of finding a colour palette suitable for a period building that brings it up to date, adding character and reflecting them as a family. Yet even Sharon wasn't committed to colourful interiors at first. Initially overwhelmed, she lacked the confidence to choose bolder colours. "I was considering painting everything white," says Sharon. "I was very conscious of not wanting to undermine the character or integrity of the house."

Then Covid presented her with another opportunity; to take an online interior design course through the Create Academy. It was a revelation and Sharon began sharing ideas

on social media, quickly finding herself in a community of like-minded people willing to share and discuss ideas. The online design course also encouraged Sharon to look beyond decor to more fundamental aspects of a major home renovation, such as room layouts and plumbing plans. It was a big undertaking, but Sharon, who teaches geography, is accustomed to thinking spatially. Working on basic graph paper, she reconsidered every room in the house, including the bathrooms. Both of these were ripped out and Sharon thoughtfully reconfigured the compact spaces of 2.5 x 2.5 metres to include both a bath and a freestanding shower. "They now feel larger and more luxurious," says Sharon. "They are much more pleasant to use."

Sharon was also inspired to make the counter-intuitive decision to reduce the number of bedrooms from five to four. A bit of light detective work revealed that the fifth – a box room – had the same floorboards as the room next door. It was located on a landing at the turn of the traditional staircase. Again, knowing the building so well paid off. "We had the luxury of knowing what is great about the house – and we had the keys," says Sharon. By removing the partition walls and allowing an existing window to illuminate the staircase, Sharon returned the landing to its original condition; a bright and generous space where their two daughters now do their homework. "It was always about the light," says Sharon. "The movement of light is important. Everything that I tried to do in the farmhouse was about merging the function of each room with its natural light."

Another unexpected space is the snug. This

SHARON'S TOP TIPS

- ★ Don't be afraid to embrace colour. Our Instagram account @now_and_then_home shows how we've used colour to inject our home with personality whilst maintaining a colour palette that cherishes the age of our home.
- ★ Source your team based on their experience working with properties similar to your own. There would have been little point in hiring a team with no experience of older properties on our project.
- ★ Stretch your budget using preloved decor and materials. Preloved items in our build included: all kitchen appliances, the back door (stable door style), and 70-80% of our furniture. There are often also wonderful bathroom fixtures and fittings available preloved.



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hard-working little room is less formal than the sitting rooms and the flooring is engineered wood, yet it's the place where the family snuggles up to watch movies and it's now one of Sharon's favourite spaces. "I love the cosiness, especially in winter," she says. "It's funny how it's often the 'spaces in between' that are the nicest in the house."

Sharon didn't have to spend too much time or money on new flooring, as the original floorboards and tiles are all beautiful. Apart from the snug, Sharon only had to select flooring for her new kitchen and dining room. Although she wanted period flagstones in this room, the budget (guarded carefully throughout) didn't allow these. Instead, Sharon chose concrete-style tiles, which she believes, fade into the background. They are only 30 x 35 cm, as the larger sizes "look too modern."

Sharon was lucky that the farmhouse still had many entrancing period details, such as ceiling roses. Yet she couldn't help making a few additions, found in home auctions around the country. Her favourite of these is the fire surround with built-in seats which came from a property in Dublin. "That was a done deal," laughs Sharon. "It's beautiful and I love a fireplace with seats!"

Although making the farmhouse their home was very much a 'passion project' for Sharon, Jer played a vital role behind the scenes, carrying out demolition work, acting as a gofer

for tradesmen, painting and, of course, moral support for Sharon.

Unusually for such a big project on a period home, there were few surprises, although Sharon blames herself for the one real low point in the project. Having moved into the farmhouse six months before building work began (and even painting several of the rooms), Sharon and Jer were reluctant to move out during the kitchen extension. Unwilling to pay the cost of living elsewhere for a while, Sharon now feels they should have lived elsewhere for at least a month. "Mid-build, with no kitchen, we had a power black-out one evening in the local area and I found myself barbequing in the rain in November... I would change that if I had the time over!"

As that memory fades, Sharon, Jer and their family can now focus on enjoying the house, which comes into its own during Christmas, when they host their extended family. "It has made a positive impact on our lives. There's a certain contentment to living here and Jer's parents are really happy the house is still in the family."

With the plans to stone-face the extension and Sharon's work on the project creating a buzz through her Instagram page, this house's story is not yet finished. "There's a great sense of satisfaction," says Sharon. I hope we've managed to both make a new home for us while cherishing what the farmhouse was." ■

Get colourful with Bradite

Working with a client to select an exterior colour scheme involves a number of different considerations. Most importantly, do the colours chosen complement the exterior of the property? How should a painter and decorator select a colour scheme on behalf of a client, or advise them on how their choice may or may not work?

It's crucial that any paint chosen for exteriors should be durable enough to withstand all that the British climate has to throw at it, and Bradite's One Can certainly delivers in this respect. A primer, undercoat and topcoat combined, water-based One Can is tough and long lasting. It has excellent adhesion to a wide range of surface materials, including uPVC, and can be supplied with a matt or eggshell finish.

But most importantly for our subject, One Can is also available to be tinted in all RAL, BS and NCS colours. You can choose freely from this extensive colour range to select shades that will



flawlessly complement your client's home exterior.

Many period properties are traditionally built out of stone. Warm neutral colours work well in this case, whether you are painting masonry, front doors, window frames, sills, soffits and more. Shades like RAL 9001, or 10 C 31 in the BS 4800 range, are firm favourites for many country houses. But if the client is happy to go with something a little more adventurous, consider a bold blue-green like BS 16 E 53.

For a more contemporary exterior, there's also the option to create

contrast with a dark, impactful shade. Try a deep navy like '106 – Royal Blue' from BS 381C, or a dark grey-green like '220 – Olive Drab'. The latter is a popular choice for painting metal railings to ensure they blend into the surrounding greenery. Alternatively, a straightforward, no-nonsense jet black like RAL 9001 is great for painting garage doors and front doors.

Another popular substrate for home exteriors is, of course, red brickwork. Consider using bold shades of green on the front doors of these properties. As any artist will tell you, green is the complementary colour to red, so this is a failsafe colour choice to create instant kerb appeal. Consider rich greens like RAL 6016 or 6026.

Finally, it's often a good idea to offer the client a test with a sample pot before they make their final choice. Once the colour is agreed, you can begin your masterpiece!

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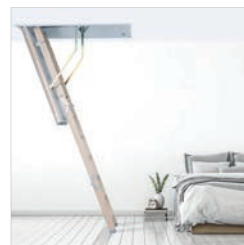


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such as shower enclosures or study spaces, kitchen countertops and stairways; in fact, anywhere the creative mind can conceive a plan for. The collection offers the option of neutral white, warm white or RGB+W LEDs.

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The self-build market is an aspirational one, with many media titles targeted towards those people who are merely dreaming about building their own house. Unlike some newstand magazines, Selfbuilder + Homemaker has a focused readership of genuine self-builders, renovators and agents, reaching only the people who already own their land or property, have planning permission and are ready to start work.

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