



Distinctive by DESIGN



Experts in bespoke glazing for new build and renovation projects.

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FROM THE EDITOR...

While undeniably a dream for many, building your own home is also an incredibly daunting prospect. Securing a plot of land and subsequently planning permission are the first of many steps to be taken before you're living in your dream home.

A point where many come unstuck – aside from the obvious and much-discussed issues with local authorities and planning – is financing their build. Self-build finance and mortgages can be tricky to navigate, working differently to a 'regular' mortgage as funds are released in stages rather than one lump sum.

Confusion can arise anywhere, from when self-builders should begin speaking to providers through to what happens when their project is finished. In this issue's Ask the Expert (page 8), BuildStore's Tom McSherry answers your questions on all things self-build finance, including how self-build mortgages work, what criteria you need to meet to qualify, what kind of project you can secure financing for and how your provider can help you manage unexpected costs.

For some, merely figuring out what they want to get from their project or realising what they can achieve can be overwhelming, especially for those with little or no experience. This is where having a good architect can pay dividends, as Jane and Sam Arman discovered with their project in the West of Edinburgh. Pend Architects relished the trust the couple put in them and, inspired by the constraints of the tight site, designed an extension that has changed the way the family live in the house. You can read the full case study on page 30.

As Jane and Sam proved, putting your trust in experts in the areas where you don't feel confident can make a world of difference. Jo and Louise Roberts had a similar experience when they undertook their build, with architect Luke Sutton

turning their ideas and vision into reality, creating an oak-framed home with an enviable view (page 16).

I hope you enjoy the issue, and remember if you'd like to see your project featured in the magazine (no matter what stage it's at!), email rfield@netmagmedia.co.uk.

ROSEANNE FIELD



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ON THE COVER...
© JULIET MURPHY/IGUANA
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A sense of calm

Deborah and Alex's London renovation was all about creating a calm and clutter-free sanctuary

For the future

Rick Clarke of NIBE explains why whole-home integration is more important than ever

Bright & beautiful

Origin's Victoria Brocklesby discusses how to best utilise glazing to flood your home with natural light







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Ask the Expert: Unlocking finance for your dream home

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Opening the door to space, style & smart living

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SLIDE & TURN



SLENDER 45MM SIGHTLINES
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TOTALLY FLUSH TRACK DETAIL





Unlocking finance for your dream home



BuildStore Mortgage Services'
Tom McSherry tells *The Selfbuilder's*James Parker how self-build
mortgages work, the options
available, and why early financial

planning is key to a successful project.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SELF-BUILD MORTGAGES ON OFFER, AND HOW DO THEY DIFFER FROM CONVENTIONAL MORTGAGES?

A self-build mortgage is designed to release funds in stages, rather than as one lump sum at the start, to match the way building projects incur costs. There are two main types:

Arrears Valuation Stage Payments Funds are released after each stage of work is completed and signed off by a valuer. This suits borrowers who have significant savings and already own the site. It is important to understand that if the value does not increase in line with the spend, you could incur cash flow issues.

The other is Arrears Stage Payments Guaranteed. Unlike the valuation based arrears products, these mortgages guarantee you the funds after each stage of the project, reducing risk and creating the certainty of you receiving the funds you need.

Advance Stage Payments Guaranteed unds are released at the start of each stage, based on your build costs, not the value of the property at that point. This provides certainty and better cash flow, particularly for those without

large savings or looking to use offsite manufactured building systems.

This differs from a conventional mortgage, where funds are released in full at completion of the purchase. Self-build mortgages are tailored to the unique cashflow demands of building a home from scratch or undertaking major works.

WHAT ARE GUARANTEED STAGE PAYMENTS, AND HOW DO THEY WORK?

Guaranteed stage payments, available through BuildStore's exclusive arrears and advance payment products, mean your funds are released on pre-agreed dates and amounts, aligned with your build schedule. This is based on your project's



estimated costs, rather than the value of the property at each stage. The benefits are significant:

- Cashflow certainty you know exactly when and how much money will be available.
- Reduced reliance on savings ideal for those without large sums to cover upfront costs.
- Fewer delays contractors can be paid promptly, avoiding costly stoppages.

WHAT CRITERIA DO SELF-BUILDERS NEED TO MEET TO QUALIFY FOR A SELF-BUILD MORTGAGE?

While requirements vary by lender, common criteria include:

- Deposit usually at least 15% of the total project cost; however, BuildStore has products with as little as a 5% deposit required.
- Detailed plans and budget lenders want to see accurate costings and a realistic schedule.
- Planning permission outline planning consent is typically needed before funds are released to purchase the land, with detailed planning required to release funds to start the build.
- Good credit profile similar to a conventional mortgage, affordability and credit checks apply.

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO SPEAK WITH A MORTGAGE SPECIALIST EARLY ON IN THE PROCESS?

Engaging with a specialist like BuildStore early ensures you:

- Choose the right product for your cashflow and project type.
- Understand your budget before committing to land or build costs.
- Avoid funding gaps that can halt progress mid-project.
- Navigate lender requirements so your application proceeds smoothly.
 Many self-builders waste time and money

because they seek finance too late. Early advice can help shape your project to meet lender criteria from the start.

CAN I USE THIS TYPE OF FINANCING FOR A REFURBISHMENT PROJECT OR EXTENSION?

Yes. While self-build finance is often associated with building from scratch, it can also fund:

- Major renovations
- Buying an uninhabitable property for renovation
- Barn conversions
- Property reconfigurations

Property extensions

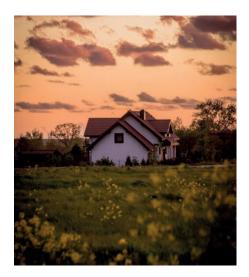
As with self-builds, funds are released in stages, supporting projects where costs are spread over time and work increases the property's value or size.

HOW CAN A MORTGAGE PROVIDER HELP WITH MANAGING POTENTIAL UNEXPECTED COSTS?

Specialist mortgage providers like BuildStore help you prepare for the unexpected by:

- Building contingency into your budget – typically 10-15% of total costs.
- Structuring funds to allow flexibility if costs change.
- Reassessing at key stages to ensure the project remains affordable.
- Offering access to advanced stage payments reduces the need for costly short-term borrowing if issues arise.

Mortgage providers such as BuildStore support you all the way through the project, providing support when needed. Our experience means we can flag risks early, from fluctuating material prices to weather related delays.



HOW WILL SELF-BUILDERS BE SUPPORTED THROUGHOUT THE DURATION OF THEIR PROJECT?

With providers like BuildStore, support doesn't stop once your mortgage is approved:

- Dedicated case managers handle all lender communications.
- Build cost assessments ensure your

- funds match your schedule.
- Stage payment coordination keeps money flowing on time.
- Customer service teams make sure ongoing advice is available if your plans change mid-project.

We understand that no two projects are the same, so our role is to be proactive and responsive from the first brick to the final sign-off.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE PROJECT IS FINISHED?

When your build is complete and signed off, your self-build mortgage can be switched to a standard residential mortgage product, often at a lower interest rate.

At this stage, the property is valued as a finished home, and your loan-to-value ratio may improve, opening up access to more competitive rates. Your lender or adviser will help you transition smoothly to the most suitable long-term product.

To listen to the full podcast and hear more of what Tom has to say about self-build finance, visit insights.netmagmedia.co.uk



COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT

Expert support throughout the application process, including build cost assessments, documentation and management of stage release payments through to final sign-off and project completion.

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Improved cashflow for your build with our unique guaranteed and advance stage payments. Benefit from higher lending percentages - borrow up to 95% of your project costs. Over 30,000 projects successfully funded.

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Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage

There may be a fee for mortgage advice. The actual amount you pay will depend on your circumstances. The fee is up to 1% but a typical fee £395.

TRANSFORM SPACES USING NATURAL LIGHT

Victoria Brocklesby of Origin shares expert tips on how to use glazing to create brighter homes.

atural light is one of the most powerful design tools available to self-builders and renovators. It can transform a space by enhancing its aesthetic, improving functionality, and adding value.

Bifolding and sliding doors such as those by Origin are designed to achieve just that. With ultra-slim sightlines and expansive glazed panels, they can flood interiors with daylight, blur the boundary between indoors and out, and deliver clean, contemporary finishes without compromising on thermal performance. Whether you're planning a kitchen extension, reworking your layout, creating a home office, or designing an entirely new space, making smart glazing choices early in the design process will have a significant impact on the end result.

Maximising natural light isn't just about adding more glass; it's about selecting the right solutions for each space. Follow this guide to ensure you make mindful design decisions that will enhance light, improve daily living and create spaces you will want to spend time in.

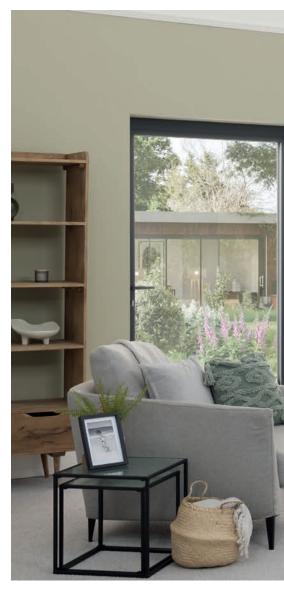
UNDERSTANDING THE SPACE

A well informed glazing decision starts by understanding how a space will be used. The function of the room and the time of day it's most used should guide every choice.

Take a rear kitchen extension, for example. Often the social heart of the home, these spaces present a great opportunity to use generous panes of glass to open the space up visually and invite the outdoors in. For this, a bifold door such as the OB-36+ is an excellent choice, offering individual panel sizes up to 1.2m wide and 3m tall to create impressive glazed expanses and connect seamlessly with the garden. Unlike sliding doors, bifolds can be fully folded back to remove all barriers between inside and out – ideal for sociable, open-plan living.

Other rooms may call for a different approach. For instance, the priority for a home office is likely to be natural light in the morning and afternoon, while evening brightness will be less important. In these cases, orientation matters just as much as the layout and size of the



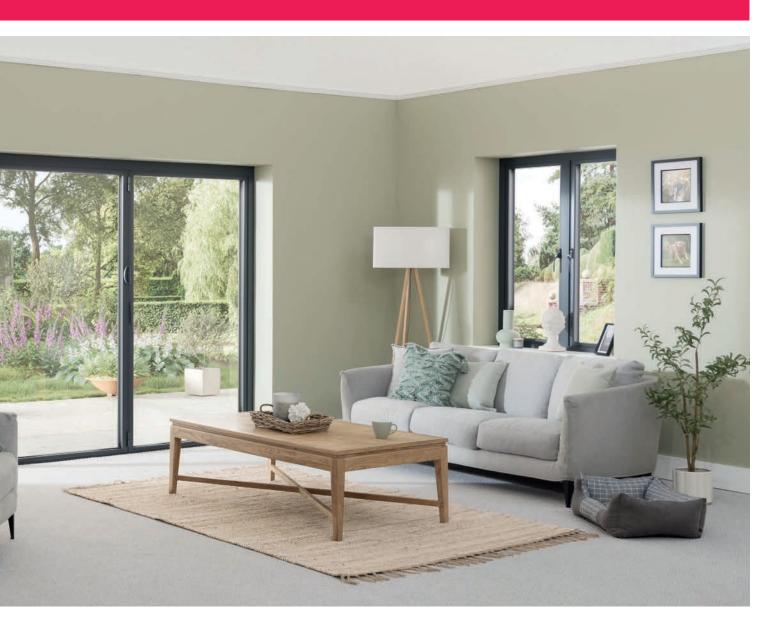


windows. South-facing walls offer steady daylight throughout the day, while an east-facing aspect captures the morning sun, but falls into shade by afternoon. Considering both the purpose of the room and the pattern of daily use allows self-builders to design a home to be lived in.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PRODUCTS

Self-builders and renovators can now choose from a wide range of glazing options that deliver on performance while complementing modern architectural styles. Slimline sliding doors and bifolds remain popular for their ability to flood rooms with natural light while providing seamless transitions between indoor and outdoor spaces.

Sliding doors are ideal for this purpose. For example, the OS 29+ has a sightline of just 29mm, offering homeowners a contemporary look while letting in



maximum light. With flexible panel configurations up to 2.2m wide and 2.6m tall, doors like this are perfect for creating bright, expansive living areas. Also look for doors that feature concealed tracks and have an option for flush stacking.

You can also find doors with additional customisable options, such as the signature knurled handles available across Origin's product range. These not only support cohesive design decisions but also create eye-catching spaces throughout the home.

For homeowners, choosing the right doors and glazing isn't just a practical decision; it can completely change the look and feel of a space. The right products can make a home feel brighter, more spacious, and more connected, creating places people genuinely love spending time in.

Victoria Brocklesby is COO of Origin



Scandi-Inspired Self-Build Brought to Life with VELFAC



hen Fiona and William Coe set out to build their dream home in the Suffolk countryside, they had a clear vision: timeless Scandinavian style, exceptional natural light, and high energy performance. That vision became Homestead—a striking, modern family home built to Passivhaus principles and brought to life with VELFAC windows and doors.

Recommended by industry friends, VELFAC was the natural choice. Slim-framed, triple-glazed units fill the home with light and deliver outstanding thermal performance. "The design possibilities with VELFAC are incredible," says Fiona. "We loved that we could have sleek aluminium frames outside and warm timber inside."

A dramatic double-height library wall floods the hall with light, thanks to a huge 3m-wide VELFAC 200 ENERGY window—expertly installed by distributor okoHaus using a Smartlift robot. A frameless corner window opens up views to the front

garden, while sliding doors and Juliet balconies upstairs embrace the surrounding landscape.

Finished in a rich grey-black powder coat to complement zinc cladding, the external frames bring a contemporary edge. Inside, FSC-certified pine adds warmth and texture.

"After years in a draughty Victorian house, we're loving the calm, comfort and efficiency of our new home," Fiona adds. "VELFAC made it all possible."

01480 759 510 velfac.co.uk











Recent studies have shown that on average people spend 90% of their time indoors.

As daylight has a positive influence on people's health, productivity, ability to learn and overall well-being, the rooms in which we live and work must maximise the amount of natural light.



Daylight increases the feeling of light and space.

Our windows combine slim sightlines and glazing tailored to manage solar gain, which maximises natural daylight and helps to deliver the ideal indoor climate.



BEDROOMS

Your bedroom should be the ultimate retreat

– a space for you to relax and rest. We've
compiled a range of products to suit every kind
of style, whether you're creating a room with a
contemporary feel or something more traditional.

1. With soft gentle curves on a scalloped headboard, the Snowdon super king bed from Darlings of Chelsea combines an elegant design with plenty of space for you to stretch out and sleep in comfort. This upholstered bed also features slimline angled wooden legs to complete the look. From soft pink velvets to warm tan leathers, the bed's available in fabrics and leathers in an array of shades so you can find the right fit for your aesthetic. Price: £1876

www.darlingsofchelsea.co.uk





2. Experience the ultimate in refined elegance with Industrious Decor's brass and wooden block chest of drawers. The solid brass composition adds a weighty, luxurious feel while resisting tarnish, and the clean, geometric block design delivers modern luxury with classic appeal. The spacious tabletop and storage area provide practical convenience. Its distinguished design and premium brass material make it a timeless treasure in any luxury home. Price: £600

www.industriousdecor.com

- 3. This contemporary Una Sleepstation cabin bed from Nöa & Nani introduces style and functionality to your little one's bedroom. Crafted from pine, the white design uplifts and refreshes while the natural pine elements add contrast and character. Fun as well as functional, the underneath area can be transformed into an exciting den with a couple of beanbags and colourful cushions, or utilised as a toy storage area, making it ideal for smaller bedrooms. Price: £448 www.noaandnani.co.uk
- **4.** The **Padley Table Lamp** by **Laura Ashley** features a rippled ceramic base in a glossy transparent glaze in the colour ochre yellow. Paired with an oatmeal natural linen cylinder lampshade it creates a warm glow of light, so you can set up the perfect ambience in

your bedroom. The lamp is also dimmable when paired with a suitable bulb. Price: £75

www.darlighting.co.uk/laura-ashley

5. The Detroit Solid Hardwood and Metal Triple Wardrobe from Oak Furnitureland is made from 100% solid acacia hardwood with smooth and brushed surface textures. The Detroit triple wardrobe has a generous double hanging space, with the third section customisable to either include additional hanging space or shelves. One double drawer and one single sit at the base with solid backs and slatted fronts that feature a scoring detail. The darker colour and metal feet and handles bring an industrial edge to the range. Price: £1,399.99

www.oakfurnitureland.co.uk

6. Introduce a touch of elegance to your bedroom with the stunning Barcelona Cream & Black Sunburst Bed from Rowen Homes. It features a unique sunburst design on the headboard to create a striking focal point. The cream upholstery is complemented by bold black accents, offering a sophisticated contrast for an ultra modern look. Crafted with attention to detail, this bed combines comfort with style, making it a perfect centrepiece for modern and contemporary interiors. Price: £1,299 www.rowenhomes.com











ack in 1996, Jo and Louise Roberts bought a village house just outside Totnes in South Devon, which had previously been used as ensuite guest rooms for a neighbouring health spa. The property became their family home, and over the years, they undertook renovation and building work while raising their two children. This experience was to prove invaluable when they later embarked on a far more ambitious project: building a new home in their garden.

Tucked away in an elevated position, and with views stretching west towards Dartmoor, it was the garden's outlook, in particular, that sparked Jo and Louise's desire to build a home for their retirement, which would make the most of its setting.

"The old house is sunk down a little on the plot and surrounded by trees, which means it doesn't enjoy such a great view," explains Jo, a retired GP. "We'd been advised that we would never be granted planning consent to build in the garden though, even by the planning consultant we employed."

Instead, the couple erected a log cabin style garden building as overflow space for the family, which was later used as a holiday let. "10 years on, when planning laws had been relaxed slightly, we decided to try again to gain planning permission to build a house there," says Louise, a retired anaesthetist. "Having the log cabin definitely helped our case, although it hadn't been built with this in mind."

The couple approached renowned architectural practice, Roderick James Architects, and invited them to design a detached three bedroom house for their plot. "We live about three miles away from the well known timber frame company, Carpenter Oak, and had paid a visit to their framing yard," says Jo. "They gave us a tour and put us in touch with our architect, Luke Sutton at Roderick James, who really listened to our ideas."

The couple hoped to replicate the openplan nature of their small log cabin on the site, while increasing the footprint by around 50%. Maximising the view was a priority, and a large beech tree was to be retained in the garden.

Luke produced a design concept sketch, floor plans and a 3D model of the house so that Jo and Louise could fully envisage how it would both look and feel. On the ground floor, a spacious living/dining/kitchen, a utility room, WC and boot room are stepped down from the entrance hall, with two bedrooms sharing a bathroom at the other end of the plan.

"A one-and-a-half storey arrangement is a fantastic way of extracting the most space from the smallest possible volume, and results in some of my favourite oak frame features," says architect Luke Sutton. Upstairs, the main bedroom enjoys its own balcony, ensuite, a mezzanine library area and study, with voids left above the hallway, bedrooms and bathroom below creating a sense of spaciousness.

"The 200 sam design needed to nestle in the

EXTERIOR: An exposed green oak frame provides character and warmth to the interiors, while the use of natural external materials, such as local stone and cedar weatherboarding, will allow the house to mellow with age

LOW POINT

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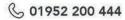


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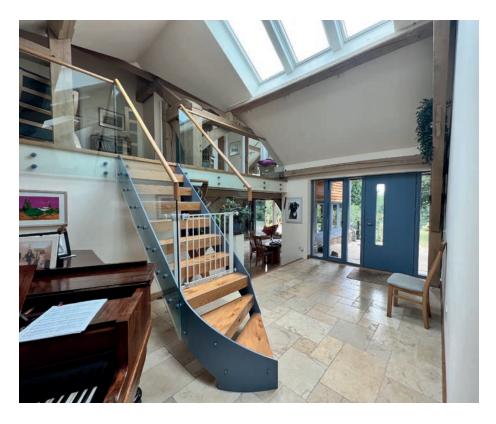














LIVING SPACE: The open-plan living space maximises views over the garden and towards Dartmoor through expansive glass doors

STAIRCASE: Bespoke stairs, a grand piano, and carefully chosen finishes reflect the owners' personal style

HIGH POINT

The frame raising and topping out ceremony were real highlights, and we were allowed to hammer in a couple of the oak pegs ourselves.

beautiful garden Jo and Louise had created, with careful thought given to the topography and orientation, along with the relationship to the beech tree standing at the heart of the site," explains Luke. "The solution was an L-shaped plan on a stepped ground floor level, ensuring each internal space would have a direct relationship with the garden and far reaching views."

With grown-up children and elderly relatives to consider, it was essential that the house could offer flexibility: enabling Jo and Louise to enjoy the space as a couple while also hosting multi-generational gatherings, with guest accommodation located in the single storey wing. Service spaces have been grouped together to maximise the efficiency of plumbing and drainage.

"We're just outside the village development plan, but our garden isn't overlooked at all," says Jo. "There was an existing covenant on the property, though, which prevented another house from being built on the land, and it took several years of negotiating with the neighbour before an agreement was reached to lift the covenant."

Once legal issues had been agreed and planning permission granted, Carpenter Oak could begin building the oak frame and the couple tendered to three building companies, choosing BroadOak Construction as their main contractor for the project. The site was cleared and the garden divided in two, with Jo and Louise keeping the two thirds of the land.

"Early on, the decision was taken to invite Luke Sutton to oversee the whole project, as we were both working at the time," says Louise. "He proved to be the most amazing diplomat, with With grownup children and
elderly relatives
to consider, it was
essential that the
house could offer
flexibility

incredible attention to detail."

The new house has been formed on a reinforced concrete raft foundation, with a step in level to accommodate the split-level ground floor arrangement. The construction ethos was to create a natural, healthy, low carbon home for Jo and Louise, minimising the use of petrochemical materials.

When the oak frame was ready, architect Luke took a day off to help with the raising, and over two days the frame was craned into position and constructed. "Watching the oak frame going up was incredible," says Louise. "We'd been to Carpenter Oak's yard to see it being made by the same team who came onsite to erect it. The carpenters' marks are left visible on the frame, and we absolutely love those details."

A timelapse video captured the process and, in keeping with tradition, the youngest member of the framing team climbed up to fix an oak branch to the ridge beam, followed by a celebratory glass of champagne. "It's a lovely moment, the topping-out ceremony," Jo adds.



"In every room, you can see the structure of the building and experience the texture of the oak"

"You realise all the work and craftsmanship that's gone into the frame."

Once the house was weathertight, the oak frame could be sandblasted clean to reveal its grain. "For months afterwards, the house made these cracking sounds, like gunshots," laughs Jo. "It was just the oak settling and the sand working its way out. The smell of the fresh timber was incredible."

A simple softwood studwork and rafter structure, with an inner and outer timber-based sheathing board, was used to wrap around the exposed green oak frame. Warmcel cellulose fibre insulation, made from recycled newspaper, was then injected into the voids between studs and rafters under pressure, via small holes drilled into the inner sheathing board, before airtight patches were applied over holes to close the panels.

"There are several benefits to this kind of timber-based insulation system, including the significantly reduced carbon footprint and avoidance of off gassing from synthetic alternatives," says Luke Sutton.

"The high density of the insulation results in excellent acoustic properties in addition to high thermal performance. There's minimal waste, as you install exactly the amount of insulation needed, rather than cutting sheets of material to fit, and injecting the insulation means that every void is fully filled."

The orientation of the glass was carefully considered to optimise passive solar gain in the winter months, using the deep overhang of the balcony and porch roof structures to provide solar shading in the height of summer.

"In every room, you can see the structure of the building and experience the texture of the oak," says Luke. "We used roof windows to bring natural light into the depths of the building, drawing the eye upwards to the vaulted roof space and accentuating the sense of height and space."

Large glazed doors open the house to the garden, and the five panel system tilts and stacks like a pack of cards to one side. "The doors were expensive, but totally worth it," says Jo. "They connect the house to the garden and view, which was exactly what we'd hoped for."

Internal walls and ceilings are lined in Fermacell board, an alternative to conventional plasterboard with a recycled paper content, but with greater density, sound resistance and screw holding ability than plasterboard. In addition, it does not require a plaster skim coat –saving on both trades and the associated drying time of wet plaster.

The exterior of the new house is largely clad in cedar to the front, with composite cedar cladding to the rear, and local stone sourced from a quarry near Tavistock. A stone plinth wall wraps around the building and extends

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OAK FRAME

Carpenter Oak carpenteroak.com

MAIN CONTRACTOR

BroadOak Construction broadoakconstruction.co.uk

KITCHEN

Peter Booth Kitchens booth-kitchens.co.uk

GLAZING

Devonshire Windows (Rationel windows & IDS doors)

devonshirewindows.co.uk

FERMACELL (DRY LINING/ BACKING BOARD)

James Hardie Europe GmbH (Fermacell UK) fermacell.co.uk

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up to eaves height at the south-west corner of the building, forming an impressive chimney stack which anchors the house to its site while protecting it from prevailing south-westerly winds.

"We were determined to use local materials wherever possible, although the roof slate is Spanish," says Louise. "We'd have loved local slate, but the cost was eye watering."

Naturally derived material choices were complemented by a series of renewable and low carbon technologies, including a ground source heat pump and a ground mounted photovoltaic panel array. A new borehole supplies water to the house, avoiding complications with the old private water supply which passed through neighbouring land, and three additional boreholes supply the ground source heating system.

"We already had solar panels and electric cars, so this made sense," explains Jo. "We also installed a sewage treatment plant, but being green isn't cheap. All these systems need maintenance and have ongoing costs."

Inside, the feature staircase leads to a mezzanine library and the main bedroom. "I wanted a spiral staircase originally, but it just wouldn't have worked," Jo admits. "The new design fits perfectly, and I still get to keep my old boudoir grand piano downstairs. That was non-negotiable."

Throughout the house, a soft pigeon blue runs across the kitchen, windows, joinery and metalwork – a colour drawn straight from Luke's original concept sketches. "We spent hours with RAL charts getting the shade right," says Louise. "We didn't want everything to be oak. We'd have been oaked out. The blue cools everything

down a little."

The kitchen itself was designed and fitted by the same family firm that had supplied their previous kitchen. "We literally drew out the layout on the floor using masking tape to check the sizes," laughs Louise. "They listened to what we wanted and got it spot on."

A small utility room keeps cooking smells away from the main open plan space, while the bathrooms were carefully sourced from a single supplier in Dorset to simplify the overwhelming range of options. Louise adds: "It's easy to get carried away, but you have to keep one eye on the budget. We also tried to buy British wherever possible."

Thoughtful lighting, devised by a lighting designer, highlights the oak frame, but the couple decided against a costly automated system, opting instead for simple, practical switches. They also installed a mesh network to tackle patchy Wi-Fi inside the well-insulated structure.

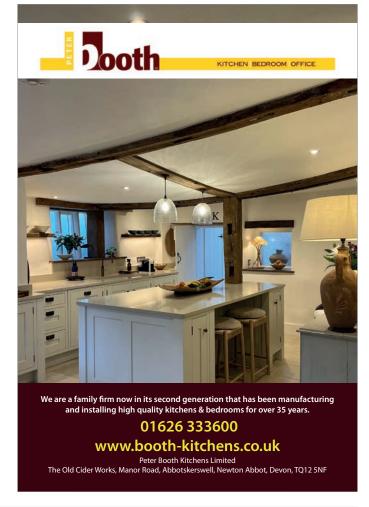
The house features several bespoke touches from local artisans, including a fused glass fish mural by Cornish artist Jo Downs, and a silver birch glass kitchen window by Steve Robinson, designed to obscure an unsightly boundary and with a matching splashback.

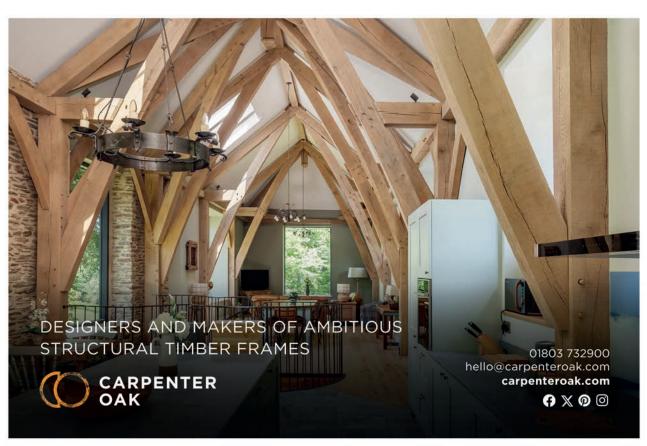
The build took around 15 months to complete, with a few unexpected costs along the way, from a four-figure bill to relocate an unrecorded telecoms cable to the underfloor heating company going bust mid-project. "There are always curveballs," says Jo. "You need a healthy contingency and a good architect who'll fight your corner. Now, we wake up every day and look out at the view. We honestly can't believe our luck living here."

GARDEN DOORS

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Burning bright

Peter Mintoft of Charlton & Jenrick explains the Government's decision to allow woodburning stoves in new homes under the Future Homes Standard and the impact for self-builders.

espite increasing environmental regulations, the UK Government has confirmed that woodburning stoves will continue to be permitted in new homes – welcome news for self-builders seeking both style and sustainability.

As the UK moves toward its 2050 net zero target, the introduction of the Government's Future Homes Standard has prompted significant discussion within the homebuilding sector. A key concern was whether traditional heating appliances, such as woodburning stoves, would be excluded from new build properties. However, recent developments have clarified that these appliances will remain allowed as secondary heating sources.

In a communication to the Stove Industry Association (SIA), the Government confirmed that woodburning stoves will be permitted in new homes in England under the Future Homes Standard. This decision has been positively received by manufacturers, suppliers and environmentally conscious homeowners who have invested in modern, low emission stove technologies.

The decision is a significant acknowledgement of the evolving role of solid fuel appliances in low carbon living. The move supports consumer choice while highlighting the importance of sustainable secondary heating systems compatible with energy efficient homes.

A LOW CARBON FUTURE

The Future Homes Standard mandates that all new build homes utilise low carbon heating systems and achieve high energy efficiency. While primary heating will rely on technologies such as heat pumps and solar panels, the Government's clarification allows self-builders to incorporate woodburning stoves as supplementary heating options.

This approach supports the broader trend toward hybrid heating systems, which combine renewable technologies with traditional appliances to enhance energy flexibility and reduce strain on the



national grid during peak periods. Wood stoves can be a very large contributor to relieving the power load on electricity networks when they are under maximum stress. For homes in rural or off-grid locations, the ability to use energy independent fuel sources remains particularly valuable, most clearly in the event of network disruptions, severe weather events and more.

TECHNOLOGY THAT MEETS THE STANDARD

The Government's decision is underpinned by the improved performance of modern woodburning stoves. Since January 2022, all stoves sold in the UK must comply with Ecodesign standards, which limit emissions and enhance efficiency. These regulations, part of the UK's Clean Air Strategy, ensure that new stoves emit significantly lower pollutants than older models or open fires. This fact is often lost in widespread misinformation about wood burning with modern appliances.

Leading stove brands now feature advanced combustion technology that optimises airflow, enabling more complete wood combustion and reducing fine particulate matter (PM2.5) emissions by up to 90% compared to open fires. These stoves also align with the clearSkies certification system, which demonstrates that high performing appliances go beyond basic Ecodesign. When used correctly with well seasoned wood and installed professionally, an Ecodesign stove is both clean and efficient, a modern appliance for a modern home.

PRACTICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Modern woodburning stoves offer several advantages that appeal to self-builders and renovators:

- Energy independence: Provides a backup heat source during power outages, especially in remote areas.
- Localised heating: Enables zoning to reduce energy waste and lower

The Government's decision is underpinned by the improved performance of modern woodburning stoves

- overall heating costs.
- Aesthetic value: Serves as a striking architectural feature in contemporary interiors.
- Sustainability: When fuelled with responsibly sourced wood, it contributes to a home's low carbon footprint.
- Wellbeing: Recent studies identify and confirm the wellbeing and social benefits of woodburning stoves.

Good stove and flue maintenance and using the correct fuel are essential. Burning well-seasoned or kiln dried logs, rather than wet or manufactured logs, minimises smoke and maximises heat output, helping users stay within emissions limits and maintain indoor and outdoor air quality.

A POSITIVE STEP

The Government's announcement follows extensive industry engagement. Earlier this year, a letter cosigned by the SIA, the Confederation of Forest

Industries, and the British Flue and Chimney Manufacturers Association was submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, emphasising the role of wood stoves in sustainable home heating.

Robust support for modern stove use has also been seen in Scotland, where a proposed ban on stoves in new homes was completely reversed in September 2024 following immense public opposition. These developments reflect a growing recognition of the nuanced role that modern, cleaner burning stoves play in domestic heating, particularly when integrated into broader energy strategies.

Although concerns about wood burning persist, especially in urban areas, data indicates that emissions from domestic combustion have decreased by over 70% since 1990, thanks to technological advancements and increased public awareness. For rural and semi-rural self-builders, a clean, efficient stove remains a viable

and attractive component of an eco conscious home.

LOOKING AHEAD

As the Future Homes Standard nears finalisation, the self-build and renovation community now has clarity: woodburning stoves will remain an option, provided they meet Ecodesign standards as a minimum and are used responsibly. This opens the door for combining the charm and warmth of traditional stoves with the performance and low emissions expected of future ready homes.

Manufacturers remain committed to supporting sustainable homebuilding without compromise. With ongoing innovation in stove design, research and development, and installation practices, woodburning stoves are poised to remain a key element of British home heating, not as a relic of the past, but as a forward-looking solution.

Peter Mintoft is managing director at Charlton & Jenrick



Whole-home integration is the future

From comfort and efficiency to long-term resilience, Rick Clarke at NIBE reveals why whole-home integration is essential for today's self-builders.

elf-builders today aren't just designing houses, they're shaping futureproof, connected homes. In the UK's self-build and renovation market, the focus is shifting from individual technologies to integrated, whole-home systems that unite heating, ventilation, hot water and smart controls. This isn't simply about reducing energy bills or cutting carbon; it's about delivering a home where comfort, efficiency and sustainability work in harmony, now and for decades to come.

Integrated systems bring together heating, ventilation, hot water, and controls under a unified strategy. This holistic approach allows a home to be optimised dynamically, rather than operated as separate parts. Instead of thinking about heating, cooling or ventilation as isolated functions, self-builders are now approaching them as components of a single ecosystem.

In practice, this means homes that maintain stable temperatures, balanced humidity, and fresh indoor air with minimal wasted energy. A well designed whole-home system ensures that hot water is delivered efficiently, that every room is comfortable, and that the homeowner is in control at all times.

Control is central to integrated systems. Some systems give homeowners immediate insights into their home's performance – covering heating, hot water and ventilation in one place. Many platforms now include weatherforecast compensation, meaning the system can anticipate a cold snap or heatwave and adjust settings automatically. Remote access, voice control and energy-use tracking add further layers of convenience.

For self-builders, this brings two advantages: firstly, the ability to tailor comfort on a room-by-room basis; and secondly, confidence that the system is always running as efficiently as possible.

Heat pumps are already central to this integrated vision. Studies show that they can be three to five times more



energy efficient than traditional boilers, depending on design and installation. According to the Heat Pump Association, widespread deployment could save UK homes millions of tonnes of CO₂ annually, helping to cut 18% of the nation's emissions that come from heating.

Installing an air source heat pump rather than a gas boiler can reduce a household's carbon footprint by around 2,900 kg of CO_2 per year, equivalent to the emissions of a long-haul flight. At the same time, homeowners often report running cost reductions of 20–30% when heat pumps are combined with smart controls and efficient distribution systems such as underfloor heating.

Government policy is also pushing selfbuilders towards low-carbon, integrated solutions. The Future Homes Standard will soon require that new homes be designed without fossil fuel heating systems. From 2027, most new builds will be expected to incorporate heat pumps, solar panels or other renewable technologies as standard.

Incentives are helping too. Schemes such as the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) currently provide those eligible with grants of up to £7,500 to help towards the cost of replacing an existing boiler with a heat pump installation. Meanwhile, training and skills development are expanding, making it easier for self-builders and renovators to find qualified installers who understand integrated systems.

One of the clearest demonstrations of integration comes from a recent self-build project in Aberdeenshire. The homeowner combined an air source heat pump with underfloor heating, a mechanical ventilation system, and smart controls. Using a NIBE integrated system,

Government policy is also pushing self-builders towards low-carbon, integrated solutions

the result is a home with consistently low running costs and a comfortable, balanced indoor climate throughout the year.

Another example is a development in Lincolnshire, where 13 homes were equipped with ground source heat pumps connected to a shared ground loop, paired with hot water cylinders and underfloor heating. Residents benefit from reliable low-carbon heating and hot water, while the shared infrastructure keeps the system efficient and manageable.

These examples highlight that integration is already happening across the UK, demonstrating how joined up design delivers measurable benefits for homeowners.

Integrated systems are not simply about meeting regulations; for self-builders and renovators, they are about creating homes that are resilient, efficient and comfortable. By uniting heating, hot water, ventilation and controls into a single approach,

these systems ensure properties are futureproof, ready for net zero smart grid connections and shifting energy trends. At the same time, they deliver high seasonal efficiencies and adaptive controls that help reduce running costs, while cutting carbon emissions in line with national targets and unlocking the benefits of government incentives. Just as importantly, they create healthier living environments with stable temperatures, fresh air and the flexibility for room-byroom personalisation.

For today's self-builder, embracing a whole-home integrated system is both a practical and strategic decision. The examples here show how integration can be achieved today without compromising on comfort or ease of use. For the self-builder, the message is clear: build with integration in mind, and you create not just a house, but a connected home that is efficient, sustainable and ready for tomorrow.

Rick Clarke is product manager at NIBE







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ane, a dentist and Sam, who is a doctor, were living in Inverness when they decided a move to Edinburgh was on the cards. In July 2022, the couple came across a terraced property in the West of Edinburgh. Jane arranged a viewing and while it appealed to her, she knew instantly changes would have to be made if it was to work for her and Sam.

"The layout felt weird," Jane recalls. "And, the front of the house didn't match the back," Sam adds. This "weird" layout consisted of a traditional, corniced sitting room at the front of the house and a kitchen towards the rear, which was joined with a flat roof extension that incorporated a WC/utility space. This extension was located at the back of the building, but off centre and had created two rather unusable patio areas. Upstairs, there was a family bathroom and four bedrooms.

Keen to make the house usable as quickly as possible, the couple didn't waste any time, as Jane

explains: "We wanted to make it our space, so we didn't see any reason to put the renovations on hold." Within three months, the couple had set up a meeting with Edinburgh-based architects, Pend. "I had seen posts from Pend on Instagram and there wasn't a project of theirs that I didn't like," Jane continues. "We didn't look at anyone else."

The couple both agree that this was possibly quite a naive approach to such an expensive undertaking, but they were also realistic about their own abilities, as Sam explains: "We came into this knowing that we didn't know anything about self-building, but we were also aware that we didn't have the time to learn anything about it either. We both work full-time, so we thought we might as well find someone who knew what they were doing. We're complete novices, but also, we didn't really know what we wanted to do or what we could do with the space. We didn't even know how big we could go."

HIGH POINT

"The first time we walked in when it was finished. You never really know how good it's going to be and I was pretty wowed. It's slightly embarrassing when people come over and say this is amazing and it's really nice how many people have been inspired by it."

— Jane





LOW POINT

"There were a few delays that couldn't be helped such as the sewer issue, but we weren't stressed about it – we knew it would be sorted."

— Sam

After a meeting with director, Jamie Anderson, an initial brief was established in October 2022. "We didn't give Jamie much of a brief," says Sam. "We really did leave it very much up to him although I wanted whatever we did to make sense with the garden, so we could actually utilise it." Jane continues: "I didn't want it to be a box, I wanted it to appeal to open plan family living and I wanted the finishing touches to be important."

For the Armans, their brief to Pend seemed rather vague but for Jamie and project architect, Ben MacFarlane, the site had already given them an idea as to what they could design and how to achieve it as Ben recalls: "Jamie had the first meeting with Sam and Jane and then I came on board when we started the drawings and it quickly became apparent there was one design that we wanted to put forward."

Surprisingly, what interested and inspired Ben were the constraints that the site threw up: "At Pend we like to dial into the constraints at the outset. What are going to be the potential pitfalls later in the project? If we factor them in at the start, it's less to navigate later."

"This extension has completely changed how we live in this house"

The issues in this case were the slope that the original house and garden were built on, neighbours on both sides, a retaining wall, and a public sewer which ran through the garden and now runs under the new extension.

"The arrangement of the space and the relationships to the garden came to us quite quickly and Jamie and I both felt this was the design and thankfully Jane and Sam felt the same," says Ben.

Pend's design incorporated a new kitchen/ dining/living space at the rear of the property with a utility room in the middle of the house, a generous shower room under the stairs and a playroom between the hallway and sitting area for





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MAIN CONTRACTOR

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the couple's two children, Rosie (four) and Annie (two). Both the playroom and utility are accessed by pocket doors to emphasise the open plan design and provide practical solutions for storage and access.

The plans from Pend also included the removal of the offshoot extension in the middle of the patio, thus establishing a new connection with the garden accessed by floor to ceiling sliding doors leading to a sunken patio, raised flower bed and varied ground levels to the end of the site. "The offshoot extension interrupted the connection with the garden and as the site is on an elevated position on Corstorphine Hill, surrounded by greenery and views, I wanted to make the most of the blue skies when they're available!"

This elevated position, while enviable for the views, also ensured that Ben had to create a design that took into account two sets of neighbours, their privacy and their sunlight. He did this by simple geometry, creating two pitched volumes in the roof that slide and intersect and which had a twofold effect. On the one hand, this design protected the neighbours' privacy and light and on the other created an internal variation in volumes in the open plan space.

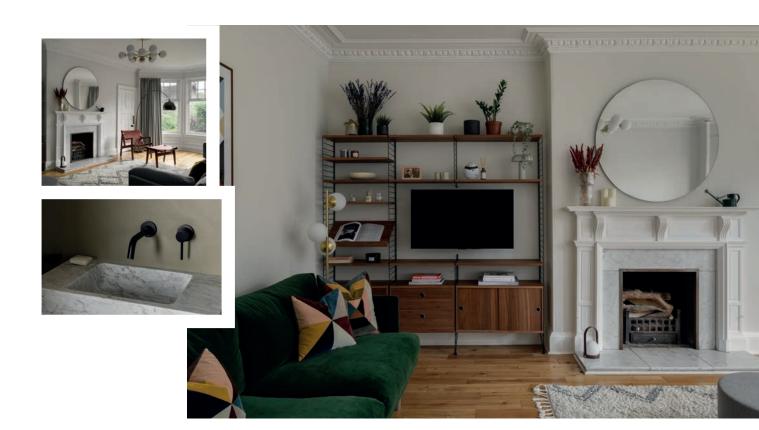
"We like to ensure that our clients don't need to have tricky conversations with their neighbours about planning permissions," Ben explains. "There's no point us designing and building a fantastic extension if you've annoyed the neighbours and have to live next to them for the next five years!"

This foresight worked and planning permission was granted with no objections. Contractors Rollo Developments were suggested by Pend to carry out the project and work commenced in March 2023 with a completion date of December 2023.

"It became clear from the outset that we wouldn't be able to live in the house while the building work was going on," Sam remembers. This was due in no small part to the fact that there is no access to the rear of the property; therefore, every piece of machinery and all the materials had to be transported through the house and also, there was simply no space for the family to live. "I'm still shocked that Rollo managed to get a digger through the house!" Jane continues: "The builders said there may be some damage, but there was none; they were incredibly careful and much of the house was boarded up for protection."

The building process went relatively smoothly apart from one hiccup. Although Pend thought they had dealt with the issue of the sewer and designed around it, it wasn't to be. "When we're dealing with historic drainage records, they are usually pencil sketches from 100 years ago and they're not always 100% accurate," says Ben. Fortunately, the alterations required were approximately half a foot and didn't hold things up for long. "There were a few other small discoveries, as there always are with older buildings," Ben adds. "In this case, we discovered the timbers under the original kitchen had rotted, so the new floor was extended into the old part along with the insulation and the underfloor heating."

While Jane and Sam had been unsure about how the actual extension would take shape, they knew the aesthetics and finishing touches were important to them and this part of the design process was much more collaborative. As a result, the inspiration for the materials palette was drawn in the main from the original exterior at the back of the property, as Ben explains: "Sam and Jane showed us some images that they liked and we



proposed a material palette based on that. We took inspiration from the brick boundary wall outside and from the back elevation, which was a sandy coloured pebble dash." A buff toned Marziale brick was chosen for the interior wall in the snug area and part of the dining space and this complements both the red brick boundary wall and the beige pebbledash.

This attention to detail and a quest for continuity and flow were reflected in the choices for the rest of the material palette. With a marble fireplace in the sitting room, echoing this material in the kitchen countertops and island, along with the sanitaryware in the shower room, brings a cohesiveness to the ground floor which was formerly lacking.

The kitchen, designed in collaboration with Archispek, is a contemporary combination of natural oak, off-white veneer cabinetry and white Calacatta marble. "We changed our minds a few times around the kitchen design and how large the island should be," Jane recalls. "Wooden floors were a consideration, but then I thought there would be too much wood and Ben suggested micro cement instead." says Jane. "Everything is very functional but stylish too and there's so much storage that I haven't used it all yet!"

Although the couple were keen to get the aesthetics just right, one thing they hadn't considered was the impact of their new lighting system, as Sam explains: "The lighting really took me aback. I wasn't expecting it to be so cool or for it to have such an impact. It plays such an important role. If we were in charge of the lighting, there would be something dangling from the ceiling and that would be it."

"You don't want to simply luminate rooms, you want to set the ambience in each space," Ben

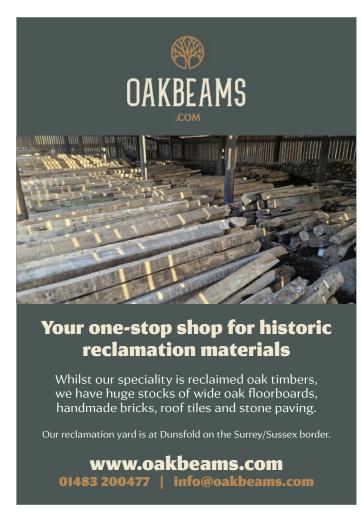
"Lighting really is the vehicle to set the mood in the spaces"

explains. "Here, some of the lighting is functional, some of it is a feature, such as the adjustable Malamatta one and some of it is backlighting. Lighting really is the vehicle to set the mood in the spaces."

Another surprise for the couple was the smallest room in the project – the playroom. "We didn't realise how well the location of the playroom and the aperture that was punched through to the open plan area would work," says Sam. "The light that the opening brings through the house is amazing. Visually, it's great and practically, it works really well too. We can see and hear the kids and they and their friends also enjoy climbing through it, which was an unexpected use!"

"This extension has completely changed how we live in this house," says Jane. "I think we lent on Pend quite a lot, but with good reason and the outcome speaks for itself," Sam adds. "If you ask a professional for advice, you might as well take their advice. Jane and I are professionals, and we hate it when people don't take our advice. And, while we always had options on the project, it was pretty clear in our minds that the option that Ben suggested was probably the best one."

For Pend it was also an enjoyable experience as Ben explains: "I found it very refreshing how much trust Sam and Jane put in us; it's not always the case when clients are so well aligned with our vision. I'm proud of what we've done here and I'm jealous when I visit!"





Garador launches new GRP side hinged garage door

Garador has announced the launch of a new GRP side hinged garage door designed specifically for the modern market. These new doors offer a perfect solution for homes requiring all the advantages of a modern side hinged garage door with the added benefits of a lightweight, impact resistant and low maintenance material that looks stunning on any design. Easy entry side hinged garage doors are growing fast in popularity as garage spaces are increasingly being used for storage, as offices and gyms and for other purposes. Garador's new side hinged doors feature a glass-fibre reinforced construction. They won't rot, rust or corrode and the special UV stable finish protects against the elements, with only an occasional rinse to keep them looking pristine. These great looking doors come in a wide variety of sizes, styles, finishes and colours. Garador has distributors and fitters available right across the UK.

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SPONSORED FEATURE **BUILDING ENVELOPE**

Okopod selects Hörmann **RollMatic Roller Doors**

odular building specialist Okopod has specified Hörmann RollMatic roller garage doors for a newly completed 9-car garage project in Cambridge, showcasing the company's commitment to sustainable design and precision-engineered construction.

Founded in 2019, Okopod has quickly become a leader in the manufacture and supply of eco-friendly modular pods for use as garden rooms, workspaces, and garages. Drawing on lean manufacturing techniques inspired by the automotive sector, the company's offsite construction process ensures minimal waste, high build quality, and reduced disruption on site.

In one of their most recent installations, Okopod delivered a Scandinavian-inspired garage structure designed to store a collection of classic



and performance cars. The doubleheight garage accommodates up to nine vehicles, thanks to an integrated stack parking system, offering a luxurious yet practical solution that blends seamlessly into family life.

To complement the clean, contemporary exterior, which is clad in vertically arranged, sustainably

sourced Red Grandis timber -Okopod selected two fully automated Hörmann RollMatic roller doors for their slim profile, reliable performance, and stylish modern aesthetic. A double-width door (6000mm x 2100mm) and single-width door (2600mm x 2100mm) were installed, both finished in Anthracite Grey (RAL 7016) to perfectly match the garage's refined, minimalist palette.

The Hörmann roller doors were supplied and installed by Fenland Garage Doors, ensuring smooth integration into the structure. The slimline fit of the RollMatic doors allow for maximum internal clearance, while offering the robust security and convenience demanded for the high-value vehicles housed within.

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Opening the door to space, style & smart living

Louise Stacey of Eclisse discusses how pocket doors can transform your home by maximising space, enhancing light and creating seamless flow between rooms.



or anyone embarking on a self-build journey, every design choice matters. From the orientation of the windows to the choice of floor coverings, each decision plays a part in shaping a home that is not only beautiful but functional. Among these choices, doors might not be the first element to come to mind – yet their placement, style and operation can have a surprisingly powerful impact on the way a home feels and flows.

CHOOSING POCKET DOORS

One of the joys of a self-build project is the freedom to design a space from

scratch – free from the limitations of existing structures. But even with that freedom, space is often at a premium. A traditional hinged door needs a clear floor area to open, effectively creating a 'dead zone' in a room that can't be used for furniture or fittings.

By contrast, a pocket door vanishes discreetly into the wall, freeing up to 8% of usable space in a home. For smaller rooms, open-plan areas with zoning needs, or layouts where every inch counts, this is a game changer.

Self-builders often comment on the versatility pocket doors bring. They can be used to create fluid transitions between rooms – opening wide to connect spaces for entertaining, or closing off areas for privacy and quiet when needed.

DESIGN WITHOUT COMPROMISE

While practicality is key, self-builders also want interiors that reflect their personal style. Pocket door systems offer that freedom. Doors can both complement contemporary and classic interiors.

For those seeking a minimalist aesthetic, there are ranges available with frameless designs. This allows the door to blend into the wall with no visible architraves, creating a sleek,

While practicality is key, self-builders also want interiors that reflect their personal style

uninterrupted look. It's a favourite for modern self-build projects where clean lines and simplicity are paramount.

Alternatively, frameless glass pocket doors can introduce natural light into internal spaces, making them feel larger and more inviting. This is particularly effective in areas like hallways, home offices, or between a kitchen and dining room, where light flow is essential.

ENGINEERING YOU CAN RELY ON

Self-builders, especially those working closely with their builders, appreciate products that are straightforward to install yet built to last.

Steel pocket door frames are designed for strength and durability, capable of withstanding the rigours of everyday use.

For walls that require extra stability, a galvanised steel frame construction provides additional rigidity and sturdiness. Systems can be installed on both solid and stud walls and integrate seamlessly into a wide variety of build types.

INSTALLATION MADE EASIER

For many self-builders, the installation process is part of the attraction of pocket doors.

Systems can be installed at the first fix stage, with the pocket frame and track in place before the wall is finished. This means self-builders can plan their interior design from the outset, rather than having to adapt later. For those working with architects or designers, early integration of a pocket door into the plan ensures the cleanest, most professional result.



FUTURE PROOFING

One of the benefits of including pocket doors in a self-build is the long-term flexibility they offer. Life changes, whether that means accommodating a growing family, creating a home office, or adapting a property for improved accessibility.

Pocket doors are particularly useful in inclusive design, where wheelchair users or those with reduced mobility benefit from the extra space and ease of movement they provide. Without a door swinging into the room, manoeuvring through spaces becomes simpler and safer.

Some manufacturers offer additional accessories with soft close and soft open

features, adding to the ease of use and longevity of the door mechanism.

SUSTAINABLE SMART DESIGN

In an era where energy efficiency and sustainability are central to self-build decisions, pocket doors have a role to play. By allowing for more efficient use of space, they can contribute to smaller, more sustainable floor plans without sacrificing comfort or practicality.

Additionally, by maximising natural light flow with glass options, homeowners can reduce reliance on artificial lighting during the day.

VISION TO REALITY

For many self-builders, the journey from plans to reality is a once in a lifetime project. Every detail – from the largest structural element to the smallest design touch – is an opportunity to shape a home that truly works for the people who live in it.

Pocket door systems embody that philosophy. They combine space-saving practicality with beautiful design and reliable engineering, enabling selfbuilders to create homes that are as functional as they are stylish.

As one satisfied self-builder put it: "It's one of those details you don't realise you'll love until you live with it and then you wonder why you didn't put one in every room."

Louise Stacey is marketing manager at Eclisse



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FROM DRAUGHTY TO DREAMY

When Deborah Shafier and her husband Alex set out to transform their Edwardian home in London, they wanted more than just extra space; they envisioned a cosy, sustainable sanctuary.

TEXT ALEXANDRA PRATT IMAGES JULIET MURPHY/IGUANA ARCHITECTS

desperate to make changes," says Deborah. An interior designer by profession, Deborah had bought the Edwardian semi-detached home in London with her husband Alex four years earlier, soon after their daughter was born. The house had character, but its layout didn't suit their lifestyle as a modern family of four, with two children aged seven and 10. "We like to entertain, have friends over, and the kitchen especially left you isolated from your guests," explains Deborah.

The family now enjoys life in this comfortable, eco-friendly home that blends modern design with earthy elements. It is a sanctuary full of warmth and texture. With clever use of natural materials, abundant light and thoughtful layout, the home radiates a sense of calm and functionality, perfectly catering to the demands of modern family life. Yet reaching this point involved a major renovation and extension project.

Deborah knew from the moment they bought their home that she wanted to open it up, creating more light filled, practical spaces, but with an eye on both the budget and the environment. Their journey began with a serendipitous meeting at the school gate. Yaniv Peer of Iguana Architects was a fellow parent, and he understood exactly what Deborah and Alex wanted from their renovation.

"My main aim was a clutter free sanctuary. Life can be so chaotic. I wanted to balance aesthetics with a sense of calm and super practical storage. We needed a nice space to relax in," explains Deborah. In terms of internal finishes, "we love modern design but didn't want it to feel cold and clinical. Instead, we opted for warm neutrals, wood floors, textured clay plaster walls and an earthy, natural, understated design, which is timeless."

Fortunately, the house's attic had already been converted by previous owners into a quest

"We wanted to create balance"

room, office, and shower room. On the first floor, "we were bedroom rich and bathroom poor," laughs Deborah, who developed plans with Yaniv to extend this upper storey outward by just two metres. This meant they could change the existing family bathroom into an ensuite, create a new family bathroom and enlarge her daughter's bedroom.

On the ground floor, the extension was more significant, replacing an old conservatory – which was "either boiling hot or freezing cold" – with an elegant new kitchen and dining room that is connected to the garden via bifold doors.

Their first – and possibly biggest – challenge was getting planning permission for a deep, double rear extension. A now-scrapped local rule made the process unusually complicated. Under the old regulation, Deborah and Alex had to begin the work using prior approval rules. This meant building a new rear extension just 500mm away from an existing half width extension. Only after that could they apply for full planning permission to join the two into one space.

The couple's renovation went beyond just the extension – it involved the entire house, including the original structure, now over 100 years old. They approached both repairs and upgrades with a strong focus on sustainability. One of the most noticeable changes was the addition of new cladding to the front facade.

"We had a big problem... the brickwork was just completely destroyed, and so we ended up putting the Cork Sol over the top, which gives some thermal insulation," explains Deborah. Cork is a naturally produced material that contributes to carbon sequestration and provides natural insulation, reducing energy use.

LOW POINT

The months of financial recovery. Hopefully, the joy and value of the house will balance this out.









In use, it is breathable, flexible, weather-resistant and insulating.

The extension to the rear is timber-clad, which is fully recyclable and repairable, and the striking black slatted cladding adds a modern twist to the classic Edwardian brickwork. The ground floor extension also benefits from a 'green' roof, which provides insulation and adds more habitat diversity for plants and insects to the home, as well as being beautiful to look out over from the upper floors.

The same sustainable ethic continues inside the home. In the new extension on the ground floor, Deborah and Alex chose clay plaster, which was pre-tinted a soft cream colour. Sourced from UK company Clayworks, "I just fell in love with their ethos," says Deborah. "Clay plaster has low toxicity, low carbon and is very breathable. It is part of the whole 'wellness' vibe in the space." Clay plaster can help to regulate

indoor humidity levels, has natural insulating properties and eliminates toxic VOC emissions (volatile organic compounds, chemicals that can impact both the wider environment and cause breathing problems). In terms of finish, it can be smooth or rough, depending on the application, and "we chose to go with somewhere in the middle," says Deborah. "Some areas are textured, some smoother."

Colour choice was also important, as the colour of the clay plaster is a warm cream, and this continues into what was previously the difficult 'middle room'. Now opened out into the dining kitchen, the walls and the cabinetry in this space are painted the same colour, making the effect seamless.

The cabinetry in this space is a key part of the design, as these cupboards house all the family's clutter that Deborah felt was taking over their home. In the centre of the same wall, the TV

HIGH POINT

Getting to know the house and personalising it. We now just get to enjoy it!







This tranquil retreat now fuses earthy elegance with modern functionality

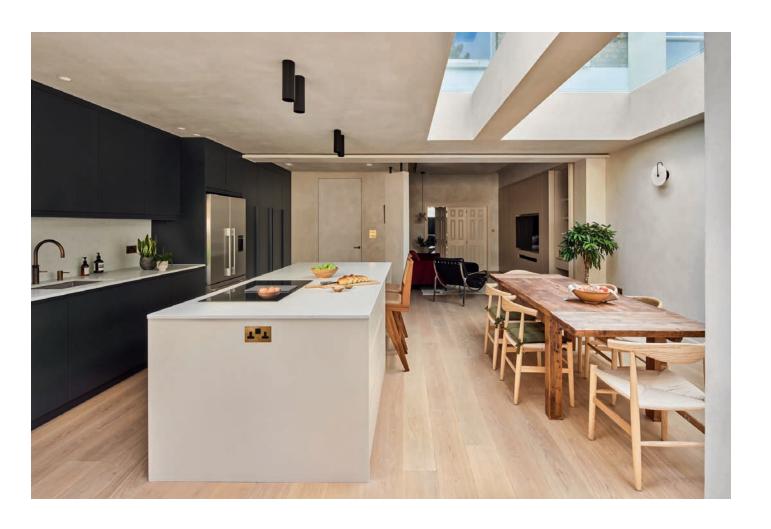
hangs on the original chimney breast. Deborah and Alex didn't feel the need to remove this, as the cost would be disproportionate to the space gained. The end cupboard in this room is also a secret office nook hidden behind pocket doors, which can be used as a breakout desk space or homework area for the children.

What is striking about the colour scheme in the extended ground floor is not just the calm serenity or the pared back palette, but the contrast with the older parts of the house. "We wanted to create balance," explains Deborah. "Tradition versus contemporary, although we didn't want it to be too stark, so we added some coving in the central room, with a dropped ceiling and concealed lighting." The hallway,

however, is more traditional, brightened with a pop of yellow inside the front door. The terracotta colour in the WC "tones with the clay nicely," and the sitting room, which is located at the front of the house, is colour-drenched in 'Blue 20' from Lick Paints.

"We used colour to create different atmospheres in different areas, "says Deborah. "Some colours appear in different ways to tie the house together, such as through art. Or, for example, the exposed girders in the kitchen are the same Farrow & Ball 'Preference Red' as the joinery in the entrance hall."

An unusual feature of the central room is a short, angled screen, finished in clay plaster, that breaks the sightline from the sitting





areas through to the kitchen. It's clever and unobtrusive. "My concern was that a fully open plan would leave the kitchen too exposed," says Deborah. "I wanted to zone the space a little

more, and the screen cocoons the living room section. It also creates a more impressive entry into the space from the hallway."

The black details in the screen are echoed in the downlights above the kitchen island. "I didn't want large pendants obstructing the space," explains Deborah. The wider aesthetic of the kitchen is minimalist and raw. The exposed girders, unpainted clay plaster and black cabinetry could be harsh, but Deborah's clever use of texture and natural wood, as well as cream, not white, and off black, pulls the vibe back to restful. It is a space where the eye is drawn out through the aluminium-framed bifold doors into the gardens, and the quality of the light is enhanced as it falls through carefully placed rooflights.

The kitchen layout and design emerged through discussions with Yaniv at Iguana and was made locally by Naked Kitchens in timber. A light toned quartz worktop complements the darker wall cabinetry. "I love cooking in the kitchen, as it's so light all year round," says Deborah. "It's such a nice space to be in."

The environmentally conscious decisions continued throughout the home too, including little things like the choice of recycled cotton fabrics in the bedrooms. Deborah was also keen to reuse materials already in the house where possible. These include the fireplaces in the older parts of the house and the internal doors. The double door between the sitting

DEBORAH & ALEX'S TOP TIP

Choosing a design direction for your home can be challenging, with so many beautiful styles to inspire you. However, committing to a clear vision early on stops you from getting overwhelmed and makes decision making far easier.

CONTACTS/ SUPPLIERS

ARCHITECT

Iguana Architects iguana-architects.com

MAIN CONTRACTOR

Billa Constructionbillaconstructionltd.com





BRASS SOCKETS

Corston Architectural Corston.com

JOINERY

Woodworld Design woodworlddesigltd.co.uk

KITCHEN

Naked Kitchens nakedkitchens.com

PAINTS

Farrow & Ball farrow-ball.com

CORK COATING

Cork Sol corksoluk.com

CLAY PLASTER

Clayworks clay-works.com

"My main aim was a clutter free sanctuary. Life can be so chaotic"

room and the central room has been rehung as a bifold, its position to one side decided by the existing large built-in bookcase that dominates the internal wall. "The door is open most of the time," says Deborah. "This means we get a better quality of light in the central room."

Other measures the couple took for sustainable reasons included suppliers with good eco credentials, such as the brass sockets from Corston Architecture, having products manufactured in the UK or as locally as possible, and upcycling or repurposing existing furniture and finishes.

Despite the couple's environmental priorities, Deborah didn't choose to install an air source heat pump, as she was deterred by both the cost and their lack of suitability in such an old property. While the new extension is airtight and cosy, the original parts of the building will never reach the same standard.

The family was lucky enough to move in with Deborah's parents for the duration of the build. This went smoothly as Billa Construction, a firm recommended by Iguana Architects, ran the project. "We had a brilliant experience," says Deborah. The couple's only real challenge during the project, once the complicated planning permission had been achieved, was the cost of materials, which rose rapidly during the Covid period. After a nine month build, the family moved in in 2023, and they have grown into their new space, adding artworks and other pieces that make the space truly feel like home.

This tranquil retreat now fuses earthy elegance with modern functionality, blending sustainability, clever design and timeless style. As natural light pours in, the Shafier family's home radiates warmth, texture and serenity. Deborah is particularly pleased with the groundfloor extension: "It was previously held back by being disjointed, but now we can do our own thing alongside each other, and we also love having gatherings in this space," she says. "It just works really well."

And there's a happy twist in the tale, too; during the project, Deborah's relationship with Iguana Architects was so successful, she now works for the company!



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For 2026, **Dulux** is asking architects, specifiers and designers to dance to the Rhythm of Blues™ with its new trio of shades. For the first time ever, Dulux has selected a colour family of the year. The harmonious collection of signature indigos reflects various moods, making them suitable for any setting. The Dulux Colours of the Year 2026 are three versatile blues: light Mellow Flow™, dark Slow Swing™ and vibrant Free Groove™. They were chosen following the company's extensive annual trend research

and provide architects, specifiers and designers with a selection of shades that reflect the mood of every environment. Professionals can also use the Dulux Trade Colour Schemer for colour inspiration.

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Innovations for a self build project

The self-build market is an aspirational one, with many media titles targeted towards those people who are merely dreaming about building their own house. Unlike some newsstand magazines, The Selfbuilder has a focused readership of genuine self-builders, renovators and agents, reaching only the people who already own their land or property, have planning permission and are ready to start work. As well as the magazine, The Selfbuilder has an established online presence. Its informative website is a one-stop shop source for all the latest press releases, providing visitors with access to information about products and services that they may require. A variety of features offer inspiration and practical advice, and each in-depth case study tell a unique self-build or renovation story from the owners' perspectives. From the website, you can also find a complete company directory that has live links to advertisers' websites. You can choose to subscribe to receive regular copies of the printed and digital versions of the magazine, or sign up to the monthly email newsletter. In addition, The Selfbuilder has expanded its social media portfolio, meaning that you can now follow us on LinkedIn and Instagram as well as Twitter to keep you as informed as possible.

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Make your bathroom work

The Bathroom Association's Tom Reynolds shares practical advice to help self-builders design better bathrooms – sustainable, compliant and perfectly suited to modern living.

Bathrooms are among the most personal and most used spaces in any home, yet they're often one of the last things considered during the planning stages of a self-build. For those who get it right, however, the results can be life enhancing. In a world where our homes must work harder for us and the environment, smart bathroom choices are more important than ever.

The Bathroom Association, formerly known as the Bathroom Manufacturers Association, recently evolved its identity to reflect the broader coalition now shaping the future of bathrooms. From installers and designers to specifiers and retailers, the bathroom world is more collaborative and diverse than ever before, and that includes self-builders.

With a vision of a world where "bathrooms are better for people and planet," the Association aims to help everyone – from first time renovators to seasoned developers – make informed decisions. Here's how to ensure your bathroom adds lasting value to your self-build.

BATHROOM TO BEDROOM EQUATION

30 years ago, an ensuite was considered a luxury. Today, a 1:1 bathroom to bedroom ratio is becoming increasingly common in new homes. But is it necessary?

TV design icon Kevin McCloud has warned against the rise of multiple bathrooms as a status symbol, questioning whether this is a step too far. However, for many self-builders, the motivation is not about prestige but practicality. A 1:1 ratio offers growing families greater flexibility, reduces morning traffic jams, and provides



essential privacy in multigenerational homes or shared living setups. As ever, context is key. A luxurious ensuite may be overkill in a single person home, but in a busy household, it can be life changing. If space or budget limits the number of full bathrooms, consider at least one additional WC.

COMPLIANCE

You might expect that all products available for sale in the UK meet regulatory standards. Sadly, that's not always the case. In a fiercely competitive and globally traded sector, it's crucial for self-builders to do a little digging before making purchasing decisions.

For items like toilets, baths and shower enclosures – products covered under the Construction Products Regulation (CPR) – ask the manufacturer or retailer for a Declaration of Performance. This document states that the product has been tested to relevant standards. Ideally, they should also provide traceability information.

For water delivering products such as taps, valves and shower mixers, the Water Supply (Water Fittings)
Regulations apply. It's a common misconception that WRAS approval is a legal requirement; it isn't, but it is one of several robust certification schemes, along with NSF, Kiwa, and Kitemark, that can give you peace of mind. Look for these marks to ensure your fittings are compliant, safe and built to last.

SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

As environmental awareness grows, so does innovation in bathroom products. We are seeing rapid progress across the

Efficient use of space is vital to good design in homes of all sizes

sector, as manufacturers work to reduce their environmental footprint without compromising quality.

Some producers are now manufacturing sanitaryware using recycled ceramics, a breakthrough that was technically impossible just a few years ago. Meanwhile furniture, now the second largest category in bathroom products, should be made from responsibly sourced timber. Look for FSC certification to ensure wood comes from sustainably managed forests. These innovations are helping to reduce the environmental impact of homebuilding, and forward thinking self-builders are leading the way in adopting them.

DESIGNING FOR SPACE & STYLE

Efficient use of space is vital to good design in homes of all sizes. Traditional pedestal basins are being phased out in favour of basins on furniture, which offer valuable under-sink storage. The move isn't just practical, it's aesthetic too, creating cleaner lines and greater flexibility.

Wall-hung toilet pans with concealed cisterns are another trend that brings both form and function. They save space, enhance visual appeal and make cleaning easier. However, don't forget that access

to the cistern is essential in case of maintenance issues, such as a leaky loo - a common problem that's easy to fix if caught early.

Compact baths are increasingly popular with space conscious selfbuilders. While they may not deliver a full stretch out soak, they preserve valuable floor area for everyday use. In particularly tight spaces, innovative options like fold away toilet pans can transform micro bathrooms without sacrificing usability.

GET IN THE PROS

Bathroom installation is one of the most complex elements of a build, especially where water is concerned. What seems like a straightforward DIY job can quickly turn into an expensive fix if something goes wrong.

We strongly advise hiring a Watersafe registered plumber, and ideally someone who's a member of a professional body such as CIPHE, APHC, or BIKBBI. These credentials ensure that the tradesperson is trained, insured and committed to best practice. It's an investment in your bathroom's performance and your peace of mind.

WATER EFFICIENCY

In the UK, we often take water

abundance for granted, but this is changing. Climate pressures, population growth and infrastructure strain are making water an increasingly precious resource.

For self-builders, this means designing with water efficiency in mind. The Unified Water Label is a helpful tool that shows how much water different products use. It covers taps, toilets, showers and more, enabling you to make informed choices without compromising on performance.

Looking ahead, expect recirculating showers and greywater reuse systems, which collect and repurpose water for flushing toilets or watering gardens, to become standard in progressive homes. Building with these innovations now means your home will remain cost efficient and environmentally responsible for years to come.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Bathrooms may be behind closed doors, but they play a central role in daily life. For self-builders, they offer the perfect opportunity to blend personal comfort, smart planning and environmental responsibility.

Tom Reynolds is chief executive of the Bathroom Association





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