HOUSEBUILDER
& DEVELOPER

JUNE/JULY 2025

A SITE WORTH ITS SALT

Russell Homes took on the site of a former salt mine in Cheshire to deliver 103 new homes offering a high degree of rural amenity – but also award-winning sustainability credentials

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NET ZERO-READY HOMES: DELIVERING THE FUTURE HOMES STANDARD
A multidisciplinary round table held on 1 May, discussing the impact of the imminent Future Homes Standard on the construction industry

FROM SALT MINE TO SETTLEMENT
A development of new homes didn't get off to the easiest start, thanks to the industrial site's history as a salt mine, but it wasn't enough to deter developers, Russell Homes. Roseanne Field reports

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PRODUCTS

James Parker

ON THE COVER

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FROM THE EDITOR

The long wake of the Building Safety Act recently saw Barratt Redrow come through with flying colours in the Supreme Court, establishing a possible precedent that developers won't have to pick up the bill for remedying buildings. The landmark case against structural engineer URS Corp (part of Aecom) shows that developers can pass on this cost to subcontractors even if the work was historical, and they commissioned the work voluntarily.

Barratt subsidiary BDW Trading (including David Wilson Homes) won in the Supreme Court recently against structural engineer URS. In 2019 Barratt underwent a review of its high-rise buildings and structures in London, Leicester and Croydon were found to have serious issues. However, the real issue for the industry going forward is that a seven-member judging panel found that URS was accountable for the cost of remedying these defective designs – despite these occurring before the newly tightened provisions of the BSA.

When the Government, shocked by the Grenfell tragedy, asked developers to inspect and remedy defects on their high-rise buildings, Barratts was one of the tier 1s who fully engaged in this process. The structural engineers' Supreme Court case rested on the arcane idea that Barratts was liable as it was not under any legal obligation to remedy the defects, however judges threw it out, in the process clarifying the realities of the Building Safety Act's extended 30 year limitation on liability. It would not be a surprise to see a slew cases from developers pursuing designers and subcontractors for historic building safety failings, particularly as they are now in line for a Delayed Homes Penalty of 10% if they don't make a start on permitted sites.

At the same time, momentum is building for central Government to bolster its avowed support of domestic retrofit with more robust collateral. The Energy Security and Net Zero Committee however recently issued a report on the current efforts, which attacked "stop-start measures and short funding cycles," which have "undermined confidence of consumers, installers, and the wider supply chain." It also villified the Government for lacking clarity on how it intends to support retrofit beyond 2026, when key schemes are due to expire.

The Committee's long list of recommendations include a simpler set of schemes suitable for less affluent homeowners, and more consumer education. One resonant one also echoed the call which is being made ever louder by the Federation of Master Builders, for licensing of retrofit contractors. However, which of these will the Government even look seriously at, given the febrile mix of priorities and challenges it's wrestling with?

There is confidence being shown by a couple of major players on the supply side, that not only the Future Homes Standard will eventually see the light of day, but also that the retrofit agenda is going to kickstart a boom for insulation. Saint Gobain and Knauf recently announced they are to open UK factories making mineral wool, in Melton Mowbray and Shotton respectively.

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Printed in England.

Allison Homes moves Glyn Mabey to South West region as new MD

Allison Homes has announced Glyn Mabey as the new managing director for the South West region.

Formerly managing director of Allison Homes East Region, Glyn has 30 years' experience in the property sector. He will spearhead the ambitious growth plans of the South West region as it looks to acquire new development opportunities and expand the number of developments, and importantly, to expand the business footprint into the Somerset and greater Bristol regions. Projects will include open market developments plus mixed developments working with Registered providers and PRS developers.

No stranger to the South West region, Glyn has previously spent many years working in the westcountry, having lived in Bristol following the gaining of a Housing degree from what is now the University of West of England. His experience in the industry includes multiple senior roles across both the public and private sectors. Glyn spent time as head of development for Sovereign Housing Association and has more than 20 years' experience at managing director level with PLC organisations such as Redrow, Persimmon and Countryside.

Jon Cook, group managing director of Allison Homes, commented: "I'm delighted to be able to appoint someone of Glyn's calibre to our South West region; his appointment is a mark of our commitment to grow the region in line with our ambitions. Glyn already knows the business well and his approach is perfectly aligned with our values.

"His focus and passion for high-quality new homes within thriving communities will be an asset to the region as we look forward to our next growth phase under his leadership. Many in our team and the wider industry will know Glyn, and his experience speaks for itself."

Commenting on his appointment, Glyn said: "I'm delighted to join up with the south west team and believe there is enormous potential for growth in the region. It's great to be working with some familiar faces as well as meeting newer team members.

"I'm looking forward to leading Allison Homes South West into its next phase. Having worked in the industry for many years, I can confidently say that Allison Homes has a culture with a strong moral compass and stands out for its commitment to quality, customer experience, its people and the wider community."

Allison Homes Group operates in the South West, East of England and Midlands, and is actively expanding its presence across all regions. There is a strategic delivery plan that focuses on a 50/50 split between homes on open market sale developments and homes developed via Partnership projects with Registered Providers and PRS (private rental sector) investment institutions.

The company holds a 5-star customer satisfaction rating from the Home Builders Federation (HBF) and is committed to becoming known as the "Homebuilder You Can Trust," recognised for its "fresh approach, strong partnerships, and commitment to delivering high-quality, sustainable homes."

Construction completes on 'boutique' Sussex scheme

Sussex-based housebuilder Sigma Homes has completed its "boutique" Spring Bank development in Haywards Heath, West Sussex.

This exclusive scheme delivers 20 elegant homes, each "thoughtfully designed to blend into the well-established surroundings." Spring Bank is now fully completed, with new residents due to move in by early summer.

Each property has open-plan living areas, and many of the scheme's three-bedroom homes include a separate study that offers the flexibility to be used as an additional bedroom. All properties feature private driveways for off-road parking, along with a covered area or garage, and private gardens equipped with a shed. All homes are built with sustainability in mind, including solar panels, air source heat pumps, car chargers and underfloor heating.

Geoff Potton, chief executive at Sigma Homes, said: "We're incredibly proud of what we've created at Spring Bank – a boutique development that respects the character of its setting while delivering high-specification new homes for modern lifestyles. It's a peaceful, well-connected place to live, and we know the new community will flourish here. We look forward to seeing a close neighbourhood develop that will grow and thrive over time."

Located less than a mile from Haywards Heath town centre, Spring Bank benefits from easy access to a host of local amenities, including schools, green spaces, and direct train services to London Bridge in under an hour. The traditional-style homes sit within a mature leafy setting, with landscaped frontages and pathways that enhance the development's welcoming feel.

Spring Bank is the latest in a series of successful completions by Sigma Homes, which said it has a "strong reputation across Sussex and Surrey for delivering sensitively designed schemes that prioritise quality, location and attention to detail."

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Planning granted for £78m Development in Duckmanton

Housebuilder Honey will build 275 new homes in Duckmanton after being granted planning permission for a £78m development.

Called Pearl and located on Tom Lane, the development will comprise a mix of two, three, four and five-bedroom homes including terraces, semi-detached and detached properties.

Sheffield-headquartered Honey says its house types have all been specifically designed to combine "style, substance and sustainability" for the benefit of buyers.

The 41-acre site has been allocated for development by Chesterfield Borough Council as part of the Chesterfield local plan to deliver 4,080 homes by 2035.

Work at Pearl is anticipated to start this summer with the first homes expected to be released for sale in autumn this year. Honey anticipates that the first residents will move into their new homes in summer 2026.

Since being launched in October 2022, Honey has secured 21 sites across Yorkshire and the East Midlands that will deliver 2,850 homes and a combined gross development value of £795m.

The company is backed by private equity firm Alchemy Partners and its Alchemy Special Opportunities Fund IV which has £937m of fully committed capital.

Honey chief executive officer, Mark Mitchell, commented: "Our Pearl development will deliver design-led homes that are perfect for modern-day living for buyers looking to move in or to Duckmanton.

"We believe our new homes offer more style, substance and sustainability for their price, and the range of properties at the development makes it suitable for first time buyers, growing families and downsizers.

"There has already been huge interest in Pearl since we announced our plans, so we now look forward to releasing the first homes for sale later this year at this thriving new community we are creating."

Honey has analysed consumer insights and trends to inform its house type designs to ensure they meet the needs and wants of today's new home buyers, including the flexible use of all living spaces.

Standard features in every Honey home include bi fold doors; individually designed fully integrated kitchens; and boutique style bathrooms with a signature free standing bath and full height tiling. All properties have an electric vehicle charging point.

BAL celebrates DOUBLE success at TTA Awards 2025!

BAL are celebrating after winning Best Innovation at this year's Tile Association (TTA) Awards and also scooping the Best Environmental Initiative as part of ARDEX Group UK.

The TTA Awards 2025 took place at The Hilton Metropole on Friday 16th May and were themed "Celebrating Excellence" – recognising the best of the best in the tiling industry.

"Best Innovation 2025" was won by BAL Micromax Grout-Effect Sealant, which was recognised by judges and a public vote as the most innovative tiling product (or service) of the last year.

Launched in July last year, BAL Micromax Grout-Effect Sealant is a unique matt-effect sealant that matches BAL Micromax3 ECO Grout and BAL Absolute Grout in colour AND texture.

It provides fixers with a sealant that can be used for seamless perimeter and soft movement joints, internal and external corners, without standing out from the grout joints.

It has proved a great success, with BAL Micromax Grout-Effect Sealant completely replacing the old "shiny" traditional technologies of BAL sealants in distribution partners.

The first of its kind for the UK tiling sector the product is a solution for seamless joints with thousands of users across the UK choosing the product as the finishing sealant of choice, and the one that clients can rely on for perfect results that last.

ARDEX Group UK also took home "Best Environmental Initiative" for the Group's Building Tomorrow initiative – with with a commitment to being fully Carbon Neutral by 2045 and being Carbon Neutral for Scope 1 & 2 emissions by 2030.

The UK Group, consisting of ARDEX UK and Building Adhesives Ltd, has crafted and part-implemented a Sustainability Roadmap to ensure that the UK business achieves these goals through a wide range of initiatives including sustainable sourcing of materials, recycling, waste reduction, extended product life-cycles, energy efficiency and sustainable energy sourcing and sustainable work-place practices.

Further success came later in the evening as tiling contractors Elite Tiling Ltd won Best Commercial Large (over 250 m^2 – Hospitality and Leisure) for Cozenton Sports Centre in Rainham, Kent which used a full ARDEX pool solution.

All categories were decided through a combination of a public vote and an expert judging panel.

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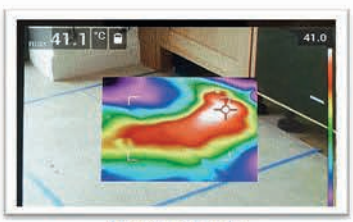

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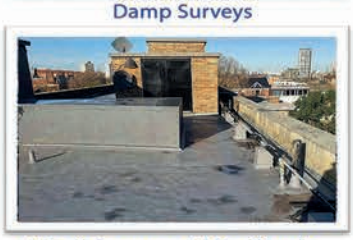
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SCAN ME

Blocks and Mortar: The essential duo for smarter, sustainable building

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For housebuilders and developers, every component counts. From foundation to finish, selecting the right materials can be the difference between a project that simply meets expectations and one that exceeds them – economically, environmentally, and structurally. When it comes to blockwork construction, the choice of both blocks and mortar plays a crucial role in delivering performance, sustainability, and long-term value.

At Tarmac, we understand that great construction starts with great materials. That's why we've developed Aggblock Lite and our ready-to-use Tarmac Mortar range – two solutions designed for faster builds, improved sustainability, and exceptional quality.

AGGBLOCK LITE: LIGHTWEIGHT STRENGTH WITH A LOWER CARBON FOOTPRINT

Tarmac's Aggblock Lite is a game-changer in the world of concrete blocks. Designed specifically for internal loadbearing and non-loadbearing walls, this medium-density block combines excellent technical performance with impressive sustainability credentials.

Manufactured using up to 30% lower carbon concrete compared to standard blocks, Aggblock Lite supports developers in meeting environmental targets without compromising on strength or durability. Its lower density not only improves handling and speeds up build times on site, but also contributes to better thermal performance and acoustic insulation within the home.

MORTAR: CONSISTENCY, CONVENIENCE, CONFIDENCE

While blocks often take the spotlight, the importance of high-quality mortar should not be underestimated. Tarmac's ready-to-use mortar range ensures that quality is built into every joint. Factory-produced and site-ready, it removes variability, reduces waste, and guarantees consistent performance in all weather conditions.

Available in a wide range of colours and strengths, Tarmac Mortar is the trusted choice for both structural and aesthetic applications. It's supplied in tubs or silos depending on project size and site requirements, helping reduce mixing time, improve site cleanliness, and speed up the build process.

Critically, the use of factory-mixed mortar improves quality assurance and compliance with NHBC and BS EN standards. It's also part of a broader drive to reduce labour time and site delays – both vital factors as developers face ongoing skills shortages and productivity pressures.

WHY THE RIGHT COMBO MATTERS

Together, Aggblock Lite and Tarmac Mortar create a construction duo that's hard to beat. Developers benefit from a lightweight block that's easier to handle and faster to lay, paired with a mortar that provides consistency, reduces rework, and minimises waste. The result is higher productivity on site, reduced costs, and a stronger path to carbon reduction.

At a time when margins are tight, regulations are evolving, and consumer expectations are growing, it pays to build smart from the ground up. Whether it's a multi-phase development or a bespoke one-off, Tarmac's block and mortar solutions are tailored to help you build homes that last – and stand up to scrutiny in every way.

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BACKED BY TARMAC EXPERTISE

With over 150 years of materials innovation, Tarmac supports housebuilders at every stage of construction. Our technical teams work closely with developers to specify the right products, optimise onsite performance, and align with modern building regulations.

We're also committed to helping our partners reach net zero targets, with continual investment in lower-carbon materials, circular economy principles, and product transparency – including an Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) for Aggblock Lite.

THE SMART CHOICE FOR MODERN HOMES

Building better homes starts with smarter materials. By combining Aggblock Lite's low-carbon, lightweight strength with the precision and performance of Tarmac Mortar, developers can meet today's challenges – and prepare for tomorrow's. So, when you're laying the foundation of your next project, remember: it's not just about blocks or mortar. It's about choosing both – wisely.

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CCF launches its groundbreaking new carbon report tool

Leading interior building products distributor CCF is taking carbon calculations to the next level with the launch of CCF Connect – a bespoke new reporting tool that provides a comprehensive and shareable assessment of the carbon impact of the building products it supplies.

The launch of CCF Connect builds on the earlier development of the company's delivery-focused carbon reporting tool which began trials in 2023. Following feedback and further investment from CCF, the offering has evolved to allow CCF's customers to track, collate, and share more accurate data relating to carbon emissions generated at the manufacturing and delivery stages.

The new tool has been developed with both main contractor and subcontractor customers in mind and has been specifically designed to help connect the supply chain by consolidating available carbon data. By factoring in key product details such as dimensions, weight, thickness, and manufacturer Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs), CCF Connect can provide a more precise and holistic view of a product's carbon footprint. It also offers 'real-time' insights to allow customers to track the exact products delivered to site, supporting compliance and reducing waste from surplus orders.

Construction Carbon, a leading independent carbon performance verification company, has verified CCF Connect in line with the requirements of ISO14064-3. This international

standard provides guidelines for quantifying, monitoring, reporting, and verifying greenhouse gas emissions statements and specifically focuses on the validation and verification of carbon calculations in terms of their accuracy and reliability.

The licensed Carbon Connect system allows CCF's supply chain partners to work together by simplifying the reporting process and facilitating collaboration in sharing valuable carbon data. For main contractors, this means subcontractor partners can easily share data to assist with SCOPE 3 and other bespoke project reports. As well as supporting their own customers in this way, subcontractors can also benefit from having access to a user-friendly tool that allows them to take direct control of their carbon reporting needs and reduce the cost and reliance of using third-party consultants.

Phil Monkman, head of sales & sustainability solutions at CCF, highlighted the transformative potential of CCF Connect, stating: "From supporting subcontractors in tracking their carbon footprints to assisting main contractors with Scope 3 reporting, our industry thrives when we work together. CCF Connect is a game-changer in making carbon reporting simpler, more accurate, and more accessible. We occupy a central position within the supply chain and we recognise both the opportunity and responsibility it gives us. We don't believe that any other UK distributor can currently offer this type of carbon reporting tool and we are excited to be able to support our customers in this way."

Gilbert Lennox-King, co-founder and CEO of Construction Carbon, added: "CCF Connect is a really smart product. With sustainability having an ever-increasing emphasis during the procurement process, it allows main contractors and particularly specialist contractors to secure more opportunities by providing a straightforward means of reporting their carbon data. We are looking forward to continuing to work with CCF as the new tool gains traction and is used on more live projects across the UK. The launch of CCF Connect marks an important step forward in the distributor and merchant sector and we are excited to see the difference it makes to the wider construction industry."

technicalteam@ccfltd.co.uk
www.ccfltd.co.uk/content/carbon-reporting

Kooltech gains MCS ASHP Design Certification

Kooltech underscores its commitment to high-quality support for sustainable heating by gaining the MCS Design Certification for Air Source Heat Pumps to MIS3005/D. This alongside Oftec Registered Renewable Heating Business, reinforces their leadership in heating and hot water solutions. The certification extends Kooltech's established expertise in delivering decarbonisation and sustainability heat pump projects within the commercial and public sectors. MCS extends this capability to the domestic and light commercial markets, demonstrating the depth of Kooltech's in-house knowledge and skillset. Scott Mason, head of sustainability and applied, comments: "The MCS Design certification shows that the team work to established methodologies, providing an additional tier of support for our customers. Kooltech continues to position itself at the forefront of the renewable heating industry, providing heating and hot water solutions to meet the evolving needs of the UK market. You can see our commitment to excellence in everything we do, from the solutions we design to the support we provide." Kooltech supplies and supports the Mitsubishi Electric range of heat pumps and all the necessary components up to the point of outlet.

0345 034 4179 www.kooltech.co.uk

Titon appoints new Sales Director for Hardware Division

Titon is pleased to announce the appointment of Vesa Nenye as sales director for its Window & Door Hardware business unit. Vesa brings over two decades of international sales leadership and business development experience across the building materials, construction, and manufacturing sectors. In his new role, Vesa will lead the strategic growth of Titon's hardware portfolio, focusing on expanding market share, strengthening customer relationships, and building a high-performing sales team. Vesa holds an MBA and degrees in international business and logistics and has held many senior commercial roles across Europe. His leadership is marked by a strong track record of delivering revenue growth, developing strategic partnerships, and mentoring cross-functional teams. "We are delighted to welcome Vesa to Titon," said Tom Carpenter, Titon's CEO. "His global perspective, customer-first mindset, and proven ability to drive sales performance make him the ideal leader to take our hardware division to the next level." Vesa added: "I'm excited to join Titon at such a pivotal time. I've always valued quality, innovation, and sustainability, which is why Titon feels like such a natural fit for me. I look forward to working with the team to build on this strong foundation and accelerate our growth in both established and emerging markets."

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Beko named Which? Best Value Appliance Brand for second year running

Beko | Your appliance solution partner

Appliance manufacturer Beko has once again been recognised by leading consumer champion Which?, earning the title of 'Best Value Appliance Brand of the Year' at the 2025 Which? Awards. This marks the second consecutive year the customer-favourite brand has received this prestigious accolade.

Well known for its independent and rigorous product reviews, Which? praised Beko appliances for their consistent performance, high-quality, and outstanding value – a testament to the brand's ongoing commitment to innovation and reliability, and a key reason it remains the UK's number one best-selling large home appliance brand.

Winners of the Which? Awards are selected by an independent panel of experts who assess the results of comprehensive lab testing alongside customer satisfaction data. The award also recognises brands that consistently go above and beyond for their customers. Martin Rogers, head of brand & digital at Beko Europe, commented: "To win the Which? Best Value Appliance Brand for a second year is a really proud moment for us. It's a testament to the dedication of our entire team, from product development and industrial design to consumer care and our engineers out on the road. We're proud to hold over 70 Which? endorsements, and we're committed to building on that strong foundation. In our research, consumers consistently tell us they see Which? as a trusted source of independent guidance, so this is a huge accolade and we're really proud to have won this award for the second time."

Beko's range of award-winning appliances come with a 10-year parts guarantee, a standard two year labour warranty, and the option to extend labour cover to five years, providing long-term peace of mind.

Beko's products are available to housebuilders and developers through Beko Appliance Partners, the brand's specialist contract supply division, offering tailored solutions for every project and budget. Beyond product innovation, Beko Appliance Partners' greatest strength lies in its robust partnership model. The company offers a tailored, end-to-end solution, working closely with developers from initial specification meetings through to delivery, installation and post completion care. This collaborative approach helps smooth the complexities of build schedules, manage changing regulations and ensure projects stay on track.

To find out more about Beko Appliance Partners, please visit the website.

appliance-partners.bekoplc.com

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Freefoam Building Products retains ECOVARDIS Silver Medal

Freefoam is proud to announce that we have successfully retained our Ecovadis Silver Medal for 2025, placing us in the 94th percentile of all companies assessed globally. This recognition reaffirms our unwavering commitment to sustainability and responsible business practices.

Ecovadis is a globally recognised sustainability ratings platform that evaluates companies on their environmental, ethical, labour and human rights practices, as well as sustainable procurement. Freefoam's achievement places us among the top 6% of all companies assessed, reflecting significant progress since our first evaluation in 2023, when we ranked in the 78th percentile.

"We're thrilled with our performance this year," said Kevin Cronin chief operating officer. "Achieving a 75/100 overall score – a six-point improvement from last year – and increasing our scores across all four assessment themes is a testament to our team's hard work and dedication to continuous improvement."

Highlights of Freefoam's 2025 Ecovadis results include:

- Increased scores in Environment, Ethics, Labour & Human Rights, and Sustainable Procurement
- A 6-point overall score increase, reaching 75/100
- Above-average performance in both general manufacturing and plastic
- product manufacturing sectors

With the gold medal threshold just one percentile away, Freefoam remains committed to further enhancing our sustainability efforts and advancing toward even higher standards in the years ahead.

"We would like to thank everyone across the organisation for their contributions to this achievement," added Kevin Cronin. "Sustainability is a collective effort, and this recognition is something we can all be proud of."

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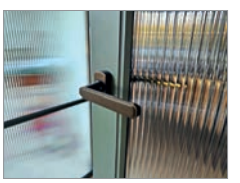
Designer Contracts achieves Elite status

Designer Contracts has completed the construction industry recognised Common Assessment Standard to achieve the coveted Elite status. Designed to advance safe and sustainable business practices and set benchmarks for supply chain compliance, the assessment is backed by Build UK and the Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA). Having previously achieved Standard and Advanced accreditation, Designer Contract's newly confirmed 'gold' standard as Elite members sets it apart from many competitors. Said commercial director Louise Walters: "We've been CHAS members for a while, but this is the first time we've reached Elite status and we're delighted to have done so."

01246 854577 www.designercontracts.com

Timeless elegance from Steel Window Fittings



Steel Window Fittings has launched the 1080 and 1090 door levers which are available on all SWF backplates. The elegant 'lever-lever' door handle conceals the fixing screws and is available with different lever styles. The ironmongery is available in several finishes and specific RAL colours on request, along with matching window furniture. Four independent springs ensure the correct position of the lever and an 8 mm spindle secured with a grub screw clamps both handles together securely. In addition, a B851 Euro Cylinder or B852 key escutcheons are available enabling a wide range of applications to include multipoint, traditional external locks and internal latches.

www.steelwindowfittings.com

Wraptite® converts property developer to benefits of external airtightness layer

An experienced property developer has seen immediate benefits from using the **A. Proctor Group**'s external air barrier solution, Wraptite®. So good were the results of the airtightness testing at the property on Scalby Road in Scarborough that the testing company thought their equipment was broken and needed recalibrating! Chris Boyes has been developing timber framed properties on small sites since he was 21. His usual approach has been to create the airtightness line on the internal face of the building structure. This latest development saw him experiment with moving the airtightness line to the external face of the structure, applying Wraptite membrane to the walls and roof. "I'm always looking for ways to improve and simplify as much as we can," said Chris. "Using Wraptite was a no-brainer." The membrane's self-adhered backing makes it an excellent choice for a complete airtight envelope, as it also ensures resistance at laps against water penetration, dust, and air infiltration. "With the walls and roof covered in Wraptite, the only areas with the potential for air leakage were the junction at the ground floor, and around the windows," explained Chris. Addressing the former simply meant ensuring the floor's radon barrier continued up the external walls to lap with the Wraptite. To deal with the latter, Chris used Wraptite Liquid Flashing by the A. Proctor Group.

01250 872 261 proctorgroup.com/products/wraptite

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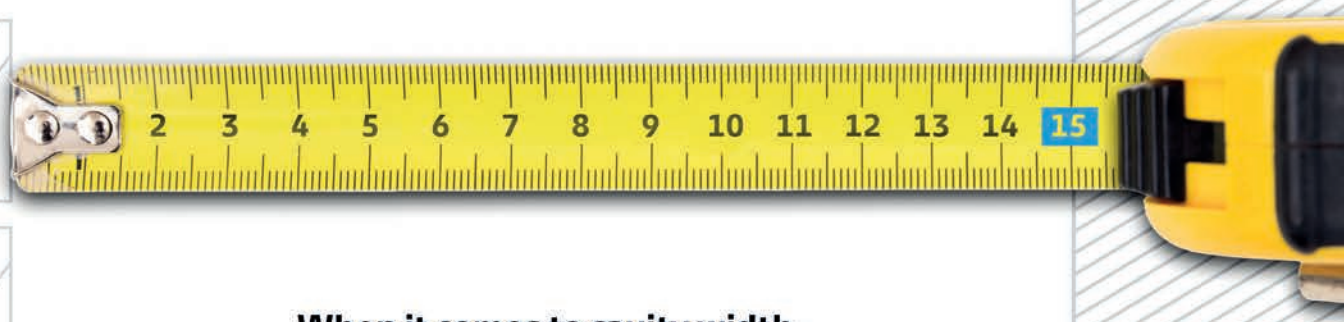
Size matters



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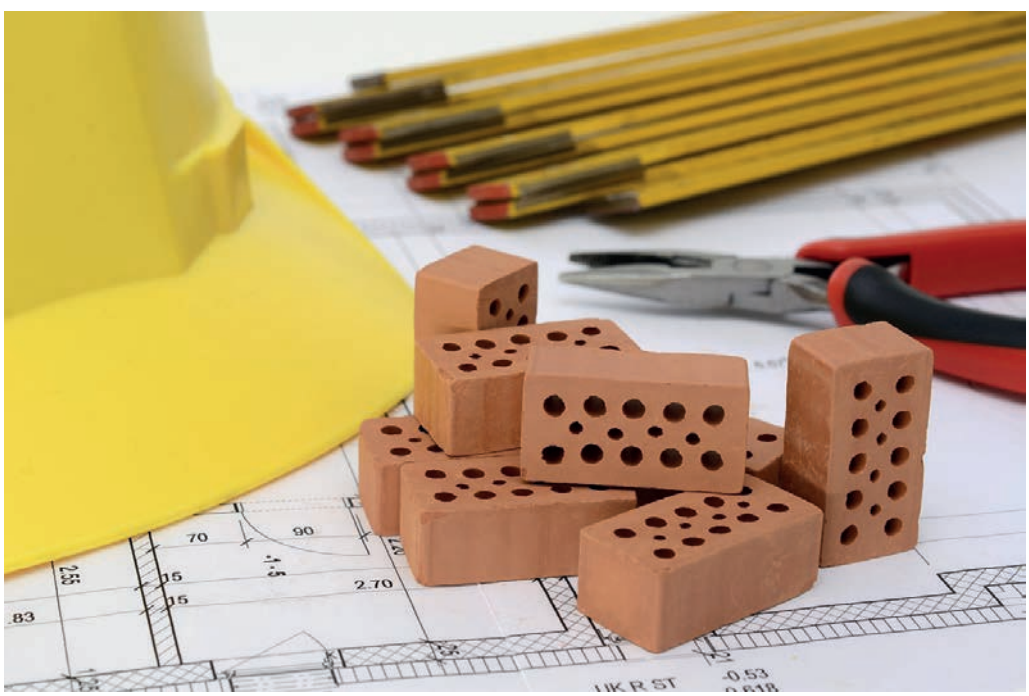
Mark Mirams, Chief Operations Officer at Studio Charrette

COMMENT

What does planning reform mean for you

With the benefit of 20 years of experience navigating planning policy, Mark Mirams, chief operations officer at Studio Charrette, gives readers a no-nonsense view of the practical changes brought by the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.



LET'S BE HONEST, PLANNING IN THE UK HAS BEEN PAINFUL

At Studio Charrette, we know how frustrating the UK planning system can be. Whether you're trying to build a home extension, open a cafe, or develop a housing scheme, the process often feels slow, confusing, and inconsistent. That's why the new Planning and Infrastructure Bill is such a big deal; it promises the most significant reform in decades. But what does that really mean for you?

Let's be honest, planning in the UK has been painful. Councils are overwhelmed, phone calls go unanswered, and even simple applications can drag on for months. With this Bill, the Government is saying, "Enough is enough." The goal is to modernise the system, speed up decision-making, and help the country "get building again."

One of the headline changes focuses on large infrastructure projects (think transport routes and power stations). Right now, these can take four years or more to get planning approval. The new bill aims to cut that in half. Key updates to the consultation and national policy statement rules should make those approvals much faster and more consistent.

That might sound distant from your everyday project, but it's part of a bigger picture. Faster infrastructure approvals can unlock development land, ease pressure on local services, and support small builders trying to bring forward much-needed housing.

The Bill also makes important changes to how local authorities operate. Councils will be allowed to set their own planning fees, but those funds must be ringfenced to improve planning services. If that's

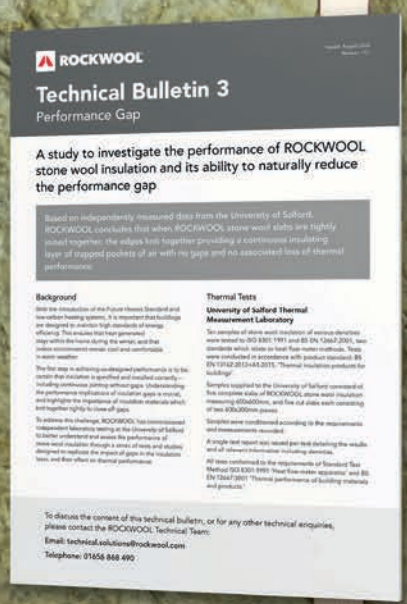
How to close the thermal gap

Need to comply with evolving thermal targets?

Independent testing shows that ROCKWOOL stone wool helps close the gap between designed and actual thermal performance.

Download the Technical Bulletin to explore how ROCKWOOL stone wool forms a continuous insulating layer and reduces gaps.

Proven performance, supported by independent testing.


ROCKWOOL

Technical Bulletin 3

Performance Gap

A study to investigate the performance of ROCKWOOL stone wool insulation and its ability to naturally reduce the performance gap

Based on independently measured data from the University of Salford, ROCKWOOL concludes that when #CORWOOL stone wool slabs are tightly butted together, the edges knit together providing a continuous insulating layer of trapped pockets of air with no gaps and no associated loss of thermal performance.

Background

With the introduction of the Future Homes Standard and low-carbon heating systems, it is important that buildings are designed to maintain high standards of energy efficiency. This ensures that heat generated stays within the home during the winter, and that indoor environments remain cool and comfortable in warm weather.

The first step in achieving as-designed performance is to be certain that insulation is specified and installed correctly – including continuous jointing without gaps. Understanding the performance implications of insulation gaps is crucial, and highlights the importance of insulation materials which butt together tightly to close off gaps.

To address this challenge, ROCKWOOL has commissioned independent laboratory testing at the University of Salford to better understand and assess the performance of stone wool insulation through a series of tests and studies designed to replicate the impact of gaps in the insulation layer, and their effect on thermal performance.

Thermal Tests

University of Salford Thermal Measurement Laboratory

Ten samples of stone wool insulation of various densities were tested to ISO 8301:1991 and BS EN 12667:2001, two standards which relate to heat flow meter methods. Tests were conducted in accordance with product standard, BS EN 13162:2012+A1:2015, 'Thermal insulation products for buildings'.

Samples supplied to the University of Salford consisted of five complete slabs of ROCKWOOL stone wool insulation measuring 600x600mm, and five cut slabs each consisting of two 300x300mm pieces.

Samples were conditioned according to the requirements and measurements recorded.

A single test report was issued per test detailing the results and all relevant information including densities.

All tests conformed to the requirements of Standard Test Method ISO 8301:1991 'Heat flow meter apparatus' and BS EN 12667:2001 'Thermal performance of building materials and products.'

To discuss the content of this technical bulletin, or for any other technical enquiries, please contact the ROCKWOOL Technical Team:

Email: technical.solutions@rockwool.com

Telephone: 01656 868 490

Download the Technical Bulletin:

rockwool.com/uk

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handled well, we could see faster response times and more experienced staff working on your applications.

Another big win is mandatory training for councillors involved in planning decisions. For too long, some planning committees have lacked the expertise to make consistent, high-quality decisions. This change should level the playing field across the country.

Also worth noting: planning officers will be given more authority under a national delegation scheme. In practical terms, this could mean fewer delays waiting on committee meetings and more consistent decisions, especially helpful if you're dealing with smaller, time-sensitive projects.

So, what does all this mean for you as a developer? In simple terms, you could see faster decisions, better service, and more predictable outcomes. Yes, fees might rise, but if those fees result in a system that works, it's a trade-off many will welcome.

For small developers, the opportunity is potentially even bigger. Projects that align with national priorities, especially affordable housing, could move more quickly through the system. But we'll be watching closely. In our experience, centralised systems can favour large players, so ensuring fairness for smaller businesses is going to be key.

There's also a new Nature Restoration Fund that allows developers to invest in national biodiversity projects instead of always offsetting environmental impact on-site. It's a smart move, if done transparently. The public needs to see real environmental benefits, not just a tick-box exercise.

Of course, not all concerns have been addressed. One of the risks with these changes is that local voices may be sidelined. Fewer committee decisions and more delegated authority could reduce community input. That's why tools like design codes, consultations, and community engagement must become stronger, not weaker.

If there's one piece of advice I can give you, it's this: don't assume the rules have already changed. These reforms will roll out gradually, and each local authority will handle things differently. That makes it more important than ever to stay informed and get professional advice early, especially if you're planning anything outside the box.

The planning system won't be fixed overnight, but if these reforms are implemented well, they could finally make the system work for you, not against you.

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Saniflo SFA GROUP

Patrick Mooney
Housing Consultant

COMMENT

Social housing delivery crisis

Patrick Mooney explores how social housebuilders are falling far short of targets, with severe underinvestment, rising homelessness, and regulatory pressures undermining efforts to deliver the new homes urgently needed.

A fall in the number of new homes started by housing associations and local authorities across England has highlighted the scale of the problems facing the social housing sector as it struggles to deliver across a wide range of fronts.

As the total for all new houses started in England last year fell to about 108,000, the social housing sector combined to contribute just 29,510 of the total – with councils starting a somewhat miserly 1,300 homes in addition to the 28,210 being built by housing associations.

The numbers for completions were slightly better at 154,000 in total, with 38,600 provided by social landlords, but the overall picture is a significant concern to politicians in Whitehall, as well as those working in the sector and perhaps most importantly, to the hundreds of thousands who are waiting for a safe, secure and affordable home.

These totals are nowhere near the 1.5 million new homes target set by the Government for this Parliament, nor are the social homes figures remotely close to the 90,000 figure which experts say are needed to be built each year to meet demand. You do not need to be the most eagle-eyed of readers to notice the huge discrepancies.

And sadly the prospects for this year and next are looking no better as the sector is facing an unprecedented combination of demands on its limited resources. Simultaneously the Government and a variety of regulators are also expecting social landlords to spend considerable sums on improving their existing housing stock and services to residents.

This is needed to reverse decades of under-investment – to tackle such problems as mould and damp, to speed up the delivery of essential repairs, to retrofit energy efficiency and new health & safety measures, while also bringing houses up to a modern standard. None of this work comes cheaply and the failure to deliver could result in punitive action from regulators and the ombudsman.

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EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

At the same time local authorities are dealing with a growth in homelessness which is threatening the financial stability of many councils and pushing them to the brink of bankruptcy. Last year, English councils spent more than £2.1bn on temporary accommodation – nearly a third more than they did in the previous year and a huge waste of money.

For the most part, this money is being paid to private landlords who own short-stay hostels, bedsits and B&B hotels. The accommodation is unsuitable, cramped and often unsafe, particularly for families with children. How much better it would be if the money was being spent on building secure and affordable homes, while paying decent wages to construction staff.

Instead London boroughs are spending £4m a day on emergency housing – equal to three-quarters of their total housing expenditure, while Hastings in East Sussex, one of the worst hit by the problem, is spending over 50% of its core spending on emergency housing. This is not an isolated problem and a growing list of councils are reporting that the cost of providing temporary accommodation is putting their financial stability at risk.

Meanwhile it was recently revealed that councils in England, with the most severe shortages of social housing, now have waiting lists exceeding 100 years for a family sized (3+ bed) social home.

This extraordinary finding came from analysis done jointly by the National Housing Federation, Crisis and Shelter who are warning of the critical need to boost investment in social housing in order to end homelessness and tackle the country's rapidly worsening housing crisis.

The figures reveal a dire situation for struggling families across the country, as the number of families on waiting lists in England has increased by 37% since 2015. In 32 local authorities across England the wait for a family sized home is now longer than an entire childhood (18+ years), with the worst three councils, all in London, having waiting lists exceeding the hundred years figure mentioned above.

Additionally Shelter is warning that without urgent investment, homelessness and its staggering costs to councils will continue to skyrocket. Using historical trends and Government data, Shelter estimates that 206,000 children will be homeless by 2029 and the number of households in temporary accommodation could surge by 44%. Without critical investment in providing new social

housing, the charity says that the cost of temporary accommodation is on track to spiral by 71% to £3.9bn by 2029.

NO QUICK FIXES

To prevent such outcomes, the Government has been intent on changing the country's planning framework and trying to make it easier (and quicker) for new housing developments to obtain planning permission. It has begun recruiting and training hundreds of new planning officers, as well as investigating the creation of a series of new towns and increasing the amount of funding available to pay for new affordable housing.

But given the time taken to design, obtain consent for and to build new houses, it will be several years before we see any significant and positive results arising from these actions. In the meantime housing waiting lists will continue to lengthen and temporary housing costs continue to rise – hence the rather dramatic forecasts given by Shelter.

In fact the picture could even be worse later this decade because firstly the downward trajectory needs to be halted and then it needs to be reversed. This is why policy makers in the sector are calling for "the biggest boost to social housing in a generation."

Turning this around will require a package of measures to rebuild capacity, unlocking housing associations' ability to borrow and build new social homes. For this reason the National Housing Federation has been lobbying Ministers for a 10-year rent settlement, with annual increases linked closely to inflation and a means for the rents of similar properties in the same area to converge over time, removing expensive and difficult to explain anomalies.

These measures are seen as essential if social landlords are to rebuild their financial capacity and to withstand further financial shocks in a more uncertain world. They are also vital if the social housing sector is to deliver an upsurge in housebuilding funded by a boost to development budgets with more generous grant rates.

Because of the challenging environment which social landlords have been working in over the past decade, many housing associations have actually been reducing their development programmes in recent years and their expenditure on Section 106 homes in particular. This mechanism was until very recently one of the most productive and popular ways for associations to deliver new housing, but not anymore. If ever proof was needed that housebuilding is nothing like turning a tap on or off and is more like the massive tankers moving cargo across the oceans, this is surely it.

Speaking ahead of the Spending Review which will answer many of the questions about the Government's intent, Kate Henderson, the NHF's Chief Executive, said: "The fact that families in so many parts of the country face waiting lists for an affordable home longer than their children's entire childhood is a national scandal. Security, stability and the space to learn and play is vital for a child's development, yet we are allowing hundreds of thousands of children to grow up in damaging temporary homes, in cramped and poor-quality conditions and with little privacy. This is no way for a child to grow up and these children deserve better.

"The social housing sector has faced years of withdrawal of vital funding. This Spending Review is the opportunity for the Government to rebuild the capacity of the social housing sector and commit the investment and the change that is needed, creating a better future for our children and ending homelessness for good. This means delivering co-ordinated homelessness and long-term housing strategies which include a package of measures to support the social housing sector to recover and crucially a big boost in funding to build new social homes."

The downturn in housebuilding seen in 2024 can be reversed and many of the levers for achieving this are slowly being put in place, but the housing sector needs an awful lot of help and support if it is to ensure that Shelter's warnings about what could happen with homelessness do not turn into an awful prophecy.

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BUILDING INSIGHTS LIVE

Net Zero-Ready Homes: Delivering the Future Homes Standard

FUTUREPROOF CONCEPTS
The multi-disciplinary group explored a range of practical issues – and some realistic solutions – for compliance with the Future Homes Standard

Attendees
Kirsty Girvan - Policy & Public Affairs, UK Green Building Council
Prof Lubo Jankovic - University of Salford
Danielle Michalska-Morris - Group Technical Innovation Manager, Barratt Redrow
Jo Conceicao - Associate Director, Sustainable Design, Savills
Julie Godefroy - Head of Net Zero Policy, CIBSE
Mark Wilkinson - Residential Sector Lead, Hoare Lea
Simon Wyatt - Partner, Cundall
Jamie Bursnell - Head of Technical & Innovations, Bellway Homes
Lesley Treacy - Head of ESG, Dandara Living
Seán McAlister - Architect, Pencil and Brick
Marc Stevens - Head of Energy Engagement, TrustMark
Ian Poole - Associate Sustainability, Elliott Wood Construction
Olivia Smalley - Head of Policy and Communications, Heat Pump Association
Tassos Kougionis - Director, McBains

Sponsor attendees:
Jonathan Ducker - Head of Regulatory Affairs, Kingspan Insulation
Craig Dolan - Senior Product Manager for Heat Pumps, Glen Dimplex
John Hadley - Growth & Transformation Manager, E.ON Energy
Ian Steward - Technical Director at Recoup Energy Solutions, MIRA
Lee Spence - Sales Manager, WMS Underfloor Heating

A multidisciplinary round table was held on 1 May at the Institute of Directors in London, looking at the impact on the construction industry of the imminent Future Homes Standard, including its delayed implementation versus the Government's 1.5 million homes target. This Building Insights LIVE event was the largest yet staged by netMAGmedia and *Housebuilder & Developer*, and featured Barratt Redrow, Bellway Homes and SME builders Dandara Living and Pencil and Brick, among a varied mix of attendees.

When we planned our round table on this key future issue for the sector back in 2024, it was seemingly a given that housebuilders would by now be learning from practice of the standard in use. However, in the event, even the likely timeline is now another thing added to the long list of questions around the FHS, although the Government announced recently that it would be finally published this autumn.

TACKLING THE PROBLEM AT SCALE
This round table was the largest yet staged by Building Insights LIVE, with five key sponsors, reflecting the scale of the challenge

What we do know is that this set of construction regulations will amount to a 75-80% reduction in carbon for new homes, is likely to require solar PV plus fossil-fuel free heating, and will also cover significant renovations to existing homes. However, with the Option 1 (PV-oriented) model of the Standard now being taken forward, the round table aired some of the remaining issues which are still to be resolved, to assist housebuilders in delivering the standard as expected.

THE DISCUSSION

Both Bellway Homes and Barratt Redrow gave us valuable on-the-ground insights into their preparations for achieving the Standard at scale, as well as concerns around the delays to the Home Energy Model replacing SAP, and (including via Professor Lubo Jankovich) some learnings from their respective Energy House 2.0 zero carbon test bed research projects at the University of Salford. We also focused on the impact on smaller mainstream housebuilding such as from SMEs Pencil and Brick and Dandara Living.

We have staged round tables around the 2021 updates to 'FLOS' (Parts F, L, O and S of the Building Regulations), where expectations were clear that upgraded fabric and renewables efficiency would become the norm in new developments. Yet according to one recent estimate (from Elmhurst Energy), by February 2025 only 40% of new homes were actually being built to the 'new' Part L requirements.

At the other end of the spectrum, Simon Wyatt of Cundall made the case that many examples now existing of Passivhaus construction, and the Future Homes Standard as currently formulated doesn't look ambitious enough. He asserted: "Design of a Passivhaus isn't that much different to the design of SAP; it's the installation and the quality." This meant "granular detail" on U-value calculation, to "make sure you actually achieve what you're looking to do, addressing the performance gap."

Whether or not it was undershooting on the ambition, the question still needed to be asked whether the Standard is deliverable as it stands – and our delegates were not convinced. We collated recommendations from the attendees at the end of the event, for both industry and Government, given that the former is waiting for the latter to announce clear details on the standard, as a matter of urgency.

While there were a host of issues and uncertainties around the FHS, we also wanted to use the meeting as an opportunity to explore the practical strategies for meeting the standard in real-world schemes. This included enabling industry innovations (from energy demand reduction to waste water heat recovery, to underfloor heating, to heat pump controls). In the absence of directives on solutions centrally, it's left to the industry to share best practice at events such as this, and develop coherent and futureproof ways forward.

The second half of the debate featured pertinent questions from each of our five sponsors to our informed panel, and we also referred to audience research by *Housebuilder & Developer* on how the industry is getting to grips with the Standard's challenges – at least as far as they were aware of them!

Following the round table in June the Government announced it would go for the more comprehensive solar PV-oriented Option 1 of the consulted standard, despite 41% of housebuilders in our 2024 Industry Viewfinder research saying they preferred Option 2.

Danielle Michalska-Morris of Barratt Redrow commented that the more expensive Option 1, in terms of capital cost to the developer, but offering lower bills for the customer was something "we absolutely agree with, but we would

"INTRODUCING THE STANDARD WITHOUT A FULLY FUNCTIONING HEM TOOL IS GOING TO BE REALLY, REALLY DIFFICULT FOR DEVELOPERS"

JAMIE BURSNELL, BELLWAY HOMES

benefit from clearer information and guidance to accurately model what is achievable with our homes." She continued, saying that lack of clarity meant that they would need "flexibility to how we meet compliance; once the HEM model is available, it could restrict how we meet compliance, potentially having a knock on effect on our supply chain."

Michalska-Morris said that as a developer "actively investing" in land to support the Government's pledge to deliver 1.5million homes, Barratt Redrow was "fully committed to playing our part. That said, greater clarity on forthcoming regulations would provide the confidence needed to move forward with certainty and pace."

Jamie Bursnell of Bellway Homes said that from "looking at the 'Goldilocks Zone,' balancing ease of install, capex, deliverability, scalability and giving the best result for the customer, our view is that there will never be a Bellway house constructed to the FHS without solar PV." However, he said that the issue which the company expressed in its consultation response was "the amount of PV and how it is applied in the notional dwelling." He explained this was why Bellway couldn't support Option 1 as it stood in the consultation.

In terms of the likely timeline of the Standard, Bursnell said that, with the regulation not having been laid in place in December 2024, the "ship has sailed" on the possibility of it coming into force in 2025. This was due to it being "predicated on a six or 12 month lead-in and a 12 month transition, and it would also be due to parliamentary process."

HOME ENERGY MODEL TRUTHS

The key to the standard's implementation is eagerly awaited – the Home Energy Model (HEM) which replaces SAP and which will be used (via a 'notional building') to establish whether new schemes comply. It was expected the Home Energy Model would be released within days of the round table, but at the time of writing there's still no sign of it, although it was confirmed in early June that software providers Sustenic and Quidos would be developing the 'core software engine.'

"WE SHOULD BE LOOKING AT HOW TECHNOLOGIES WORK TOGETHER, NOT USING HEM AS A TOOL THAT PITS THEM AGAINST EACH OTHER"

IAN STEWARD, MIRA SHOWERS

Jamie Bursnell said that introducing the standard without a "fully functioning HEM tool" is "going to be really, really difficult for a developer." He said that despite Bellway's substantial resources and large supply chain, "We need the tool and it needs to be bug free." Bursnell explained that when SAP 10.2 emerged in June 2022 (which HEM is to replace), "we were tearing our hair out because it was riddled with bugs and had limited functionality."

He said that, with potential further consultation time spent around the PV requirements in the Option 1 model before the summer Parliamentary recess, it was feasible that the regulation would be laid in December 2025, coming into force in December 2026, and then a transition arrangement leading until December 2027.

Bursnell concluded that developers "are going to need a fully functioning HEM tool ahead of the regulation coming into force, to stress test designs."

Jonathan Ducker from Kingspan Insulated concurred, saying it was "ridiculous we don't get a fully working HEM tool before we actually publish what we are intending to do – it's important to everyone across the supply chain." He continued, "Okay, HEM is not a design tool, but it informs the design specifications that are needed to comply."

Ducker said that the 'notional building' approach which HEM rests on for establishing buildings' energy performance at design stage was "all well and good," but that its fitness for real-world buildings would only be proven once in use. "It's only when you start to use it that you find out that a notional building by itself doesn't pass." He was more confident than Bursnell on the current FHS timescale, saying that the Government was "committed to publishing this year," and that in previous regulation updates, it had taken six months to implement. He said "there is a possibility we will get publication in September, and you could have implementation from March 2026."

He admitted that there hadn't been a "massive change" between requirements in terms of energy efficiency from the 2013 to 2021 regulation updates, and including the consulted values for the FHS 2025. Danielle Michalska-Morris however pinpointed the challenge for developers of no longer being able to achieve compliance on a whole-site basis, due to transitional arrangements for 2021 being plot-specific, "meaning we have sites operating with two sets of regulations." She also pushed back against the idea that the HEM would not be drastically different, saying "it is much more complex, requiring many more inputs such pipe work details which are not required in SAP," and admitted that providing the more complex information "will definitely be a shift."

Tassos Kougionis said that there was a "perfect storm" currently resulting from the absence of the HEM model, combined with a 1.5 million homes target by 2030. "SAP was not perfect, and without understanding what the assumptions are, there will definitely be bugs [with HEM], he said."

IN HOT WATER

Another supplier perspective on HEM came from Craig Dolan of Glen Dimplex, who said "it's important we understand HEM, because we have to understand where our products fit, or maybe don't fit and where we need to make changes to them." He echoed Jon Ducker, saying that the HEM tool needed to be released because "we need to be able to put products in to see how they will react – we think we know." Dolan summed up the key change, that in future, while the heating requirement of new homes is "really, really low; the hot water requirement is arguably going up."

He added: "The relative increase in importance of hot water use meant the "efficiency around hot water storage or hot water generation is going to be really, really important."

Ian Steward of Recoup Energy Solutions, on behalf of Mira Showers, gave a view echoed by others in the appliances sector, that "some of the assumptions on domestic hot water use are drastically off compared to where SAP was." He explained further – "It suggests everybody showers two and a half times a week rather than four and a half times a week; there are so many things around HEM that are being questioned." He accepted that in the context it may be a case of "whoever shouts loudest gets their assumptions looked at first."

Jonathan Ducker added that "we haven't had a working version of the consultation for five, six months. The previous version that was out there was evidently so far from where they were that they pulled it entirely, and there just hasn't been anything to even trial."

Craig Dolan of Glen Dimpex mentioned other new regulatory challenges affecting specification, such as Smart Secure Energy Systems (SSES), which oversees how low carbon smart appliances work with the grid, and "how that might impact running costs." And, striking the balance between lower temperatures and legionella control was a further

challenge; "some areas are pulling in opposite directions." He added: "It's how we work the ecosystem to make sure that manufacturers are giving developers the right information, and that we're developing the right kinds of solutions."

BROAD AGREEMENT
The round table included Barratt Redrow, UKGBC and expert consultants including McBains, Cundalls and Savills, with a broad range of knowledge and a degree of consensus on the challenges of the Future Homes Standard

ARE HOUSEBUILDERS READY?

The delegates looked at whether housebuilders are ready to not only implement the changes, but also the impacts, for example the lower profit margins that may result from smaller numbers of units delivered per site, due to the increased footprint needed for added insulation but maintaining floor space. This is alongside the general increases in upfront costs necessitated by Future Homes Standard compliance, from better fabric, more insulation and low carbon technologies such as heat pumps and PVs.

Julie Godefroy asked our Barratt Redrow and Bellway delegates directly – "when you are buying land, do you assume 2021 compliance in the cost of 2025?" Chair James Parker pointed out that most of our 2024 audience research responses put estimated cost increases at 1K-10K per unit, but 7% reckoned that the uplift could be over 30%, which would severely dent their margins.

Jamie Bursnell of Bellway said that this was a further area where there was "a whole lot of uncertainty." He explained that the housebuilder had been buying plots for four years "which we will transition to the Future Homes Standard," and said he and his commercial team "are in the unenviable position of having to make a provision for what we think the FHS will cost." He continued: "Ultimately, you're looking at the residual land value model; you've got to make sure you position it correctly; it becomes extremely difficult for us."

Danielle Michalska-Morris said that housebuilders looking to obtain development land were working in the dark in the absence of a HEM model or the full standard – "we have had to make an assumption of what the timeline for implementation and transition of the future homes standard will be, but we don't know what the fabric energy efficiency or primary energy will be."

She said the business was having to give caveats on costs based on expectations, such as "we don't know how U-values for windows are going to be calculated; if we specify a 1.3 U-value double glazed unit and they change the methodology, we might have to go to a triple glazed unit just to achieve that." Michalska-Morris added: "Given the uncertainty, we're unable to allocate the cost within our build assumptions and budget assessments, as doing so could result in an overestimation that impacts a site's overall viability."

Godefroy responded on the cost issue, saying that "the impact assessment was probably the poorest part of the consultation last year; you had no idea where the figures came from." She continued: "They looked really weird as a result, but there was no justification."

Lesley Treacy of SME builder Dandara said the industry was having to move and "be proactive, but there was a "lack of clarity and consistency from government around timelines." She said, "if we knew early enough, we could work to that, and we incorporate it into land values."

THE RETROFIT DIMENSION

A question raised by hybrid SME housebuilder/architect Seán McAlister was how the FHS interacts with retrofit, including the key innovation of redeveloping 'micro-sites' such as with urban infill, as well as significant existing home renovations and extensions. He wondered whether the FHS would require such projects to be on a par with new build, with Part L being "triggered" in many cases. Mark Stevens of Trustmark which oversees the PAS2035 retrofit standard said the challenge he saw was that "in retrofit there are different standards and different ways of assessing them." Kingspan's Jon Ducker asserted: "New build is easy by comparison with retrofit."

McAlister also echoed concerns expressed by the volume housebuilders around estimating the costs of upgrades currently, as well as that on small sites, they "are going to be disproportionately amplified." He added that with many small urban sites being the ideal, well-connected scenarios for new domestic development, there was a risk the FHS could be "starting to turn people off when there are already so many planning hurdles?"

Simon Wyatt of Cundall said there were "lots of local authorities who have recently done smaller, micro sites with housing associations including to Passivhaus, and a number of those published their cost data." He added that they have taken a "different approach," meaning they're able to progress schemes on a "cost-neutral" basis.

PV VIEWS

There was consensus that a version of Option 1 of the current FHS consultation (including PV) was to be preferred, but this meant that there would need to be a further consultation on the required area of PV for new homes, according to delegates.

Professor Lubo Jankovic of Salford University said: "We're not going to get to zero carbon with the available amount of surface area on the roofs; there's always a requirement for more PV than what's available. So I think somewhere in the equation for developments, we need to allow enough space for additional PV as otherwise we're not going to get there."

However, Jamie Bursnell pointed out that there was a crucial need for developers to not to see the Future Homes Standard provisions as a 'maximum' target, but a minimum to exceed, "particularly with regard to PV." At the same time, there were issues around PV arrays' excess electricity being exported to the grid, and that a "roof full of PV would give no latitude to trade off," he said. Bursnell asserted that the "PV formula was fundamentally flawed," as it "assumes you can fit 40% of your ground floor area onto your roof," and that your panels "can morph into any shape they want to be."

Question Time: Examining Solutions

In the second half of the debate, we gave the floor to the sponsors, all leading suppliers in their respective sectors of the industry (Kingspan Insulation, Glen Dimplex, E.ON, WMS Underfloor Heating, and MIRA Showers). Representatives from all sponsors posed key questions for our round table delegates, and given that three of our sponsors were working in fields that related directly to water use as well as heating, unsurprisingly their questions revolved around key issues in this area.

MINIMISING GRID IMPACTS

E.ON, as one of the 'Big Six' energy suppliers, was keen to find out delegates' views on how the increased use of low carbon heating systems and technologies such as PVs and EVs in the new homes they were designing and building would be impacting on local grid constraints.

John Hadley of E.ON asked: "With the major drivers creating an increased need for low carbon technologies (LCT's) such as solar panels, heat pumps and fast charging EV units… are you experiencing increased impact from grid constraints on your new build development plans, and how are you overcoming grid constraint challenges?" It has a new tool for managing low carbon technologies during peak demand, with the potential to reduce the size of substations in developments by 30%.

Jamie Bursnell admitted that Bellway had "issues in certain areas of the country with securing grid capacity," including backlogs, but they had "worked with some really good Independent Distribution Network Operators (IDNOs)," multi-utility companies working across boundaries, to reduce demand on schemes where possible. Professor Jankovich said that solar thermal was one possible solution to reduce demand, given the available roof space.

Hadley urged the Government to look holistically at the proven value of measures such as external wall insulation in the ECO initiative, alongside renewables improvements for housing. For example, the healthcare savings may not be explicitly valued, as they "often tend to see these things in isolation"; he also pointed out the need to pursue innovative ideas like green mortgages for driving uptake among homeowners.

Craig Dolan of Glen Dimplex posed a seemingly simple query, which echoed Hadley's in terms of the need to provide more flexibility in electricity supply: "How can we maximise the benefits of energy flexibility and reduce peak electricity demand, while still keeping people warm and comfortable in their homes using a range of technologies that all consumers trust?"

Bursnell said that in terms of heat pump efficiency, while fabric is going to play a part, "it is going to be driven by the quality of the design, installation and commissioning, and after that, the operation of the heat." He referenced the learnings from Energy House 2.0 Salford, "a great opportunity for us to learn in a risk free environment with a controlled external temperature." He says "we did go to town on it a little bit," with a "constant heating" combination of radiators throughout, and underfloor producing the lowest COP (Co-Efficient of Performance) so far.

TECHNOLOGIES WORKING TOGETHER

MIRA's Ian Steward, representing the waste water heat recovery (WWHR) brand Recoup, which MIRA acquired in

2023, made some interesting injections around how technologies could and should work together to reduce carbon while maintaining performance. He asked the group how suppliers could "better support" housebuilders in order to integrate hot water demand reduction and water efficiency into designs – without compromising on cost, build plans or consumer experience.

He reiterated the point made earlier by Craig Dolan that heating demand has come down drastically, but that hot water demand "sits at the same level it always has done." He added: "Rather than keep looking at diminishing returns on heating, there are ways for hot water to be drastically reduced; we talk about making sure the fabric is right, but with showering we have a massive hole where we dump out energy."

Steward mentioned a Labour policy document in 2017 which, based on research by Arup and others, found that using WWHR in 13 million homes would reduce UK energy consumption by 8 Terawatt hours per year. He cautioned against an overt focus on lower flow rates at the expense of user experience – "we need to be careful that we don't lose that customer experience because people will change showers."

Steward also referred to how heat pumps can work with WWHR, and achieving the balance on legionella control with lower flow temperatures, and said "We should be looking at how these technologies work together and not using HEM as a tool that pits them against each other; there are synergies that will help the grid as well as housebuilders."

Craig Dolan supported this, adding that HEM was potentially going to have unintended consequences, from a "laser-like focus on efficiency which can come back and burn you." He explained that HEM, in its consultation form, "was pushing quite heavily to have hot water tanks as small as possible, but if somebody buys a new house and they don't like the shower and change their shower head, suddenly they have a five minute shower and then they've completely drained a 125 litre tank. It's compliant, but completely useless in reality."

Jamie Bursnell said that Bellway would not be going below 6 litres per minute, for the customer experience – "we will get to 80 or 90 litres per day, but we won't be reducing flows any further, we'll do it by other means, like rainwater harvesting." He also suggested that MCS sizing methods for cylinders was overengineered, as it was "based around the number of bedrooms, so we might be designing hot water capacity for demand that never exists." Dolan added that the Future Homes Standard needed to focus on the "available hot water," not the size of the cylinder.

"THE HEM MODEL MIGHT RESTRICT HOW WE CAN MEET COMPLIANCE; THAT HAS A KNOCK-ON EFFECT ON OUR SUPPLY CHAIN"

DANIELLE MICHALSKA-MORRIS, BARRATT REDROW

MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

WMS Underfloor Heating's Lee Spence and Jon Ducker of Kingspan's questions centred around whether the Future Homes Standard goes far enough, in Spence's case on whether flow temperatures of around 55°C could be dropped significantly bringing "significant performance gains."

Craig Dolan of Glen Dimplex (who is also chair of the Heat Pump Association) said that the HVAC industry "had been a bit lazy on this point, because condensing boilers came in 20 years ago, and we should have mandated low temperature heat systems then." Simon Wyatt said that CIBSE guidance is for "much lower temperatures than 55°," for systems which separate water for heating and domestic hot water.

User expectations were crucial, with, as Spence emphasised, UK homes having traditionally been designed with water flow temperatures of 70-80°.

He explained why educating consumers on the new approaches was essential for success: "If the homeowner doesn't know how to use the system, it doesn't mean very much. We also need to take that into consideration as well, with regards to handovers, which we do do, but it needs to go across the whole industry."

Finally, Kingspan Insulation's question revolved around building fabric, but touched on a key issue, namely that the Future Homes Standard consultation did not raise fabric U-values on those of the

existing Part L 2021. He said: "Several key industry bodies, including UKGBC and LETI, have raised concerns about the failure to improve fabric standards from 2021. Does raising fabric standards need to be a priority as we switch to low carbon heating?"

Danielle Michalska-Morris from Barratt Redrow said that while the housebuilder was "primarily fabric first," there was "an element of diminishing returns," giving the example of Scotland where they were required to achieve 0.17 U-values for external walls using timber frame. "It becomes much more tricky – you start increasing wall width and potentially timber stud sizes, which also has a knock on effect on embodied carbon, but a negligible impact on the running cost to the customer."

Jamie Bursnell said that Bellway were "following [the notional building] reference values" for their fabric designs, in line with Part L 2021, and "are not going to reduce the insulation thickness, or take anything out of the floor."

He asserted the reference value-based approach was "the only surety" that they would be able to comply with the Fabric Energy Efficiency Standard (FEES) which sits within the Future Homes Standard.

However, he said that the "knock on issues" would arise if there were further changes made to the standard, such as on U-values, and the balance was difficult: "We have invested a lot of time coming up with a footprint and a wall thickness that will suit both masonry construction and timber frame; we have a scope 3 embodied carbon target, we know we have to increase our timber frame. We also know that we want the same plotted footprint, so that U-value in the notional dwelling has become business critical."

Bursnell added that with a goal to achieve 30% timber frame in new homes, Bellway was investing millions in its own timber frame factory, and asserted that the company had been "plotting wide footprints for the last three years, so that when we transition

to FHS, we're not moving the conveyance boundary and dropping plots." He also said a further delicate balance was needed on fabric, because "enough has changed in the notional dwelling calculation that will make trading a wall U-value against a floor U-value, or against solar gains from glazing a lot more difficult." He reiterated that they will not know the likely way ahead until HEM appears.

Danielle of Barratt Redrow noted the lack of feedback from Government on the likely shape of the standard and the industry responses, given that the Tier 1 contractor submitted its responses "back in 2024." She told the delegates: We have seen nothing on the responses – So we don't actually know how many respondents there were, what category they fell into, whether they chose Option 1 or 2. We are completely blind in terms of the outcome." ■

Listen to a podcast of the round table highlights at insights.netmagmedia.co.uk

ROUND TABLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INDUSTRY & GOVERNMENT

Our attendees each provided a recommendation for the construction industry and/or Goverrment to adopt.

Jo Conceicao, Savills
Update regulatory and planning frameworks to facilitate private wire smart grids in new and existing developments to unlock local energy sharing, and greater flexibility on prescriptive onsite renewables targets.

Have a higher ambition on airtightness, and mainstream high-performance timber frame via a coordinated effort across finance, insurance, warranty, planning and regulation, so it's not classified as a 'non-standard' build type.

Marc Stevens, Trustmark
A coherent approach for FHS implementation, to ensure all sectors in the retrofit and new build sectors are aligned; especially in HEM standards for assessment of the improvement for consumers.

Julie Godefroy, CIBSE
Government urgently needs to provide a timeline to implementation of the FHS/FBS, possibly including version 2 in a few years, and a timeline for embodied carbon regulation."

Mark Wilkinson, Hoare Lea
Focus on outcomes and what the end user wants.

Ian Poole, Elliott Wood Construction
Bring embodied carbon into mandatory reporting requirements, invest in a low carbon, bio-based local supply chain.

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SMALL DEVELOPMENTS PROJECT REPORT

A site worth its salt

A development of 103 new homes in Cheshire overcame obstacles from the site's industrial history as a salt mine – which did not deter developers Russell Homes. Roseanne Field reports

One of Russell Homes' latest developments, Brook View, has not only overcome some planning obstacles, but gone on to win an award for its sustainability credentials.

The land in rural Cheshire was found by Russell LDP – the north west-based independent housebuilder's land, development and property arm – who identified it as a potential site to build homes for the local area.

The site, located on the border of Wincham and Northwich, halfway between Manchester and Chester, is part of a wider area known for its Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Witton Lime Beds and Neumann's Flashes are locally-known nature reserves on the doorstep of the site, the former of which is a SSSI due to its offering habitats supported by chalky soils.

This particular site had been used previously for industrial warehousing, and part of it was a historic salt mine. This didn't deter Russell LDP, who thought the site offered an ideal opportunity to convert what had become a derelict parcel of brownfield land into something that the local area was in need of – namely family homes.

The team felt the location would offer potential residents the best of both worlds, living within a large parkland surrounded by fields while having easy access to modern amenities. The site is close to rambling routes and country pubs, as well as supermarkets, restaurants, entertainment venues and

both primary and secondary schools. It is close to the main regional road and rail links while still boasting views over the nearby Wincham Brook – earning the development its name Brook View.

Russell LDP began the process of securing the land, and more importantly, working through planning items with the local council. "Due to the historic industrial uses of the site, there were a number of items to consider," explains Thomas Relph, associate land and planning director at Russell Homes and LDP. "This included the use of the land, loss of employment, dealing with the previous salt mine, and managing the surrounding health and safety issues from the nearby industrial development."

Collectively, these factors meant a "strong strategy" was needed, and a series of discussions took place between the developers and council officers. The salt mine proved to be the biggest obstacle, and after detailed investigations into the ground were undertaken it was decided to create a 'standoff zone' – a designated area of green open space where no activity takes place.

Despite the complicated nature of the site, discussions with council officers were "positive," says Relph, resulting in a "positive outcome and a strong development."

MOVING FORWARD

As well as negotiating the properties of the site itself, the meetings between council officers and Russell LDP allowed for discussions around the overall site layout, number and size of units, and the various tenures. "Detailed discussions were held with the council housing officers to determine what the best mix was to meet local housing needs," says Relph. "It was important to have key stakeholder involvement from the council to deliver a strong community feel that caters for all walks of life."

In the end, they agreed on a total number of units for the site at 103 homes – ranging from one to four bedrooms. This was in order that the development would have something to offer everyone, from young families buying their first homes to downsizers looking for a smaller property. Brook View comprises detached, semi-detached and mews-style properties in a mix of tenures – open market, shared ownership and social rent.

Benefitting the local community meant more than simply building the homes. More than £400,000 was invested

"DUE TO THE HISTORIC INDUSTRIAL USES OF THE SITE, THERE WERE A NUMBER OF ITEMS TO CONSIDER"

The development offers residents the 'best of both worlds,' being situated in parkland but with easy access to local amenities

locally by Russell Homes as part of the development – just over £156,500 was allocated to local education provision by Cheshire West and Chester, £179,352 went towards funding local sports pitches and play facilities, and £102,744 provided support for local primary care surgeries.

It was also important to both parties to ensure that the development wouldn't just comprise a cluster of houses. "We always make sure our developments have plenty of usable and public open green space, so that there will be a real community feel," Relph explains. "We also make sure the homes we design and build are in keeping with the local area, using materials to go alongside." More than half of the total development area has been intentionally left as open space.

The planning application was submitted in August 2020, with permission granted at the end of July 2021. Once the team had secured planning permission, the project was handed over to Russell Homes for construction to begin. Commencement on site took place in the first quarter of 2022, with remediation works taking longer than anticipated due to inclement weather – which included snow and ice as well as rain.

BUILDING & DESIGN DETAILS

Russell Homes wanted to ensure the development was in keeping with the local area, so specifically selected house types were used on the development. At Brook View, this meant the design team opted to finish the homes with Cheshire brick and slate effect roofs and feature stone lintels – details chosen to "echo the character of traditional Cheshire homes, in keeping with the local vernacular," explains design manager Neil Walker.

Aside from the finishing touches being influenced by the locality, the other key driver behind the overall design and construction of the homes was sustainability. The company sets out to achieve high sustainability and energy efficiency standards at all of its developments, and Brook View was no exception.

Explaining the chosen construction method, Walker says: "Timber frames were used on the development to align with our sustainability and energy efficiency

goals. We used responsibly-sourced materials that are approved by the correct frameworks and benefit from having a chain of custody, meaning we can track the timber from source."

As well as allowing the housebuilder to trace right back to its source, the timber frame also acts as an "excellent insulator', allowing us to insulate between the frame which increases the energy efficiency of our homes before other features are even added, and reduces the reliance on energy sources – renewable or otherwise," Walker adds.

The timber was brought to site as pre-manufactured units, factory-controlled and craned onsite. "This modern method of construction cuts down on construction waste," explains Walker. "It reduces the carbon footprint and cuts down on construction time."

With the delays faced during remediation works, the development's show home finally launched in the first quarter of 2023. The housebuilder hopes to complete the development by the third quarter of 2025, and only three homes remain available for sale.

The homes are all internally finished to a high standard, including fully fitted kitchens with soft close doors and drawers, glass splashbacks and an integrated fridge freezer, gas hob, electric oven and extractor hood as standard.

A variety of tiles are available to choose from in the bathrooms, ensuites and cloakrooms, and chrome heated towel rails are fitted in the family bathrooms and ensuites. The staircases are finished with a polished natural wood handrail and all doors have satin stainless steel handles.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY & BIODIVERSITY

Achieving a high level of sustainability was a target from the outset, with Walker explaining that the site is the company's "most sustainable development to date."

A range of features were included, ranging from large-scale, such as the timber frame, right down to the finer details. Every home has an EV charger fitted as standard, along with A-rated condensing boilers and low heat-loss water cylinders. The timber frame is responsibly sourced to minimise deforestation, with either FSC-approved

A RANGE OF SUSTAINABLE FEATURES INCLUDE THE TIMBER FRAME AT THE LARGE SCALE DOWN TO THE FINER DETAILS

ALL OF THE HOMES INCLUDE 500 MM OF LOFT INSULATION, AND GREEN GUIDE A OR A+ RATED MATERIALS 'WHEREVER POSSIBBLE'

or PEFC-approved certification.

All of the homes also include 500 mm of loft insulation, energy efficient light bulbs and kitchen appliances that are both energy and water efficient with either A or A+ energy ratings. Wherever possible, environmentally-friendly materials are utilised rated either A or A+ by the BRE Green Guide. Bathrooms also all include "industry-leading" water saving fixtures and fittings.

The development utilises argon-filled double glazing with a low-emission coatings and incorporating Planitherm Total+ Low E glass, achieving a maximum permissible U-value of 1.4W/m^{2}K. External doors are also insulated, and over 50 of the houses include PV panels, which will enable them to generate up to 30% of their energy requirements. Combined, these factors mean the houses all have an EPC rating of B or higher.

Acoustic dampening and sound insulating materials, along with the construction methods help minimise sound transfer. During construction, the team ensured that 95% of the building waste was either recycled or reused.

Landscaping also formed an important part of the development's overall sustainability. A sustainable urban drainage system was designed and developed, which has created an ecological habitat and aided the water management of the neighbouring Wincham Brook. An attenuation pond is located near the entrance to the development which, explains Walker, "takes all surface water from the development and releases it into the existing brook via a hydro brake, at an agreed fixed rate to prevent flooding."

The attenuation pond is situated within a large open space that welcomes residents and visitors to the development on either side of the road. In total, more than 50% of the development comprises green open space. Existing trees have been supplemented by extensive planting, including bee-friendly plants and flowers, as part of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements. "Native species and wildflowers have been included in the landscaping designs, and this combined with the large number of bird and bat boxes – which have been distributed throughout the development – encourages a safe space for natural wildlife," Walker says. The ecological value of the site is assessed by independent ecologists.

There is a well-equipped play area and a pitch for ball games. Once the development is fully complete, a management company will take over

All houses in the scheme have an EPC rating of B or above

from Russell Homes to "maintain the green corridor and ensure the upkeep of all of the public space," explains Walker.

A SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

The hard work undertaken by the housebuilder to ensure Brook View was as sustainable as possible paid off, with the development being awarded a NextGeneration Project Silver Status eco award for "exceeding mandatory sustainability standards."

NextGeneration is a sustainability benchmarking system, designed to evaluate UK housebuilders on whether they are going beyond the minimum standards and mandatory requirements. Its aim is to drive change and boost understanding of the sustainability of benchmarked housebuilders, with the criteria for each benchmark publicly available. The initiative is backed by Homes England, the UK Green Building Council and Lloyds Bank and comprises three services: NextGeneration Project, which assesses sustainability on individual projects; NextGeneration Core, which benchmarks corporate sustainability practices for SME housebuilders; and NextGeneration Benchmark, which is an annual sustainability benchmark for the UK's 25 largest housebuilders.

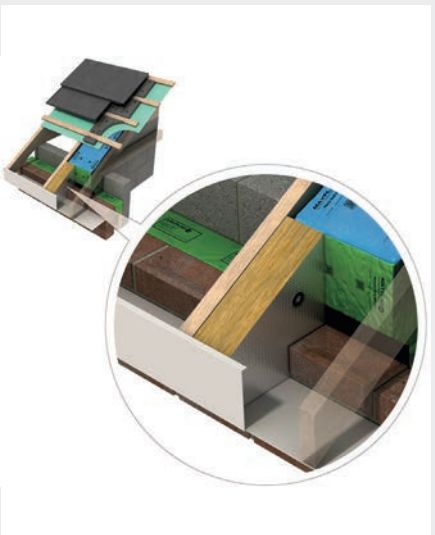
To achieve NextGeneration Project Silver Status, a scheme must exceed expectations in four areas: the use of sustainable building methods, increased biodiversity to be delivered by the end of the programme, responsible employment practices, and the provision of affordable homes. As well as being commended for its achievements and rewarded with Silver Status, Russell Homes also received guidance on how to improve in other areas, which it plans to implement on future developments.

Since the early stages of the project it's been well received, says Russell Homes' sales manager Jackie Matheson: "The reaction to the development has been nothing but positive," she explains. "From when planning was submitted to the homes being built, locals have always mentioned the attractiveness of the development and the need for housing in the local area."

Although not yet completed, many of the homes now have residents living in them who "love their new homes and the quality is always complimented," says Matheson. "The amount of green space is always a welcome surprise to our visitors, especially the green gateway on the way to the development," he concludes, asserting: There is a real community feel at the heart of this development." ■

Mayplas Thermal Soffit achieves A2 Reaction to Fire classification

Mayplas' Thermal Soffit, just launched in March, has now achieved an A2 Reaction to Fire classification and has been renamed 'Thermafire A2 Soffit'. The product is part of a range of insulation that Mayplas, a specialist manufacturer in passive fire protection, acoustic and thermal insulation, offers the housebuilding and construction industries.



Confirmed following testing as Reaction to Fire A2-s1,d0 according to BS EN 13501-1, the limited combustibility slab provides thermal and acoustic insulation within the soffit at the party wall junction.

Available in thicknesses of 100 mm and 150 mm, permitting the design of thermal performance to suit the construction, the Mayplas Thermafire A2 Soffit facilitates thermal resistance values to Approved Document L. It is suitable for both masonry and timber frame constructions.

It also provides resistance to the passage of sound, synonymous with stone mineral wool insulation.

Standard 600 mm x 600 mm slabs can be cut to size on site to ensure an accurate cut to fill the full soffit void at the party wall. The soffit can be secured through the product to the timber truss or masonry block using the correct length of fixing for the width of the product. Mayplas can supply appropriate fixings.

In terms of application, the Thermafire A2 Soffit is valid for any wooden-based substrate and is also valid with or without a cavity to the opposite side.

"Achieving an A2-s1, d0 Reaction to Fire classification for our Thermafire soffit product is proving very useful," comments Michael Hunter, Mayplas' technical director. "The test results open up new applications which we look forward to exploring with our housebuilder customers and with the construction industry more broadly."

The Thermafire A2 Soffit is foil faced to provide an effective vapour barrier and the foil also prevents fibre migration.

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GET ON TOP OF ROOF DESIGN FOR BIG GAINS

Nick Boulton of the Trussed Rafter Association explains how engaging those responsible for roof design early helps housebuilders reduce waste, cut carbon, and meet evolving sustainability regulations.

One area of significant progress is the design and construction of roof structures – particularly through trussed rafters, which are widely used in residential builds. By minimising material usage and waste, trussed rafters help developers meet evolving ESG targets and stay ahead of regulations.

Roof trusses can be taken for granted in modern house design with the potential benefits of working closely with highly skilled designers missed. The key, according to the Trussed Rafter Association, is to engage with roofscape designers earlier in projects to unlock potential gains.

TRUSSED RAFTER DESIGNERS CAN CRAFT SOLUTIONS THAT COMPLY WITH CURRENT REGULATIONS AND ANTICIPATE FUTURE DEMAND

THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF TRUSSED RAFTERS

Trussed rafters are manufactured offsite using precision engineering, which reduces material usage and waste while maintaining high structural performance. This provides three key benefits:

- Reduced material wastage: As trusses are designed to precise specifications, the amount of timber offcut is drastically reduced, leading to less on-site waste. Fewer materials being discarded means fewer disposal costs and less embodied carbon.
- Sustainable timber sourcing: Timber is a renewable material that captures carbon as it grows, making it increasingly attractive as a low-carbon alternative to steel or concrete. The majority of trussed rafters are manufactured using timber from responsibly managed forests, often certified under schemes like the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) or the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).
- Energy-efficient design potential: The shape and structure of trussed rafters can support higher levels of insulation and ventilation strategies, directly impacting thermal efficiency. Over a building's lifecycle, this can yield energy savings and lower heating and cooling costs for occupants.

Trussed rafters provide an inherently sustainable solution, but housebuilders can maximise these benefits by engaging with designers early in the process.

Their expertise ensures the right design is used from the outset, leading to more efficient construction, stronger return on investment, and improved sustainability outcomes.

RECOGNISING SUSTAINABLE ROOF DESIGN

Every year, the TRA's Roofscape Design Awards celebrate innovative and sustainable trussed rafter projects across the UK. Two recent examples demonstrate how housebuilders can benefit from close collaboration with experienced designers:

- The Copper House in Oxfordshire: The designer – Phil Morgan at Wyckham Blackwell, used an unconventional vertical truss system to create a seamless roofscape that integrates solar panels and enhances on-site energy generation. This approach shows how trussed rafter solutions can help meet stringent energy-efficiency standards without compromising aesthetics.
- Welton Extra Care Scheme in Lincolnshire: Here, the designer, Simon Copley at Acorn Timber Engineering, worked to minimise environmental impact across a large-scale housing development by sourcing PEFC-certified timber, optimising truss sizes to reduce transport emissions, and ensuring efficient on-site installation. This design helped lower the project's overall carbon footprint while streamlining the build schedule.

These examples show the value of engaging with skilled trussed rafter designers, not only for structural performance but also for sustainability-led housing solutions that can align with frameworks like Passivhaus or future adaptations to the Future Homes Standard.

ALIGNING WITH ESG & SUSTAINABILITY REGULATIONS

ESG considerations increasingly shape the construction sector, and regulations often require housebuilders to demonstrate sustainability commitments.

The UK's Building Regulations, particularly Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Power), set out specific targets for energy efficiency, while the Future Homes Standard pushes low-carbon building methods.

By considering factors like thermal bridging, airtightness, and the compatibility of diverse roofing materials, trussed rafter designers can craft solutions that comply with current regulations and anticipate future demands.

COST, COMPETENCY, & OCCUPANT WELLBEING

A well-designed trussed rafter system extends beyond structural soundness – it contributes to a building's profitability and long-term performance. Early engagement with competent designers helps reduce unforeseen costs by minimising material overuse, shortening installation times, and preventing on-site alterations or delays.

Better-insulated, well-ventilated roofs also enhance occupant wellbeing, an increasingly important aspect of the "social" dimension of ESG. Residents benefit from improved indoor air quality, more stable temperatures, and lower energy bills – key selling points for developers eager to market cost-efficient, eco-friendly homes.

THE VALUE OF EARLY COLLABORATION

Housebuilders aiming to lower their environmental impact should explore the advantages of early engagement with trussed rafter designers. This proactive strategy streamlines project coordination, reducing the chances of expensive mistakes, and positions a development for potential accreditation under green rating systems. The early involvement of these specialists can help meet ESG obligations while creating homes that are energy efficient, structurally robust, and better for both occupants and the planet.

Sustainability isn't just about the materials we use; it's about making smart design decisions.

By working with trussed rafter designers from the outset, housebuilders can ensure their projects are efficient, compliant, and ready for the future.

Nick Boulton is chief executive of the Trussed Rafter Association

TOP GLASS PERFORMANCE

Paul Higgins of TuffX explores how glazing has evolved into a critical element in buildings' energy performance, and offers a practical guide to help specifiers achieve 'futureproofed' glazing solutions.

With the Future Homes Standard (FHS) set to take effect soon, housebuilders face increasing pressure to adopt low-carbon technologies and improve energy efficiency across developments. The goal; new homes that produce 75-80% fewer carbon emissions than those built under previous regulations.

Delivering this target requires a fundamental shift in how materials are specified. To achieve it, glazing, which has long been a primarily aesthetic feature, has now become vital in boosting thermal performance, ensuring occupant comfort, and, importantly, reducing carbon output.

Another industry challenge is Part O of the Building Regulations, which now mandates that new homes mitigate overheating through innovative design strategies, including maximising passive cooling and air flow. Glazing specification is central to this, as too much solar gain can result in uncomfortable internal conditions, but too little natural light can compromise well-being.

Advanced glazing technologies such as solar control and low-emissivity (Low-E) glass can help strike this balance. These coatings reduce unwanted solar gain while allowing high levels of natural daylight. In turn, this helps indoor environments stay cooler in summer and is especially useful in properties with large, glazed areas, such as bi-fold doors or full-height windows.

SUSTAINABLE GLASS FOR A LOW-CARBON FUTURE

Low-carbon glass, produced using less energy and higher recycled content, is an exciting innovation that supports better operational efficiency while reducing a property's embodied carbon footprint. Offering high thermal performance, the improved insulation properties help reduce heat loss during winter and solar gain in summer, reducing the need for mechanical heating or cooling.

As the first manufacturer to introduce low-carbon glass to the market, TuffX developed a product containing 64% recycled content and made using renewable electricity. The result is a product with a 42% lower carbon footprint than standard float glass without compromising clarity or aesthetics. This is a simple specification choice with significant long-term benefits for housebuilders seeking practical ways to lower embodied carbon without overhauling structural design.

DOUBLE-DUTY HEATED GLASS

One of the most compelling future-proof glazing solutions is heated glass, which combines thermal comfort with clear views and space-saving potential. Integrated within bi-fold doors or large windows, this invisible technology provides primary heat through radiant energy while maintaining all the benefits of conventional glazing.

Heated glass comprises a sealed unit with an intelligent, electrically conductive coating that radiates heat. With no visible elements, the glazing appears no different from standard units. Yet it performs like a radiator, reaching surface temperatures of 35-40°C and controlled via a wall-mounted thermostat.

This frees up interior wall space, enabling more flexible room layouts – ideal for open-plan extensions and garden-facing living spaces where radiator placement can be limiting. Heated glass also reduces condensation, which helps maintain clear views and supports healthier indoor air quality by preventing the growth of mould and

mildew, which is especially beneficial in airtight homes.

From a cost perspective, heated glass is surprisingly efficient. A three-panel bi-fold running for five hours a day costs approximately £1.35 to operate (based on 25p/kWh), making it a viable low-carbon alternative to traditional systems, particularly in homes where space heating needs are moderate and aesthetics are a priority.

Installation is also straightforward. Heated glass units are installed the same way as conventional double glazing, with electrical connections made by a qualified electrician to the 240 v mains supply. There's no additional pipework, radiators or floor-level disruption, which speeds up installation and simplifies sequencing on site.

This solution offers a valuable route to FHS compliance. Delivering efficient space heating through integrated glass contributes to reducing carbon emissions while supporting architectural design and resident comfort.

SPECIALIST SOLUTIONS

Glazing specification must evolve as the industry adapts to the demands of the Future Homes Standard and tighter energy regulations. Low-carbon and multi-functional glass products offer housebuilders innovative, compliant, and practical options for creating sustainable, attractive, and future-ready homes.

For developers looking to maximise glazing's potential, from lowering embodied carbon to eliminating radiators, now is the time to re-evaluate this essential part of the building envelope. With products now available that deliver both energy savings and elegant design, glass is no longer just a window to the outside world; it's a pathway to net zero.

Paul Higgins is commercial director at TuffX

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Cavity wall costly errors – and your protection

An ongoing R&D programme into unacceptable damp course installations on site has recently been the subject on an annual review by **Cavity Trays Ltd**. The company set out to identify commonly reoccurring deficiencies witnessed when conventional roll DPC is used in cavity wall construction. From simplistic junctions to complicated junctions and intersections. All identified problems could have been avoided by using approved preformed trays from the Yeovil-based Company that also advantageously come with a performance undertaking.

01935 474769 www.cavitytrays.co.uk

Housebuilder & Developer website

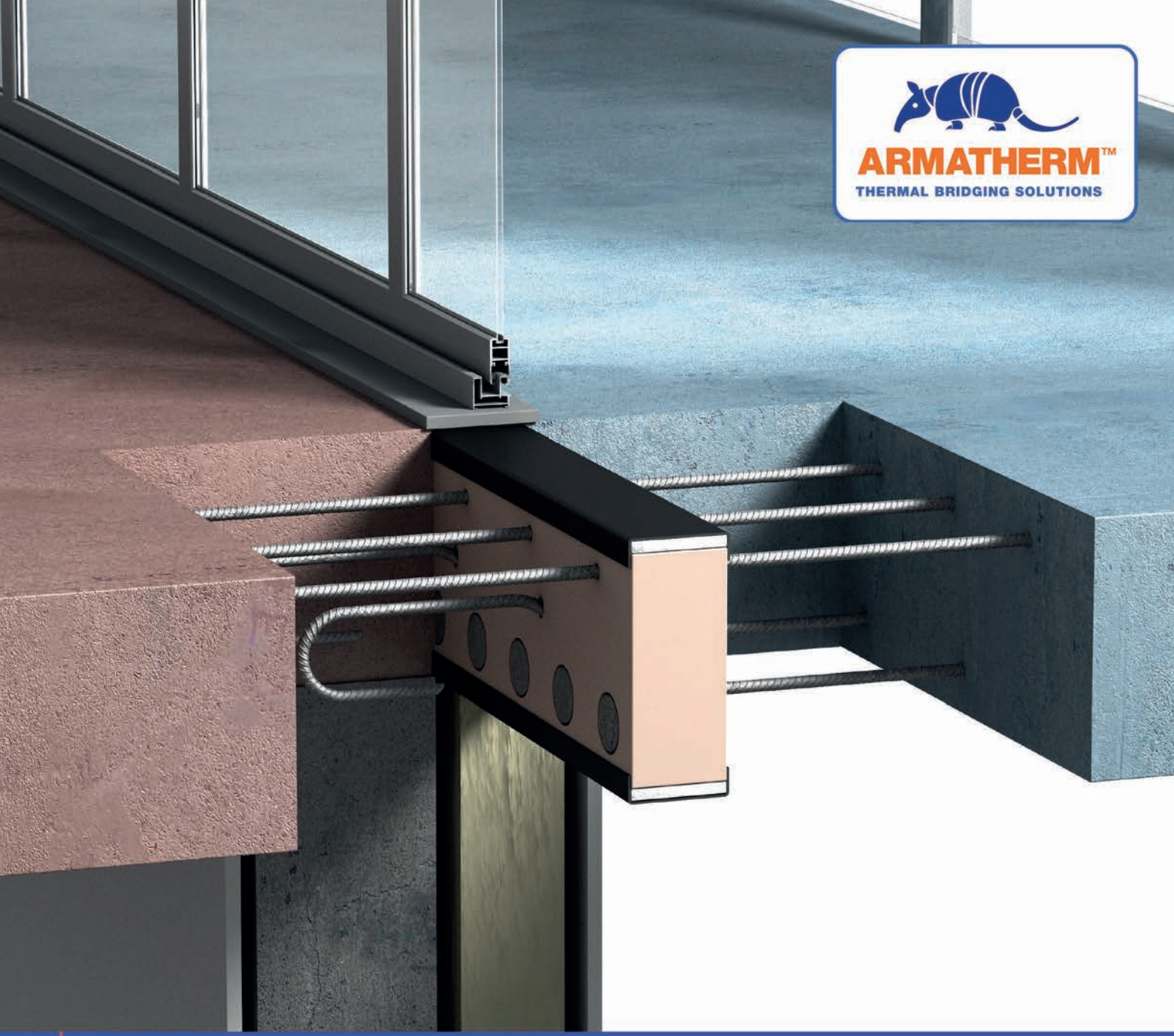
The Housebuilder & Developer (HBD) website is an online provider of past and present products and news items for the housebuilder and developer. hbdonline.co.uk is a one-stop source for all the latest press releases providing any visitor with access to information about products and services that they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

Brighten up living spaces with new Pyramid Roof Lantern

Brett Martin has introduced a new addition to its glass rooflight range, the Pyramid Roof Lantern. This square, four-pane solution is available in both standard and bespoke sizes, providing additional design options for projects where maximising natural light is a priority. With an attractive slimline profile, the new Pyramid Roof Lantern allows focused even light to penetrate buildings, creating a striking focal point in any desired space. The Pyramid Roof Lantern's four standard sizes range from 1,000 mm x 1,000 mm, up to 2,500 mm x 2,500 mm, with a lead time of just three to five days. The new addition adds to the existing range of four and six-pane rectangular roof lanterns as well as square, rectangular and circular flat glass rooflights, all of which are available with combinations of white, black or grey frames, inside and out. The glass can also be specified, with the options for clear or solar-control blue glass available for reduced solar gain and decreased internal temperature spikes. As with the other products in the Brett Martin range, the Pyramid Roof Lantern is double glazed and complies with the guidance from the Rooflight Association which recommends that a laminated inner pane should be the first choice for safety when specifying overhead glazing.

024 7660 2022 www.brettmartin.com/daylight-systems/our-products/glass-rooflights



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With over 70 years of garage door manufacturing expertise, Garador remains a trusted industry leader – delivering innovation, reliability, and exceptional value across the UK.

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Garador garage doors are available in steel, GRP, or real timber, with expert advice to guide your choice based on your build, location, and design preferences. Choose from an extensive range of deep, durable finishes – including woodgrain, metallic, and other special effects. For a classic touch, real cedar wood doors come in a variety of rich, natural shades.

OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE
Engineered for precision and tested for durability, Garador garage doors offer outstanding performance in every aspect – from smooth opening mechanisms to long-lasting finishes and low-maintenance functionality.

TAILORED SIZING
Garador offers both standard and bespoke sizes to suit any project. Options include a 5,000 mm wide steel up-and-over door and a 5,500 mm wide sectional door – ideal for larger garages or modern builds.

UNCOMPROMISING SECURITY
Garador was the first to offer Secured by Design (SBD) accredited garage doors for domestic use – setting the benchmark for garage door security in the UK.

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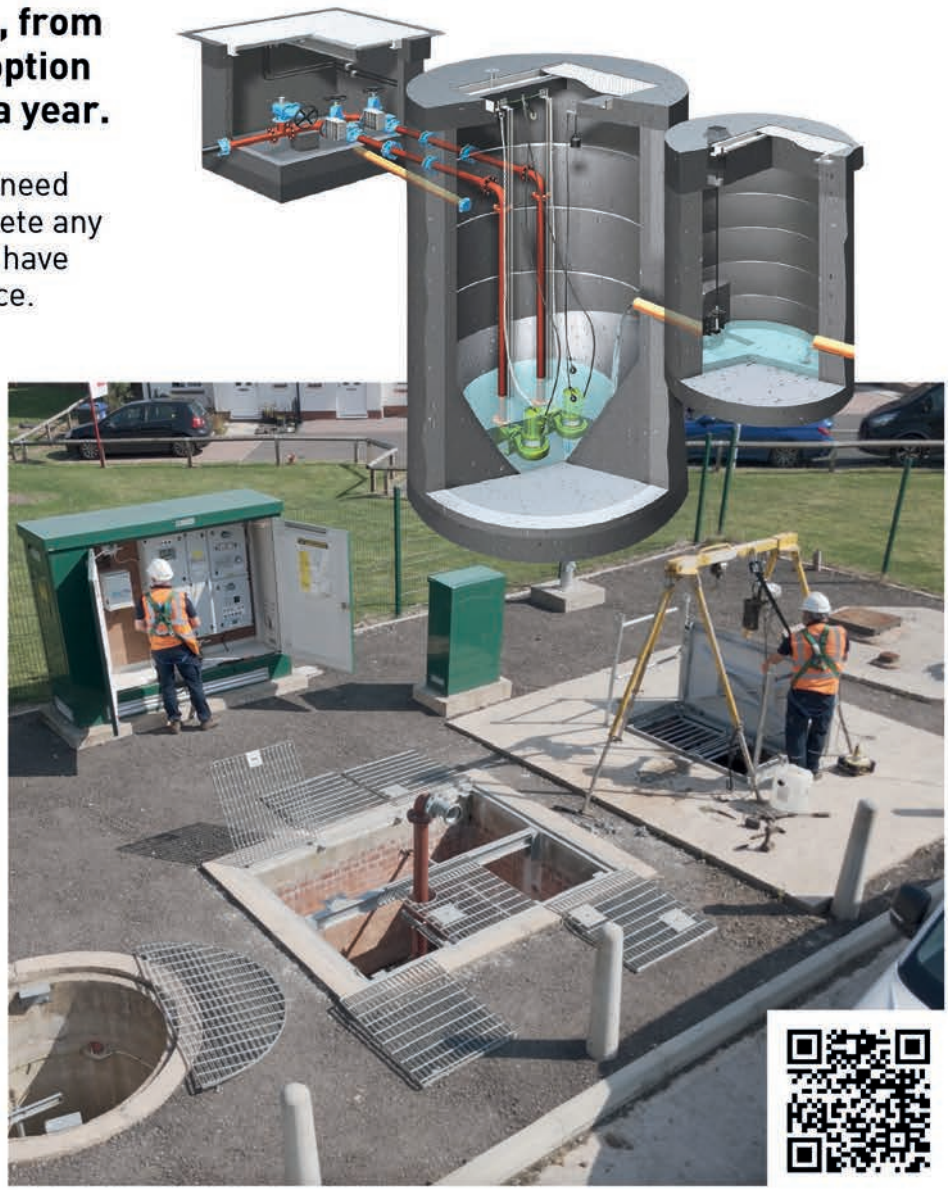

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NEW TOWN PLANNING

Chris Adair of Marshalls, explores how developers can embed flood resilience into new housing schemes, especially as the UK prepares to deliver over a million homes, including a new generation of towns and communities.

The UK Government's recent announcement of its plan to build up to 100 new towns, with at least 10,000 homes signals a bold new chapter for the housing sector. Renewed investment in affordable housing and the target of 1.5 million new homes across England over the next five years further add to a construction pipeline for new build properties that is decidedly full of promise.

Yet, as we build for growth and greater housing availability, we must also build for change. Climate change is no longer just a future risk but a present reality. According to the Met Office, five of the UK's ten wettest years since records began in 1836 have occurred in the 21st century. The decade from 2011 to 2020 was also 9% wetter than the 1961-1990 average, with winter rainfall up by 25%.

Flooding is already one of the most costly and disruptive climate-related risks in the UK; therefore, as conditions worsen, flood resilience must be designed into these new homes and communities from the outset. The Government's New Towns Taskforce recognises this, stating one of its goals as being to create "environmentally resilient places that support the Government's net zero agenda through sustainable design, nature enhancement, low-carbon infrastructure and responsible development, including flood risk mitigation."

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT NEW TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES ARE BUILT WITH A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO WATER MANAGEMENT

TURNING AMBITION INTO ACTION

To deliver on this goal, it is imperative that new towns and communities are built with a holistic approach to water management, where sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) form a key part of green infrastructure.

While Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which would mandate SuDS in England, is still awaiting full implementation, its principles are already being used in practice. Schedule 3 focuses on managing water runoff in the most natural way possible, slowing down the release of water. This contrasts with more traditional drainage systems, which concentrate on removing surface water as quickly as possible.

In addition to reducing flood risk, SuDS can offer broader benefits for developments. They can create more attractive, usable public spaces and support biodiversity, particularly relevant following the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), which became mandatory for most developments in England in February 2024. As a result, SuDS features like rain gardens, swales and tree pits are being used for both flood mitigation and biodiversity enhancements.

DESIGNED FOR TODAY'S CHALLENGES

Rain gardens, in particular, have increased in popularity amongst housing developers in recent years by using plants and soil to retain and slow the flow of rainwater from surrounding hard surfaces. One way to use the rain garden method is by combining it with a kerb, allowing water to flow through an inlet, be slowed down by a diffuser flag, and remain at the surface level to be absorbed by the soil. This supports plant

life and prevents water from entering the sewer system immediately.

Traditionally, incorporating rain gardens into hard landscaping like this, however, has required bespoke detailing, with design teams often needing to adapt standard kerbs or paving to allow water entry. This bespoke approach has slowed down the process and increased on-site complexity.

To help solve this, an off-the-shelf system has been developed consisting of three simple elements to make adding rain gardens to a new development easier than ever.

Combining a left hand inlet, right hand inlet and a complementary diffuser flag, available in a variety of sizes and finishes, it is a true 'first of its kind' system which will create both time and cost savings on site when compared to cutting or repurposing standard kerbs. And, due to its modular design, the solution will reduce the margin for error usually associated with bespoke and made-to-measure designs, increasing its effectiveness.

RESILIENCE THAT ADDS VALUE

For developers, incorporating flood resilience features also brings commercial benefits. Homes that are at risk of flooding can be more difficult to insure, harder to sell, and more likely to attract post-occupancy issues. For developers, this can lead to reputational damage and financial liability. Conversely, well-designed SuDS features such as rain gardens and tree pits help define a development's character, contribute to placemaking and appeal to environmentally conscious buyers.

As the UK embarks on its largest housebuilding programme in decades, the opportunity to create flood-resilient, nature-rich communities has never been greater. By embedding water management into the design and delivery of new homes, developers can reduce risk, add value and meet the expectations of local authorities and buyers alike.

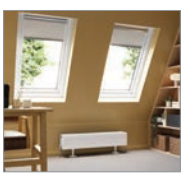
Chris Adair is product innovation manager at Marshalls

Ideal Heating Commercial takes extra care

Ideal Heating Commercial POD Heat Interface Units (HIUs) and Evomax 2 condensing boilers have been installed into Ash View Extra Care in Huddersfield as part of a heat network designed to heat the 50 one and two bedroom flats and communal areas, along with hot water, at this new development for Kirklees Council. Ash View Extra Care is a specialist housing development, designed to maintain the independence of older people who have care and/or support needs. Evomax 2 is highly efficient, has up to 99.6% full load efficiency and up to 110% part load efficiency, can operate at up to 30° Δ T, and boasts a high turndown of 5:1.

03330 040 393 www.idealcommercialheating.co.uk

New additions to compact radiator range



Stelrad has announced that it has launched a range of 200 mm and 1,200 mm high radiators in a variety of sizes. The new radiator sizes offer a helpful additional range to slot into specifications and installations up and down the country. The new 200 mm sized radiators are available in K3 and K4 sizes – that's with three or four sets of fins and three or four panels – in fourteen different sizes and are floor mounted only, supplied with feet. Available in white, have a ten-year warranty and are ideal for installations where space is limited. The 1,200 mm sized radiators come in K2 format and in five different sizes. They are wall mounted only and come with a centre tap fitting. Again, only available in white and also come with a 10-year warranty.

0800 876 6813 www.stelrad.com/trade

More pressure in less space: DAB Pumps launches the EsyTwin Mini

DAB Pumps has launched the EsyTwin Mini, a twin-pump booster set designed specifically for the EsyBox Mini^3, offering a smart solution for when a single pump just isn't enough. Whether it's higher flow rates, added redundancy or just future-proofing an installation, the EsyTwin Mini delivers extra performance without demanding extra space. The EsyBox Mini^3 is already a firm favourite with installers who are looking to achieve consistent water pressure in residential and light commercial buildings. Compact, quiet and energy-efficient, it's ideal for boosting pressure from taps and showers to garden irrigation systems. Now, with the EsyTwin Mini, users can double that performance by pairing two Mini^{3}s in a single, integrated unit; it means greater flow capacity and the option of alternating duty cycles to prolong system life. Unlike many twin-pump systems, the EsyTwin Mini doesn't require hardwiring between units. Instead, up to four EsyBox Mini^{3}s can communicate wirelessly, simplifying commissioning and making future expansion far easier. The system also integrates with DAB's DConnect platform, allowing for remote monitoring and control to suit both homeowners and installers alike. The EsyTwin Mini is ideal wherever consistent water pressure and compact installation matter.

0333 777 5010 www.dabpumps.com

Altecnic SATK32107 HIU passes more 'best practice' criteria than any other unit in UK BESA testing

Altecnic Ltd is proud to announce that its SATK32107 Heat Interface Unit (HIU) has delivered industry-leading results in the latest BESA UK HIU Test Regime, passing more individual 'best practice' criteria than any other HIU currently tested in the UK.

BEST PRACTICE ACHIEVEMENTS

The BESA test is recognised as the benchmark for assessing HIU performance in the UK, independently evaluating efficiency, reliability, and network suitability. In its latest format the test clearly highlights which modules have been completed and how each unit performs against both baseline and best practice criteria. Altecnic's SATK32107 achieved passed all four indirect modules and recorded 8 best practice outcomes, the highest to date among all tested HIUs in the UK market.

These outcomes demonstrate the unit's performance under real-world conditions and its alignment with the CIBSE CP1 (2020) and HNTAS standards. The results confirm that the SATK32107 not only meets today's expectations but is futureproofed for evolving UK performance benchmarks.

PROVEN PERFORMANCE ACROSS TEST MODULES

The SATK32107 excelled in both high and low temperature applications.

- Modules 1 & 7 (High Temperature): Demonstrated excellent space heating and DHW performance with VWARTs as low as 27°C and rapid hot water response times.
- Modules 2 & 8 (Low Temperature): Proven compatibility with low-temperature systems and heat pump-ready networks, achieving VWARTs down to 30°C, placing it among the most efficient HIUs on the market.

This outstanding performance gives specifiers, developers, and contractors clear, independently verified data to support confident system design, product selection, and long-term planning.

DRIVING DECARBONISATION

As the UK heat network landscape transitions toward low-carbon energy and electrified heating, the SATK32107 stands out as a future-ready solution. Its proven ability to operate efficiently at low temperatures makes it ideal for integration with heat pumps and renewable heat sources, helping to meet both regulatory standards and climate goals.

By reducing return temperatures and optimising energy use, the SATK32107 plays a vital role in lowering heat loss, enhancing network efficiency, and supporting the UK's wider net zero decarbonisation strategy. For developers and local authorities, this means a reliable, scalable, and sustainable HIU that's ready for the future of heat.

Gary Perry, managing director at Altecnic, commented: "This result reflects our long-term investment in quality, standards, and transparent benchmarking – principles that are embedded in everything we do as part of the Caleffi Group. Our parent company brings decades of Italian engineering expertise and a focus on innovation, which has been instrumental in the development of this high-performance HIU. As the industry shifts toward lower temperature and heat pump-ready networks, this is the kind of independently verified performance the market needs to provide reliable, efficient and future-proofed solutions for UK heat networks."

sales@altecnic.co.uk
www.altecnic.co.uk/satk32-indirect-with-network-protection-and-integral-room-controller

Source: GF Building Flow Solutions

Decades of reliability for professionals: 30 years with Uponor Quick & Easy

In 1994, Uponor set a milestone in the HVAC industry with the introduction of the Quick & Easy system. By utilizing the unique material properties of PEX-a pipe, it was possible to create pipe connections that were stronger than the pipe itself – a groundbreaking innovation for installers worldwide. Three decades and over 500 million fittings sold later, Uponor Quick & Easy remains the preferred choice of professionals who value ease of installation and exceptional durability. With Uponor Quick & Easy, the name says it all, because the fittings are connected to the pipe in three simple steps: Expand the pipe and the fitted Q&E ring. The expanded pipe is then pushed onto the end of the fitting. The final step is performed by the material itself; the connection is made in seconds as the pipe is shrinking. "Our Uponor Q&E fittings require no solder, torches, fluxes or solvents for the installation. The pipes' unique shape memory forms a tight seal around the fitting, creating a strong, reliable connection in seconds," says Charlotta Persfell, chief marketing officer, **GF Building Flow Solutions**. "And with minimal effort, saving installation time and costs." With over 500 million fittings sold, Uponor Quick & Easy is one of the systems that professionals rely on when it comes to reliable, easy-to-install and durable pipe connections.

info@uponor.com www.uponor.com/en-en/qande30

Waterproof Wood for Life with Unilin Flooring

Natural wood is a favourite choice for high specification housing and with Quick-Step wood flooring from **Unilin Flooring**, projects can benefit from a lasting and easy to maintain wood floor. Unlike other engineered wood floors and solid wood, Quick-Step is waterproof and features Wood for Life. Wood for Life is a unique innovation that prevents the build-up of dirt and water marks in the grain and joints so that the floor retains its 'as new' appearance. With scratch resistance, Wood for Life makes the floor easier to maintain and helps to extend its life. Thanks to a special coating that works to repel water, Quick-Step wood is also waterproof. Water can stay on the surface for 72 hours without causing damage or seeping through the joints. This means that Quick-Step wood floors can be used throughout all private areas, including bathrooms and kitchens. For housing and other commercial projects, Unilin Flooring offers the Faro and Faro Herringbone collections. Faro is a wide and long plank (1,820 x 220 mm) that elevates interiors in six natural oak finishes. Faro Herringbone comes in a versatile 580 x 145 mm herringbone plank, again in six oak finishes. Both floors are designed for floating installation and come with Quick-Step's Uniclic® Multifit joint for secure, glueless installation.

info.panels@unilin.com www.unilin.com

Woodburners get the green light.

UK government approves continued use of modern, efficient wood burning stoves and fires in new build homes.

Dik Geurts Bora Corner wood stove

DRU is the Netherlands-based manufacturer of Dik Geurts woodburning stoves and fires and the UK distributor of Spartherm wood stoves and fires.

The company is pleased to share some reassuring news for anyone considering a wood burning stove or fire for their new build home.

The UK Government has confirmed that, under the proposed Future Homes Standard, people in new build properties can continue to install and use modern, efficient wood burning appliances.

Dik Geurts Vidar Triple wood stove

This important clarification, prompted by strong industry representation led by the Stove Industry Association (SIA), means that wood burning stoves will remain a part of the UK's future housing landscape as an important source of low-carbon, sustainable heating.

Modern wood stoves are not only highly efficient and low in emissions, but they also provide flexible, reliable heat, even during power outages.

With an Ecodesign compliant stove, using properly prepared wood and responsible burning practices, homeowners can enjoy all the benefits of real wood fires. They will also have complete peace of mind that their wood stove or fire can be used for the foreseeable future.

Commenting on the ruling, DRU UK general manager Niall Deiraniya said: "We are delighted that the government has given the green light to woodburning in new homes. This sensible decision is good for the wood stove industry and good for consumers and will greatly enhance the choice of green energy options available to new home buyers."

For further information, please email or visit the website.

info@drufire.co.uk www.drufire.com

THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF CORRECTLY SIZING AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMPS

Getting the size right is crucial for air source heat pump performance – too small or too large and efficiency, comfort, and longevity suffer. Jamie Ansell of EDF Heat Pumps explains why detailed design matters.

Air source heat pumps are an increasingly popular heating solution for new and existing homes, offering energy efficiency, lower carbon emissions, and long-term cost savings. However, to realise their full potential, one key factor must be carefully addressed at the outset – correct sizing. An improperly sized heat pump can compromise both the performance and efficiency of a system, leading to higher running costs, reduced comfort, and a shorter system lifespan.

When an ASHP is undersized for the property, it will struggle to meet the heating demands during colder weather. The unit may run continuously at maximum capacity, consuming more electricity than necessary and potentially failing to maintain a comfortable indoor temperature. This not only drives up energy bills but also increases mechanical wear, reducing the expected service life of the system.

On the other hand, an oversized heat pump can be just as problematic. Rather than operating efficiently, an oversized unit will frequently "cycle" in spring and autumn switching on and off in quick succession as it rapidly overshoots the desired indoor temperature. Short cycling leads to unnecessary strain on system components, diminished efficiency, and inconsistent indoor comfort. Poorly zoned central heating systems can make this scenario worse!

The foundation of a correctly sized ASHP lies in a detailed heat loss calculation. This process analyses factors such as insulation levels, window specifications, geographical location, air tightness, and overall floor area to determine the heating requirement of the property. Here at EDF heat pumps, we calculate each room's heat loss giving us an overall heat loss figure for the building and from that we can determine the correct emitter sizes for each room. Relying on simple rules of thumb or oversimplified estimates can lead to significant errors. A professional heat loss assessment ensures that the selected system is matched perfectly to the building's needs, enabling the heat pump to operate at its optimal efficiency range.

Another important consideration for homeowners and installers is how to operate an air source heat pump efficiently. Unlike traditional fossil fuel boilers that are typically run intermittently, ASHPs perform best when operated continuously. Running the system 24/7 at low flow temperatures allows it to maintain steady indoor conditions without the need for high energy inputs. This "low and slow" approach not only maximises system efficiency but also enhances occupant comfort by eliminating significant temperature fluctuations throughout the day and night.

Correctly sizing and operating an air source heat pump is therefore essential to unlocking its full performance potential. For self-builders, renovators, and anyone upgrading their heating system, investing time in a proper design and specification process will pay dividends in long-term comfort, energy savings, and system reliability.

Jamie Ansell is training manager at EDF Heat Pumps

Water treatment solutions from Kelly Tanks

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The essence of the Orient from Keller

Keller Kitchens has developed such a vast range of colours, styles and materials; flexibility in design is the company's mantra; along with prowess in sustainability initiatives. One emerging style is 'hotel chic' which combines luxury, elegance and comfort with a sophisticated aesthetic featuring high-quality materials and stylish furniture. The somewhat richer colours of recent years are giving way to a more serene and harmonious colour palette. Combining high-quality materials, glamorous accents and a sense of exclusivity, the design combines semi built-in units with Elba doors in walnut caramel and sesame; and handle trims in sesame.

www.kellerkitchens.com

Spitfire Homes chooses Luceco Group's trio of brands

Sync Energy, BG Electrical and **Luceco Lighting** provide a complete package for newest development, Ellenbrook. As a forward-thinking homebuilder, Spitfire Homes is recognised in the industry for their commitment to delivering design-led, aspirational properties that showcase a variety of sustainable features, each designed to be future-proofed and meet the demands of modern life. As part of their continuous investment into sustainability, Spitfire Homes chose a complete Luceco Group package, which included: Sync Energy's Wall Charger 2 and fully compatible, floor-mounted, Single EV Stands, BG Electrical accessories and Luceco Lighting, to be installed in every home at their new collection of homes, Ellenbrook, Moreton-in-Marsh. Joe Wright, national housebuilder account manager at Luceco, said: "We are delighted to be Spitfire Homes' supplier of choice for EV charging points at Ellenbrook and to continue a long-standing relationship which began six years ago; initially supplying a range of BG electrical accessories and more recently, Sync Energy and Luceco Lighting." Joe continues: "Homebuilders such as Spitfire are recognising the commercial advantages of the Luceco Group suite of brands and our ability to offer a complete package with the wide range of quality products available."

01952 238 100 luceco.com/uk

Pyroguard joins new umbrella brand Saverto

The svt Group, a leading provider of passive fire protection solutions, is restructuring its international brand architecture by introducing Saverto as its new umbrella brand, under which **Pyroguard** will now operate. This strategic move reinforces Pyroguard's global position in the sector of fire safety glass and establishes a cohesive, future-oriented brand landscape for passive fire protection across international markets. The name Saverto is derived from "to save" and "to avert," encapsulating the core values of the product division: safety, reliability, and structured solutions. The new brand architecture enhances Saverto's international visibility, providing customers with clear orientation, a distinct market position, and direct access to trusted product brands across all segments. As a specialist for fire safety glass, Pyroguard contributes over 40 years of expertise to the Saverto brand network and assumes a central role as a core brand. As part of the rebranding, its affiliation with the new brand architecture will be subtly reflected – such as through an additional design element in the logo. Pyroguard will continue to operate in the market with its existing portfolio, familiar contacts, and established services. The former holding company, Technical Fire Safety Group, will now operate under the name Saverto UK Ltd.

saverto.com www.pyroguard.eu

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Introducing Nullifire FZ400: The pioneering 'movement-tested' fire stopping solution

Nullifire, a leader in passive fire protection innovation, proudly unveils FZ400 – a cutting-edge fire stopping product designed to accommodate movement, while maintaining the integrity of compartmentation.

Powered by patented GXT Technology, FZ400 provides the necessary continual relief of fatigue on fire stopping seals under deflection stress and protects service penetration seals with outstanding fire performance and movement-resilience.

The FZ400 has been rigorously tested to EN 1366-3/4, achieving up to two hours fire rating after undergoing cyclic movement, proving its effectiveness in real-world scenarios where structural movement is inevitable.

Using Nullifire's pioneering 'Movement Test,' developed with the support of Warrington Fire, the FZ400 was subjected to a groundbreaking procedure that replicates ceiling deflection. A wall was moved up and down by 30 mm more than 50 times over a two hour period, then placed in a furnace to assess performance post-movement.

FZ400 is a graphite impregnated open cell foam with a highly expansive char when exposed to heat. The water resistant film provides a cold smoke seal. This provides both flexibility and excellent fire stopping properties.

The results were outstanding:

- No ripping, cracking, or fibre migration
- Maintained a secure, air-tight fire seal
- Up to two hours of fire resistance maintained

The FZ400 properties are:

- Tested to EN 1366-3/4 – Up to two hours fire resistance post-movement
- Nullifire's Patented GXT Technology – Combines flexibility with superior fire protection
- Easy to install – Dry fit, cut-to-size, compressible, and lightweight
- Zero fibre migration
- Retrospective fitting capability
- Creates a dynamic seal that accommodates building movement
- Tested with mixed services
- Tested as a linear gap joint – superseding FJ400

Hannah Eyres, technical manager at Nullifire, explained: "Our Movement Test provides a complete framework for testing how GXT Technology adapts to real-life building pressures. We're proud to share a test that reinforces our drive toward data-driven solutions and gives architects and contractors complete confidence in FZ400. Feedback has been very positive. Architects and Main Contractor clients demand data driven solutions so the development and success of this test will be well received in the Construction Industry."

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Behind the scenes of Egger in Hexham

Covering over 64 acres, EGGER Hexham is the manufacturer's primary site in the UK and sees up to 45 miles of chipboard produced every day.

Step inside one of the UK's leading wood-based panel manufacturers and discover how raw timber and recycled wood are transformed into high-quality chipboard products, for specification across the interior design, building and decorative flooring markets. One of two UK sites, Hexham is at the heart of EGGER's operations, making the manufacturer one of the largest employers in Northumberland. A dedicated team of over 650 employees work around the clock to ensure production runs smoothly, 24/7.

A COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

"Wood is much too valuable to simply throw it away". These were the words of founder Fritz EGGER Sr. and is an ethos that remains at the heart of EGGER. The manufacturer operates a closed loop production cycle across all its sites, with at least 45% of the wood in EGGER UK chipboard made from recycled wood.

Before production even begins, every piece of timber that enters the plant is carefully sourced. Roundwood comes from responsibly managed forests, overseen by EGGER's forestry team and comes from 100% verified legal and controlled sources according to ISO 38200. Furthermore, internationally acknowledged third-party Chain of Custody certification programs guarantee EGGER's adherence to environmental and social standards.

Timberpak, a subsidiary of EGGER UK, ensures a steady supply of recycled wood, collecting waste from the industry and repurposing it for chipboard production. While just under half a million tonnes of sawmill by-products, such as hackchips, sawdust and offcuts, are also used in production every year, ensuring nothing goes to waste.

THE LOG YARD

Even standing at the Hexham entrance and it's a hive of activity, with an average of 130 lorries arriving at the site every day, delivering raw timber and waste wood for recycling. Test samples are taken from all deliveries, to determine the quality of the material and its dry weight.

The log yard itself is a vast landscape of roundwood, hackchips, sawdust and recycled wood. With a capacity to store around 50,000 dry tonnes, the log yard typically holds enough material to support production for around a month.

THE FIRST STAGE OF PRODUCTION

First, the raw materials are loaded into the wet chip preparation area, where they will be cut down and processed into the right size for chipboard production. These wet chips travel along belts before entering core dryers to fully dry out the wood and remove moisture. It is this process that produces the clouds of clean steam visible for miles around, earning the Hexham plant its nickname among local school children: the Cloud Factory. Once dried, the wood chips are stored in silos.

Sustainability remains at the forefront throughout. Any wood residue and dust that cannot be used for production is used to fuel EGGER's on-site bio-mass energy plant. Generating hot gases and energy, used to dry the wet chips and help power the plant, this saves 70,000 tonnes of CO_2 compared to using natural gas.

FROM WOODCHIP TO CHIPBOARD

Inside the 'Conti Hall', the real magic happens. Here, the dried wood chips are combined with glues and resins (also produced on site), before being compressed under pressure and heat to form raw chipboard. The press line stretches an impressive 48.7 metres long and can produce around 45.6 miles of chipboard every day. That's enough board to get from Hexham to Newcastle and back again.

Once the boards come off the continuous press line, they are carefully cooled before being sanded and inspected.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Once the raw chipboard has been manufactured, it embarks on its final journey depending on the intended use.

For structural flooring, all P5, Peel Clean Xtra and Protect boards must pass through the T&G line. Here, a diamond tipped tool creates precise tongue and groove profiles, enabling tight and consistent joints to be achieved.

While EGGER's decorative boards, for use in furniture and interior design, are sent to the impregnation line. Decorative papers are impregnated with resin to form sheets ready for lamination, before the boards are processed through five short cycle lamination presses. Each line compresses the paper onto the raw chipboard, using a variety of textured press plates for a realistic aesthetic.

QUALITY LAB

At EGGER, quality is paramount. Each production batch undergoes a series of rigorous tests in the on-site laboratory, where over 20,000 individual tests are carried out each year. From bending strength tests and internal bond tests to the abrasion test, every board must meet strict European, local and EGGER internal standards.

BIODIVERSITY

While the Hexham site is a hive of manufacturing activity, you are never too far away from nature. Located within Northumberland, the site is also home to a host of green spaces, with wildflowers and even bee hives that are home to 150,000 bees. With House Martins and Sand Martins, as well as annual visits from nesting Oyster Catchers, EGGER has also installed nest boxes to provide safe habitats away from the busy plant.

01434 602191 www.egger.com

BEWI achieves NHBC-acceptance

Following hot on the heels of the NHBC accepting **BEWI**'s Thermomur® insulating concrete formwork (ICF) system, the company is excited to announce that NHBC now also accepts BEWI's Jackodur® Atlas Foundation System. Gaining NHBC accreditation means that the Jackodur® Atlas extruded polystyrene (XPS) foam foundation system has been rigorously assessed and meets NHBC's robust standards. This accreditation complements both BBA and Passivhaus approvals, further demonstrating that Jackodur® Atlas is a leading building system known for its high performance. Jackodur® Atlas is ideal for use alongside Thermomur® ICF and also works very well with timber frame and traditional building methods, helping to meet all project requirements. Jackodur® Atlas is an intelligent, efficient thermal insulation and formwork system for floor slabs. It is an innovative system incorporating an interlocking design that skilfully eliminates thermal bridges, ensuring superior thermal performance. It features robust compressive strength properties, providing stability and reliability for building projects.

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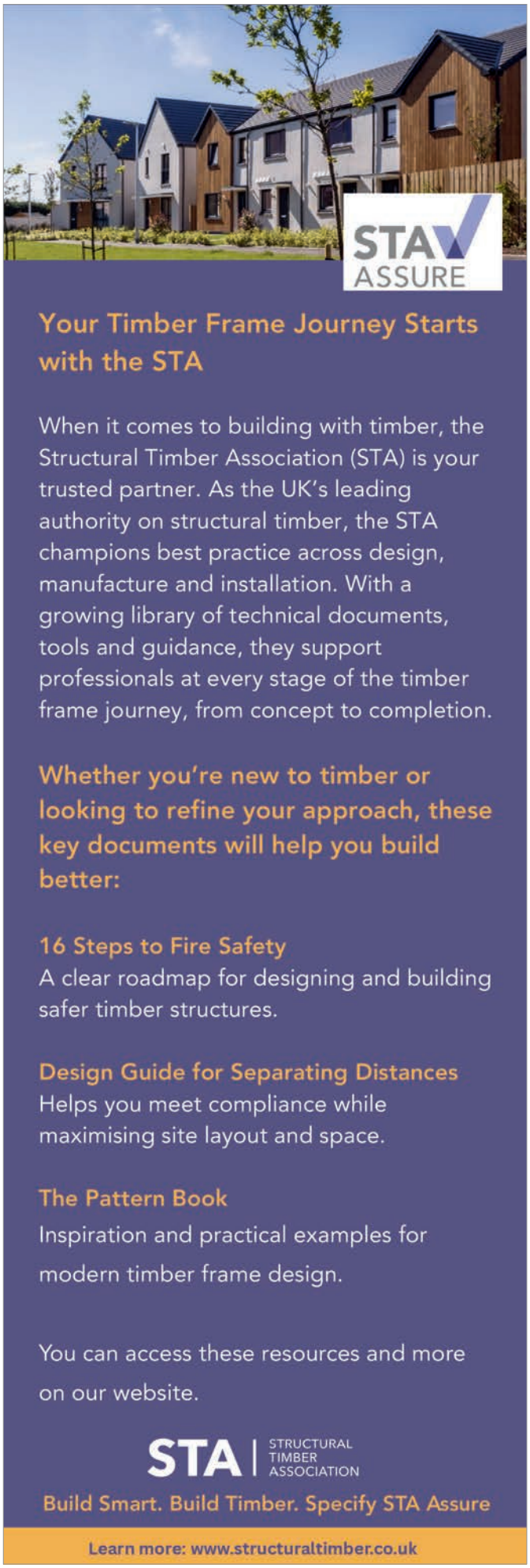

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TIMBER STEPS UP

Andrew Orriss of the Structural Timber Association (STA) outlines how timber construction offers housebuilders a route to 'carbon-conscious design' allied to commercial efficiency in the sector.

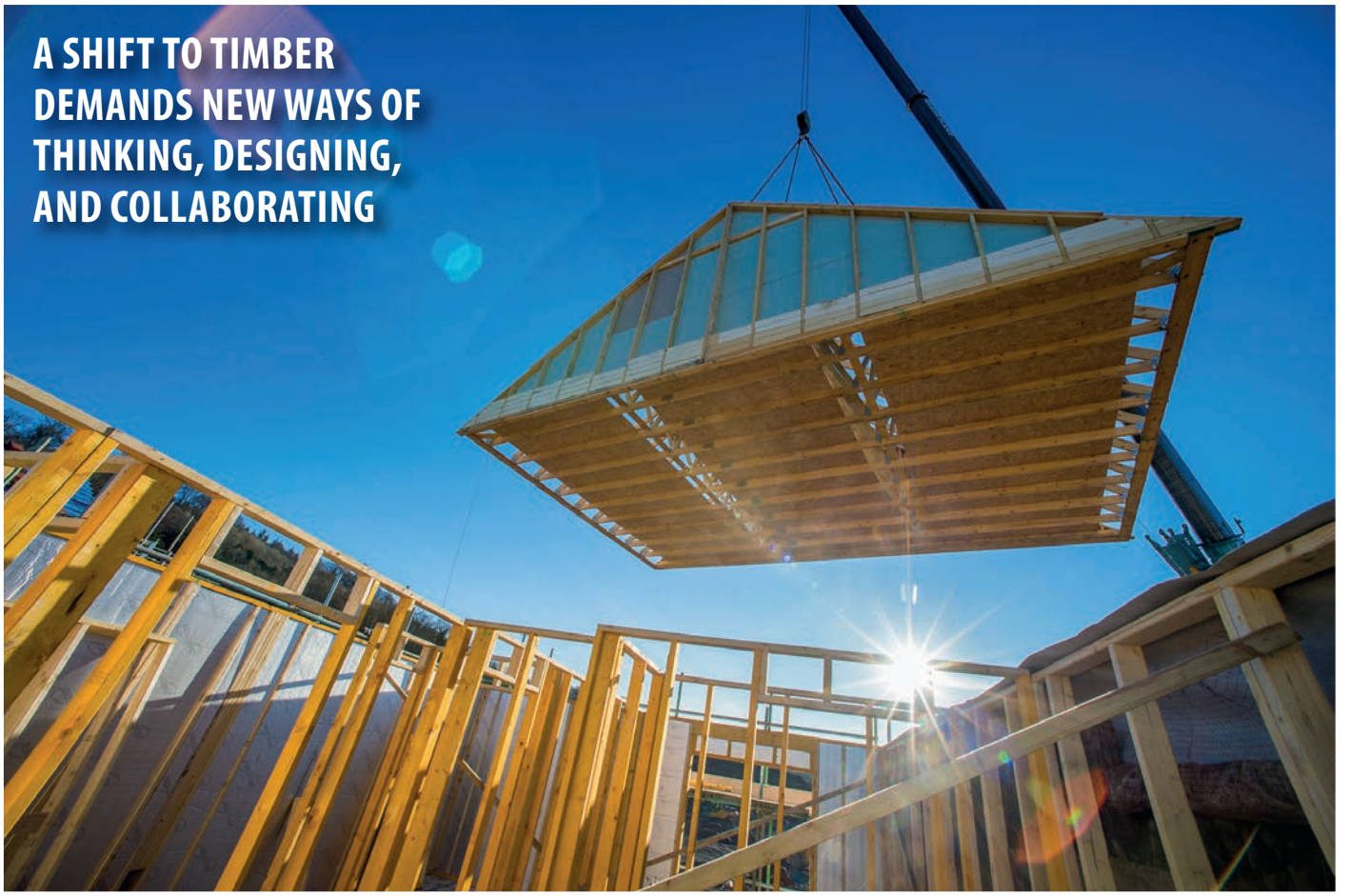
As housebuilders and architects work toward delivering on the UK's net zero commitments and the pressing demand for more homes, timber construction is stepping forward as a practical, sustainable, and commercially viable solution.

The UK Government's renewed support of the Timber in Construction (TiC) Policy Roadmap adds fresh momentum to the shift towards more sustainable construction with structural timber, providing the housebuilding sector with a structured pathway for adoption. However, beyond policy direction and climate targets, the success of timber in the built environment hinges on early design decisions, collaborative planning, and a skilled workforce ready to adapt.

The case for timber as a low-carbon material is well established. Structural timber systems offer a significantly reduced embodied carbon footprint compared to conventional alternatives, making them a natural fit for environmentally responsible design. Yet, just as compelling are the commercial advantages timber provides to developers and contractors.

Timber-framed homes can be constructed in nearly half the time of traditional masonry builds, often within 15 weeks, which enables earlier site turnover, improved cash flow, and better risk management. Quicker weather-tightness, often achieved six to 10 weeks earlier than with brick and block, further accelerates internal work and handovers. With the pressures of meeting housing targets and controlling costs, these time savings are not just attractive, they are becoming essential.

For timber's benefits to be fully realised, the design community must do more than simply swap one material for another. Timber demands a different design approach, one that embraces its properties and construction systems from the outset, and early collaboration is essential. Architects should engage with engineers, contractors, and clients at the concept stage to ensure design decisions support best practices in timber. Fire, durability, and acoustic performance requirements must be addressed through integrated planning rather than late-stage compliance checks.



A SHIFT TO TIMBER DEMANDS NEW WAYS OF THINKING, DESIGNING, AND COLLABORATING

Similarly, by designing with offsite manufacture in mind, architects can influence not just sustainability outcomes but also commercial performance.

Despite growing demand, a major barrier to mainstreaming timber in construction remains the availability of skills. The TiC Roadmap strongly emphasises developing competency across the supply chain, identifying three key priorities: attracting new talent into timber-related careers, upskilling and reskilling existing professionals, and establishing industry-wide forums for knowledge exchange.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) must play a central role in closing the skills gap, particularly in timber engineering, fire safety design, and low-carbon performance, and industry bodies, such as the STA, are working to address this through technical guidance, training schemes, and accreditation programmes that reinforce competency across both design and construction stages.

Meanwhile, the STA Assure scheme offers a framework for quality and compliance in timber manufacture and installation, helping housebuilders mitigate risk while increasing confidence among insurers, lenders, and warranty providers. Ensuring consistent standards across the supply chain not only supports safe and compliant builds but also reinforces timber's reputation as a credible, mainstream construction method.

The reaffirmation of the TiC Policy Roadmap in early 2025 by the Environment Minister, Mary Creagh, underscores timber's central role in delivering the Government's environmental and housing ambitions. From improving data on embodied carbon to boosting domestic timber supply and addressing fire safety concerns, the roadmap sets a wide-reaching agenda that brings together government and industry.

For architects, this evolving landscape presents both a challenge and an opportunity. A shift to timber demands new ways of thinking, designing, and collaborating, but it also unlocks pathways to low-carbon architecture that is efficient, cost-effective, and aligned with future regulatory expectations.

Recent guidance published by the STA, aligned with the RIBA Plan of Work, provides a guide for designing with structural timber. The guide supports design professionals with technical considerations around compliance, performance, and buildability, and when used in tandem with quality assurance schemes and early supply chain engagement, these resources help to build the confidence needed for wider adoption.

The case for timber is no longer confined to sustainability, it is also about viability, resilience, and readiness for the future. For architects at the forefront of the UK's housebuilding efforts, embracing timber means contributing not just to greener homes, but to smarter, faster, and more commercially grounded construction. As the industry continues to respond to the challenges of climate change and housing demand, timber presents not just an option, but a clear direction of travel.

Andrew Orriss is CEO at the Structural Timber Association (STA)

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