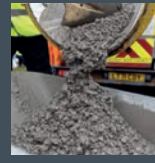




Comment:
A legal perspective
on the implications of
the planning reforms
for housebuilders



Comment:
Patrick Mooney on
the realities of
building 1.5 million
homes



**Climate
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HOUSEBUILDER & DEVELOPER

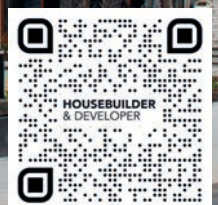
DECEMBER/JANUARY 2025



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James Parker

ON THE COVER



HOUSEBUILDER & DEVELOPER

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2025



GREEN SHOOTS IN SALFORD

Greenhubs is a 25-unit development of affordable homes by Salford Homes. It's the first of a new wave of affordable housing approved by Manchester City Council.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Ken Livingstone would be horrified. A socialist 'icon' who Housing Secretary Angela Rayner no doubt looked up to in former years, was also famously a huge advocate of protecting the humble newt. However Rayner has turned her sights on the cute amphibians, rather than the NIMBYs who may turn out to be a much bigger and tougher enemy in her battle to build 1.5 million homes across England over the next five years.

As the magazine went to press, we awaited the 'overhaul' of the National Planning Policy Framework, and Rayner gave a strong signal that some of the environmental guidelines around biodiversity may be sacrificed to build more homes.

She said on Sky News recently: "We can't have a situation where a newt is more protected than people who desperately need housing."

She then backtracked a bit: "What we need is a process which says protect the nature and wildlife but not at the expense of us building the houses we need. We can do both," she said. Is that right? Can we really build 1.5 million homes over the duration of this Parliament without a major freeing-up of all manner of planning restraints, inclusion biodiversity provision? Rayner also said "we can offset," so maybe the offsetting industry will where we will see the admittedly important biodiversity focus be in future, as opposed to supporting species on sites themselves.

Housebuilding in general, and in particular exactly what can be achieved if you force local authorities to drive through Local Plans, is going to be a key political battleground for the next few years. Builders will be front and centre, trying to do the right thing by their customers while being battered by local objectors in their thousands across the country. They have been here before, but not on this scale.

According to one projection (by the Centre for Cities, based on the past 80 years of housebuilding), Labour will undershoot the 1.5 million homes target by at least 388,000 units. Even Sir Keir has already admitted it "might be too ambitious."

Andrew Carter, chief executive of Centre for Cities praised the boldness of the Government's ambition, but said parts of England would have to reach an 80-year high in rates of building. He added, however: "By removing the discretionary element of the planning system, the UK would bring its planning system in line with most developed economies."

The Centre recommended moving to a non-discretionary zonal planning approach instead, plus 'selected release' of green belt, and an expanded role for the public sector including in obtaining sites and preparing brownfield.

This chimes with Rayner's words – she says she will remove "subjective reasons" for blocking schemes – and if borne out, this is the real game changer.

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Bellway picks up staff prize at national awards



(Left to right): host Katherine Ryan; Laura Bell, head of organisational development for Bellway; Heidi Khoshtaghaza, Bellway Group HR director; Andy Neilson from award sponsor OpenReach

Bellway was awarded the 'Best Staff Development Award' at the Housebuilder Awards 2024, held in October.

Bellway was picked as winner from a shortlist of five finalists by a panel of expert judges from across the housebuilding industry. The company's entry – entitled 'A workplace where everyone is welcome' – outlined Bellway's pathway towards being an Employer of Choice, which is an integral priority of its innovative long-term sustainability strategy, Better with Bellway.

Bellway trainee assistant site manager Sophie Curtis was also highly commended in the Housebuilder Star category at the event. As well as demonstrating dedication towards her bricklaying apprenticeship, she has encouraged other young women to consider a career in construction and supported other apprentices working in the industry.

Heidi Khoshtaghaza, Bellway Group HR director, said: "We are absolutely thrilled to have won the prestigious Best Staff Development accolade at the Housebuilder Awards for the second year in a row." She continued: "At Bellway, we are totally committed to creating a people-first culture which embraces equality, diversity and inclusion and this award is recognition of the achievements we have made and the

vision that we are working towards."

"I'd also like to congratulate Sophie on being highly commended in the Housebuilder Star category. She consistently goes above and beyond what is expected of her, to learn, and develop, and to encourage others to do the same – she is a fantastic ambassador for everything we do at Bellway."

Under the Better with Bellway initiative, which was launched two years ago, Bellway has introduced a number of new bespoke programmes to foster an inclusive workplace, including inclusion hiring training for people managers across the business.

Improvements to family-friendly policies and flexible working have also been introduced to make life easier for employees. Bellway's "mental health first aid" programme, run internally, has trained employees to be mental health advocates, while there has also been a focus on mental health awareness training across the company.

Through partnership with the Leonard Cheshire's Change 100 Programme, Bellway has provided paid work placements to promote social mobility and disability diversity, while the company has also set targets to increase the ethnic diversity of both its workforce and within senior roles.

Tilia Homes partners with Places for People



Housebuilder Tilia Homes, part of the untypical group, has partnered with the UK's leading social enterprise, Places for People, in a deal worth approximately £17m to bring a choice of affordable homes to its new development in Thetford.

Sovereign Gate has been created with the environment, sustainability and community in mind, and will provide 130 new energy-efficient homes. 60 affordable homes ranging from two to four-bedrooms will be available on either a shared ownership or rental basis directly through Places for People.

This collaboration aims to address the significant demand for affordable housing in the region, with projections indicating a need for more than 10,000 new dwellings by 2038 in Greater Norwich alone.

The new community at Sovereign Gate will also benefit from areas of public open space, enhanced landscaping and a play area to create a vibrant and welcoming environment that promotes community interaction and a rich quality of life for residents of all ages.

John Kerr, regional managing director from Places for People, commented: "We are thrilled to partner with Tilia Homes on the Sovereign Gate development in Thetford. This collaboration aligns perfectly with our mission to create places that work for everyone. The development's focus on energy efficiency, sustainability, and community spaces resonates with our values of building not just houses, but thriving communities. We look forward to welcoming residents to this new community and contributing to the vibrant future of Thetford."

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Modular 'micro homes' for Chelmsford homeless



A collection of 24 modular DuoHaus homes, constructed to provide accommodation for homeless people, are being installed near Chelmsford. Delivered by The Hill Group, the purpose-built, self-contained homes will be run by CHES Homeless; an Essex-based charity that supports people suffering from homelessness. The charity will provide 24-hour onsite assistance and support with living skills, helping residents rebuild their independence and stability.

The concept was developed by The Hill Group, as a "follow-on housing solution" to help address the homeless crisis. Hill is installing the DuoHaus homes to replace an obsolete motel, which CHES Homeless has been running as a homeless hostel since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. The project was made possible through support from the government's Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP), Chelmsford City Council, various trusts, grant-makers, individuals, and pro bono contributions from the teams involved.

Designed with a 60-year lifespan, each DuoHaus home has been designed for up to two residents and is built to meet Future Homes Standards, exceeding building regulations for energy-efficiency and sound insulation. They will be fully furnished and equipped including a fitted

kitchen and white goods, providing a safe, comfortable environment for residents before they find permanent housing.

The DuoHaus homes are part of The Hill Group's broader SoloHaus initiative, which has been providing safe, high-quality modular housing for homeless individuals since 2020.

The 24 homes will be stacked on two levels and each home will arrive ready for installation. The homes are set to be complete and ready for residents by late spring 2025, just 18 months after the project was first initiated. The development gained planning permission recently and demolition of the former motel building and site groundworks are already underway.

As part of the redevelopment, one section of the former motel is being retained and renovated to provide an administration building where CHES' dedicated support team will be based, as well as a communal space for residents to socialise. The charity will provide 24-hour assistance for residents and also offer educational sessions including IT skills, DIY and job advice to help build their confidence back. In addition to the DuoHaus homes, the redevelopment will provide office and private spaces where residents can access one-to-one support from the charity.

Hill Group embarks on 'landmark' Billericay development

The Hill Group has officially broken ground on a transformative new development in Billericay, Essex, which will deliver 179 high-quality homes across a 20-acre site that will redefine the town's landscape.

Designed to blend seamlessly with the surrounding countryside while addressing the pressing demand for sustainable housing, the project will be set around an expansive park that will serve as the green hub of the neighbourhood.

Central to Hill's vision for this development is the creation of a "landscape-led community." The thoughtfully designed green spaces will not only provide residents with areas to gather and relax but will also support local biodiversity with habitats for wildlife and a rich array of trees and plants. The development is set to deliver more than double the biodiversity gain required by planning regulations, "setting a new standard for environmentally conscious urban planning," said Hill.

In addition to providing a diverse range of one and two-bedroom apartments and two to four-bedroom houses, the development will feature mixed-tenure options including private sale, affordable rent, and shared ownership, "appealing to a wide demographic and fostering a truly inclusive neighbourhood," said the firm. Designed to be 'tenure-blind,' the first homes are set to go on sale in late 2025.

True to Hill's high environmental standards, each home will be equipped with advanced features to reduce energy consumption, including air source heat pumps and provisions for electric vehicle charging. Every property will come with designated parking, cycle storage, and private outdoor space, from gardens to terraces, for "a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle."

The plans for the development have been "thoughtfully shaped by insights gathered from extensive community consultations, ensuring they align with the values and needs of Billericay residents." Key improvements within the new development, including a new cycle path, upgraded road infrastructure, and enhanced local footpaths, have been incorporated to strengthen connectivity to the town centre.



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Campaign aims to put smaller developers 'at the heart of housebuilding'



Independent housebuilder City & Country has pledged its support for a new national campaign by Pocket Living which “urges the Government to help unlock the potential of small and medium-sized developers to end the housing crisis.”

Pocket Living’s “Get SMEs Building Again” campaign reflects the difficulties that SME housebuilders face and proposes a 10-point plan to “boost housing delivery by levelling the playing field.”

The report notes that the number of SME housebuilders has plummeted from 12,000 in the 1980s to just 2,500 today, with the sector now building just 10% of the UK’s new homes, compared with nearly half of homes in the 1970s.

Pocket Living, supported by City & Country and a number of other developers, has put forward a manifesto of recommendations that it believes will revitalise the struggling small and medium-sized housebuilder sector and massively speed up the number of homes being built on smaller sites across the country.

Wayne Douglas, managing director at City & Country, comments: “The report by Pocket Living clearly highlights the difficulties that SMEs face, and puts forward a sound and well-researched plan that could unlock the full potential of smaller businesses to create the homes the country so badly needs. At City & Country, we are keen to support it and

would encourage the Government to take urgent action to put smaller developers back at the heart of housebuilding.

He continued: “SMEs have a vital role to play in the housing market, but there are too many barriers in their way – the pace of planning is one such hurdle, but another significant barrier is the cost of finance when the planning and discharge process can be so lengthy and uncertain. For SMEs, the risk we take on can mean that on otherwise viable schemes, we struggle to break-even on a building project, whereas with more speed and certainty of timing, more schemes could be viably delivered.”

Paul Rickard, managing director at Pocket Living, added: “Small and medium-sized housebuilders have a wealth of skill and talent that needs to be supported. In London alone, the number of SMEs has plummeted by 66% since Pocket was founded two decades ago, making it harder and harder to get new homes built on smaller sites – especially since delays in planning consent are more damaging to smaller businesses. We are delighted that City & Country has joined our campaign, and we look forward to discussing these proposals in detail with the Government. All of the steps included in Get SMEs Building Again are designed to be cost-neutral for the Treasury and should be low-hanging fruit for the Chancellor.”

Thomas Alexander Homes makes key new appointments

Yorkshire-based housebuilder Thomas Alexander Homes has announced the appointments of Dean Woodward as site manager, Jasmine Thomas as technical coordinator and Dan Pearson as sales executive.

Woodward has worked in the construction industry for more than 15 years, with 11 of those spent in site management roles for organisations including Keepmoat and Avant Homes.

In his new role, he will be responsible for the successful execution of the firm’s newest development, Hartley Vale, a mix of 23 two, three, four and five bedroom properties in the village of Burneston.

With more than 10 years’ experience in the property industry, Thomas’ appointment as technical coordinator will see her working in both the company’s architectural and engineering departments, where her responsibilities will include creating plans and coordinating designs for forthcoming developments, ensuring all projects meet building control and sustainability requirements and actioning diversions and service providers.

New sales executive, Dan Pearson joins the company having spent the last three and a half years working in the property sector. He will be located at the company’s new Swann Gate development in Church Fenton, where he will assist customers throughout their buying process, from initial enquiry to completion.

Alex Blease, managing director at Thomas Alexander Homes, said: “Dean, Jasmine and Dan are fantastic new recruits for us as we continue to expand our business. Dean adds invaluable management experience to the team and will support our growth across the Yorkshire region at a time when high-quality, sustainable housing is in extremely high demand.

“Jasmine’s understanding of both the engineering and agricultural sides of our business – coupled with her in-depth knowledge of the property industry – will make her a versatile and exceptionally talented addition to the team, while Dan’s impeccable customer service skills, work-ethic and ambition align perfectly with those of the company.”



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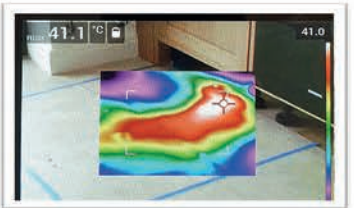
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Alec Cropper
Partner at planning law firm
Walton & Co

NAVIGATING THE NEW PLANNING REFORMS

Alec Cropper of Walton & Co gives the prognosis for meeting Labour's 1.5 million new homes goal, and the key changes needed in the housebuilding sector.

Following its victory in the 2024 General Election, the Labour Government has put housebuilding and economic growth at the forefront of its agenda. Describing the need to see more homes being built as a 'moral obligation,' the Government has announced a raft of proposed planning reforms that are intended to facilitate the building of 1.5 million new homes.

A NEW APPROACH TO CALCULATING HOUSING NEED

The Government announced a consultation on revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') in July. Amongst the proposed changes was the introduction of a new 'Standard Method' for assessing housing need in England.

The current methodology involves calculating the projected household growth for the next 10 years using 2014 household projections, which are then adjusted to take account of affordability. Caps and urban uplifts may also be applied as circumstances require. The current method is designed to provide a total of approximately 305,000 net additional homes per annum.

The proposed new Standard Method would utilise a baseline set at a percentage of existing housing stock levels, and apply an uplift based on median workplace-based affordability ratios. Government calculations indicate that application of this new methodology would generate a total of circa 370,000 net additional homes per year. Most councils will therefore see a notable increase in the number of homes it needs to plan for, with 90% of local planning authorities outside of London needing to increase their current housing need figures.

The new Standard Method would also be required to be used by councils to assess housing needs in their areas, rather than being an advisory starting point as is currently the case. Housebuilders and developers will therefore want to consider how the introduction of any new housing need methodologies affect the areas in which they have an interest.

INTRODUCTION OF THE GREY BELT

The concept of the 'grey belt' was discussed prior to the General Election. The Government has now provided further detail as to what grey belt land is, and how it can contribute to housing delivery.

The consultation version of the NPPF defines grey belt as brownfield land in the green belt that makes a "limited contribution" to the five purposes that green belt land is expected to serve. However, land located within specific protected areas (such as Areas of Outstanding National Beauty, National Parks, or habitats sites) are excluded.

Development of grey belt land for residential purposes would be appropriate where the site is in a sustainable location, the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply, and the following "golden rules" are met:

- At least 50% of the dwellings are secured as affordable housing (subject to viability);
- Necessary improvements would be made to local or national infrastructure; and
- New, or improvements to existing green space would be provided.

The proposed introduction of the grey belt represents a marked shift toward encouraging development of 'low performing' sites within the green belt to meet housing needs. However, developers will need to be confident that schemes can satisfy the above requirements. Arguments as to the extent to which potential grey belt land contributes to the five green belt 'purposes' and whether sites are in a sustainable location may also provide potential planning battlegrounds.

GREEN BELT OPPORTUNITIES & HURDLES

The proposed revisions to the NPPF make clear that exceptional circumstances for altering green belt boundaries through the plan-making process include where housing needs cannot be met through other means. In such circumstances, authorities will need to alter green belt boundaries to meet their needs in

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT HAS NOW PROVIDED FURTHER DETAIL AS TO WHAT 'GREY BELT' LAND IS

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full, unless there is 'clear evidence' that such alterations would fundamentally undermine the function of the green belt across the plan area.

Planning authorities will therefore be obliged to review green belt boundaries where they fall short on housing need, with the draft NPPF proposing a sequential approach to guide release. Brownfield sites would be considered first, then grey belt land in sustainable locations, and then other sustainable green belt locations.

However, where green belt land is released through plan preparation or review, development proposals would be expected to deliver the 'golden rule' contributions discussed above, including 50% affordable housing provision. Viability assessments for development in the green belt would also be expected to utilise nationally set benchmark land values that are based on existing use value plus a "reasonable and proportionate premium for the landowner." If land was transacted above the benchmark land value, and a proposed scheme could not deliver policy-compliant development, planning permission would be expected to be refused.

Housebuilders will therefore need to monitor whether the adopted version of the NPPF sets a benchmark land value for green belt land, and the level at which any such value is set.

Such matters may be particularly

relevant for those currently promoting green belt sites through emerging plans, and whose schemes may be expected to provide a higher level of affordable housing than previously envisaged.

REGIONAL PLANNING & NEW TOWNS

The Government has confirmed that it intends to implement new legislation enabling universal coverage of strategic planning in England within the next five years. Elected mayors and combined authorities are expected to have a central role in overseeing the preparation and adoption of 'Spatial Development Strategies', with the Government also

exploring the most effective means through which such Strategies can be brought forward outside of mayoral areas.

Further detail as to the nature of Spatial Development Strategies is expected to be forthcoming in the short-term future. However, the Government envisages that they will have an important role in meeting housing needs, delivering strategic infrastructure, building the economy, and planning for environmental improvements. Developers will therefore want to ensure that any draft Spatial Development Strategies that are consulted upon make adequate provision to meet identified needs, and respond to market demand.

The Government's Policy Statement on New Towns has also reaffirmed its commitment to building new large-scale communities across England. An independent New Towns Taskforce has been created that will advise ministers on appropriate 'New Town' locations, with a final shortlist expected within 12 months.

The Government's new town programme will include new settlements built on greenfield land, as well as urban extensions to existing settlements and regeneration schemes. The unifying principle being the programme is that each new settlement will contain at least 10,000 homes, with a target rate of 40% affordable housing.

With planning overhauls at the front of the Government's drive for economic growth, developers and their advisers will want to keep informed of all legislative and policy changes that are introduced.



DEVELOPERS WILL WANT TO ENSURE THAT ANY DRAFT SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES THAT ARE CONSULTED UPON MAKE ADEQUATE PROVISION TO MEET IDENTIFIED NEEDS, AND RESPOND TO MARKET DEMAND

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Patrick Mooney,
Housing Consultant

BEHIND THE
SCENES THERE
ARE RUMOURS
OF A LONGER
TIMETABLE
BEING SET

TESTING TIMES

Patrick Mooney warns the Government's 1.5 million homes target requires urgent funding and policy reforms if it is to be achieved.

Has the Government already signalled that it is unlikely to meet its ambitious target of building 1.5 million new homes over the course of the next five years? In public it has not, but behind the scenes there are rumours of a longer timetable being set which would take us beyond the next election.

Given the many challenges it inherited from the previous administration this was always going to be a tough target to meet, but after six months in office it appears the sheer scale of the problem has forced Ministers to admit there are huge industrywide issues to resolve and they under-estimated the scale of these before the election earlier this year.

In a landmark report from the housing consultancy Savills, which was sponsored by the National Housing Federation, there are predictions that without significant levels of Government funding and support the sector is likely to deliver no more than one million homes by 2029.

DIFFICULT INHERITANCE

Appearing before the Housing, Communities and Local Government committee, the Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook told MPs that "delivering 1.5 million homes is going to be more difficult than we expected in opposition". He said Labour knew it would be grappling with a "difficult inheritance", and that changes to the National Planning Policy Framework in December 2023 had exacerbated a fall in housing supply.

On assuming office he said "we discovered the situation was even more acute than we expected." This is understood to be a reference to the Office for Budget Responsibility's forecast that new housing supply will drop below 200,000 homes in the current year.

He said it was essential that the headline target of 1.5 million new homes was met due to the lack of affordable housing and because 1.3 million people in the UK are on social housing waiting lists. However, he could not provide a figure for the number of affordable or social rent homes to be delivered within the overall new homes target.

The committee chair Florence Eshalomi MP pointed out that since 2017, previous governments had only managed to deliver around 234,000 net additional homes per year. When pressed by Eshalomi on whether the new Labour Government would set interim

annual targets for housing delivery, the Minister said they would not. He explained: "You referenced 300,000 homes per year in your initial question, that was obviously the previous Government's target and it didn't hit it once in 14 years."

ANNUAL TARGETS

On interim housebuilding targets, Pennycook said this Government "deliberately didn't pick an annual target because we knew that we were going to inherit a very constrained supply and in particular, what amounts to essentially a collapse in affordable housing supply."

The Minister said the number of planning permissions granted and additional new completions will still be published as normal, saying "the sector will be able to see whether we've turned the system around and are making progress towards that final full Parliament target."

He added that "the trajectory is an upward one, with large amounts of housebuilding delivered in the later years of the Parliament." Pennycook said he is "comfortable" that the Government will reach the target by the end of its five-year term, but he clearly did not convince all of the committee members on this point.

Liberal Democrat MP Lee Dillon asked Pennycook how many of the planned 1.5m homes will be for social rent. Pennycook said: "I can't give you that figure, although we will have more clarity as we progress through Parliament". He explained that it is "not as simple" as taking a proportion of the total supply and saying 20% or 25% of it will be social housing, noting that around half of all social and affordable housing is currently delivered through Section 106 planning agreements with housebuilders.

SOCIAL RENTED HOMES NEEDED

Matthew Pennycook said that the Government is committed to strengthening the existing developer contributions process, and also that pushing supply up through planning reform will help to deliver more affordable homes. However, he added: "We won't know until the spending review settlement precisely how many social and affordable homes will come through that route."

The Minister acknowledged that less than 10,000 social rented homes were delivered per year over the past 14 years, with the

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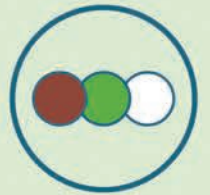
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numbers typically around 6,000 to 7,000. He insisted that “We need to do better than that.”

However, housing industry experts are warning the Government that it could miss its overall target by at least 500,000 homes without increased funding and policy intervention. The National Housing Federation (NHF), the Home Builders Federation (HBF) and Savills have warned that significant support for new social housebuilding and homes for first time buyers are required to make a real difference. Without this they predict there is likely to be a shortfall of up to 95,000 new homes a year on average.

According to the findings of the Savills report, the quickest way to plug the gap in delivery is through targeted grant funding for social housing, including social rented homes, as part of a wider support package for social housing providers. This would also help ensure that councils and housing associations can afford to buy Section 106 homes from private developers, which they are struggling to do at present because of the strain on their finances.

This could sit alongside a Government-funded support scheme for first time buyers which in turn would increase the demand and delivery of new homes for sale in the private market.

RECORD LEVELS OF DEMAND

As we already know demand for social housing is at record levels with 1.3 million households on social housing waiting lists in England. This is affecting families across the country, with one in five children currently living in overcrowded homes, and over 150,000 children homeless and growing up in

unsuitable temporary accommodation – which is also the highest level on record.

Since grant-funded social housing does not rely on market conditions, Savills and the NHF say it is resilient to market downturns and can help ensure a steady demand for homes, propping up the construction industry, securing jobs and boosting growth. This would help sustain growth across the wider economy which is probably the highest priority for the Government.

While the ambitious planning reforms (to the NPPF) announced by the Government are vital in increasing the number of plots available to build on, the number of new homes built will still be determined by local demand to buy those homes, particularly in the five years of this Parliament.

The state of the current housing market limits this demand – with high interest rates, high house prices, and fewer mortgages available to first time buyers all acting as barriers to purchasing homes on the private market. Without additional funding to build social housing, the Government’s target relies on delivering an average of 200,000 new homes per year for private sale as the key component in the 300,000 net additional homes per year required.

The Savills report reveals this to be near impossible to achieve by 2030 without additional Government support, based on historical trends and on current and projected market conditions. This is not due to capacity or lack of ambition within the housebuilding sector, but to the likely state of the wider housing market over the next five years.

A MIX OF SOLUTIONS

Since the 1940s net housing supply has only reached close to 250,000 homes per year on a sustained basis either alongside a substantial social housebuilding programme, or with Government support for first time buyers, as with Help to Buy between 2013 and 2022.

Because new private homes are sold into a market dominated by the sale of existing homes, new private homes typically only make up about one tenth of all private sales in any given year. This means we would need total sales of over two million homes a year to achieve 200,000 new private home sales. Projected market conditions, without any intervention to support first time buyers, would indicate total sales of around half this level (1.16 million). This will test the persuasive powers of Mr Pennycook and Deputy PM Angela Rayner, over what they can secure from the Treasury.

The NHF and HBF have called for support to bolster the financial capacity of social housing providers through a long-term rent settlement, funding to invest in existing social homes, a rapid boost to the current Affordable Homes Programme and commitment to a new long term and expanded programme. Some of this has already been approved, but Savills say this needs to be complemented by support that the Government can offer to first time buyers and ensure that all housing providers are able to invest with confidence in the new sites and labour resources to get the country building again.

It is uncertain how much capacity local authorities currently have for them to assist in building more council homes, as council finances hang in the balance with rising costs and increasing pressures pushing their budgets to the brink. Many councils face the near-impossible choice between record spending on homelessness services and the provision of temporary accommodation, while at the same time their housing revenue accounts are going into deficit.

They also have to meet new statutory repair obligations, under Awaab’s Law which will require landlords to fix reported hazards, such as mould and damp within specified timescales. Alongside this they are being required to improve property standards and the energy efficiency of tenanted housing and prepare themselves for a new, Decent Homes Standard. This is a scenario to test even the most gifted and imaginative of council treasurers and housing directors, as well as the Housing Minister and the Deputy PM.



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Brian Berry
Chief Executive of the
Federation of Master Builders

A LONG AND WINDING ROAD

Brian Berry of the Federation of Master Builders (FMB) looks back over what has been a pivotal year for housing, and highlights the challenges and opportunities presented to builders by the new Government's policies.



WE MUST USE
THIS PUSH
FOR NEW
HOMES AS AN
OPPORTUNITY
TO RESET THE
HOUSING
MARKET

Well, what a bumpy and eventful year 2024 turned out to be! We have had a shock early General Election that caught the Conservative Government by surprise; a landslide victory for the Labour Party; the first Labour Budget in 14 years; the election of a new USA President; and of course, growing geo-political instability. All of these events have impacted housebuilders in one way or another. Now that the new Labour Government has had time to settle in it's a good opportunity to look at some of the highlights and see what ups and downs they have had for the sector.

LABOUR'S HOUSING PUSH – THE FIRST FEW MONTHS

Labour's housing target of 1.5 million new homes over five years is to say the least an ambitious goal. Plans to reform the planning system should help to make it easier to build homes and the latest announcement to increase low-cost loan options for house builders is positive. However, for the

Government's plans to succeed it will be crucial that this money is directed towards those small housebuilders who need it most and can build the homes this country needs.

The Government has also made brownfield sites the focus of their plans. This could be a bonus for SME housebuilders who tend to prefer to use smaller, brownfield sites, but with ambitions for hefty affordable housing numbers and brownfield sites only representing a small percentage of overall land in the country, will the numbers stack up?

There was also the much talked about 'grey belt' which is what will be defined as previously developed upon green belt land. There was a scramble to understand what this term really meant. The consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) made it a little clearer, although the level of clarity has sparked much debate. Labour also set up a commission to look into building new town, another lofty ambition, which the FMB has made clear must include smaller housebuilders.

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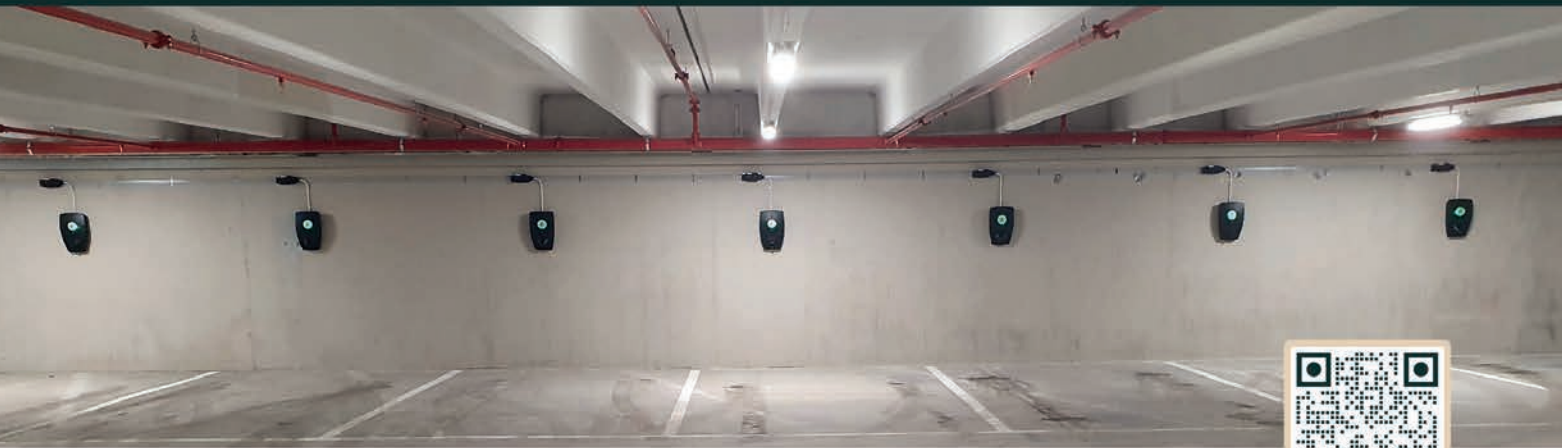
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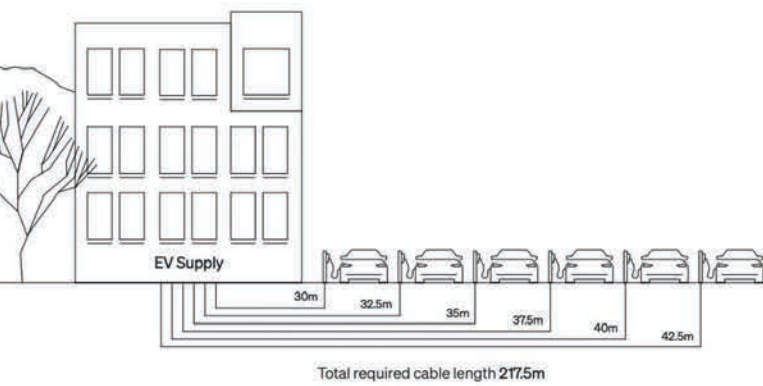
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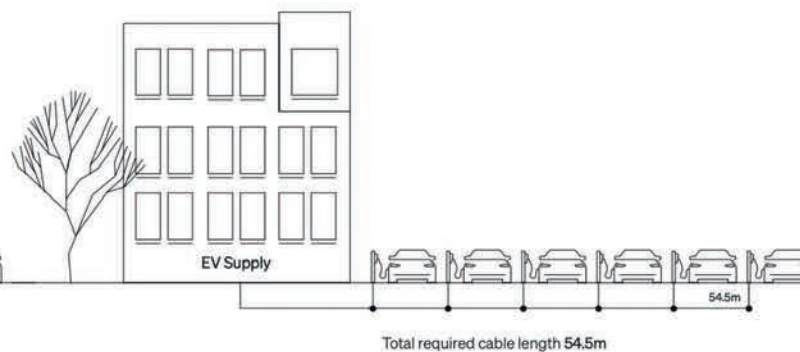
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So, does this mean in five years' time we'll have 1.5 million additional homes? Probably not, and this is seemingly supported by the outgoing head of Homes England. It's more likely that two terms will be needed to deliver that figure given we haven't built 300,000 new homes in a single year since the late 1960s. Overall though we must use this push for new homes as an opportunity to reset the housing market. The UK has become too reliant on a small number of volume housebuilders to deliver new homes, while SME numbers have crashed, putting us deeply out of sync with other developed economies. My concern is the plans of this Government seem reliant upon large-scale strategic housebuilding, which – in theory – will reduce house prices and result in more housing. But, this is far from the business models that volume developers work to, and pushes aside organic, sustainable growth.

THE FIRST LABOUR BUDGET IN 14 YEARS

The long-awaited Budget finally arrived at the end of October and we've now all had time to mull over it. Previous new governments tend to try and get the finances sorted early on, but Labour played a waiting game. What we eventually ended up with was certainly a



step change to the previous government. But the immediate message was costs are going up for businesses. The fallout is still being debated into the end of the year, particularly the rise in national insurance contributions for employers which will sting many in 2025.

It is good news that the Government has committed to upgrade the country's energy inefficient homes with £3.4bn pledged to fund their Warm Homes programme. While the full plans for how this will impact homeowners, and not just social housing, is not yet clear, it may help to provide a pipeline of work for small builders.

The Budget also finally cemented

Labour's plans to provide and increase the number of planning officers. However, the 300 additional planning officers is a drop in the ocean compared to what is needed to boost local authority planning teams – 0.7 planning officers per local authority planning team will struggle to make a difference!

WHAT'S TO COME IN 2025?

As we leave 2024 and enter 2025 the Government has started to realise the scale of the challenge. Departments beyond MHLCG, including Education, Work and Pensions and Business have now understood that more builders are needed to get anywhere near delivering 1.5 million new homes. The creation of Skills England may also help with this push but given it's going to take at least nine months to set up expectations have to be managed. Efforts to boost recruitment will need to be funnelled into building up our vocational educational system, which has found itself in second place behind academic routes to work for decades. Let's hope in 2025 this and wider sectoral issues can find a path to some form of a resolution and the Government can realise its much sought after and increasingly elusive 'growth' in the economy.

Stocksigns achieves gold level membership



Stocksigns has achieved gold level membership from the Supply Chain Sustainability School (SCSS). This forms a key pillar of the company's progressive CSR policy, demonstrating its commitment to sustainable business practices and helping to reduce the environmental impact of the

construction sector. "Achieving gold level membership from the SCSS has been a crucial step," commented Danny Adamson, managing director at Stocksigns. "Introducing operational and procedural changes are all very well, but we also need employee awareness and engagement to have a real, lasting impact. The resources available through the SCSS have really helped us to educate and train employees across our teams."

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Inspiring Community Connections



Meadfleet Open Space Management is celebrating a successful year of community engagement activities. The award-winning open space specialists have broadened their outreach, collaborating with even more residents, neighbourhood groups, charities, and schools across England and Wales.

Their activities range from mini-beast hunts and pond-dipping days to bat and wildlife walks, ecology talks, and planting activities. Wherever possible, events are held on Meadfleet-managed open spaces, fostering stronger connections among neighbours within their developments. Through the Meadfleet Academy, they engage younger generations, inspiring them to become future stewards of the natural environment.

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New UK Trade Sales Director For Luceco

Luceco has appointed Ian Hunter as UK trade sales director. With a wealth of experience in the electricals industry across all channels and with strong links within the housebuilding sector, Ian has previously worked for brands including Legrand, Scolmore and Electrium (part of Siemens). Working with an innovative portfolio of respected lighting, electrical and EV charging products, Ian will now be responsible for driving forward Luceco's UK trade sales.

John Hornby, CEO at Luceco Group PLC said: "Ian's appointment is a reflection of our ambitious long-term goals for Luceco. A new role, Ian will be focused on UK trade and project responsibilities. With his strong industry relationships and proven track record, I am confident that Ian's contribution to the business will be highly significant."

Ian said: "With its impressive product portfolio and forward-thinking attitude, Luceco offers exciting opportunities in the rapidly developing electrical market. This, coupled with my experience makes this appointment a 'perfect fit' for me and I look forward to being part of the next stage in Luceco's development."

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THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

Concrete's route to net zero

As demand for eco-friendly homes and stricter regulations grow, Andy Campling of Tarmac explores how manufacturers are tackling the challenge of developing low-carbon concrete solutions that could transform UK housebuilding.



While the construction industry's path to net zero is becoming more hopeful due to increased innovation and transparency, it's still a path that is challenging to travel. Stringent environmental regulations and the growing demand for environmentally friendly homes are putting immediate pressure on housebuilders to make sustainable changes rapidly to keep pace. Low carbon concrete solutions are enabling housebuilders to meet this pressure head-on, transforming construction's sustainability landscape.

CONCRETE'S CLIMATE PROBLEM

On the road to net zero, construction is facing a myriad of unique challenges that are making sustainability goals a marathon, rather than a sprint. One of the main challenges posed to the industry is the issue of concrete. Concrete is a

major source of CO₂ in construction, accounting for 1.5% of all emissions in the UK – and 8% globally.

In recent years, the focus on environmental legislation has shifted to building materials and reducing carbon emissions. Significant changes include but are not limited to the Future Homes Standard 2025, the Labour government's housing development pledge, and the Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard. Combined, these three changes demonstrate a growing emphasis on embodied carbon, CO₂ emissions associated with materials, and construction processes throughout the entire life-cycle of a building or infrastructure.

Housebuilders must evaluate the environmental impacts of a building or development throughout its life-cycle, then make a change. The most recent and accepted evaluative standards

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for embodied carbon are found in building life-cycle assessments (LCAs). LCAs highlight the relevant regulatory compliance for embodied carbon, opportunities to reduce embodied carbon, and the embodied carbon data to declare in Scope 3 emissions.

THE RISE OF LOW CARBON CONCRETE

The demand for low carbon concrete has been steadily increasing and concrete manufacturers are innovating to meet this need. Low carbon concrete is produced with fewer carbon emissions compared to standard concrete while maintaining the same properties that make concrete a reliable building material.

The reduction of carbon comes from manufacturers using alternative materials to clinker, such as fly ash, slag, or limestone. These alternatives have been extensively proven to be high-quality materials that are safe and effective in reducing the carbon footprint of concrete production. For instance, Tarmac uses only the highest quality alternative materials and follows strict quality control measures to ensure that our low carbon concrete meets and exceeds industry standards.

Additionally, low carbon concrete has been shown to be more durable and resistant to corrosion than traditional concrete and just as strong, if not stronger depending on the specific mix design and intended application. Low carbon concrete can offer better long-term strength and durability, making it a great option for long-lasting structures.

However, some manufacturers are also creating tailored, low carbon concrete. For example, at Tarmac we engineer all our CEVO low carbon solutions, so whatever your performance requirement, we can supply a reduced CO₂ concrete solution, depending on the rating you want to achieve (from industry standard A++ to G).

The perceived upfront cost of low carbon has been a known barrier for housebuilders who are aiming for net zero but have budgetary constraints. But, as with many sustainable changes within the industry, the cost-effectiveness of low carbon must be seen on a long-term basis. Understanding and talking about how the long-term benefits of low carbon's durability and sustainability can save money overall, will make this shift less challenging and seen as an inevitable move to make sooner rather than later.

INNOVATIONS IN CONCRETE

Many manufacturers welcome the update to the BS 8500 British concrete standard, which allows for portland-limestone (PLC) cements to be used in combination with GGBS. PLC cements allow up to 20% of the cementitious elements to be limestone filler, replacing clinker and lowering the carbon emissions from cement. PLC has been a major focus in Tarmac's concrete solutions evolution and we have planned a full rollout across our national manufacturing capability.

Additionally, Tarmac has developed an alkali-activated material system (AACM) which has been used in recent full-scale demonstrations across the UK, including a National Highways project on the M42. We anticipate the replacement of CEM I 52,5N (PC) volumes, with CEM II A-LL 52,5N (PLC), a UKCA-marked cement with limestone filler already built in, which can be used under the new BS 8500 standards. Tarmac has confidence that CEM II A-LL will have equivalent performance, creating a permanent carbon-cutting replacement.

Low carbon concrete is a relatively new technology and it's still evolving to meet the demands and challenges of the construction industry. But as sustainability becomes an essential element to housebuilding, low carbon concrete becomes a vital product that needs to be readily available in order for it to be a viable choice for housebuilders.

LOOKING AHEAD

Concrete's path to net zero is hopeful. Despite the building material's reputation for being a significant contributor to carbon emissions, there is an exciting solution emerging with the increasing popularity of low carbon concrete. With regulations constantly evolving and the rising demand for eco-friendly housing, low carbon materials are slowly becoming the go-to for housebuilders.

Manufacturers are innovating with alternatives to clinker and engineered solutions are allowing tailored mixtures to meet environmental standards. Low carbon concrete is transforming housebuilding in the UK and ultimately leading the industry to a more sustainable future.

Andy Campling is head of readymix performance at Tarmac

PLC CEMENTS ALLOW UP TO 20% OF THE CEMENTITIOUS ELEMENTS TO BE LIMESTONE FILLER, REPLACING CLINKER AND REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS

CCF passes CCPI Assessment for Merchants and Distributors

Nationwide distributor of insulation and interior building products CCF has passed the Code for Construction Product Information (CCPI) Assessment for Merchants and Distributors.

The CCPI was created in response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the construction industry's subsequent need to improve the way product information is managed and communicated. The CCPI aims to raise standards in the management, marketing and advertising of product information and facilitate a culture of transparency, with specific criteria for best practice set out for manufacturers, merchants and distributors.

CCF was assessed and found to have the necessary product information processes and systems in place to uphold the CCPI, and that the company is committed to diligently adhering to the CCPI and to proactively promoting and supporting the adoption of the CCPI with its suppliers. The CCPI Mark for Merchants and Distributors does not indicate that any particular product information conforms with the CCPI or constitutes any statement as to a product's compliance with any standards of quality or safety.

As part of the CCPI Assessment for Merchants and Distributors, CCF also had to demonstrate that its employees are fully supported and aware of what needs to be done to continuously



improve product information and to keep the distributor's product information up-to-date and unambiguous.

CCPI assessment requires a commitment to continuous improvement and looking ahead, CCF will be regularly reviewing its internal processes and how the company works with its manufacturing partners to raise standards in the information the distributor shares with its customers.

Commenting, CCF's managing director Catherine Gibson said: "Through collaboration within CCF's different internal departments, headed up by our product category, technical and marketing teams, and by providing relevant

colleague training, we are now in an even stronger position to support our customers with reliable product information to help them select the right products for their projects.

"We are proud to have passed the CCPI Assessment for Merchants and Distributors and as an organisation, we are committed to proactively working with the CCPI to raise standards in product information and continuously improve the product information we supply."

For more information about CCF's products and services, please visit the website.

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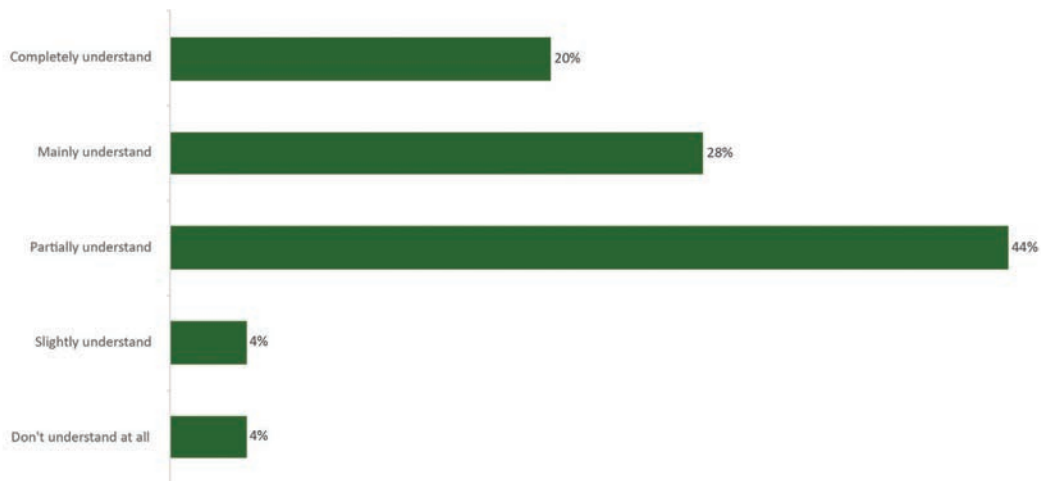
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STRATEGIES FOR MEETING THE FUTURE HOMES STANDARD

How well do you understand the requirements of the Future Homes Standard?



INTRODUCTION

The currently consultation on the Future Homes Standard (FHS) was published in December 2023, with the aim of building upon the changes already set out by the updated Parts L and F, as well as making provisions for fabric improvements and renewable technologies. We staged a series of surveys of housebuilders in order to gauge their readiness, and most recently, their practical approaches to the Standard.

The original 2021 consultation proposed increases in required U-values from those set out in Part L – requiring walls to achieve a minimum of 0.15 W/m²K (rather than 0.18 W/m²K in Part L), and windows tightened from 1.2 to 0.8 W/m²K. However, that was dropped in 2023, much to the dismay of many industry bodies. As a result, FHS provisions currently are unchanged on U-values from those in Part L. The standard also includes so-called ‘backstop values,’ meaning individual products can have lower U-values than those set by the notional building, so long as the overall average U-value meets the target.

Other key changes include a preference for inclusion of heat

pumps, and the scrapping of the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) – unchanged in the last 30 years – to be replaced by the Home Energy Model. The HEM sees the calculation methodology and ‘ecosystem’ modified, allowing assessors to determine a design’s compliance with the FHS and also issue new energy performance certificate (EPC) ratings. As part of this, there are two ‘notional’ building options which will be used to compare designs’ performance with, known as Option 1 and Option 2.

Option 1 utilises solar PV panels, decentralised mechanical ventilation (dMEV) and achieves an airtightness test score of 4. The simpler Option 2 includes no solar PV, natural ventilation with intermittent extractor fans, and an airtightness test result of 5, presented as “the minimal approach to achieve ‘zero-carbon ready’ homes.” It’s estimated that on a three bed semi-detached house, Option 1 would cost around £6,000 more than current regulations, with Option 2 presenting only a £1,000 increase.

Despite this, the overwhelming consensus within the industry is that Option 1 is preferred. It would mean lower running

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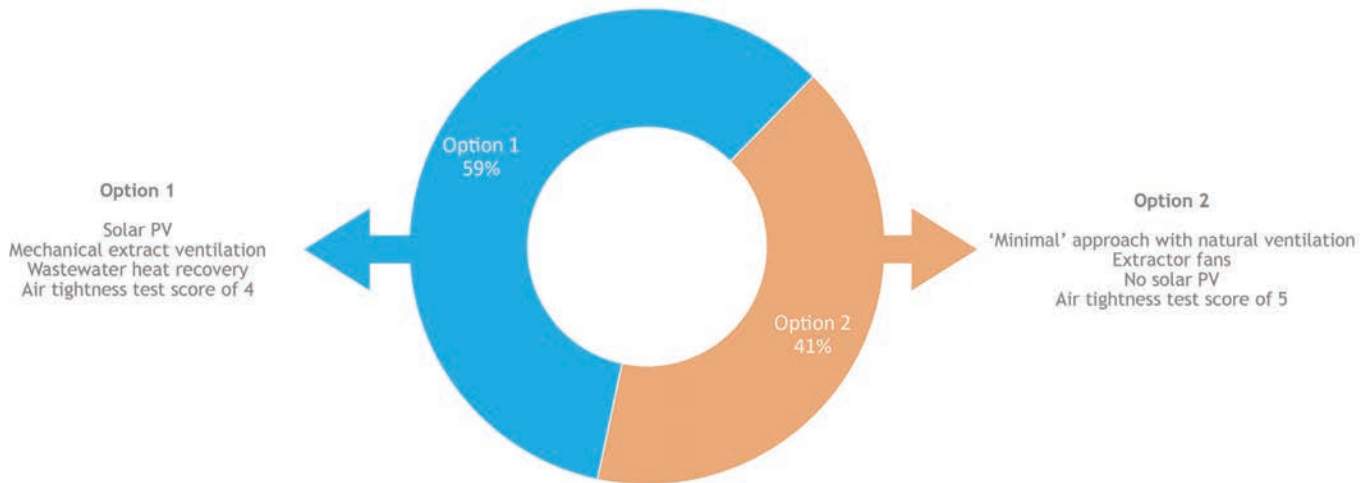
costs for occupants and do more to reduce both fuel poverty and carbon emissions, while also supporting the decarbonisation of the grid.

Strangely, the Government itself has given no indication which option it would prefer or recommend – something that

many have criticised as it makes the process of planning for changes more difficult, with no clear guidance on what exactly is required. It's little surprise that just under half of respondents to our survey said they only 'partially understand' the requirements of the FHS.

CHALLENGES

Which of the two 'notional home' options in the Government's consultation would you prefer to pursue?



While it undoubtedly could have presented more ambitious targets in the consultation document, The Future Homes Standard as currently proposed presents a host of challenges for housebuilders and developers. Despite the stepping stones of Parts L, F and O having been negotiated, many developers are uncertain over how the full FHS will impact their business, development plans, strategies, and customers.

With the lack of any further updates or guidelines since the release of the consultation in December 2023 it's not surprising that 44% of our respondents said they only 'partially understand' the requirements. When comparing this with our 2023 survey on Parts L, F and O, a much higher percentage said they either 'mainly' or 'completely' understood each Approved Document (60%, 53% and 49% respectively) – indicative perhaps that the lack of guidance on the FHS in comparison to the information available on Parts L, F and O is causing much more confusion for developers. It could also be a demonstration that Parts L and F at least were evolutions of pre-existing standards, whereas the actual practicalities of the FHS remain something of an unknown quantity. Only 20% of respondents said they 'completely understand' the requirements of the FHS – somewhat alarming given the supposedly imminent launch of the standard (while it may take years to come into force), but also not surprising.

When asked if they were prepared and ready for the FHS if it were to be introduced in early 2025, 53% of our respondents said they weren't. When ranking the FHS's associated challenges,

87% said the 'time available to reach the 2025 deadline' was either 'very' or 'quite' challenging from a fabric point of view, and 69% on 'renewables & heating.'

COSTS

Undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges with any significant change in regulations is the associated cost – particularly for SMEs, who are likely to find it more difficult to absorb increased costs within their businesses.

When asked how much they estimate the FHS will increase their build costs (based on a three bedroom home), 26% said £1,000 to £5,000, and a further 26% said it would cost between £5,000 and £10,000 extra. A further 28% said between £10,000 and £30,000, with the overall estimated average per unit coming out at £11,120. In our 2023 survey the average estimated cost increase (due to Parts L and F) was £6,020 – almost half the increase developers are anticipating this time round.

When we split the FHS requirements into the categories of 'fabric' and 'renewables & heating' and asked respondents how challenging certain areas are (ranking each area from 'very challenging' to 'not at all challenging'), cost came out on top in both instances. A total of 87% said it was either 'very' or 'quite' challenging from a fabric point of view, and 83% said 'very' or 'quite' challenging from a renewables and heating perspective.

Where developers are anticipating an increase in build costs, there are naturally questions around how those costs will be

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managed. When asked to select all that apply from a list of options, 72% of our respondents said the added cost will be passed on to customers.

The potentially even more concerning finding – certainly from the Government’s point of view – was that 15% said they would delay projects, and 13% said they would reduce the number of homes they aim to deliver – options that would hinder the country’s efforts to build the homes that are desperately needed, and specifically Labour’s target of building 1.5 million homes in the next five years.

CUSTOMERS

When we asked our cohort how important issues around reducing the carbon footprint of homes were to their customers, 71% said they were either ‘very important’ or ‘quite important,’ indicating there is strong demand for more sustainable homes.

However, despite this, a slightly contradictory finding was given when asked how challenging meeting fabric and renewables requirements of FHS against a set of variables. In terms of fabric improvements, 71% cited lack of customer demand for higher performing homes as either a ‘very challenging’ or ‘quite challenging’ factor, and 58% said it was similarly challenging from a renewables & heating perspective.

Either there is a lack of certainty from developers on what their customers actually want, or it’s a case of the customer demand being present, but not the willingness to pay for it, thus there is still a conundrum for housebuilders.

PRODUCTS: MATERIALS & RENEWABLES

As well as the need for proper guidance outlining the full requirements of the FHS, housebuilders also need assurance that products will be available in order to hit required targets.

When we asked if developers are struggling to find materials to comply with the FHS, 87% said they were not. Among the 13% who said they were having issues, insulation was the overwhelming cause of concern. One said their challenge was “what is the best insulation to use at a price sensitive target.” However, 70% of respondents also selected insulation when asked which fabric measures they are already using to meet the FHS; this indicates that it’s not necessarily that insulation products are ‘lagging’ behind, but that developers have encountered more problems with it over other products as it’s the avenue they’ve explored the most.

Following on from the issues developers are having with insulation, it’s not surprising that 67% of respondents ranked wall U-values as either ‘very’ or ‘quite’ challenging specification areas to address, based on the FHS. However, wall U-value targets remain unchanged from those set out in Part L, so it’s concerning that so many are still finding the target challenging, though this could be a continuation of issues encountered surrounding the need to supply photographic evidence to support the Building Regulations England Part L (BREL) report.

Carbon emissions also ranked highly, with a total of 75% rating this as challenging. 72% selected the Fabric Energy Efficiency Standards (FEES) – which sets performance levels for building fabric that aim to reduce the amount of energy required to heat the home – as challenging, and 69% selected Primary Energy, which is the type of fuel used for heating and hot water. These all form the key metrics for measuring building performance under the FHS, along with the Home Energy Model,

so the fact such a high percentage of our cohort rate them all as challenges is a concern.

The FHS heavily supports the use of heat pumps, which interestingly 67% of respondents said was challenging. Installing heat pumps can be expensive and with alternative options available such as electric and biomass boilers, perhaps the government needs to consider giving housebuilders more choice in order to better support them.

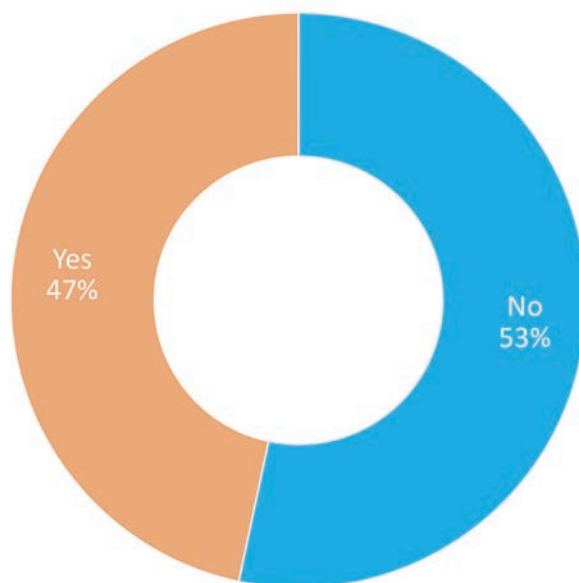
The FHS arguably goes hand in hand with a fabric first approach, and yet when asked if they have opted for a fabric first strategy for compliance with the standard, over half (54%) said no. This suggests that rather than approaching the building as a whole, developers are choosing to focus on specific elements.

The replacement of SAP with the Home Energy Model has had mixed reviews. Positivity has generally focused on the fact it replaces a method which hasn’t been updated for over 30 years, but negative criticism has been that the two options selected for the notional building were the two ‘weakest’ building fabric options from the Future Homes Hub ‘Ready for Zero’ report.

Option 1 includes the use of solar PV panels, decentralised mechanical ventilation (dMEV), waste water heat recovery (WWHR) and achieves an airtightness test score of 4, while Option 2 excludes solar PV and utilises natural ventilation with intermittent extractor fans, achieving an airtightness test result of 5. Both have been criticised for omitting embodied carbon and thermal bridging, and for failing to change U-value targets from Part L 2021.

Of the 28% who said they feel it could have gone further, we asked specifically where they felt it fell short. One respondent commented that the consultation “seemed a bit watered down, especially the airtightness,” and another said “to eradicate carbon and energy usage this should be aligned with Passivhaus standard,” both seemingly in agreement that the two options are indeed weak. A third respondent also agreed, saying “there is more to be done in fabric efficiency.”

Are you prepared and ready for the Future Homes Standard if it comes into force in early 2025?



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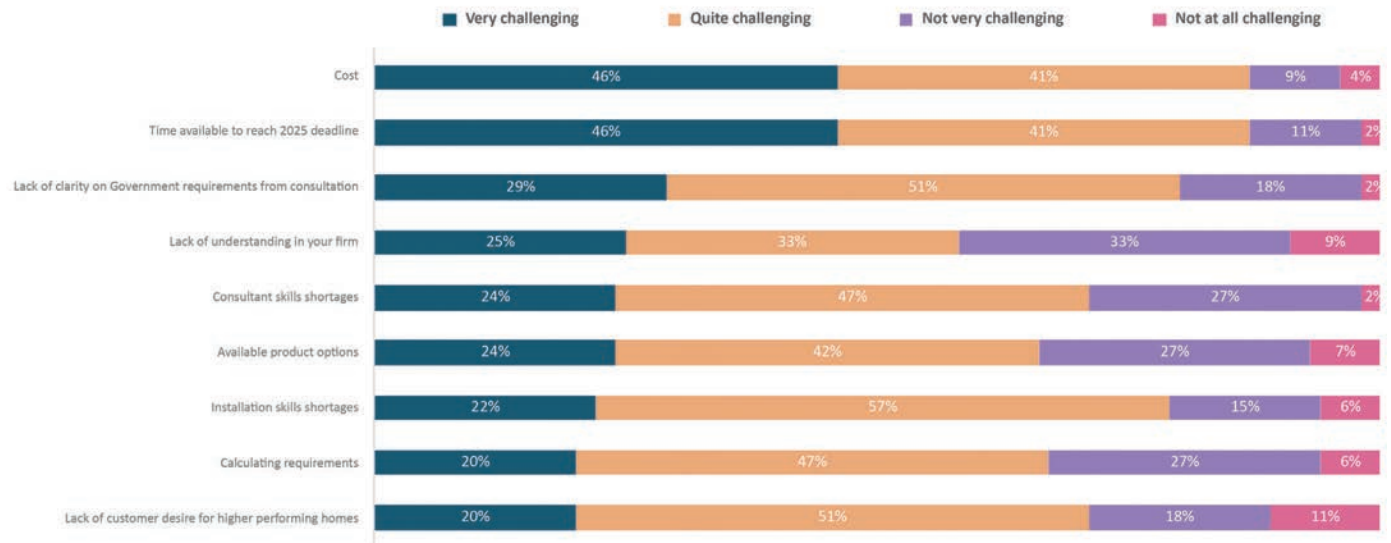

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SOLUTIONS

How challenging are the following areas for meeting Future Homes Standard in terms of fabric?



Despite the problems and challenges highlighted in our survey, there are also positive signs that housebuilders are beginning to take the necessary steps towards improving the efficiency of their developments.

While the lack of clarity and information is clearly causing issues, many developers are aware of challenges that lie ahead, and understand the pressing need to make changes to their builds, particularly around renewables.

PRODUCTS: MATERIALS & RENEWABLES

Of our respondents, 87% said they aren't struggling to source FHS-compliant materials which is hugely encouraging, and an improvement on last year's study in which 79% said they were able to find compliant building materials for Parts L, F and O. Suitable products are essential in assisting housebuilders meet targets, particularly when so many are also reliant on the information they receive from manufacturers – a total of 78% are either 'very' or 'fairly' reliant on manufacturer information.

Based on what they currently know about the standard, when asked what fabric measures or technologies our cohort are using, the most popular choice, as in the 2023 study, was insulation (70%). This indicates that despite the lack of clarity around the standard, and some of the problems with sourcing suitable insulation, a good number of respondents are already making an effort to improve building fabric.

The next most selected answer was triple glazing (61%). This demonstrates a willingness among housebuilders to invest in better windows, and indicates that perhaps target U-values could in fact be improved to 0.8 as many had hoped following the 2021 consultation.

Despite the heat pump preference presenting a challenge for

housebuilders, when we asked our cohort what 'eco' and/or renewables technologies they are already using, 56% selected heat pumps among other options; the second most popular choice. The only technology which ranked higher was underfloor heating, with 62% saying they already specified it. Although just under half of respondents say they are not currently taking a fabric first approach, it's clear a mix of both fabric and renewable technologies are already being implemented.

As in any business, a huge part of what housebuilders do or don't decide to deliver – aside from what is dictated by regulations and the FHS – will be driven by customers. It's therefore reassuring to see the majority of our respondents say reducing the carbon footprint of homes is important to their customers; 40% said it's 'very important' and 31% said it's 'quite important.'

Given that customer demand is already there, we asked respondents what they have done already to make properties more liveable for consumers. The overwhelming response was 'increased insulation levels', which 63% of respondents selected, followed by triple glazing which 48% selected.

TRAINING & GUIDANCE

Any major regulation change means a certain amount of investment will be required in the training of staff. We asked our cohort what areas of staff skills and training they've invested in to meet the FHS. Once again, including more insulation came out top, with 56% of respondents selecting this.

Following on from this, we asked respondents what more they feel they need – from either the Government or industry bodies – selecting all options that apply. Unsurprisingly, the most selected choice was 'grants and funding options' (42%).

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THE HOME ENERGY MODEL

The introduction of the Home Energy Model brings a much-needed update and refresh for SAP. Despite criticism that the two options proposed for the notional building are the ‘weakest,’ they still present an opportunity for positive change.

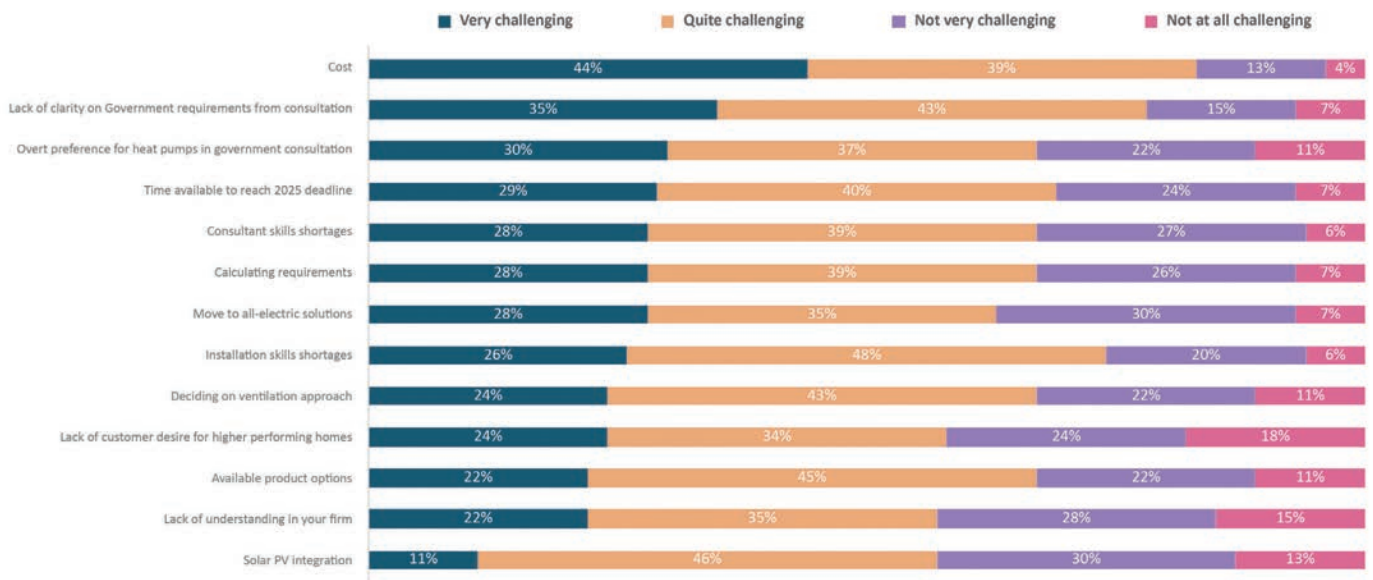
Although when asked which eco & renewable technologies housebuilders are currently using the uptake on dMEV was low (9%), and solar PV not as high as might be expected (38%), our respondents still ultimately favour Option 1. We asked them which of the notional building options they would prefer, with 59% choosing Option 1. It’s encouraging that

despite this being the more expensive and challenging of the options, developers are still recognising it as the superior choice overall.

When asked if they thought the Home Energy Model would be more accurate than SAP, the most selected answer of the options we gave respondents was that it would be more accurate. Only 18% said they think it will be less accurate, while 27% said they don’t know. Based on other findings from the survey, this may not result from a negative opinion of the Home Energy Model, but rather that they are not totally clear on the full implications and methodology of SAP’s replacement.

CONCLUSION

How challenging are the following areas for meeting Future Homes Standard in terms of renewables & heating?



The FHS presents questions, with many in the industry still unclear on what exactly it will encompass and when they will be expected to comply. However, what’s clear from our survey is that while the need for change in the push to net zero is not disputed, the reality of implementing them is challenging.

The lack of clear guidance and decision on not only what the standard will specifically consist of, but also when it will actually come into force, is proving to be a huge obstacle. While many would willingly begin to take the necessary steps towards the standard, without knowing exactly what it will consist of is making it difficult to engage. Most of our respondents are already making small changes to the way they build their projects in response to the consultation, but whether what they are doing is enough remains to be seen.

As well as the product-related changes developers are making, many have also begun taking steps to train their staff in new technologies. But again, without a clear understanding

of what the final standard will look like, there’s a risk that this investment could be wasted.

Overall, whether or not the standard goes far enough, it’s evident the industry as a whole needs clearer guidance from the Government. Over half our respondents said they would not be ready for the FHS to come into force next year, and the Government needs to take housebuilders’ concerns seriously, or potentially face a decrease in the amount of new housing built – a risk they cannot afford to take.

Download the full version of this white paper at [insights.netmagmedia.co.uk](https://www.netmagmedia.co.uk)

To explore this issue in more depth, netMAGmedia will be hosting a round table on 1 May 2025 on delivering the Future Homes Standard. The event will allow housebuilders, manufacturers and other stakeholders to discuss the challenges the FHS presents, and how best to approach them.

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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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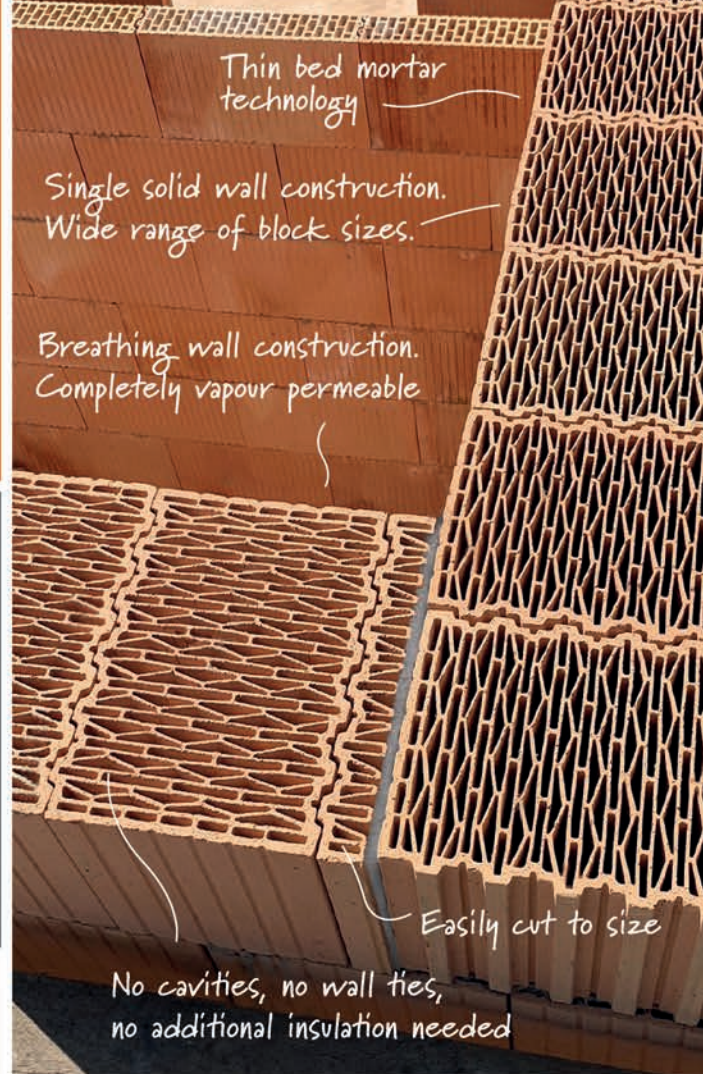
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JUWO Evolved SmartWall™ is a Monolithic clay block building system for External Wall Construction that's easy to build with, reduces construction time, has excellent thermal insulation qualities and requires no cavities, no additional insulation and no wall ties, to meet current and new Future Home standards.

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Making a fresh start



A highly sustainable housing development in the centre of Salford has set a new standard for healthy, high quality affordable housing, complete with Passivhaus certification. Roseanne Field takes an in-depth look behind the facade.

Located in the heart of Salford, historic Chapel Street is part of a wider area that's undergoing a significant regeneration. A £1bn masterplan spanning 50 acres is underway to transform the area and ultimately benefit the city's residents, who are collectively some of the most challenged in the UK. Salford itself is the 18th most deprived area in the UK, with the highest mortality rate from lung disease. The regeneration is the result of a joint

venture known as English Cities Fund (ECF), a partnership between Homes England, Legal & General, and Muse.

This regeneration includes Greenhaus, a 96-unit development of affordable homes built to very high sustainability standards. The project aims to "bridge a gap in the housing sector for affordable, high specification living," explains executive director of assets, growth and sustainability at Salix Homes, Liam Turner.

The development has achieved Passivhaus Classic certification – and is thought to be the largest project of its kind to do so in the north west. ECF was supported in delivering the project by Salford City Council; Salix Homes is the development's housing association partner, with the homes built by lead contractor Eric Wright Construction.

Finance for the multi-million pound development was secured by Salix Homes,



who obtained funding from NatWest bank alongside grants from Homes England and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). It fits into GMCA's ambitious strategy to increase the number of affordable, net zero housing in the Greater Manchester area.

ADDRESSING LOCAL NEEDS

Greenhaus embodies a shared commitment to address housing shortages and improve both environmental standards and living standards for local people. "For Salix Homes, Greenhaus represents the future of affordable and social housing," explains Turner. "It demonstrates what can be achieved through effective partnership working and a shared desire to create cleaner, greener, and healthier homes that are fit for the future and which won't need retrofitting."

Salix Homes owns 8,000 properties across Salford, with the majority of its customers in receipt of welfare benefits. "The new homes at Greenhaus help reduce fuel poverty for residents, with the monthly cost of heating and hot water at around 68% less than a typical scheme built to current Building Regulations," explains Muse project

director Simon Hourihan.

Achieving Passivhaus certification not only helps residents from an affordability perspective, but also offers a range of health benefits which in turn "can reduce the impact on the NHS and the costs associated with illness related to poor quality housing and health inequality," Hourihan continues. Thanks to the airtightness, thermal comfort and improved ventilation of Passivhaus properties, residents are better protected against airborne pollutants, the risk of illness associated with living in a cold home is reduced, as is the risk of damp, mould and condensation.

Greenhaus comprises a mix of one and two bedroom homes, including four accessible apartments on the ground floor. The homes are mixed tenures – 11 are for social rent, 13 for affordable rent and the remaining 72 available as part of the Rent to Buy scheme.

The decision on how to split the tenures was taken carefully. "To ensure the development would meet the local housing need, extensive consultation was undertaken with Salford City Council," explains Alison Haigh, Greenhouse project leader and certified Passivhaus consultant

"THE MONTHLY COST OF HEATING AND HOT WATER IS AROUND 68% LESS THAN A TYPICAL SCHEME BUILT TO CURRENT BUILDING REGULATIONS"
SIMON HOURIHAN, MUSE PROJECT DIRECTOR



at Buttress Architects who designed the building. “The provision of affordable homes was and is vitally important to the community, and the ambition for Greenhaus to be the largest Passivhaus affordable housing scheme in the north west was to address this as part of the answer to bridging the gap in the housing sector for both affordable and sustainable homes.”

COMPLEMENTARY DESIGN

Much of the development’s design was influenced by the surrounding area, as well as the Passivhaus certification target. Located in what Haigh describes as a “prominent” location on Chapel Street, Greenhaus sits opposite the Grade II* listed Salford Cathedral. “Key to the design intent, therefore, was a desire to reinforce the architectural setting and the sense of place of this part of Chapel Street and respect the development’s position across from this important part of Salford’s civic life and urban history,” she explains. The site also presented some practical challenges – in particular underground services that would be uneconomic to remove meant the buildable site footprint was constrained.

Despite the tricky location, ECF’s good working relationship with Salford City

Council meant the planning process went smoothly, with the partnership having “the full support and co-operation of Salford City Council planning team throughout all stages,” explains Turner. Planning permission was granted in November 2021, and with all the necessary funding secured soon after construction began two months later in January 2022. The development was completed in February 2024, with both the first residents moving in and Passivhaus certification being received in March 2024.

In the end, the final design “successfully resolved these distinct challenges in a form that reinforces the connection with the Cathedral and its presence on one of the key arterial routes into Manchester,” Haigh says. The final material choices were heavily inspired by the architecture of Chapel Street. “High quality brickwork was selected to match the materiality of nearby buildings, while the buff colour was specifically chosen to harmonise with the cathedral, respecting its historic and landmark setting,” she continues.

As well as materiality, the cathedral also had an impact on the design of Greenhaus’ volumes. The development comprises two blocks of six and eight storeys high, forming an L-shape that

THE CONTRACTOR “EMBRACED THESE STANDARDS, IMPLEMENTING STRONG QUALITY CONTROL MEASURES”

SIMON HOURIHAN, MUSE PROJECT DIRECTOR



also creates a new landscaped public area which faces the cathedral. “The primary drivers behind the massing were to recognise the prominence of the cathedral and provide a public space opposite to enjoy it, together with a need to bring forward an efficient building form and massing to support Passivhaus best practice,” explains Haigh. “Form and mass are critical for a multi-apartment Passivhaus building as maximising the built volume in relation to surface area drives thermal efficiencies.”

The two building entrances are connected via a spacious central lobby – a deliberate design choice to promote community interaction. All the apartments benefit from open-plan living spaces and Juliet balconies, offering residents impressive views as well as creating a “strong visual connection to the outside.” Externally extensive soft landscaping was included to provide wildlife habitats and ecological benefits. There is also parking at the rear of the building, including EV charging stations.

PUSHING TOWARDS PASSIVHAUS

Aside from the local area impacting the design, many of the choices were dictated by the aim to achieve Passivhaus certification, such as the buildings’

orientation, and form factor (the efficiency generated by the buildings’ shape). “Detailed design elements were highly driven by the technical Passivhaus design standard requirements in terms of thermal performance, airtightness, thermal bridging and the performance of MEP equipment,” explains Hourihan.

The project utilised several processes which Haigh says “broke ground for residential Passivhaus construction.” One such example is the steel framing system (SFS) used in the development’s structural external envelope. Previous certified schemes have used concrete block, but SFS is much quicker to install. “It imposes less weight on the structure and can be used in conjunction with mass climbers, reducing the construction programme and the cost,” Haigh says.

The decision to aim for certification was made very early on in the project by Salix Homes and Muse, which meant the design was developed with this goal in mind from the outset. Despite the build cost being higher, Turner says “we considered the long term savings to be made on repairs and maintenance or complex and expensive retrofit solutions, as well as the financial and health benefits for residents.”

To meet the rigorous requirements



for certification, several key features were incorporated. They installed air source heat pumps and airtightness was “carefully improved to reduce heat loss, while thermal bridging was meticulously addressed to prevent unwanted heat transfer,” explains Hourihan. Gaps larger than 3 mm in the envelope (for example at junction points or where vents penetrate the structure) were not permitted.

High performance triple glazed windows were used to minimise energy loss and improve insulation, along with the high levels of insulation installed. Efficient appliances and upgraded ventilation systems were also utilised. “Together, these elements work to create a more sustainable, comfortable, and energy efficient living environment,” Hourihan says.

Hourihan estimates that the total added cost of these measures was around the £2m mark, adding 10% to the total project cost. Thankfully, he adds, this was offset by the financial support received by Homes England and GMCA, as well as the money Salix Homes was investing in itself.

The process and steps to be taken in order to achieve certification was a challenge of its own. As well as the project requiring a Passivhaus designer or consultant, an independent certifier guided and oversaw the entire process. “The certifier conducts an initial review at RIBA Stage 3, a design review at RIBA Stage 4, and a construction review at RIBA Stage 5, which includes regular site inspections and quality assurance,” Haigh explains.

In order to ensure this process ran smoothly, close collaboration with main contractor Eric Wright Construction was critical. The team undertook an airtightness test on a mock-up which helped them identify any potential issues before construction began, thus reducing the risk of potential costly corrections. “Detailed planning ensured that the final ‘As Built’ assessment and certification aligned seamlessly with the practical completion,” says Haigh.

Despite the additional measures required by the stringent certification process, Haigh says it’s key in order to verify the building meets the energy performance targets outlined initially. The meticulous attention to detail during construction also mitigates the likelihood of damage to the building fabric, helping futureproof the building generally. Luckily, the contractor “embraced these standards, implementing strong quality control measures,” says Hourihan.

The high sustainability and performance standards proved to be a challenge generally, with Hourihan

describing a “limited level of experience within the supply chain” as another key obstacle encountered. However, he says: “To address this, we engaged with contractors early in the process and collaborated with all stakeholders from the outset, ensuring a shared commitment to meeting project standards.”

Collaborating with stakeholders throughout the process was also essential from a risk management perspective. “Greenhaus had contractual obligations to deliver a Passivhaus certified, high quality development,” says Hourihan. “Understanding these obligations and associated risks required careful planning to ensure all contractual standards were met and risks were mitigated.”

Collaboration in general proved to be essential in the success of the project, particularly given it was the first Passivhaus project for Salix Homes, Muse and Buttress. “It was a learning curve for us all, and collaboration and communication between the partners has been key throughout,” Turner says.

“A key factor in the project’s success was the engagement with a project team that fully understood the demands of Passivhaus accreditation and were committed to its successful delivery,” adds Haigh. “In particular Eric Wright Construction, working with the design team, happily established quality control procedures that minimised risk.” This included the testing of prototypes and the inspection and testing of building work as it made progress.

Although the project was an overwhelming success, that’s not to say there weren’t lessons learned during it. “A critical lesson was the importance of managing costs effectively and utilising Passivhaus Planning Package (PHPP) as a design tool to evaluate various options throughout the project,” Hourihan says. Another lesson, he says, was the importance of precision construction, and the need to manage tolerances carefully, emphasising that the need for tight quality control of work shouldn’t be underestimated.

He believes the team gained “valuable insights” into how best to deliver sustainability targets at this level. “Projects like this can be achieved primarily with standard technologies, although early engagement with the supply chain is essential due to limited availability of certain specialised materials,” he says.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The team behind Greenhaus believe it’s proof of what can be achieved, even on projects of this size and tenure, with Hourihan saying it sets “an important example”. However, he also acknowledges



the increased cost of delivering such a project is a major obstacle preventing others from following suit, as well as the general lack of knowledge and understanding around the “rigorous design standards and elevated construction quality required.” He asserts: “By demonstrating that high sustainability targets are achievable on a large scale, Greenhaus serves as a model.”

Turner agrees that cost is a barrier, but argues it “makes strong business sense” when factoring in longer-term savings on repairs and maintenance, and potential retrofits. He also believes the financial and health benefits for residents make a strong case for pursuing Passivhaus certification. “In the context of the cost of living crisis, a shortage of affordable housing, and the urgent need to address climate challenges, Greenhaus demonstrates what’s possible.”

The team’s experience on Greenhaus has already paved the way for a second Passivhaus project – a sister development named Willohaus which will deliver 100 affordable apartments. Planning permission has also been granted for a third scheme for Salix Homes – a 69 unit “independent living scheme” for over 55s.

IMPACT ON RESIDENTS

Ensuring the success of a Passivhaus project ultimately relies on residents using the homes and their features correctly, which is why Salix Homes introduced a “careful education and monitoring process,” as well as having a specialist support team. Residents receive

an in-depth user guide and videos to help them understand their home and ensure it performs as intended. “We have also installed technology to remotely monitor the air quality and energy usage, and we’re monitoring the data and repairs and maintenance expenditure alongside non-Passivhaus developments to track the long-term benefits,” Turner adds.

Taking things one step further, the company is also working with sustainability specialists Max Fordham to track the health of residents, to gain further insight into the benefits of a Passivhaus property.

Turner says the project has been “life-changing” for some residents, with some previously living in conditions which were affecting both their mental and physical health. “Seeing the journey some of our new residents have been on really highlights the pressing need for more social and affordable housing,” he says.

The project has received an enormous amount of interest from the housing and construction industries, as well as government officials, and the team believes what has been achieved at Greenhaus should set a benchmark for future developments. “High spec homes with the energy saving credentials of Greenhaus are uncommon in the social housing sector,” Turner concludes. “It represents a new era of high quality, sustainable and affordable homes which are better for the environment, support carbon reduction targets, and help reduce fuel poverty for residents.” ■

**THE PROJECT HAS BEEN
“LIFE-CHANGING” FOR
SOME RESIDENTS**

ROUND TABLE REVIEW

Water Efficiency & Water Saving Innovations in New Build Housing

The Building Centre, London, November 2024



All images © Mikey Pooley

Dan Lintell, Sustainability Manager from event co-sponsor Triton Showers puts his views to the group

INTRODUCTION

With the Environment Agency saying England and Wales will need an extra 5 billion litres of water by 2050, the housebuilding sector needs to play its part by cutting water use alongside the energy use from heating water. The debate in new build residential has arguably been dominated by energy performance of homes, but our recent industry round table brought together water saving aspirations driven by upcoming regulations reviews, together with existing energy and carbon goals.

Developers have been given incentives such as those from water companies – already hard-pressed tackling multitudes of leaks – to provide ‘water neutrality’ required by many planners across the country. But, what other levers are needed to make those developers prioritise water saving systems, such as within the upcoming consultation on Part G? Our well-timed round table saw lively discussion around the controversial ‘per person per litre’ approach currently used to measure water usage in properties, and proposals of preferred alternatives.

THE DEBATE

The round table kicked off with session chair James Parker, editor of *Housebuilder and Developer*, asking the delegates their views on the HBF’s claim that most housebuilders were now building to not just the 125 litres per person required by Part G of the Building Regulations, but also to the optional 110 litres per person.

There was also some controversy

“WATER EFFICIENCY IS JUST NOT ON OUR CUSTOMERS’ RADAR”

JACK BRAYSHAW, VISTRY GROUP

Delegates:

Richard Lupo, Managing Director, SHIFT Environment
 Neil Williams, Principal Civil Engineer, Burroughs
 Nathan Richardson, Head of Policy & Strategy, Waterwise
 Jack Brayshaw, Head of Technical Innovation, Vistry Group
 Jeff House, External Affairs & Policy Director, BAXI
 Andrew Tucker, Water Demand Reduction Manager, Thames Water
 Nigel Griffiths, Sustainability Expert / Ex-Director, STBA
 Tom Reynolds, Chief Executive, Bathroom Manufacturers Association
 Naomi Sadler, Sadler Energy & Environmental Services (SEES)
 Kevin Wellman, Chartered Institute of Plumbing & Heating Engineering (CIPHE)
 John Slaughter, External Affairs Director, Future Homes Hub
 Danielle Michalska-Morris, Group Technical Innovation Manager, Barratt Homes

Sponsor attendees:

Tony Gordon, Managing Director, Showersave
 Dan Lintell, Sustainability Manager, Triton Showers
 Simon Gibbins, Key Account Manager, Residential, Hansgrohe International

around whether litres per person was the correct metric to be using in order to drive uptake of better solutions, rather than the ‘fittings-based’ approach which focuses on labelling of appliances on water efficiency to guide specifiers.

A 2023 Industry Viewfinder audience survey undertaken by *Housebuilder and Developer* saw a third of our survey sample saying that even restricting ‘as designed’ water use to 125 litres per person required ‘substantial’ levels of extra investment on their part. Actual ‘in-use’ consumption would be dependent on user behaviour over time.

The National Retrofit Hub’s John Slaughter said the industry had embraced innovative solutions to reduce water use in properties, and there was a time lag with regulations having to catch up: “While the housebuilder can only deal in terms of the design specification, I think it’s probably likely that the norm is below 125. This is partly because if you look at the fittings ratings in Part G for appliances, for washing machines and dishwashers, what’s available on the market is more efficient than what is listed in Part G.”

PART G REVISIONS: FITTINGS-BASED OR PER PERSON CALCULATIONS?

Andrew Tucker of Thames Water confirmed that Part G would see a new consultation on changes to update it in various ways in the coming months, which would be a positive move for water saving in new homes. He said that all water companies were “recommending to Defra that they only use a fittings-based approach, and ditch ‘litres per person, per day’ because the numbers are absolutely rubbish and are not needed, and a developer can’t measure them.”

He also advocated aligning the fittings-based approach with the water label (using mandatory water consumption labelling of products in the same way as current A-G energy consumption labels). This has been promised as a mandatory solution for a while, but Tucker says its introduction is now imminent, “for all basic devices that you currently see in the bathroom, and in the kitchen.”

Slaughter said that “having a regulatory target is critical from a developer point of view, and having clarity about what the standard is, is kind of essential.” He said that with that accepted, it was more about ensuring regulations were “revised and updated” in a timely way, with the planned summer consultation on a new Part G having been scuppered by the snap election.

Andrew Tucker said the range of consumption even between identical builds is “huge – one house uses 305 litres on average a day, and the one next



door uses seven and a half thousand litres a day.” He added: “You want to make it as simple as possible for a developer.”

Danielle Michalska-Morris, representing the UK’s largest housebuilder Barratt Homes, said that “on paper, not in practice, [major] developers are below 110 litres per person,” and that Barratt and its sister firms Redrow and David Wilson “were all at 105 – on paper.” She alluded to the issue of ‘as-designed’ performance being fully dependent on ‘as-built’ and ‘as-operated’ performance to be fully borne out.

Michalska-Morris acknowledged that “Part G is very outdated, and there’s new products on the market that we can achieve better with.” She added that in some authorities, particularly in London, they have been for some time driven to go below the regulatory 125 litres per person.”

Tom Reynolds of the BMA asked if, in the light of the unified water label having “a really robust methodology,” including technical criteria, “why Defra would do it any other way.”

SOLUTIONS & FITTINGS-BASED CHALLENGES

Dan Lintell of event sponsor Triton Showers said that with whole-house approaches to water saving requiring architects to “balance a myriad of things,” the per-person measurement had a role as it was “very simple.” He asked Andrew Tucker what his alternative approach would look like.

While Tucker admitted that the water sector didn’t yet know what the Part G consultation would contain, “all water companies have recommended that Defra only use a fittings approach.”

Tom Reynolds of the Bathroom Manufacturers’ Association (after praising the round table as a “refreshing chance to have a really in depth conversation about water rather than energy”), said that his members were beginning to come around to the fittings-based approach. “Historically,” he said, “BMA has been very defensive of the water calculation methodology, based on a defence of flexibility and choice for developers who

are effectively our end customers.”

He added, however, “I think that position is changing among manufacturers, for a couple of reasons, firstly, as we look to the future and a necessary lowering of per capita consumption because of the looming threat of water scarcity, if we stick with water calculation alone, you’re going to end up with some really perverse behaviours, like people drilling overflows in baths at a really low level, and it will just drive dissatisfaction with bathroom manufacturers’ products.”

Reynolds said the industry supported mandatory labelling, but appealed to the Government “not to reinvent the wheel” as they rolled out the new label. “There’s been an industry led scheme called the unified water label operating on a voluntary basis for many years, just make that a mandatory requirement.”

Danielle Michalska-Morris of Barratt Homes said there were currently challenges in adopting the fittings approach: “We looked 12 months ago to go to it as our preferred method, but [water companies] come back and say, ‘but we need you to prove your litres per person per day.’” She added: “We’re still having to do the water calculator; there’s no issue with the fittings approach per se, it’s more that the per person measure is still around.”

Tom Reynolds said that the regulations around water fittings are “in a mess, because we’ve got Part G, we’ve got water supply and water fittings regs, and we’ve got the water quality regs, we’ve also got the Construction Product Regulation and now the Building Safety Act, which needs to be taken into consideration. And within the next few months, we will have water labelling regulations as well. All of these regulations are really hard for manufacturers to navigate, let alone our various stakeholders. And you know, there’s not always the synergies that you’d expect between these regulations. I think we could do with going back to the drawing board.”

“AS OF 1 APRIL, EVERY WATER COMPANY WILL HAVE TO INTRODUCE AN ENVIRONMENTAL INCENTIVE FOR EVERY HOUSEBUILDER”

ANDREW TUCKER, THAMES WATER

LOW FLOW, LABELLING & CONSUMERS

There was consensus around the table that consumers had to be engaged fully in order to ensure that the design aim of lower water use and lower energy use were not compromised by problems with consumers' lifestyles versus design assumptions, post-occupancy. Methods of engaging consumers on water savings and water and energy saving measures (such as via EPCs and the new product labels) were discussed, including the pros and cons of both options.

Simon Gibbins from event co-sponsor Hansgrohe International said that the water label would help towards the heavy-lifting job of trying to increase the value of water in consumers' perceptions. However he added a caveat: "I'd love to raise the value of water in the eyes of the consumer, but I feel we need to live in the real world, and so I agree that we need a mandatory water label and to make it compulsory at point of sale."

He also pinpointed the dilemma for consumers as well as developers that the better performing products on water use and energy criteria may "potentially be a lower flow product, and the consumer sees that." However, Andrew Tucker reassured the group that the new unified water label was "building quality of experience into the assessments."

Consultant Naomi Sadler took a practical view to bringing consumers on board on water neutrality from her experience assessing properties. She said labels were not the panacea, and instead advocated leveraging the link between water and energy savings. "When we do water neutrality statements, we calculate it on an occupancy rate on a per-house basis, in the same way as the water savings and SAP are calculated. It makes it more relatable – someone's not going to calculate based on their floor area." She added: "If it's on their EPC and it's calculated for people, then they're more likely to understand when the water bill comes through."

Andrew Tucker said that if the direction of travel towards the mandatory water



label continues as it has so far, it will "become almost the water version of performance measurement, in the same way that an EPC tries to do it for the whole house." He told the developers at the round table: "I'd like to lift the burden from you; it shouldn't sit with you. The label is an opportunity to make that so much simpler, and it'll be the guarantee of in the same way that is done elsewhere in the world, of what is specified, purchased and installed post construction."

Richard Lupo highlighted that post-construction checks were key to discovering what is happening "between the design stage and what actually gets built, and this needs addressing." The problem with this, he said, was "if you do find something, who picks up the pieces afterwards? The builders have gone, there's got to be some kind of sort of lever to get it repaired properly."

Andrew Tucker reiterated that Defra's new water label will have "a long term ramp-up benefit. It'll drive two things, firstly procurement – you'll slowly be wanting the better performing one, and also drive manufacturers in the same way the energy ratings have done. No manufacturer wants to be the only one with a G rated product when their competitors are A and B."

Kevin Wellman, representing plumbers and heating engineers, and echoing Tom Reynolds' earlier 'reinventing the wheel' comments, voiced his concern about the possibility of hampering clarity for installers, "if we end up with two schemes" for water efficiency ratings.

INFORMING CUSTOMERS

The key issue in customer information is, as articulated by Naomi Sadler, that "no-one reads home user guides." She instead said that a monitoring system linked to smart meters could be used, which for example showed when water was "constantly on, so maybe there was maybe a leak." She said this would help "action the homeowner," because they'd be aware of the transparency of risk they'd be passing on to a potential buyer.

Danielle Michalska-Morris said that education of customers was crucial: "At the minute, they take water for granted.

Energy bills are high, so everyone's on it. Our customers are coming into sales centres and saying we can turn this plug off or do this to save energy, but nobody talks about water.

Jack Brayshaw of Vistry agreed, warning that water saving and water scarcity isn't on consumers agenda yet. "We're not getting screamed at because they want it. Energy efficiency is a massive driver; now they want EPCs, and want to make sure bills are low, if not zero, but water efficiency is just not."

John Slaughter said the Government had a major role to play in informing customers: "If you think about the history of energy and why we actually focus on that, it's got a lot to do with the Government saying this is an important issue. They need to say something similar about water, I think. And you could actually use energy as a kind of entry route into water, as heating water is going to be a large part of your energy bill."

Naomi Sadler drew the crucial connection between reducing the water used in homes and the carbon savings required from heating water: "Water and energy are so closely linked. You could actually use the SAP calculations and have a section in there which you put all the fittings in, and it will then say how much and then, like an EPC, you have energy and you have water. This is how water efficient your house is, and you're rewarding the developers that are doing the right things and reducing their water usage."

ALIGNING WITH ENERGY SAVINGS & THE HOME ENERGY MODEL

Water heating in properties is soon to become the highest energy demand in homes, post-Future Home Standard when much tighter fabric reduces heating bills significantly. Aligned with this, the carbon associated with water needs similar focus upon, agreed our delegates. However, the Home Energy Model aspect of the FHS was also under scrutiny, including how assumptions currently made on usage affect specification of water heating systems. The more comprehensive (and expensive) Option 2 for the FHS includes measures like waste water heat recovery, however it remains to be seen despite the general favourable views on Option 2 whether the Government will support this option, as the consultation concludes.

John Slaughter advocated consumer KPIs built in alongside regs and labelling to ensure the new regime was realistic. "One of the things we recommended in our April 2024 'Water Ready' report is that there should be a compulsory consumer aspect in the new regime; that you should have consumer KPIs built in.

Tom Reynolds added: "I think we

"YOU COULD USE ENERGY AS A KIND OF ENTRY ROUTE INTO WATER, AS HEATING WATER IS GOING TO BE A LARGE PART OF ENERGY BILLS"

JOHN SLAUGHTER, FUTURE HOMES HUB

should be looking at water performance, in order to give water the parity with energy that's required." You know, wastewater heat recovery should just be a given now, and it does come down to cost. But what's the cost if we don't make these interventions?

The round table's chair James Parker asked: "Does there need to be the aspirational side for customers as well as stressing the financial benefits?" Reynolds countered: "Water scarcity is terribly badly understood, because it is a looming threat."

Tony Gordon of Showersave discussed the Home Energy Model, and the likelihood of the cheaper Option 2 for designs being adopted, as well as the assumptions around usage which were challenged by other delegates. "We don't know for sure when the results will come out from consultation, but anecdotally, I haven't heard of anyone promoting the cheaper option because it's just not sustainable, moving forward, and it won't allow us to hit the carbon targets that are required." Gordon added: "There are huge discrepancies, as you would imagine, in terms of the Home Energy Model as it currently stands, and there are some challenges already that we have identified in terms of the kind of beta modelling that's out there that needs addressing, and that's going to take time to put that right. It's really interesting just listening to the consensus around the table, on the need for a joint government on regulations; they are the baseline everyone wants to achieve."

Danielle from Barratt Homes confirmed that even in the latest version of SAP, "showering assumptions are incorrect, so we're heavily penalised on the actual result. If we add an extra shower in." Vistry's Jack Brayshaw agreed: "So you're encouraging your customers to use a bath rather than a shower."

For the extended report on this round table, visit insights.netmagmedia.co.uk

"INSTEAD OF WHACKING ON A LOAD MORE PV, MAYBE DEVELOPERS MIGHT CONSIDER LOOKING AT RAINWATER HARVESTING"

NAOMI SADLER, SEES

Thank you to our sponsors:



Jack Brayshaw, Head of Technical Innovation, Vistry Group

INDUSTRY RECOMMENDATIONS

Our attendees each provided a recommendation for the construction industry to adopt, in order to drive forward improvements in specification of water and energy saving appliances for new homes.

Tom Reynolds, BMA

Proceed with mandatory unified water labelling of products, but don't reinvent the wheel, use what's already there.

Jeff House, Baxi

Look at how we regulate water use the same way as we do energy, and whether that forms part of a home energy rating of some kind.

John Slaughter, Future Homes Hub

Committing to ongoing collaboration is really important; developers, supply chain, and the skills side working together to develop practical solutions. This needs to then be fed to Government so it makes decisions on a sensible basis.

Andrew Tucker, Thames Water

From the majority of developers we work with, the message is 'please keep it simple.' Ditch the per person per day in any metric or requirement, as we now know it's not fit for purpose. Use the fittings approach, link it to the label, find options for getting reuse into the equation.

Tony Gordon, Showersave

Waste water heat recovery should be considered as a mandatory energy saving measure in the same way as insulation and air tightness!

Nathan Richardson, Waterwise

Get involved in the forthcoming national campaign on saving water, look at Home Information Packs, and stop spec'ing toilets with confusing dual flush buttons!

Dan Lintell, Triton Showers

Focus on the positives, and the art of the possible, and make it personal and relatable. That's what will drive change.

Kevin Wellman, CIPHE

Need to mandate training, whether CPD or education, and a fair and equitable licence scheme so it's a level playing field for everyone.

Naomi Sadler, SEES

I'd like a way to bring water into everyone's minds, and which provides more flexibility in how we meet carbon emissions, because getting every litre of water to your door has a carbon impact.

Nigel Griffiths, sustainability expert

Rainwater harvesting is a no-brainer, and we do need to look again at whole-house certification systems.

Simon Gibbins, Hansgrohe International

We need a mandatory water label and to make it compulsory at point of sale.

Richard Lupo, SHIFT Environment

Post-construction checks on water fittings need to be carried out – there is clearly no mechanism in place to do this. And a nationwide campaign about water efficiency is needed – led by Government.

Danielle Michalska-Morris, Barratt Homes

Educate the consumer – even if we have the certificates and labels, if the consumer doesn't know what to do with it, we will fail.

Jack Brayshaw, Vistry Group

Regulations should become more stringent and we need to innovate to meet them, and make sure we're not hitting our customer experience; regulations will only get us so far because consumer behaviour is crucial.

'Fabric First' principles should be applied to water usage

Historically, the environmental impact of water usage has been largely ignored. However recent environmental concerns and energy costs have highlighted the link between water and the environment. The recent surges in energy prices have focused attention on the cost.

Heidi Mottram, CEO, Northumbrian Water highlighted the fact that on average 25% of energy used in the home is to heat water. Whilst water efficient appliances, i.e.

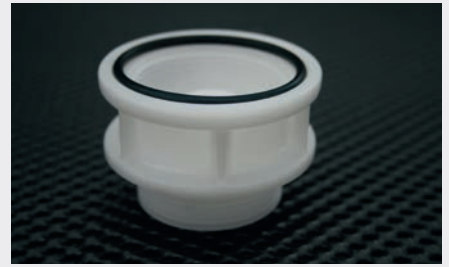


dishwashers and washing machines, can reduce domestic water and energy usage, much of this hot water used in 'time critical' usage e.g. taking a shower or running the tap to rinse dishes.

To date, much of the water industry's focus has been on adapting customer behaviour. However, Britain's grey sky and regular rainfall makes it harder to embed behaviour change. A change in the 'fabric' of the water network may be the solution.

Our water companies are regulated to provide a minimum standard of pressure and flow of water, but in many areas due to network structure and gravity fed systems supply is much greater. So, run a hose for five minutes at the bottom of the hill, and your lawn will be greener than the gardener that does the same at the top. These 'time controlled' uses could be reduced if all households received the same acceptable, 'standardised' supply.

Groundbreaker's NRv2 LoFlo is a surprisingly simple method of working towards current water usage reduction targets. NRv2 LoFlo regulates the level of flow entering customer premises – regardless of network pressure, meaning a reduction in the level of water used by customers when 'variable use' appliances are used. As the flow of water into the premises is limited, then the amount used by the customer is also limited – but without providing a degradation of service, and more importantly not requiring any intervention or behavioural change on the part of the customer, leading to



'natural' reduction in per capita consumption.

The NRv2 LoFlo can be easily and simply fitted to any meter installation or retrofitted on meter exchange or when upgrading or remediating underground meter chambers. Thus, allowing water providers to manage demand with little or no impact on consumers and at minimal cost to the water undertakers.

'A simple solution at approximately £20 per household, fitted on the normal meter exchange/upgrade cycle could achieve in excess of 20% of consumption reduction targets in 10 years.'

A number of flow modulation ranges are available which enable the perfect balance between usage reduction and service provision. As an added benefit, the NRv2 LoFlo can also provide whole site protection against contamination by back flow – effectively a three in one solution.

01379 741993 www.groundbreaker.co.uk

Vent-Axia and AO Win Award



Vent-Axia, and AO are celebrating winning the prestigious BEAMA Net Zero Collaboration Award. Recognising outstanding partnerships that contribute to advancing Net Zero, sustainability, and circularity within the electrical industry, the companies scooped the accolade for their pioneering initiative

transforming AO's recycled fridge plastic into high-quality Vent-Axia ventilation products. This innovative partnership, recognised on 27 November at the BEAMA Annual Lunch in London, represents a significant step in sustainable UK manufacturing. Vent-Axia aims to be Net Zero by 2040, a decade ahead of the Government's target.

0344 856 0590 www.vent-axia.com

James Hardie launches 'Toolbox Talks' service



James Hardie has launched a new 'Toolbox Talks' service to provide builders and homeowners with essential installation knowledge across its product portfolio. Two new Technical Support Specialists have been appointed to deliver the service. Mitchell Pearson will support clients in the South West and South East. He joins

from Persimmon Homes where he was Site Manager and brings with him extensive project management and construction experience. Andrew Coote will be responsible for clients in the Midlands, North of England and Scotland. He has worked at James Hardie as a Channel Manager for two years and has an excellent understanding of the full product range.

0121 311 3480 www.jameshardie.co.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

futurebuild
the future of the built environment

SHOW PREVIEW

4-6 March
ExCeL, London

MAKE AN IMPACT

As the built environment moves towards a more sustainable future, Futurebuild 2025 has a theme of Impact, underscoring the event's dedication to innovation, collaboration and meaningful action. A hub for sustainability and cutting-edge solutions, Futurebuild is a crucial opportunity for housebuilders to explore the latest strategies, technologies, and frameworks to meet evolving housebuilding demands.

The knowledge programme spans The Futurebuild Arena, The National Retrofit Conference & Expo, and five Impact Stage, each curated to address core industry challenges and opportunities:

- The Buildings Impact Stage sponsored by HG Matthews: Future Homes Standard, modular construction, and net-zero building strategies. Panels from partners such as Passivhaus Trust, BRE, and UKGBC, highlighting applications of Passivhaus standards, safety in building design, and emerging trends in lighting and acoustics.
- Materials Impact Stage sponsored by Aggregate Industries: includes Sustainable Supply Chain School and Built by Nature on subjects like materials passports, supply chain transparency, and circular economy principles.
- Energy Impact Stage sponsored by Kensa: renewable energy integration, energy-efficient heating solutions, and navigating upcoming regulations. Energy Saving Trust, CIBSE, and the Sustainable Energy Solution will address the role of heat pumps, solar technologies, and thermal storage for low-energy homes.
- Placemaking Impact Stage: Water management, biodiversity, and sustainable transport, with the Urban Design Group, Landscape Institute and RSPB.
- FutureX Digital Disruptors Impact Stage sponsored by One Click LCA: Explore how construction technology can be used to benefit both society and the environment.

The Futurebuild Arena's focus in 2025 will be on creating a vibrant economy that works within planetary boundaries, promotes social justice, and ensures fair resource use.

The Arena's programme will focus on three overarching themes: Putting Circularity and Reuse at the Heart of Living and Working, Sustainability, Social Justice and Transition, and Making it Happen. Each session will examine where we need to be in 12 months, five years, and 10 years time, proving that

now is the time for decisive action, with no more delays.

RETROFIT & INNOVATION IN FOCUS

The National Retrofit Conference, co-located with Futurebuild, is sponsored by Sustainable Building Services, and serves as a dedicated event for professionals focused on achieving net-zero goals through retrofitting. The conference spans across three days, with content curated from Retrofit Academy CIC across the first two days and the National Retrofit Hub on the third. Its programme will focus on scaling the ambition, delivering the promise of retrofitting, and regenerating our cities and regions at their core. The National Retrofit Expo, new for 2025, will feature innovations for tackling retrofit challenges, with exhibitors such as Parity Projects, E.ON, Corksol, Trustmark, q-bot, and many more.

Lastly, The Big Retrofit Challenge in partnership with NHDG and Innovate UK, will include a live finale where we will announce the six finalists and showcase their pioneering ideas for decarbonising existing homes.

Visitors can also explore the Innovation Trail, featuring partners like Glen Dimplex Heating & Ventilation, Heidelberg Materials UK, and SDS. This curated journey connects visitors with innovations that support net-zero housing, from eco-friendly building materials to smart energy systems – 'you saw it here first.'

Futurebuild 2025 offers housebuilders the chance to engage with industry peers, from policymakers to technology providers, building connections that can drive residential innovation. It will also provide the chance to explore first-hand exhibitors' products and technologies that are solving pressing challenges like carbon reduction, waste minimisation and affordability in housing.

Martin Hurn, event director at Futurebuild, is eagerly anticipating this edition of the event: "Our mission at Futurebuild 2025 is to drive meaningful change in the built environment. With a focus on innovation, collaboration, and sustainability, housebuilders will gain critical insights to meet today's housing demands while building for tomorrow."

**Join the movement and make your impact!
Register for Futurebuild 2025 today by
scanning the QR Code.**

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THE THEME
OF IMPACT
UNDERScores
THE EVENT'S
DEDICATION
TO INNOVATION
AND ACTION



Weatherclad® gives Cardiff modular homes durable exterior finish

Euroform's wood effect fibre cement shiplap planks have been used by @Home MMC to finish 57 modular homes, part of a new scheme of 154 transitional homes in Cardiff. With its natural timber look, WeatherClad® is designed for external applications where durability and performance are required.

Cardiff Living's development Ffordd-y-Rhaffau in Grangetown, a partnership between Cardiff Council and Wates Group, provides temporary accommodation for 154 families while the Council works with them to find a more

permanent housing solution. The last few units were handed over to the Council in October.

Built offsite by modular construction company @Home MMC using modern methods of construction, following groundworks, the energy-efficient, one to four-bedroom homes were transported to site and lowered into position.

Euroform supplied WeatherClad® in a range of colours to @Home MMC's manufacturing facility. The planks are easy to work and fix. A comprehensive range of colour matched profiles and trims were also provided.

Conformity assessed to BS EN 12467:2012+A2:2018, WeatherClad® carries third party BDA Agrément certification from KIWA. It has a BS EN 13501-1 Reaction to Fire classification of A2-s1,d0. Weatherclad® is part of the range of Euroform's Code for Construction Product Information (CCPI) assessed products.

With funding from the Welsh Government's Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme, Ffordd-Y-Rhaffau, which is on the site of a former gasworks, is part of the Council's response to tremendous pressures on housing and homeless services in the city.

Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Cllr Lynda Thorne: "Our innovative modular development at Ffordd Y Rhaffau has delivered modern, comfortable and energy-efficient homes for families experiencing



homelessness in considerably less time than via traditional construction methods. This has been a crucial part of our response to the city's housing emergency and we are very pleased to have delivered a safe and welcoming place for families to stay as we support them in finding permanent housing solutions."

WeatherClad® can be purchased from Euroform in split pallets, helping customers to avoid waste. There is no minimum order. Euroform has an easy-to-use online tool for calculating the number of boards required for projects: <https://www.euroform.co.uk/weatherclad-calculator/>

Euroform develops, fabricates and supplies materials for the construction industry, specialising in ensuring fire and thermal compliance across its product range. It is part of the Performance Technology Group, a group of companies supporting the construction industry to meet acoustic, fire, thermal and vibration challenges.

01925 860 999 www.euroform.co.uk



Senior helps give Glasgow's historic Meat Market a new lease of life

Senior Architectural Systems has provided a trio of products as part of the creation of a new residential scheme located on the former derelict site of Glasgow's Grade II listed Meat Market. Accessibility has been a key factor in the design of the scheme, with four individual apartments on each floor arranged around a central stair and lift shaft to provide wheelchair access throughout. Senior's aluminium products were fabricated and installed to this main core area by supply chain partner Scottech. Senior's slim profile SF52 aluminium curtain wall system was installed to these stair towers to help increase the flow of natural light and create a welcoming and accessible area. Daylighting was further enhanced through the use of Senior's automatic opening ventilation (AOV) aluminium windows. Based on the same aesthetic design as the manufacturer's popular SPW600 aluminium window system, Senior's AOV version is fitted with a smart actuator which allows for quick and automatic ventilation in the event of a fire to help to remove smoke from the air. To complete the package, Senior also provided its SPW501 anti-finger trap aluminium commercial doors to provide safe and secure ground floor access. Above the door and suspended from the curtain wall is a glass canopy to provide a degree of shelter from the elements for the residents of the development.

01709 772600 www.seniorarchitectural.co.uk

Italian Flair from VBH

Hardware specialist, VBH, is experiencing increased sales of tilt and turn hardware thanks to the addition to their range of the ArTech tilt & turn system from respected Italian hardware manufacturer, AGB. In recent months VBH has widened the reach of the system by developing profile related parts for a number of new PVCu profile systems, including Profile 22 Optima and Rehau Artevo. VBH advise that one of the main reasons that they have picked up so much new tilt and turn business with ArTech is the product's impressive anti-corrosion performance. ArTech is treated with 'Activeage Hi-Protection' coating that enables the hardware to withstand over 2,000 hours of testing in a neutral salt spray environment. Activeage is a three stage finish, incorporating layers of zinc, chromic passivation with silica Nano particles, and finally an organic mineral protection coating. In addition to its impressive weather resistance, VBH advise that another reason tilt and turn manufacturers are embracing ArTech is the system's security performance. Security spec windows have been tested to forces of 5.5 KN, nearly double the forces specified in PAS24. ArTech is covered by 'hardware Kitemark' KM727991 and is listed as a Police Preferred Specification by Secured by Design.

01634 263263 sales@vbhgb.com



ELEVATED EXPECTATIONS

Lee Bucknall of James Hardie looks forward to a 'transformed' industry for housebuilders and developers in 2025 and beyond, and how the cladding sector is responding to the challenges.



As we look ahead to 2025, the housebuilding and development sectors are poised for significant transformation. Staying ahead of emerging trends is vital for builders, developers, and architects alike, as evolving priorities and challenges shape the choices of industry professionals and homeowners.

ESG: DRIVING SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations are no longer optional; they have become a cornerstone of industry strategy. The shift from being a regulatory tick-box exercise to a priority for every stakeholder highlights the urgency of achieving tangible sustainability goals. Reaching net zero by 2050 demands coordinated efforts, innovation, and measurable progress across the supply chain.

A key challenge remains the measurement and management of 'Scope 3' emissions, which rely heavily on accurate data from supply chain partners. For housebuilders and developers,

ESG CONSIDERATIONS ARE NO LONGER OPTIONAL; THEY HAVE BECOME A CORNERSTONE OF INDUSTRY STRATEGY

investing in materials and systems with transparent and verifiable sustainability credentials is essential. Collaborating with suppliers who provide detailed emissions data can support compliance and help align with broader sustainability targets.

FUTURE RESILIENCE

Managing rising costs continues to dominate the agenda for housebuilders. Labour shortages, driven by an ageing workforce, skills gaps, and the cost-of-living crisis, are impacting the affordability and efficiency of construction projects. To address these challenges, partnerships with educational institutions and training initiatives are essential

to cultivate the next generation of skilled workers.

Housebuilders are increasingly prioritising cost-effective and durable materials. Fibre cement cladding, for example, is becoming a popular choice for its low maintenance and long-term performance. Also, its ease of installation reduces build times and labour costs, while its durability ensures fewer repairs and repainting, offering significant savings over the lifecycle of a building. Such materials enable developers to balance upfront affordability with long-term value.

WORKFORCE WELLBEING: COMPETITIVE EDGE

The construction industry's workforce dynamics are evolving. The competition for skilled labour has intensified, and workers are prioritising mental health, work-life balance, diversity, and inclusion when evaluating job opportunities. For housebuilders, creating a supportive and inclusive workplace culture is now a business imperative.

Adopting policies that promote wellbeing and diversity can improve employee satisfaction and retention, making companies more attractive to top talent. Gen Z, in particular, value organisations that align with their expectations for meaningful work and inclusive practices. Investing in leadership development, technical training, and employee engagement programmes can help housebuilders build a resilient and motivated workforce.

At James Hardie we're seeing how Gen Z in particular is redefining the workplace. We believe that a skilled and diverse workforce encompasses different viewpoints, expertise, attributes and life experiences. We're really proud of our new 'people strategy' which is designed to drive results by building and retaining a robust talent pool, expanding technical and leadership capabilities, and inspiring and engaging employees.

INNOVATION: THE CATALYST FOR GROWTH

Innovation remains central to the industry's evolution. Advancements in construction materials and technologies not only drive efficiency but also help meet stringent building standards and design aspirations. For housebuilders, embracing innovation is crucial to staying



competitive in a rapidly changing market.

New developments in cladding materials and systems are addressing the need for cost-effective and high-performing solutions. For instance, thinner, lightweight panels that achieve high impact resistance standards provide an affordable option for residential and commercial projects. Collaborations between manufacturers' R&D teams and developers ensure that innovations align with the practical needs of the market.

EXTERNAL COLOUR TRENDS

The choice of exterior colours plays a significant role in defining the character and appeal of residential developments. In 2025, natural and pastel tones are set to dominate residential design, reflecting homeowners' desire for

wellness-inspired aesthetics.

In contrast, educational and commercial buildings are embracing bold, vibrant colours to foster engagement and energy. Warm tones like red and orange help stimulate attention and encourage interaction, making them a popular choice for schools and other communal spaces.

Advances in paint technology now offer durable, fade-resistant finishes that maintain aesthetic integrity over time. Housebuilders and developers are increasingly seeking products that combine visual appeal with low maintenance requirements, ensuring long-term satisfaction for homeowners and tenants alike.

LOOKING AHEAD

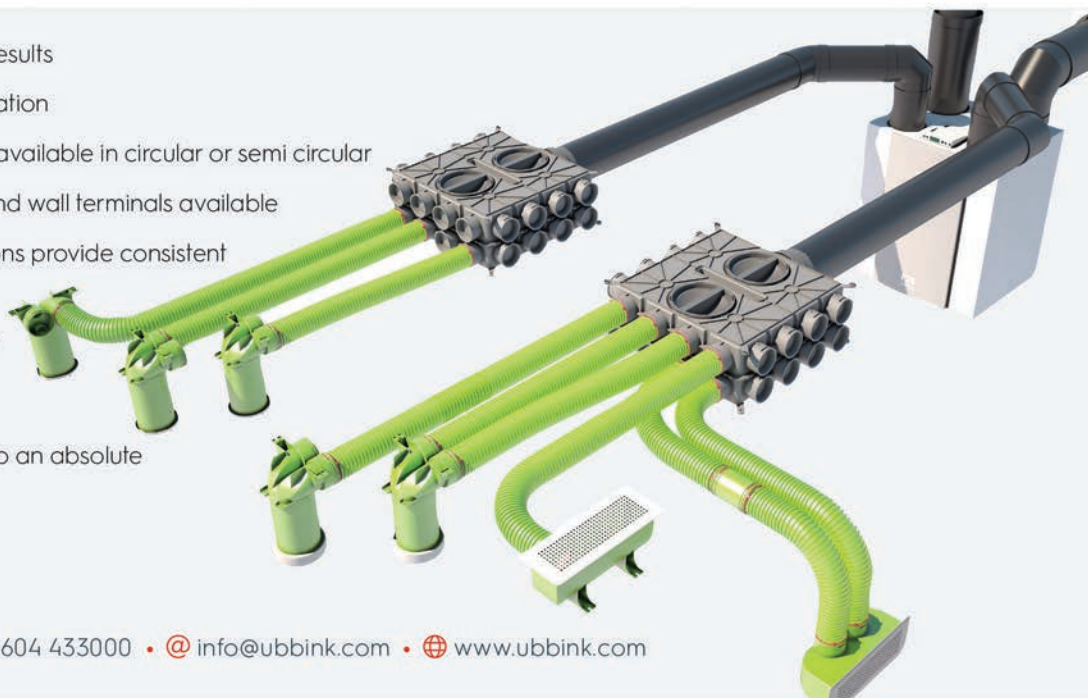
The coming year promises to be a dynamic period for housebuilders and developers. Addressing ESG goals, managing costs, prioritising workforce wellbeing, embracing innovation, and adapting to evolving design trends will be critical to success. By staying informed and proactive, the industry can navigate challenges and capitalise on opportunities to build a more sustainable and prosperous future.

Lee Bucknall is country manager UK & Ireland at James Hardie

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Wraptite® external air barrier helps to deliver performance and quality in new city quarter development from the start

Wraptite®, the vapour permeable external air barrier from A. Proctor Group, is part of the high-performance residential building specification in the new Dublin city quarter, Glass Bottle.

Connecting Dublin to its bay at the base of the Poolbeg Peninsula, the development is also linking the communities of Irishtown, Ringsend and Sandymount. The creation of Glass Bottle is transforming some 15 hectares of a former glass bottle-making site that was once home to one of the most modern factories in Europe.

Building an entirely new city quarter, that is also intended to be a city-within-a-city, is expected to take around a decade. The work currently being undertaken, and which features the use of Wraptite as part of the specification, is Phase 1.

SPECIFYING AN EXTERNAL AIR BARRIER FOR THE NEW GLASS BOTTLE CITY QUARTER

Granted planning permission in March 2022, Phase 1 of Glass Bottle comprises three individual buildings with around 570 apartment units overall. 10% are social housing units and 15% are affordable housing units – percentages that will be maintained across delivery of the entire scheme, which will eventually deliver 3,800 new homes for some 9,500 people.

Phase 1 also includes a new creche and 400 m² of retail space.



The external wall build-up of the apartment buildings is a fairly typical light steel frame structure with a sheathing board and external finish. Designed and specified by Dublin-based architectural practice Henry J. Lyons, the Wraptite external air barrier was named within their specification pack.

As an airtight and vapour permeable membrane, Wraptite can be positioned to the external side of the structure. This moves the airtightness barrier away from the internal services zone, simplifying detailing and reducing the number of penetrations through the membrane. At the same time, allowing the passage of moisture vapour eliminates condensation risk.

It is even possible to use Wraptite as the sole membrane in a wall build-up, subject to the appropriate condensation risk analyses being

carried out.

However, at Glass Bottle, the Phase 1 specification still included an internal vapour control membrane as part of a belt-and-braces approach.

The residential apartments feature mechanical heat recovery ventilation, so an airtightness target of less than 3m³/hr/m² will be desirable. The better the standard of airtightness achieved on the project, the more efficiently the heat recovery ventilation will operate – and that all depends on the quality of the installation.

INSTALLING WRAPTITE EXTERNAL AIR BARRIER ON PHASE 1 OF GLASS BOTTLE

The performance of Wraptite membrane is founded on it being a simple, self-adhesive solution, with the added benefit of Wraptite Tape being used for particular areas of detailing. This approach saves on the labour and material costs associated with meeting modern energy efficiency requirements, which are at the forefront of Glass Bottle's conception.

Project manager, Ionel Danaca explained: "We've found Wraptite is the easiest membrane to work with," he said. "It's the quality of the membrane and the quality of the adhesive – and not just that it is a self-adhered membrane, but the strength of the bond itself is superior."

01250 872 261 proctorgroup.com

Ubiflex Finio: perfect for solar PV installations



Ubiflex Finio is the latest addition to **Ubbink's** unrivalled range of high quality non-lead flashings. It features a unique self-adhesive double bonding system that makes it the ideal solution for in-roof solar PV panel flashings. A simple tear-off system on the back allows solar installers to install first, leaving the roofers to dress the flashing when completing the roof.

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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% 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

Combination of light and shade



The "markilux 679" is a new form of solar protection for patio roofs and conservatories. The awning has a modern cubic shape, offers plenty of shade and, with LED Lines controlled by an app, ensures an attractive interplay of light on both the cover and facade of the house. Underglass awnings are perfect for both patio roofs and conservatories. The cover, frame and mechanism of this awning type are thus particularly well protected from the weather as they are installed under the glass construction. Awning manufacturer **markilux** has just launched its third model, the "markilux 679". The large awning features a modern, cubic design. It has a simple, elegant look because hardly any technical connecting elements are visible. Despite its lightweight look, it provides plenty of shade as a single-unit awning of up to 30 m² with a projection of up to 6 metres. As with other current models from the awning specialist, light also plays a role. As an option, "LED Lines" can be integrated in the cover cassette and in the guide tracks. Equipped with a light source in RGB warm white, they create a coloured to neutral light that illuminates the fabric and facade in a subtle to atmospheric way. The LEDs are convenient to control using io radio technology with a hand-held transmitter or a special app. These can even be used to define individual light scenarios. And control by voice command is also possible.

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BUILDING IN CONFIDENCE

Peter Richardson of Build-Zone provides insight into structural defects insurance policies – including what they cover, and which features developers should focus on when choosing warranties for new housing developments.



Even with the best care and due diligence, building houses can be complex, and sometimes things go wrong. For developers and housebuilders, the key objective for selling newly built houses is to achieve the best financial return. This is made possible by building and completing high-quality homes that meet the specified requirements, stay within budget, and adhere to the project timeline. Put simply, the housing stock released onto the property market must be premium, finished to a high standard and supported by minimum 10 year structural defects insurance policies.

Structural defects insurance policies are sometimes referred to as inherent or latent defects insurance. They are designed to protect homeowners in new build housing developments from structural defects in design, quality and materials. They provide peace of mind and offer financial protection if there are significant issues with the structural integrity of the properties.

When housebuilders and developers

EVEN THOUGH A NEW HOME WARRANTY ISN'T REQUIRED BY LAW, MOST LENDERS INSIST ON THIS TYPE OF COVER

sell newly built houses on the open market, they will require a structural defects insurance policy to comply with a mortgage lender's requirements. The provider must be approved by UK lenders to sell the property upon completion.

Even though a new home warranty isn't required by law, most mortgage lenders insist this type of cover on the build is mandatory when considering lending to potential homeowners, meaning they won't provide a mortgage until the developer has acquired inherent latent defects insurance cover.

With the right policy, buyers can be confident knowing the properties are

protected against potentially costly inherent latent defects. Most providers will send surveyors and technical auditors to site to assess the structures and building works at crucial points during the construction period. This reduces the risk of things being missed that could lead to the development of latent structural defects. It is, therefore, essential to understand what is covered under any given policy before signing up, as not all policies are equal. This can help find the right structural defects insurance policy to protect a new build housing property portfolio.

Once properties are built, the latent structural defects policy is usually split into two periods:

- Builder Inherent Defects Liability Period: 0-2 years
- During this phase, the builder or developer is responsible for correcting any problems caused by any physical damage or defect from faulty workmanship or materials.

- Structural Defects Insurance Period: Three to 10 years

During the structural defects insurance period, developers are responsible for major structural problems such as load-bearing floors/walls, foundations, the roof structure, ceilings and chimneys.

WHAT IS COVERED UNDER STRUCTURAL DEFECTS INSURANCE?

Generally, these insurance policies cover structural defects due to defective design, materials or quality. These can be issues related to poor ground conditions, damage caused by incorrect or poor-standard construction methods and the cost of correcting or remedying faulty construction.

Features to consider when choosing a structural defects insurance provider for new build housing developments built for residential sale:

- 10 year residential development structural defects insurance policy, backed by financially secure A-rated insurers
- Part of a Consumer Code
- Accepted by the majority of lenders in the UK and an associate of UK Finance
- Fast quotation turnaround

- Quick response from professional, nationwide technical auditing or survey service
- Flexible payment method
- Full risk transfer in years three to 10 of cover
- Cover as standard for alternative accommodation, additional costs, debris removal, and professional fees.

BUILD TO RENT SCHEMES

Other types of cover include inherent/latent defects policies for Build to Rent Schemes. Many house developers are choosing to expand their offerings into the Build to Rent (BtR) sector, contributing to the increasing number of opportunities emerging in key cities across the UK. BtR involves the creation of residential properties expressly for rent and not for sale to individual homeowners. Structural defects insurance for BtR schemes works slightly differently from new homes built for residential sales as there is no lender requirement or code of conduct.

As this sector grows and evolves, Build to Rent is poised to become a key player in meeting the UK's housing requirements and defining the future of renting.

Features to consider when choosing a structural defects insurance provider for Build to Rent developments include:

- Long-term 'A' rated insurer capacity
- Single structure limits available in excess of £300m
- Cover offered on a Full Value Reinstatement Basis, with no inner financial limits
- 10 or 12 year policy period
- Loss of rent cover
- Each project is individually underwritten and technically appraised, meaning that there is no technical manual to adhere to – giving you greater creativity in the scheme's design
- An in-house technical team and independent auditors will provide input and advice from the design stage to practical completion.

Structural defects insurance policies provide security and protection against structural defects and enhance a developer's reputation by demonstrating a commitment to quality and customer care. Housing developers can ensure projects are risk-averse, compliant, and appealing to modern homebuyers and investors, especially when selecting an A-rated specialist structural defects insurance provider.

Peter Richardson is managing director of Build-Zone

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Salamander Pumps launches MainsBooster



MainsBooster by Salamander Pumps comprises of 11 different products, featuring inline pumps and accumulator tanks, and is designed to provide a quiet, lightweight and easy-to-install solution, from a single outlet to the whole house.

As part of this range, TankBoost, is an easy to install, single unit solution that delivers flow rates up to 80 L/min and pressures up to 3.0 Bar, ideal for even the busiest homes where showers, taps, toilets and more are being used at the same time. TankBoost has been designed to meet the water pressure and flow needs of domestic and light commercial installations.

sales@salamanderpumps.co.uk www.salamanderpumps.co.uk/TankBoost

MSP Capital appoints Commercial Director



MSP Capital proudly announces Adam Tovey's appointment as commercial director, marking his second promotion in two years. Since joining in 2010, Adam has excelled in roles including valuation director and director of risk and underwriting, contributing to major client

portfolios and innovative product development. With nearly 20 years of experience in property and financial services, Adam's leadership has already driven initiatives like reduced rates on Development Exit Bridging Loans. In 2025, Adam's focus will be driving strategies that support revenue growth, build on our already strong reputation in the market and lead on future business development opportunities.

01202 743400 mspcapital.co.uk

POWERING UP HOMES' WATER PRESSURE

With growing challenges in the UK water industry, Mark Ayckbourn of Stuart Turner highlights key considerations around low water pressure for new builds, and explores effective methods and technology to improve performance.



Under UK regulation, households should be supplied with 0.7 bar, or more, of water pressure. In reality, the delivered water pressure will vary throughout the home, with some outlets exceeding the average, and some coming below it.

While most homeowners will have experienced low pressure for one reason or another, the prevalence of climate change, a declining infrastructure and increased housing demand are having an impact – and this is only likely to worsen.

A report from international home improvement company, Kingfisher plc, discovered that seven out of 17 regions in England are set to experience severe

water stress by 2030, rising to 12 by 2040. The same report also found that we significantly underestimate how much water we use per day, estimating on average we use just 57 litres, compared to the reality (which is 144 litres). The Government target for 2050 is to reduce the current personal consumption to 110 litres per person, per day.

CAUSES OF LOW WATER PRESSURE

Water pressure in homes can fluctuate significantly depending on location. Being on higher elevations or at the end of the water supply network, for example, force limitations onto the water pressure the property will receive and can lead to

lower water pressure even when demand isn't high.

It is well documented that the UK is home to an outdated and in some cases inadequate water infrastructure, which poses sector-wide issues. Having old, deteriorating or leaking pipes can significantly restrict water flow and therefore impact performance.

There are of course also the fluctuations in demand that will ultimately have a knock-on effect, with reduced pressure and flow rates at peak water demand periods. For example, in the morning, where multiple homes are needing water for showers this can put a local strain on the system and impact the performance

for individuals at that time, compared with taking a shower in the middle of the day when demand is less.

MAKING IMPROVEMENTS

While of course there are important changes that need to be made when it comes to water performance – such as repairing water infrastructure, looking at sustainable measures and tackling challenges at the source – advancements in technology offer innovative solutions to enhance water performance in the interim.

Pump boosting solutions have the capability to increase flow rate by connecting directly to incoming cold-water mains and activating automatically when an outlet is open – a tap or shower for example – boosting mains water pressure and flow throughout a property.

There are products designed specifically for residential use that help to address those water pressure and flow fluctuations that homeowners may find out of their control, particularly if the problem lies in the location. Exploring these options should be a priority for any housebuilder looking ahead.

BOOSTING BENEFITS

As well as the obvious advantages of a

HIGHER-PRESSURE SHOWERS WERE ASSOCIATED WITH LOWER WATER CONSUMPTION

better shower experience, there are also economic advantages of using pump systems. This could bring substantial cost savings for homes and help to support environmental sustainability, by reducing water consumption and waste. When water pressure is higher, there is a greater chance that showers will be shorter.

Recent research undertaken by the Universities of Surrey, Bristol and Swansea analysed how increased water pressure helped to reduce water consumption in showers. Through installing sensors across 290 showers around the Surrey campus, the team analysed more than 86,000 individual showers across 39 weeks. The researchers found that while some showers were very long, the average duration was 6.7 minutes. Half of the showers took between 3.3 and 8.8 minutes. The results reveal that at any given flow rate, higher-pressure showers were associated with

lower water consumption.

In addition, the team installed visible timers into showers so users could see how long they were taking. This coupled with the high-pressure shower, meant that on average showers used about 17 litres of water. In contrast, those with low pressure and no timer, used nearly 61 litres per shower.

FINAL THOUGHTS

By harnessing technology, such as pumps or high-pressure storage systems, developers can overcome challenges like low water pressure and inconsistent flow rates. For instance, storing water at high pressure during off-peak hours and releasing it during peak demand can significantly improve water performance. Additionally, technologies that monitor and analyse water usage patterns can help identify areas for improvement and optimise systems efficiency.

Improving water performance is essential for environmental, economic, and social well-being. By addressing challenges through innovative technologies and data-driven approaches, we can ensure a sustainable and reliable water supply for future generations.

Mark Ayckbourn is domestic division product manager at Stuart Turner

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SMARTER WATER PERFORMANCE

FUTUREPROOFING HOMES MEANS HEAT PUMPS

Neil Thompson of Ideal Heating explores why heat pumps are critical for future-proofing new homes on the journey to net zero, bearing in mind some of the key design challenges the industry needs to consider.

Sustainable housebuilding has shifted from being a 'luxury' to an essential practice.

With the UK firmly committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, housebuilders must play a pivotal role in reshaping residential infrastructure to meet this ambitious target.

One of the most crucial decisions in designing new builds is choosing heating solutions that align with both environmental and legislative requirements – and this is where heat pumps come in.

WHY HEAT PUMPS ARE HERE TO STAY

The Government's impending Future Homes Standard is expected to mean gas boilers will be banned in new build homes.

This policy change signals the need for housebuilders to incorporate alternative heating systems into their developments.

Heat pumps, once viewed as niche, are now moving into the mainstream, with over 250,000 heat pump installations in the UK to date. European countries, such as Norway – where there are over 600 heat pumps per 1,000 households – demonstrate the viability of large-scale adoption and the pathway for the UK to follow.

In 2022, the global heat pump market size was estimated at \$81 billion, and as more heat pumps enter the market, housebuilders and homeowners have greater choice than ever before.

Ideal Heating for example have invested £50m in transforming its manufacturing facilities in Hull, which have produced fossil fuel boilers for more than a century. Today, alongside manufacturing about 500,000 gas boilers annually, Ideal Heating is scaling up heat pump production. It has also established a state-of-the-art training centre capable of equipping up to 5,000 installers annually with the skills to install and service heat pumps.

Many manufacturers are adapting to the same legislative changes as housebuilders,



ensuring that expertise and resources are available to support this transition.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CASE FOR HEAT PUMPS

Unlike traditional gas boilers that burn fossil fuels, heat pumps extract thermal energy from the air, and convert it into heat for residential use.

This process is far more efficient, generating several units of heat for every unit of electricity consumed. Heat pumps provide a consistent, steady flow of lower-temperature heat, compared to the short bursts of high heat typical of boilers.

Contrary to common misconceptions, heat pumps are perfectly suited to the UK climate. They provide efficient, low-carbon heating all year round, regardless of whether it's sunny, raining, or icy cold.

As energy efficiency regulations tighten and consumer demand for sustainable living options grows, integrating heat pumps into new builds isn't just an environmental imperative – it's a critical step in future-proofing developments.

CHALLENGES AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Transitioning to heat pumps comes with design challenges. These systems work best in highly insulated homes with low-temperature heating solutions, such as underfloor heating or slightly larger radiators.

Unlike compact combi boilers, heat pumps require a cylinder for hot water storage, which demands additional space and needs to be factored into designs.

This shift calls for a rethink of traditional layouts and may involve incorporating improved materials and methods to enhance energy efficiency.

However, when heat pumps are planned into the design from the outset, they can be seamlessly integrated into the home. While retrofitting is entirely feasible, it is more complex. Housebuilders are at an advantage because their developments start with a blank slate.

Collaboration with engineers and sustainability experts during the planning and design phases is vital to ensure effective implementation. Many manufac-



turers are also evolving their services to offer housebuilders tailored support and resources, reducing the burden and making the transition smoother.

ENHANCING THE APPEAL OF NEW HOMES

Sustainability is no longer a 'nice-to-

have' – it's an expectation for new homes. Homes equipped with efficient, low-carbon heating systems stand out in the competitive property market.

Homebuyers are increasingly prioritising features that reduce their carbon footprint and which offer

long-term energy savings.

By integrating heat pumps, housebuilders are not just enhancing the appeal of their developments— they are meeting regulatory demands and aligning with growing public demand for sustainable living.

THE PATH FORWARD

Heat pumps are set to become an indispensable feature of housebuilding as the UK accelerates its journey towards net zero. For housebuilders, this is no longer a choice – it is a legislative and environmental necessity.

Adopting heat pump technology in new homes is crucial for ensuring compliance, and for meeting the UK's ambitious climate goals.

The collaboration between manufacturers and housebuilders will not only ensure compliance with new regulations but will set a new standard for sustainable construction, building a greener future for generations to come.

Neil Thompson is sales director (New Build) at Ideal Heating

AS ENERGY EFFICIENCY REGULATIONS TIGHTEN AND CONSUMER DEMAND FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING OPTIONS GROWS

Showersave launches QB1-21XE system



Showersave has unveiled the Showersave QB1-21XE, its latest innovation designed to help housebuilders improve energy efficiency and achieve Part L compliance. 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 housebuilders and developers across the UK. The QB1-21XE is an affordable and effective solution for meeting Part L building regulations and future-proofing homes to comply with the upcoming Future Homes Standard (FHS).

www.showersave.com

Housebuilder & Developer website



The Housebuilder & Developer (HBD) website is an online provider of past and present products and news items for the housebuilder and developer. hbdonline.co.uk is a one-stop source for all the latest press releases providing any visitor 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.

www.hbdonline.co.uk



Altecnic launch new high efficiency Deaerator for heat pumps

Altecnic Ltd is excited to announce the release of the HED® 5516 Series High-Efficiency Deaerator. Specifically designed to enhance and protect heat pump systems, the HED® 5516 Series removes up to 99% of air from the thermal medium on its first pass, ensuring optimal system performance. By eliminating air, the unit reduces noise, corrosion, localised overheating, and potential mechanical damage, delivering smoother and more reliable heating and cooling. The HED® 5516 Series' unique design enhances air separation, guiding micro-bubbles into a calm zone for effective expulsion, reducing noise and corrosion while improving heat transfer to enhance the performance and longevity of heat pump systems. The hygroscopic safety cap featured in the HED® 5516 Series seals to prevent leaks and ensures system protection. Constructed from high-performance composite materials, the HED® 5516 Series is built to withstand the demanding conditions of heating and cooling systems. Its crack-resistant, abrasion-resistant design ensures long-term durability while minimizing the risk of material permeability. Furthermore, it is fully compatible with glycols and additives used in various heating and cooling circuits, making it a versatile solution for modern systems. The HED® 5516 Series is designed for easy integration into a wide range of system configurations.

sales@altecnic.co.uk www.altecnic.co.uk/caleffi-hed-high-efficiency-deaerator

ARDEX and Polypipe Underfloor Heating join forces to offer recommended solutions for underfloor heating systems

ARDEX – one of the UK's leading manufacturers and suppliers of high-performance building products for flooring and tiling – has partnered with Polypipe Underfloor Heating to provide a trusted solution for their water-fed underfloor heating systems.

ARDEX products have been extensively tested with Polypipe Underfloor Heating's Overlay® gypsum panels, Overlay® Plus lightweight retro-fit boards, as well as their solid floor systems including the Red Floor Panel System, Clip Rail and Staple systems.

ARDEX and Polypipe Underfloor Heating have joined forces to produce a comprehensive installation guide. Available to download by visiting ARDEX.co.uk and PolypipeUFH.com, the guide covers everything from subfloor preparation and installation of retro-fit board and solid-floor systems to tiling and resilient flooring installation guidance using ARDEX products.

Emma McDonald, ARDEX UK Technical Manager, said: "After a long process involving extensive testing of Polypipe Underfloor Heating's warm-water systems with our products, we're delighted to be able to announce this partnership.

"This is one of the first partnerships of its kind in the industry, providing a recommended system when tiling or flooring onto these kinds



of retro-fit systems to help ensure problem-free installations.

"The system covers everything from the preparation of subfloors prior to the installation of these systems, right to the products needed to fix tiles or lay resilient flooring. ARDEX solutions have also been tested and are recommended for use with Polypipe Underfloor Heating systems for use in solid or screeded floors.

"Whether you're installing warm-water UFH or laying a floorcovering over an existing system, our partnership provides clear guidance and will help you overcome common

installation problems."

Stuart Wood, Product Manager - Sustainable Heating from Polypipe Underfloor Heating said: "We are delighted to be working with Ardex, ensuring our customers receive the best advice on floor preparation both before and after the installation of our Underfloor Heating Systems. ARDEX have worked tirelessly with us over the last few months to create a comprehensive guide that really supports best installation practises for the industry."

www.polypipeufh.com
ardex.co.uk

An exciting new natural flexible insulation



Ecological Building Systems has launched an exciting new flexible insulation product for roofs, walls, ceilings and floors, called IndiBreathe Flex, as part of an exclusive partnership with IndiNature. IndiBreathe Flex is a breathable, natural high performance thermal and acoustic

insulation that helps to regulate humidity within a building structure for better indoor air quality. The innovative insulation material has also received BBA Approval Inspection Testing Certification (24/7266) for Timber frame, pitched roof constructions and suspended timber intermediate floors and ground floors. IndiBreathe Flex provides superior thermal performance with a low thermal conductivity of 0.039 W/mK.

info@ecologicalbuildingsystems.com ecologicalbuildingsystems.com

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 decor. 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 decor 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.

0800 876 6813 www.stelrad.com



Fast LVT Installations with Flex Pro

Flex Pro self-adhesive underlay makes it possible to achieve a floating installation for **Moduleo® Pro** dryback luxury vinyl floors. Cutting down on installation complexity, using Flex Pro is the faster and simpler way to a high quality luxury vinyl floor in commercial projects. With the ability to absorb minor imperfections, Flex Pro can also help to reduce time and money on preparation. Because there's no permanent bond to the subfloor when it's time to replace the floor, it is simply lifted and carried away without damage to the surface beneath, turning around refurbishments faster. There's also no drying time, so floors can be walked on immediately after installation. Flex Pro is rolled out onto a correctly prepared subfloor and the self-adhesive is revealed by peeling back the protective layer. Then, Moduleo Pro Roots planks or tiles are simply pressed into place. Flex Pro is also ideal for the shapes and laying patterns of Moduleo Moods as it makes repositioning fuss free. The underlay delivers an installation suitable for commercial projects, accepting a rolling load of up to 250 kg. Paul Webb, national sales manager specification at Moduleo, says: "Commercial projects are run to tight timescales and so using Flex Pro is a sensible measure to minimise the time spent on installing luxury vinyl tiles." Using Flex Pro also improves impact sound absorption by 10 dB when used with Moduleo Pro Roots 2.5 mm dryback luxury vinyl floors.

01332 851 500 www.moduleo.co.uk

Beko Appliance Partners launch new online product catalogue

Beko | Your appliance solution partner



Appliance provider Beko Appliance Partners, who specialise in supplying tailored appliance solutions to housebuilders, developers and build-to-rent providers, have recently enhanced their website with the addition of a new online product catalogue.

This significant update to the website of Beko's contract supply division allows visitors, for the first time, to explore the company's extensive selection of appliances from both their Beko and Grundig ranges. Beko Appliance Partners' product portfolio, which continues to prove popular amongst providers of new homes, has been thoughtfully selected for the housebuilder market from the brands' wider ranges of products by a knowledgeable specification team. The team's vast experience in providing bespoke appliance solutions for new build projects has shaped their choices for the range as they aim to create the most suitable

possible selection of products for their partners, with options for all project budgets.

Each model is presented with detailed product specification and clear energy ratings. Further information is also available on the appliance's programmes, functionality, dimensions, noise levels, connection and installation details. Whether searching for sleek, integrated fridge freezers, energy efficient induction hobs or compact dishwashers, housebuilders and developers can now easily select appliances that align with the goals of their project.

Beko appliance partners' national contract specification manager, Mike Beech comments: "We are proud to announce the addition of the Beko and Grundig product pages to our website. Our online catalogue allows our partners to easily view our entire range of appliances available for their residential developments, enabling them to find out more about the innovative technologies and unique features of our products which have been designed to add value to their homes and save their customers time and money. Larger product categories contain filters to allow users to easily view only the appliances which fit their specific requirements.

Mike continues, "Whilst the website provides a fantastic overview of our exciting product ranges, we are keen to emphasise the tailored service we are able to provide as specialist suppliers to the residential property sector. Whether our partners require large capacity appliances for substantial family homes or more

compact solutions where space is at a premium, we are able to recommend the most effective solution to complement any kitchen design. We hold stock specifically to support contract fulfilment in our world-class storage facility here in the UK, and we offer a tailored support package with a nominated customer care team to provide ongoing reassurance to our partners and their customers."

The launch of this new online product catalogue reinforces Beko Appliance Partners' position as a leader in delivering quality energy and water-efficient appliance solutions to support the new homes sector. By offering competitively-priced, stylish products through an easy-to-navigate online platform, Beko aims to become the go-to appliance partner for housebuilders and developers.

appliancepartners@beko.co.uk
appliance-partners.bekopl.com/products



CaberMDF the ideal all-rounder for housebuilders



For those who have yet to encounter West Fraser's CaberMDF range it is probably justified delving into the history of English cricket, where Sir Ian Botham was widely regarded as its greatest ever all-rounder – as good a performer with bat or ball in hand, as well as being a remarkable slip-fielder who rarely dropped a catch. The analogy then is to the product's versatility and underlying quality, with West Fraser manufacturing five distinct grades of CaberMDF, these being Trade (Light), Pro (Standard), Trade Moisture Resistant, Pro Moisture Resistant and Industrial. Perhaps one of the most versatile for housebuilders to specify is CaberMDF Trade, as it is suitable for general purpose use where simple profiles are needed, as is Trade MR.

uk.westfraser.com

Keller extends carbon farming collaboration



Since 2021, DKG (parent company of Keller Kitchens and Bruynzeel) and ZLTO have working together on a five-year pilot project, "Carbon Farming for CO₂-storage in farmland." The project includes two carbon farmers, Joris de Jager and Johan Laurijsse, who have dedicated plots carbon farming/CO₂-storage.

After two years of testing, soil samples showed a significant increase in organic matter, resulting in 30 tonnes of CO₂ being sequestered by 2023. The project improved soil quality, drainage, and crop growth, while reducing irrigation, nitrogen runoff, and disease pressure. Based on positive results, the project's target has been expanded to 100 tonnes of CO₂ stored.

www.kellerkitchens.com



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Effective design of external communal spaces in housing developments

Housebuilders are under growing pressure to create communal spaces that are sustainable, accessible and welcoming – while keeping costs down. With **Tobermore's** innovative hard landscaping products, it's possible to design outdoor areas that meet residents' needs today and for years to come. Designing and constructing successful outdoor spaces begins with understanding what residents want. Communal spaces need to be inviting, accessible, safe and attractive. Tobermore's range includes paving slabs, block paving, permeable paving, retaining walls, and kerb edging, all designed to meet the needs of modern housing developments – and their residents. Wide paving, dropped kerbs and off-road parking enhance accessibility for wheelchair users and parents with prams, while Tobermore's permeable paving can be used as part of a sustainable drainage system (SuDS), helping to manage surface water, reduce flood risks, filter pollutants and support local biodiversity. The company's retaining walls further complement these efforts by preventing soil erosion and enhancing planting areas. To learn more about how Tobermore's products can help you create effective external communal spaces for housing developments, request a Hard Landscape Proposal.

0844 800 5736 www.tobermore.co.uk



AG recognised for environmental excellence

AG has reinforced its leadership in sustainable construction by securing Platinum status – the highest accolade – for the second consecutive year in the Business in the Community's (BITC) annual NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey. This prestigious survey recognises companies that excel in minimising their environmental impact and highlights those who successfully embed sustainable practices into their corporate strategies, driving meaningful environmental improvements year after year. AG has consistently led the way in sustainability within the manufacturing sector. Recently, the company was honoured as Sustainable Manufacturing Business of the Year at the Business Eye Sustainability Awards and Green Exporter of the Year at the All-Ireland Sustainability Awards. In addition, over one-third of AG's vehicle fleet is now electric, complementing its shift to manufacturing with 100% renewable energy, including biomethane sourced from a neighbouring farm, and utilising 100% recycled water. The company has also made significant strides in reducing its Scope 3 emissions since 2021, further reinforcing its commitment to a more sustainable future in construction. AG has recently enlisted Ulster Wildlife to drive its biodiversity plans and partnered with Sustain IQ to monitor and enhance its sustainability performance across its operations.

www.ag.uk.com

Wall Cavity Barrier (Red Edition) meets masonry construction challenge

In medium to high rise buildings where the external facade is masonry, brickwork may need structural support, typically steel support shelves, but this is often located where a cavity barrier should be positioned. Installing wall cavity barriers together with masonry support shelves without a detrimental effect on the building's fire safety can be a challenge. Now, testing shows this can be achieved with AIM – Acoustic & Insulation Manufacturing's new Wall Cavity Barrier (Red Edition).

Launched in summer 2024, AIM's Wall Cavity Barrier (Red Edition) is for use as a cavity barrier or cavity closer within the external wall structure of a building to prevent the passage of heat, flame and smoke within the cavity it fills for 30, 60 or 120-minute fire rating periods. Due to its extended fire rating, the Wall Cavity Barrier (Red Edition) is intended for use, both vertically and horizontally along fire compartmentation lines, in medium to high rise buildings requiring



enhanced levels of fire protection.

In recognition of the challenge of installing a barrier with masonry support shelves, the Wall Cavity Barrier (Red Edition) has been tested with a Leviai designed masonry support shelf indicative of an onerous situation and performed well with cavities up to 300mm. The test configurations were varied to represent varying levels of penetration of the masonry support bracket into the barrier. The tests confirm that the Wall Cavity Barrier (Red Edition) gives up to 120 minutes EI (Integrity and Insulation).

"The outcome of the testing is that our Wall Cavity Barrier (Red Edition) may be fitted at the top or bottom of the floor slab, with the masonry support shelf tested with a 50% to 140% penetration through the cavity barrier line. This gives the installer much more flexibility in installing both the masonry support shelf and the cavity barrier," explains AIM's commercial director Ian Exall.

The testing is in accordance with BS EN 1366-4:2021, recognised throughout the UK and EU as an appropriate resistance to fire test standard for cavity barriers. Testing also included masonry and steel frame systems (SFS). AIM has also invested in third party certification from UKAS accredited IFC Certification Ltd in masonry activities.

Wall Cavity Barrier (Red Edition) can be



used to fill voids up to 600mm in masonry construction and has been tested in SFS construction and rainscreen cladding. Supplied in slab form for on-site cutting or cut to size, AIM's Wall Cavity Barriers are available in 600 and 1200mm wide slabs in 75, 100 and 125mm thicknesses. They are often used in conjunction with AIM's Open State Cavity Barriers (OSCBs). AIM provides technical, specification, training and on-site support. New Wall Cavity Barrier (Red Edition) technical literature, including fixing instructions, can be downloaded at: aimlimited.co.uk/solutions/wall-cavity-barrier/

01293 582400 www.aimlimited.co.uk



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THE OFFSITE KEYS TO THE FUTURE HOMES STANDARD

Will Frost from Saint-Gobain Off-Site Solutions asserts that the Future Homes Standard offers developers a chance to prioritise long-term benefits over short-term cost savings, while reducing carbon emissions.

One of the best ways to achieve the ambitious aims of the Future Homes Standard is for housebuilders and developers to embrace a fabric-first approach, using offsite Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) as a catalyst to deliver inherently efficient homes of the future.

As we move towards whole-building energy assessments, which by their nature take a more comprehensive view of performance than previous piecemeal measures, we believe that the emphasis should move away from bolt-on energy-saving measures to a comprehensive evaluation of a building's fabric. The building's structure should be designed with high performance in mind, giving decades of improved efficiency for a low early investment.

REGULATORY HURDLES OR A CHANCE FOR LASTING CHANGE?

It is little surprise that some housebuilders have focused on achieving short-term gains to achieve compliance with, at times, increasingly complex energy performance requirements.

Energy efficiency in new builds has sometimes been treated as an afterthought. While adding solar panels or heat pumps certainly have their place in any modern housing design, they do not address inefficiencies in buildings created through thermal bridging, low quality insulation or air leakage, which can compromise a building's overall performance.

Without a solid foundation, there is a risk that technological solutions become window dressing, rather than part of a



well delivered solution.

The Future Homes Standard (FHS) challenges developers to shift their focus towards the long-term performance of the home, and recent government discussions have indicated that the FHS is the start of a programme of improvement, not the end point. These standards have the potential to deliver real change in the performance of our housing stock.

A FABRIC-FIRST APPROACH

Central to meeting the Future Homes Standard is a fabric-first approach. This strategy prioritises the energy performance of the building's core elements, including the walls, floors and roofs, before considering additional technologies or systems.

Focusing on the building envelope to enhance its thermal performance, such as minimising thermal bridging, ensuring airtightness and thermal efficiency and

limiting the risk of overheating, will all contribute to reduced energy demand. In turn this leads to a lower carbon footprint and helps ensure long-term savings for the homeowner when combined with energy efficient technologies.

THE ROLE OF OFFSITE CONSTRUCTION

The benefits of offsite construction are well documented, but when it comes to improving the building envelope, these benefits are wider reaching than simply offering a means to speed up the building process or to reduce waste.

To begin, every component can be fabricated to exact specifications, meaning that all parts fit together precisely, ensuring that the building is built as it was designed to be. Wall panels incorporating high-performance insulation materials can be manufactured under controlled conditions, with pre-installed insulated reveals around



CENTRAL TO MEETING THE FUTURE HOMES STANDARD IS A FABRIC-FIRST APPROACH

expectation that a new build home will be cost-efficient to run and can help owners to be environmentally responsible.

The need for developers to embed energy efficiency into the design phase is clear. Early integration not only future-proofs projects for longevity and durability, but it also helps increase the market value of homes due to their lower operational costs – and greater perceived comfort factors.

In conclusion, the future of housing lies in a commitment to embedding energy performance at the initial design phase, and into the structures of the house itself. This fabric-first approach, combined with the precision and efficiency of offsite construction, offers a clear path to meeting the Future Homes Standard, and so, more importantly, delivering better homes.

Will Frost is head of housing solutions at Saint-Gobain Off-Site Solutions

windows and doors to prevent heat loss at these critical points.

Elsewhere, roof trusses and floor cassettes can be designed to exact dimensions, with insulation integrated directly into the structure. Each element can then be inspected and checked before it leaves the factory; a level of control that is difficult to achieve onsite.

This ensures that the building's structure supports both its thermal performance and overall energy efficiency.

EARLY INTEGRATION IS KEY

Cost-conscious homeowners are aware of the correlation between an energy-efficient home and a reduction in their energy bills. There is a justifiable

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The magazine is published 12 times a year with an ABC-audited circulation of 12,500 UK housebuilders, developers and housing associations. The magazine offers a highly credible platform from which to communicate with the industry.

Website	https://www.hbdonline.co.uk/
Industries	Publishing
Company size	11-50 employees
Headquarters	Heathfield, East Sussex

THE QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU PICK AN EV CHARGING SOLUTION

In June 2023, Part S made installing EV chargers compulsory in all new builds and major renovation projects, raising key challenges for housebuilder specifiers when selecting solutions, as Charlotte Stowe of Zaptec explains.



There are a variety of key considerations for housebuilders confronting the challenge of installing AC charging points for EVs in their new builds and renovations, to meet the requirements of Part S of the Building Regulations. Here are some pointers for specifiers when perusing the market.

RELIABILITY RECORD

It's common for people to head over to review sites when assessing a product's reputation, and while this is great to see a broad view of opinions from end users to electricians, the nature of a review is that it's written by an individual, from their perspective. If builders are looking for a non-biased record of a technical product's uptime,

reliability, and quantity sold, you can ask a manufacturer to share their reliability report with you, alongside the percentage of faulty units returned.

This way you don't have to sift through online opinions, and it gives you a window into potential issues you may encounter if supplying their products.

WARRANTY VS GUARANTEE

Specifiers should check whether the charge point manufacturer offers a warranty or guarantee, and what exactly it covers, as there are differences in consumer law and legally binding rights.

While a warranty is an assurance issued to the customer, which you pay an additional fee to obtain, a guarantee is a promise from the manufacturer that a

product is good quality and will perform as intended at no additional cost. It's legally binding and adds to your rights under consumer law.

If a manufacturer offers a guarantee, it will be in writing, and will outline what it covers; you can ask to see this before purchasing.

INSTALLATION SUPPORT

What level of support can they offer, and can they recommend experienced installers? Most credible EV charge point manufacturers make it a mandatory requirement that anyone installing their chargers must be accredited to work with their specific product. If you would prefer to use your existing electricians, ask if the manufacturer offers training, if it's in

person or online, and how long it takes to complete?

If you do go down this route, make sure the company you choose has a technical support team who can be available for your electricians, should they need guidance.

Some installers who work on developments are well versed in helping with technical drawings, install methods, and speed of job completion. Ask the manufacturer to pass on their recommended install partners details.

HIGH DENSITY

What about the ability to install multiple chargers on a single cable? The industry has many different solutions for commercial and high-density applications. While individual homes often use a small stand-alone unit, apartment complexes and other shared parking installations are more involved. For these applications, labour and material costs are essential to profitability – that means minimising the total time installing and reducing the required resources.

Some chargers provide a scalable solution for shared parking, including free backplates and simple bus box wiring. This means up to 30 chargers can be installed on a single cable making the scale-up easy, the resident can purchase

the charger and absorb that extra cost. The install method can cut labour costs by up to 60% and wire costs by up to 75%. Therefore, choosing the cheapest unit on the market will not always equate to the cheapest job quote overall.

HIDDEN COSTS

Ask suppliers how long it takes to install and commission a charge point, and can they commission before getting onsite? In this regard, there are typically unseen costs when selecting a unit with less capability. For example, many builders are unaware of the large differences in installation and commissioning times between products. This could come down to several factors like; how many screws the unit has, how many different tools you need, if there are specialist tools you need to do the job, and how fiddly and time consuming the unit may be to fit.

Equally, some unscrupulous distributors may not provide an honest answer about how long each of these activities take. There are labour costs associated with each of these that can balloon the total price per unit. Then there is the risk of callouts and remediation should a unit fail within the six to 12-month rectification period.

Ask about the commissioning process – if it requires a call to the manufacturer or

if you can complete the install remotely. How fast is an average install for the product and type of project you are enquiring about?

RISK-AVERSE DESIGN

Ask how the unit's design supports the installer and helps them avoid issues. Charge points can be completely sealed for weather and dust proofing after install, in conformance with IP54, but it's important to ask how the unit and components are protected during the install. If components are exposed to rain, moisture or dust during installation, the sealed unit could trap the contaminants inside causing issues before the unit is even online.

CONCLUSION: ASK QUESTIONS

When selecting a charge point, ask manufacturers for evidence-based information which you can fact check.

While the advertised unit price may be attractive, a little digging can usually uncover issues that will inflate overall costs. It is especially important to remain compliant with all standards and legislation, something that is usually only achieved by reputable manufacturers.

Charlotte Stowe is UK marketing manager at Zaptec

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