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James Parker

FROM THE EDITOR

At the end of August, Andy Burnham announced another voluntary licensing scheme for builders, which he was determined to call a "crackdown on cowboys." It was more a 'backdown' from anything substantial, and seems to amount to a badge rewarding people already doing the right thing.

Burnham used a *Daily Mail* article as the means to launch the initiative to a broad, Middle England cash-rich audience. His team no doubt hoped to resonate with those still active in the housing market with his comments on billions being lost to rogue traders. The new Approved Code and payment system, due to be launched this month, arrive in a context of "too many people being ripped off," said the Ministry of Housing, using Federation of Master Builders data showing more than one in four home improvement projects in the past 18 months had issues with builders. These included "projects abandoned half way through, and undue pressure on elderly people to overpay for shoddy work." More than one in three faced extra costs, and in 2024, homeowners spent "over £10.3bn on home and garden maintenance due to losses, overpriced costs or unfair practices."

The industry was lukewarm on this quality mark idea for good firms, in place of a mandatory licensing system which would instantly highlight non-compliant building companies. Brian Berry, Chief Executive of the FMB said it was a "real concern that this is just another voluntary programme without regulation behind it," although he backed the signalling of "a positive change in the Government's commitment on the issue."

Bizarrely, as the industry is expected to deliver more and more rigour, and high-performance homes, anyone is still able to set themselves up as a 'builder' with zero qualifications. Berry re-asserted the FMB call that "in the long term the Government should be looking at a compulsory licensing scheme for building companies." The only thing I'd question about this is why "long term?," surely this is needed now?

UK trades directory The Elite Construction Network welcomed the move towards a voluntary Code, but said this plus the proposed "milestone" based payment scheme duplicates services it already offers. Dan Hensher, co-founder, said: "It confirms what we have believed from the start: the industry needs proper standards, properly checked."

And the NFB has unsurprisingly criticised the limited scheme, saying it "would not stop bad actors operating and ripping people off."

The industry needs clarification on how the new Code differs from the existing Chartered Trading Standards Institute's Approved Code, which already covers around 10,000 housebuilders. I'd argue what it really needs is a punitive system of regulation which will only allow those qualified on safety and quality competence to enter a site, and throw repeat offenders in prison. Only something this draconian might clear out the dead wood for good.

James Parker

ON THE COVER



Beswick House, part of ForHousing's White Lion development in Salford
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Arada submits applications for £2.5bn Thameside West regeneration





UAE-based international developer Arada has submitted a series of planning applications to the London Borough of Newham to advance the delivery of Thameside West, one of London's largest and most ambitious regeneration projects, with proposals claimed to "unlock the delivery of affordable housing and connect the area between the Thames and Royal Docks for the first time."

Spanning over 47 acres in London's Royal Docks, Thameside West has a Gross Development Value of £2.5bn, with the potential to deliver at least 5,000 homes as part of a "vibrant new district of East London," said the developer.

Building on the existing hybrid planning permission, the plans set out Arada's landscape-led approach to the first stage of the project. This stage comprises nearly 1,500 new homes across six buildings, the first two of which will now be 100% social rent and will include three and four bedroom family homes.

The plans are also designed to improve the permeability between buildings across the site; they are organised around a network of streets, gardens, parks and shared spaces. New ground floor units facing onto the park will provide space for amenities, such as cafes and restaurants. A "coherent architectural character has been applied," said Arada, which responds to the individual positioning of each building along the dock-facing edge, park and Bell Lane, which now forms part of the site.

At the heart of the proposals will be a new seven-acre park, alongside around 1,000 new trees, creating a greener, more biodiverse environment for residents and the wider community. The park will serve both recreational and everyday needs, framed by smaller gardens and planted edges to enhance biodiversity, as well as dedicated play spaces including adventure-filled woodland areas, play trails and play-on-the-way spaces. This is further complemented by a kilometre of active waterfront and a riverside walk along Bell Lane, which marks the south-east border of the site.

A community design group of 20 local residents is working with Arada to "help shape a section of park around local needs." A series of workshops is now underway, giving residents the opportunity to "share local knowledge, explore ideas and inform the design of a welcoming and inclusive public space."

Accessible public realm and landscaping sit at the heart of Arada's vision for Thameside West, creating a new destination for recreation, leisure and community use and forging a new connection between the Thames and the Royal Docks. The rich industrial heritage of Silvertown will be woven into the design through the use of ropework-inspired detailing and paths. This underscores Arada's commitment to unlocking and delivering high quality, genuinely affordable new homes that meet local need with a focus on nature and wellbeing.

Situated across the river from Greenwich Peninsula and Canary Wharf, with Royal Victoria Dock, City Hall, Excel and Silvertown to the north and east, Thameside West sits at the meeting point of the Thames, the Royal Docks and some of London's most significant transport, cultural and regeneration infrastructure.

Arada is progressing design development with Transport for London (TfL) on a new DLR station, a major piece of public infrastructure, which it is intended to open in time for the arrival of the site's first residents. The DLR is one of the UK's busiest light rail routes, with 97.8 million passenger journeys recorded during the year ended March 2025. The wider area is well served by public transport, and a new station will offer enhanced accessibility for future Thameside West residents and nearby neighbours and businesses.

Thameside West is being brought forward in partnership with the Greater London Authority's (GLA) Royal Docks Team, reflecting a shared commitment to delivering new homes, public infrastructure, and long-term economic growth across the Royal Docks.

Global architecture firm Gensler, global built environment consultancy Arup, and landscape architects Planit are advising on the scheme.

@TheGreyHouseStories / Chris Taylor Photography



Bellway buys land for 82 low-carbon homes in North Horsham



Bellway has completed the purchase of land to build 82 low-carbon homes within the new Mowbray Village development in North Horsham.

The acquisition follows the submission of a reserved matters planning application earlier this year, for a range of one-, two-, three-, and four-bedroom properties, all featuring air source heat pumps and electric vehicle charging points.

Outline planning permission for up to 2,750 homes along with a business park, retail units, community centre, and leisure and education facilities on land north of the A264 was granted in 2018.

Bellway's proposals are to develop a 6.4-acre parcel of land at the northwestern edge of the first phase of the wider scheme, where construction is already underway. The Bellway site borders Old Holbrook to the west and will be accessed from Moat Road, the main spine road serving this phase of the development.

If the plans are approved, Bellway could start construction work on site in the autumn.

Bellway's plans comprise 72 properties for private sale, featuring two-, three- and four-bedroom houses, and 10 affordable homes ranging from one- and two-bedroom maisonettes to four-bedroom houses.

Keepmoat strengthens Yorkshire team with new technical director



Top 10 UK housebuilder, Keepmoat, has appointed a new technical director set to oversee compliance and design management across its Yorkshire East region.

David Major joins the team with significant experience across the sector, including previous roles with McCarthy & Stone and Stewart Milne Homes. His career spans more than 28 years across both residential and retirement living.

Based in the housebuilder's flagship office in Doncaster, David will oversee the technical delivery of every development from initial site investigations and engineering design through to infrastructure, build quality and compliance with Building Regulations.

In his new role, David will oversee the technical function, supporting the progression of new sites through design, planning and technical delivery. He will work closely with internal teams and external partners "to ensure developments are technically viable, helping to support Keepmoat's continued growth across Yorkshire," said the firm.

Allison Homes secures site for 70 new homes in Trowbridge

Allison Homes South West has exchanged contracts on a site on the southern edge of Trowbridge, Wiltshire, further strengthening the housebuilder's growing presence in the county and across the wider region.

The circa 20-acre greenfield site, located north of North Bradley and south of the A363, benefits from outline planning permission for 70 new homes. The site has an anticipated gross development value in excess of £20m, with completion of the purchase expected later this year.

Allison Homes continues to build momentum across Wiltshire and beyond, having recently submitted a reserved matters application for 100 new homes in Calne and secured planning permission for 70 new homes in Congresbury, North Somerset. This latest deal marks a further step forward in the housebuilder's commitment to delivering "attractive, well-connected homes in desirable locations while supporting investment and economic growth across the region."



'Indicative site masterplan' of the 70-home Trowbridge scheme

New CFO joins the Owl Group

The Owl Group has announced it has appointed Steve Breslin as its new group chief financial officer.

Steve joins Owl Group's leadership team, where he will lead the financial strategy, ensuring the housebuilder has the financial strength and commercial discipline to support its growth plans across the Midlands for both its Owl Homes and Owl Partnerships brands.

Steve brings more than 20 years of industry experience to Owl, having held senior finance roles at Taylor Wimpey, Galliford Try Partnerships and, most recently, Lovell Partnerships, where he was a member of the main board.

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COMMENT

Concrete bricks' sustainable role

Jamie Gledhill of Brett Landscaping and Building Products, explores how UK manufactured concrete bricks can reduce embodied carbon while supporting resilient, efficient housing delivery.



Housebuilders and developers are under growing pressure to deliver homes that meet increasingly ambitious sustainability targets while remaining commercially viable and buildable. From reducing embodied carbon and supporting responsible sourcing to improving supply chain resilience and programme certainty, every material choice is coming under greater scrutiny.

While discussions around sustainable construction often focus on glazing, insulation or operational energy performance, external walling materials also play an important role in the overall environmental footprint of a development. As a result, specifiers are increasingly taking a closer look at the sustainability credentials of masonry products and evaluating options that can help support both environmental and commercial objectives.

One solution that deserves greater consideration is the UK manufactured concrete brick. Combining lower manufacturing energy requirements, durable long-term performance and the benefits of local production, concrete bricks offer developers and housebuilders a practical route towards more sustainable residential construction.

RETHINKING TRADITIONAL ASSUMPTIONS

For many years, clay bricks have often been regarded as the default masonry choice for residential developments. However, assumptions surrounding sustainability can sometimes overlook the realities of modern manufacturing processes and whole-life environmental impacts. One of the most significant differences between concrete and clay bricks lies in how they are produced.

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Traditional clay bricks are manufactured through a firing process that requires temperatures commonly exceeding 1,000°C. Maintaining these temperatures for prolonged periods demands significant amounts of energy, contributing substantially to embodied carbon. Concrete bricks, on the other hand, are not kiln fired. Once formed, they achieve their strength through a curing process that relies on the natural hydration of cement. This process generates heat as part of the chemical reaction, reducing the need for the high-energy manufacturing methods associated with fired products.

Modern production techniques further enhance efficiency by retaining and using heat generated during curing, helping minimise additional energy requirements. The result is a product that can deliver lower embodied carbon while maintaining the performance standards demanded by modern residential construction.

For developers seeking practical ways to reduce the carbon impact of projects without compromising quality or buildability, this difference in manufacturing can be particularly significant.

THE VALUE OF UK MANUFACTURING

Sustainability extends well beyond the factory gate. Transportation emissions, supply chain resilience and procurement practices all contribute to the environmental impact of construction materials. For residential developers operating within demanding build programmes, supply chain certainty has become increasingly important in recent years. Delays in material availability can have significant implications for project costs, site productivity and completion schedules.

UK manufactured concrete bricks help address these challenges by reducing reliance on lengthy international supply chains and minimising transportation distances compared with imported alternatives. The production cycle for concrete bricks is also considerably shorter than that of clay bricks, helping improve product availability and responsiveness to market demand. This can be particularly valuable on larger housing developments where maintaining momentum across multiple phases of construction is critical. Shorter transport routes not only reduce associated emissions but also provide greater confidence around lead times and continuity of supply.



For developers focused on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) commitments, supporting domestic manufacturing also offers wider benefits. Investment in UK industry helps sustain skilled jobs, strengthens local economies and supports the long-term resilience of the construction supply chain.

DURABILITY DELIVERS LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

When assessing sustainability, it is important to consider how products perform throughout the life of a building, not simply during manufacture.

A material that performs reliably over decades can significantly reduce the environmental impacts associated with repair, maintenance and replacement.

Concrete bricks have a long-established track record within residential construction, delivering robust performance across a wide range of applications. Manufactured to stringent quality standards, they offer excellent dimensional accuracy, durability and resistance to weathering. Their consistency can also support efficient construction on site by helping minimise waste and reducing the need for remedial work.

For developers, durability translates into more than environmental benefits. Buildings that maintain their appearance and performance over time can help reduce lifecycle costs while supporting long-term asset value.

As the industry increasingly adopts whole-life carbon assessments, durability is becoming a far more important consideration when evaluating the sustainability of construction materials.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF MODERN HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

Today's residential schemes require masonry products capable of meeting a variety of structural, aesthetic and performance requirements.

Facing bricks provide attractive, durable facades suitable for a wide range of residential developments. Available in multiple colours, textures and finishes, they offer architects and developers considerable design flexibility while delivering long-term weather resistance and colour retention.

Engineering bricks provide the strength and durability required for challenging environments, including foundations, below damp-proof course construction and applications where higher levels of loading or moisture resistance are required.

Concrete commons offer a cost-effective and practical solution for concealed construction elements where performance and efficiency are primary considerations.

Together, these products provide developers with access to a complete masonry solution from a single UK manufacturer, simplifying procurement while supporting consistency across projects.

A PRACTICAL CHOICE FOR FUTURE HOUSING

As housebuilders and developers continue to balance sustainability goals with commercial and operational realities, practical material choices will play an increasingly important role. UK-manufactured concrete bricks combine lower manufacturing energy requirements, reliable durability and the advantages of local production within a single solution. They support efforts to reduce embodied carbon, strengthen supply chain resilience and deliver long-term building performance without requiring significant changes to established construction practices.

Most importantly, they demonstrate that sustainable construction is not simply about adopting new technologies. Often, meaningful improvements can be achieved through informed material selection and a greater understanding of how products perform throughout their lifecycle.

For residential developers looking to build lower-carbon communities while maintaining programme certainty, quality and value, UK-manufactured concrete bricks represent a sustainable solution that is ready to deliver today.

Jamie Gledhill is engineering technical manager at Brett Landscaping and Building Products

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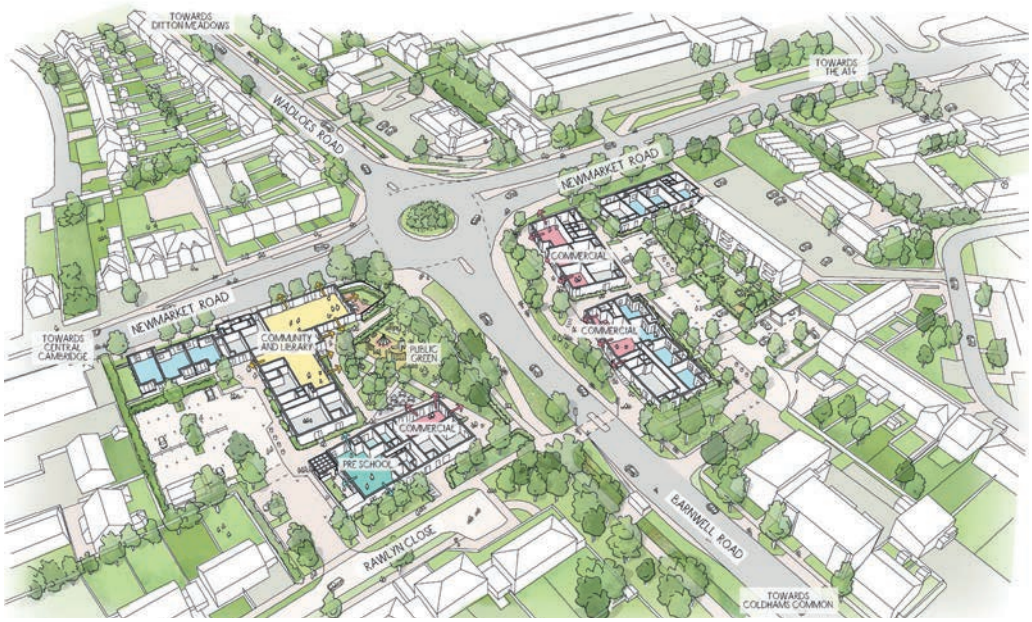


Glen Richardson
Carter Jonas

COMMENT

A lesson in densification

Glen Richardson of Carter Jonas, explores how the Cambridgeshire district of East Barnwell shows that using land more intensively can deliver affordable homes, stronger services, and better places.



High density sometimes has an image problem. It is often presented as the point at which development becomes excessive: more homes, taller buildings, less space and greater pressure on local services. Yet poorly designed low-density development can see less efficient use of land, entrenchment of car dependence, and leave shops and community facilities without enough people to sustain them. But instead of regarding density as a problem, it is better to ask what it can achieve.

Centre for Cities' report 'Flat Britain: The urban density gap and how to close it' estimates that British urban cores have a density gap of at least 2.3 million homes compared with similar cities in France and Japan. It identifies the missing form not as towers, but as mid-rise apartments of four to nine storeys.

DENSITY AS A TOOL, NOT AN OBJECTIVE

The test of good density is whether the additional homes support usable open space, safe streets, local services and a mix of homes that meets local need.

More residents means more footfall for shops and services. Streets benefit from more natural surveillance, and higher-density development can make more efficient use of infrastructure.

However, higher density needs careful masterplanning: parking must be handled well; private and shared amenity should be planned together; building heights should respond to their role in the townscape; and ground floor spaces matter because they provide outside and community space for more residents.

Density also has a placemaking role. In a low-density suburb, a denser local centre can create hierarchy, identity and orientation. It can act as a landmark and a node: the place where routes meet, services cluster and public life becomes more visible.

FROM 18 HOMES TO 120 HOMES

East Barnwell, a part of Cambridge for which Carter Jonas prepared the regeneration strategy in 2022, provides an emerging case study in how carefully planned increases in density can support regeneration.


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Before redevelopment, the local centre comprised ageing shops, 18 outdated flats, garages and fragmented areas of open space. Despite having been identified for regeneration in the 2006 Local Plan, comprehensive redevelopment did not begin until 2025.

The regeneration strategy, now being delivered on the ground, increases the number of homes from 18 to 120 in the local centre of East Barnwell. All are affordable council homes, including 48 for social rent and 72 available at around 80% of market rents. The buildings range from three to six storeys and sit alongside a new community centre, library, pre-school, cafe and commercial units.

That uplift creates the capacity for substantially more affordable housing while supporting the regeneration of the local centre. Furthermore, the additional residents will support the new commercial and community uses. In this instance, greater density helps support three objectives: meeting housing need, underpinning local services and giving the centre a stronger identity.

The built form is significant: East Barnwell is not simply adding more homes to a suburb; it is creating a place that feels more like a town centre, with enough height and enclosure to frame Barnwell Road, mark an important junction and give the neighbourhood a stronger civic heart.

This is particularly important in Cambridge, where housing costs make it difficult for many people who work in the city to live locally. Affordable homes within an existing neighbourhood can help retain families and key workers while reducing longer commutes.

FLATS, FAMILIES & MARKET REALITY

East Barnwell also points to a wider issue: much urban density is delivered through flats. Family demand can often favour houses, while confidence has been tested by concerns about ground rents, service charges, cladding and building management.



East Barnwell is different because it is 100% affordable council housing in a rebuilt local centre, rather than a market-led apartment scheme. But if policy expects more urban density, leasehold reform, building safety regulation and family-friendly space standards will all play an important role in ensuring flats are attractive, practical homes.

WORKING HARDER WITH LESS SPACE

The most instructive part of East Barnwell is not the housing numbers, but what happens between the buildings.

The local centre masterplan replaces fragmented and underused land with a central square and landscaped park. Buildings frame the public realm and provide active ground-floor uses. The scheme provides clearer walking and cycling routes and vehicle parking has been reduced. The scheme adds 92 new trees and is designed to achieve 20% biodiversity net gain.

Housing quality has not been treated as the price of density. Around 90% of the homes are dual aspect and the development is gas free and includes air source heat pumps, mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, solar panels and green roofs for new buildings. The scheme demonstrates how a more intensive use of land alongside stronger environmental performance and more coherent open space.

The quantity of open space is only one measure of amenity. A leftover grass verge may add to a measure of open space while contributing little to daily life; a well-overlooked, connected and purposeful public space can offer greater social value.

COMMUNITY IS PART OF THE DESIGN

Achieving higher density also depends on trust between residents and the local authority. Residents are more likely to accept substantial change when they can see what it provides in return and when their aspirations and suggestions influence the scheme.

Engagement on the regeneration strategy at East Barnwell began in 2019 and included workshops, drop-in events and discussions with residents, local organisations, businesses and existing tenants. Much of this occurred through the Covid pandemic in 2020-21.

Concerns about open space and the operation of shops during construction shaped the response. The landscape



was reorganised to be more useful, and a planning condition secured a strategy for temporary commercial provision. In June 2024, Cambridge City Council's planning committee approved the scheme unanimously.

A PRACTICAL MODEL FOR URBAN GROWTH

The existing National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), asks planning authorities to make efficient use of land and the Government's proposed revisions go further, supporting urban and suburban densification and minimum densities in well-connected locations. Delivery will still depend on local judgement, design capability and viable partnership models.

East Barnwell is being delivered through the Cambridge Investment Partnership. The partnership between Cambridge City Council and The Hill Group, with Carter Jonas acting as planning adviser. The model combines public-sector land and knowledge of local need with private-sector development experience and expertise.

Not every site being delivered by the Cambridge Investment Partnership has the same site ownership, funding or community context and not every local centre should by default be rebuilt to higher densities, but East Barnwell demonstrates at least one transferable principle: that density is most usefully assessed by the value it creates, not simply by the number it records.

At East Barnwell, more homes will enable a 100% affordable housing programme in the local centre, supporting renewed community facilities, a stronger landmark and a more sustainable centre. For these reasons, the development provides a key example of how increased density can deliver on objectives of place.

Glen Richardson is an associate partner at Carter Jonas

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THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

Accelerating sustainable communities through innovation & regeneration

Shaun Fielding from Keepmoat's West Midlands division discusses how the industry can deliver new homes at scale through focusing on innovation and regeneration, including by harnessing the New Homes Accelerator.



The housing sector is under growing pressure to increase the pace and scale of home delivery, while also responding to evolving regulations around environmental performance, sustainability and the quality of new communities.

Increasingly, these considerations are being addressed earlier in the development process, alongside questions of viability, deliverability and long-term value.

The transition towards 'carbon free' building, alongside the implementation of new regulations, is placing greater emphasis on brownfield land, sustainable technology, and the way new developments integrate with their surrounding areas.

For developers, local authorities and communities alike, this creates both challenges and opportunities as the sector adapts to changing standards.

PRIORITISING HOUSING DELIVERY IN THE MIDLANDS AND BEYOND

Across the Midlands, a significant barrier to delivering new homes can be securing land and obtaining planning permission at pace. As of early 2026, planning in the region has experienced significant bottlenecks, with 67% of local plans being delayed, resulting in around 55,000 potential homes being stalled.

However, the industry is committed to creating a turning point, with the Government recently introducing the New Homes Accelerator. This involves actively working with developers and local authorities to address specific barriers on large-scale sites, with a focus on delivering regeneration.

PRIORITISING REGENERATION

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is well equipped to manage risk early, unlock challenging sites and work in partnership with stakeholders to bring forward sustainable communities.

Brownfield developments often come with greater complexity and uncertainty. Issues such as remediation, existing infrastructure constraints, ground conditions and planning sensitivities can all affect programme certainty. While some brownfield sites benefit from existing roads and utilities, addressing these risks early often requires more detailed investigation and coordination, which can extend timelines.

Differences in build timelines between greenfield and brownfield developments can be significant, largely because of the complexity and risk profile of each site. Greenfield sites are usually more straightforward to deliver, as they start from a clean slate with fewer constraints.

Our region has considerable potential, with more than 190,000 homes feasible on brownfield sites throughout the Midlands. Therefore, we see the utilisation of brownfield land to meet housing demand as one of the most significant opportunities, which is backed by government initiatives and partnerships with local authorities.

We pride ourselves on transforming disused, previously developed land into multi-tenure, sustainable communities, with around 60 to 70% of our developments built on brownfield sites.

As an example, we are a strategic partner of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), with a commitment to deliver 4,000 additional homes across the region. The partnership will also support net-zero brownfield development, increase housebuilding activity by 50%, and create local jobs and apprenticeships.

This commitment is already being delivered through the flagship Friar Park regeneration scheme, where Keepmoat is working with WMCA and Sandwell Council to transform a former waste treatment plant.

The scheme will deliver 600 new homes, including at least 25% affordable housing, alongside significant regeneration of the wider site.

SUSTAINABILITY IN HOUSEBUILDING IS UNDERGOING A SHIFT IN MINDSET

SUSTAINABILITY SHIFT

To proactively implement evolving regulations, we are already building net-zero ready homes that can reduce carbon emissions by up to 80% compared to older regulations.

Our latest developments come equipped with air source heat pumps, solar PV panels, superior insulation and EV charging points as standard features.

Our commitment to sustainable development not only helps residents save on energy bills, but also contributes to lowering their overall carbon emissions. As we look to the future, we anticipate continued cost increases alongside a growing demand for housing.

To become more sustainable, the housing industry must prioritise actions that effectively address both the environmental impact of construction and the long-term energy efficiency of homes.

At our Mill Place development in Upper Tean, future-proofing technologies, including solar panels, help to reduce carbon emissions by up to two-thirds compared to older housing stock. This not only helps residents save money on their bills but also ensures they live in homes built for the future.

Sustainability in housebuilding is undergoing a shift in mindset. Rather than treating it as a set of discrete technologies or planning obligations to be checked off, developers are increasingly approaching sustainability as a priority for development as a whole.

BRINGING THESE TOGETHER

As an industry, we shouldn't have to choose between delivering homes and building better places through regeneration. These aspects should go hand in hand and be considered from the outset.

Placemaking is at the heart of our developments, and the decisions we make today will shape communities and environmental outcomes for decades to come.

Looking to the future, housebuilders need to balance the requirement to deliver more homes with the opportunity to create sustainable, well-connected, and resilient places for the future.

Shaun Fielding is regional managing director at Keepmoat

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Ask the Manufacturer - Burdens



LEFT TO RIGHT:
Mark Gillies, Ken Graham and Andrew Taylor

James Parker speaks to Burdens' national sales director Ken Graham, technical sales manager Andrew Taylor, and director of technical solutions Mark Gillies. They tackle the key questions on how developers can take a more holistic approach to stormwater management, the role of natural and engineered SuDS, and how specialist expertise can help projects save time, cash and carbon.

WHY IS STORMWATER MANAGEMENT BECOMING SUCH A CRITICAL ISSUE FOR HOUSEBUILDERS & DEVELOPERS, PARTICULARLY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 1.5M HOMES TARGET & THE NEED TO BUILD ON FLOOD PLAINS?

Graham: Stormwater management has become critical because of the increasing frequency of severe weather events and the pressure this puts on traditional drainage systems. When those systems are overwhelmed, we see the consequences in the form of serious flooding.

At the same time, development has replaced areas of open land where water would previously have naturally soaked into the ground. We are now dealing with much larger volumes of water entering an ageing drainage system, so every development needs to consider how that water is going to be managed and attenuated.

We are seeing more intense rainfall and heavier downpours, which has increased the need for SuDS and systems that can manage water more efficiently. With millions of properties already at risk of flooding, it really highlights why these solutions need to be planned, designed, installed and maintained properly.

CAN YOU BREAK DOWN WHAT CONSTITUTES STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AS AN OVERALL STRATEGY FOR A DEVELOPMENT?

Taylor: There isn't one single solution. The most common approaches include underground attenuation tanks and soakaways, which store water and release it at a controlled rate. But there are also swales, detention basins, retention ponds, permeable paving, rain gardens, and rain planters.

The important thing is to look at the development holistically – you can have several of those solutions working together. A large underground tank might provide the bulk of the storage, while rain gardens, permeable paving or smaller soakaways deal with water at the individual plot level.

Even the more natural-looking solutions have an engineered element behind them. There are calculations around how much water each feature needs to store and how it will perform during a storm event. So it's about combining the right solutions for the site rather than automatically choosing one approach.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE ON THE BALANCE BETWEEN NATURAL AND ENGINEERED OR BELOW-GROUND SUDS IN EACH DEVELOPMENT?

Graham: It really comes down to what is right for that particular site. Two contractors looking at the same piece of land could potentially want to attenuate the water in completely different ways.

That's where we come in. We're not trying to push one particular solution. Our role is to understand what the developer or contractor is trying to achieve and then offer the right solution for that situation. The site, its topography, available space, cost and the overall design all have an influence.

Sometimes a development will benefit from a larger natural feature, while on another site there simply isn't the space, and an underground solution makes more sense. It's about finding the right balance.

HOW DO NATURAL SUDS FEATURES HELP TO INCREASE THE RESIDENT APPEAL AS WELL AS BIODIVERSITY OF DEVELOPMENTS, AND WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT IN THE CURRENT MARKET?

Gillies: When SuDS are done well, they can transform the amenity value of a development. Ponds, swales and other green solutions can support biodiversity and wellbeing, while also making a development feel softer and more natural.

There is a real opportunity to create developments that feel more balanced and liveable rather than simply being rows of houses surrounded by hard landscaping. Natural SuDS can help retain some of the character of the land while also providing a genuine drainage function.

For developers, that's important because these features can become part of the wider proposition of the development. A pond or swale isn't simply somewhere to put excess water; if it's designed properly, it can become an attractive and multifunctional part of the environment.

IS IT VERY DIFFICULT TO INCORPORATE COMPREHENSIVE NATURAL SUDS IN TIGHT URBAN SITES?

Gillies: It can be challenging, particularly where space is constrained, but that's where taking a holistic approach becomes important. Natural solutions such as ponds and swales can take up more space, whereas underground storage allows developers to make better use of the available land and potentially create more room for plots.

The answer isn't necessarily to choose natural or engineered solutions. It can be about combining them. You might have a larger underground system dealing with the bulk of the storage while incorporating smaller-scale natural features such as rain gardens or permeable paving elsewhere across the development.

The earlier those decisions are made, the more options the developer has available.

WHY IS EARLY-STAGE THINKING ON SUDS IMPORTANT AND WHO TYPICALLY TAKES CHARGE OF DESIGN?

Taylor: It needs to be considered at the earliest possible stage, ideally during concept design and planning. If you know you want ponds, basins or swales as part of the development, the housing layout

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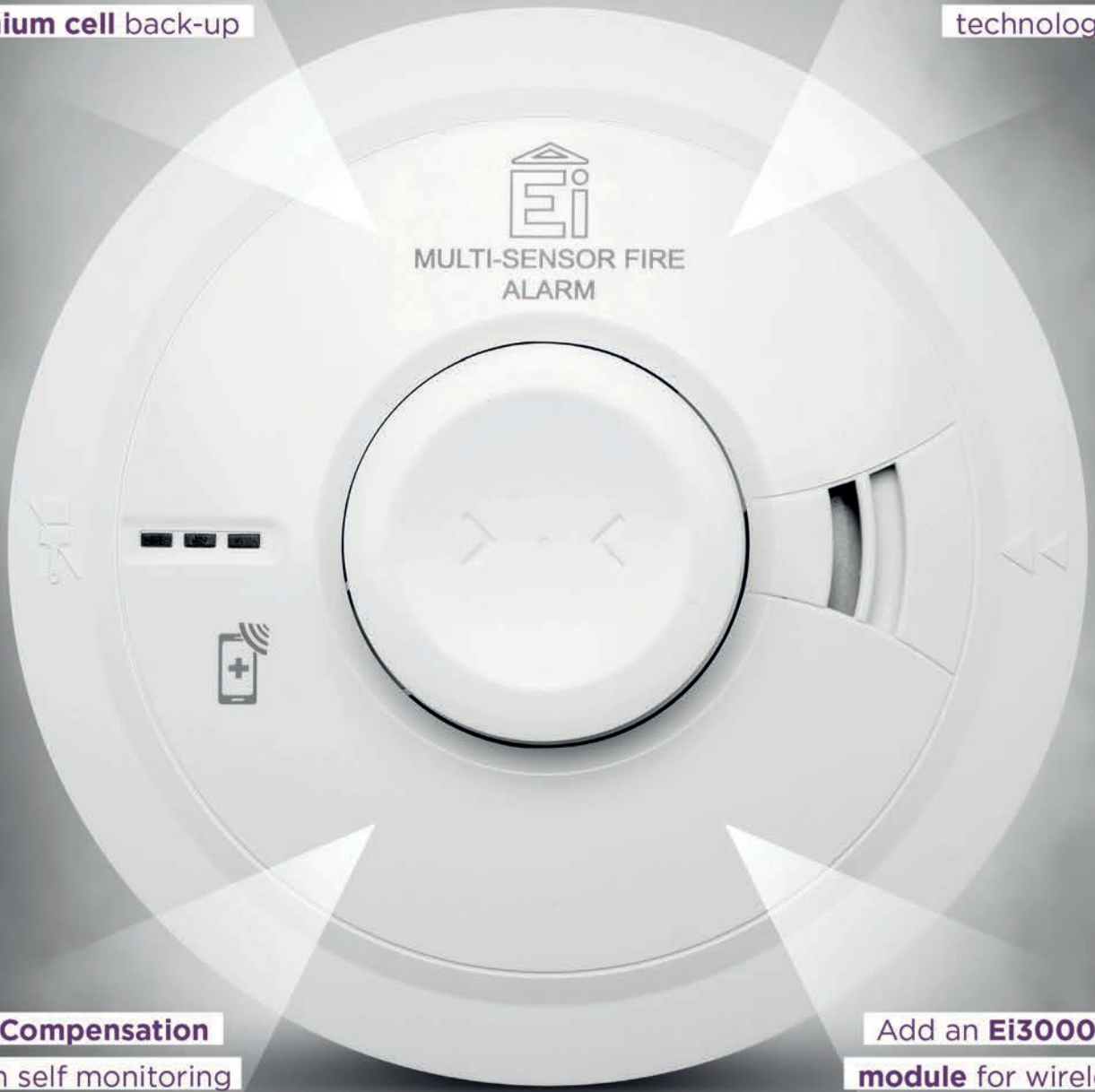
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needs to work around those features rather than trying to find somewhere to put them once the houses have already been designed.

Looking at it early allows you to consider how much land is required, what the costs are and what you want the development to look and feel like. If you leave it until the end, your options become much more constrained, and you can end up trying to shoehorn drainage features into whatever space is left.

It should be part of the wider design process, with the developer, designer, contractor and relevant specialists working together, rather than treating drainage as something that is added at the end.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO DEVELOPERS WHO WANT TO TAKE A MORE PROACTIVE APPROACH TO HOLISTIC STORMWATER MANAGEMENT BUT ARE UNSURE WHERE TO START?

Gillies: Start as early as possible. Concept planning, detailed design and construction all need to be considered as part of the same process.

The earlier SuDS are embedded into a scheme, the more cost-effective the whole process can be. If you wait until construction is under way, you may have to go back, make changes and alter specifications, which costs both time and money.

It's also about getting the right people around the table. If everyone works together from the outset, you can look at the different solutions available and make sure the final approach is practical to install, cost-effective and appropriate for the site.

WHAT ABOUT MAINTENANCE – WHO MAINTAINS SUDS INSTALLATIONS, AND WHAT HAPPENS IF MAINTENANCE ISN'T FACTORED INTO DESIGN?

Taylor: Maintenance is absolutely critical, particularly for systems that are buried underground and out of sight. We've seen drawings for attenuation tanks where there isn't sufficient access for inspection or maintenance. If you can't get into a system, how are you going to clean it and keep it performing properly?

The same principle applies to above-ground drainage. You can see existing schemes where road gullies or channel drainage have become blocked because they haven't been maintained. The design may have been perfectly adequate, but if the system isn't looked after, its performance will decline.

With underground attenuation, silt, fines and oils can build up over time, reducing the available storage capacity and potentially causing problems further down the network. So access for inspection, cleaning and maintenance needs to be considered as part of the original design, rather than treated as an afterthought.

WHAT ARE GEOSYNTHETICS AND WHY DO THEY PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SUDS?

Gillies: Geosynthetics are typically man-made polymers used as value-engineered alternatives to traditional construction methods. One of their key functions is filtration, which makes them particularly well suited to SuDS applications.

They're still relatively underused when people are considering SuDS. For example, grass and gravel pavers made from recycled plastics can provide a permeable surface that allows rainfall to pass through naturally, removing the need for some traditional drainage infrastructure.

They can also be used as part of the layers beneath the surface, alongside geotextiles, sub-base materials and, where required, geogrids. Non-woven geotextiles, for example, provide strong filtration properties.

The wider benefit is that geosynthetics can reduce the volume of traditional stone required, as well as reducing installation time and the need to mobilise heavy plant. That can have a significant impact on time, cash and carbon.

WHY IS THERE AN ISSUE AROUND PRODUCTS IN THE MARKET WITHOUT CLEAR ACCREDITATION?

Gillies: Developers need confidence that the products they're specifying are going to perform as intended. There are products on the market where the information provided may be based on a manufacturer's data sheet rather than being supported by the appropriate declaration of performance or relevant standard.

That can make it difficult for specifiers to understand exactly what they're getting and how the product compares with an established standard.

For example, Burden's Aztex MW100 non-woven geotextile meets the BS 8661 standard. Having the appropriate standards, accreditations and supporting documentation gives designers and contractors greater confidence in the performance and suitability of the product.

WHAT OTHER PRODUCT TYPES HAVE SEEN RECENT INNOVATION THAT IS HELPING RESIDENTIAL SUDS PROJECTS ACHIEVE SUCCESS?

Taylor: There have been developments across a number of product categories. With modular attenuation systems, for example, manufacturers have been increasing the void ratio of some products, allowing them to hold more water within the same overall volume. That can help reduce the footprint of a tank.

We're also seeing more use of rain gardens and planters at individual properties, permeable paving and tree pits. There are developments in crate systems too, including shallower options that can provide greater flexibility where depth is restricted.

The important thing is that developers and engineers don't necessarily have to accept the first solution presented to them. There may be another product or approach that reduces the footprint, eliminates the need for additional tanks or makes the installation easier.

WHAT IS THE EXPERTISE THAT BURDENS CAN BRING TO PROJECTS TO ASSIST SPECIFIERS IN SAVING 'TIME, CASH & CARBON'?

Graham: Our role is to bring together technical, logistical and product knowledge to help contractors find the right solution for the scheme. We're not simply there to sell a particular product. Sometimes the right solution may actually mean we sell less, but if it's the right solution for the customer and the project, that's what we should be doing.

We've seen projects where changing the design has dramatically reduced the number of deliveries required, while also reducing cost and carbon. In one example, a design change reduced the number of wagon movements from around 97 to around 17 while achieving the same overall solution.

That's the value of looking at the whole project rather than simply pricing what's on a drawing. Andrew and Mark can look at a design and ask whether there's a different way of achieving the same outcome, whether the footprint can be reduced, whether installation can be simplified or whether the amount of material and site movements can be reduced.

We're effectively acting as the link between the developer, contractor and manufacturer, bringing those different areas of expertise together. Ultimately, it's about understanding what the customer is trying to achieve and finding a solution that works technically, commercially and practically.

To listen to a podcast where you can hear more of what Burdens have to say on SuDS, scan the QR code.



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SOCIAL HOUSING PROJECT REPORT

Salford keys to a community

To meet a growing local need for social housing in Salford, ForHousing has completed its White Lion development – 18 social rent homes on a brownfield site designed with a focus on creating safe, modern places to live. Roseanne Field reports.

The need for social housing in the UK is ever increasing, with demand far outweighing availability – Shelter estimates that there are currently 1.3 million households on social housing waiting lists in England. The National Housing Federation says that at least 90,000 homes need to be built a year to meet the demand.

This figure is significantly higher than the 70,000 homes the Government announced would be built over the next 10 years, though this forms only part of a plan to build 300,000 social and affordable homes under its £39bn Social and Affordable Homes Programme.

Around £529m has been allocated to Greater Manchester, where more than 97,000 households are on social housing waiting lists, 26,000 of which



have been identified as being in priority need. Within the region, Salford reportedly builds more social homes than any other local authority. Despite this, Salford City Council says it currently has up to 3,500 applications on its housing register, and is receiving approximately 30 new applications a day.

The urgency of the need for affordable housing is indisputable. One organisation chipping away at this task is social housing provider ForHousing, which currently owns 19,000 homes across the north west in areas including Salford, Knowsley, Oldham, Fylde and Trafford.

The provider places emphasis on positively impacting the lives of its social housing tenants, by providing "safe, well-maintained homes while making sure we deliver customer focused services that are fair and efficient," explains ForHousing director of development, Chris Mather.

ForHousing prides itself on driving tenant satisfaction as well at what it calls "an inclusive culture – creating a place where everyone can thrive and be themselves," adds Mather. "We aim to provide excellent services that are efficient and easy to access through automation and detailed insight."

To support the region's acute need for social and affordable housing, ForHousing is continuously looking to add to its portfolio, with seven developments currently underway and a further two due to start this year, and over 1,000 planned homes in the pipeline.

In the "family-friendly" town of Swinton, located within the City of Salford, sits one recently completed scheme by the firm. It makes use of a disused piece of brownfield land and supports Salford City Council's "priority to increase the supply of social and affordable housing across the borough," says Mather.



The White Lion scheme comprises 18 apartments for social rent – a mix of one and two beds

THE LAYOUT WAS ALSO DESIGNED WITH SECURE ACCESS AND "CLEAR LINES OF MANAGEMENT" WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY MAINTAINING A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

Known as the White Lion scheme, due to its location behind the White Lion pub in Swinton, the development comprises 18 new social rent apartments, which are a mix of one- and two-bedrooms. Historically the site had a variety of uses, and at the time of beginning the project it was home to a car park and grassed area. It was a win-win for ForHousing, "helping local people access high-quality homes and genuinely affordable rents while making effective use of a brownfield site within an established community," Mather explains.

The project is only five minutes from local shops, Swinton town centre and public transport links, providing access to necessary amenities and keeping residents connected to the community.

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

Collaboration is key on most projects, and this was certainly no exception. ForHousing worked with construction and development company Whitfield & Brown – who also took care of the planning application – on the delivery of the project.

The land-inclusive nature of the project meant that assembling the right team was crucial. Whitfield & Brown appointed BTP Architects as designers for the project, while ForHousing engaged AA Projects (now Drees & Sommer) as employer's agent.

The development was also supported by funding from Homes England and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Brownfield Fund, which was launched in 2020 from the MHCLG's £400m Brownfield Housing Fund. It's designed to unlock housing development on brownfield sites where it otherwise wouldn't be possible, or wouldn't happen at the desired pace. In total the scheme cost £3.9m, of which £1.3m was funded by Homes England and £270,000 by the GMCA Brownfield Fund. The remaining cost was funded by ForHousing investment and group loan facilities.

Mather says the grant funding element was crucial: "It played an important role in making the scheme viable and ensuring the homes could be delivered for social rent," he explains. "Funding programmes such as these help housing providers bring forward affordable housing developments that might otherwise be challenging to deliver because of construction costs and market conditions."

STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

The size and number of apartments in the development was carefully considered. In total there are 18 apartments, comprising 13 one-bedroom apartments at 50 m^2



The apartments are equipped with air source heat pumps and efficient radiators, as well as high levels of insulation

and five two-bedroom apartments at 61 m^2. These sizes were chosen to meet the National Design Space Standards (NDSS), in accordance with Homes England requirements. It also tallied with affordable housing schemes ForHousing has delivered previously in Salford.

The ratio of one- and two-bedroom units was arrived at "in conjunction with our housing management directorate which is based on current lettings patterns within the area," explains Mather. "The chosen mix reflects local housing demand and helps ensure the homes meet the needs of people most likely to benefit from apartment living, while remaining affordable and sustainable over the long term."

Additionally, the housing provider has found "significant challenges" letting two-bedroom apartments, due to the way in which housing benefit works. "Families that are on housing benefit generally need at least three people to occupy the apartment to avoid being affected by under-occupation rules," Mather explains.

While applying their own strategy, ForHousing also liaised closely with the Strategic Housing Department at Salford City Council to ensure their design and approach to the scheme mix would meet their affordable housing need locally.

This helped finalise the apartment ratio, but also led to the inclusion of four 'accessible friendly' homes on the ground floor, in line with Building Regulations M4(2): Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings. "While there were financial and spatial limitations to achieve compliance as a fully wheelchair accessible apartment, we were able to provide full wetrooms with walk-in showers and double pattress walls for grab rails to be added in the future."

It was agreed with Salford City Council – as per ForHousing's ongoing partnership with the authority – that all of the homes would be let via the council's housing register Salford Home Search. In line with other new homes the housing provider has built in the borough, the agreement means that the homes will be offered to households nominated by the council via its Salford Home Search when they are first let. From second lets onwards nominations will defer to ForHousing's transfer agreement. The homes are also to "remain affordable in perpetuity," Mather explains. "The homes are grant funded affordable housing apartments and are developed with the intention of them remaining so for their lifetime."

The development is three storeys, meaning a lift was not installed – as a general rule Regs (Part M) only require lifts installed in blocks of four





Funding for the scheme was supported by MHCLG's £400m Brownfield Housing Fund

or more storeys, partly in order to keep service charges low for tenants. The block is linear and the apartments comprise an open plan kitchen/living room with a bathroom and one or two bedrooms.

For any developer or housing provider ensuring residents feel safe and secure is a top priority, and ForHousing are no exception. Safety and security were "important considerations" throughout the design process, says Mather. The development has a fully integrated door entry system, providing controlled access to the building, secure cycle storage, bin stores and the rear parking area.

Only letter post box deliveries are allowed, with parcels and large deliveries managed by the tenants themselves. "This ensures that the block, and access to it and internal circulation areas remain as secure as possible." The layout was also designed with secure access and "clear lines of management" in mind, while simultaneously "maintaining a welcoming environment for residents," says Mather.

Aside from safety and security, the other key focus for ForHousing when designing and building social rent homes, is that they feel high quality and attractive while remaining affordable and sustainable now and over the long term. "Key considerations include building safety, energy efficiency, accessibility, durability of materials, future maintenance requirements and the needs of local communities," Mather explains. "Social housing should offer the same quality and design standards as any other tenure, while also delivering long term value and positive outcomes for residents."

CONSTRUCTION & SUSTAINABILITY

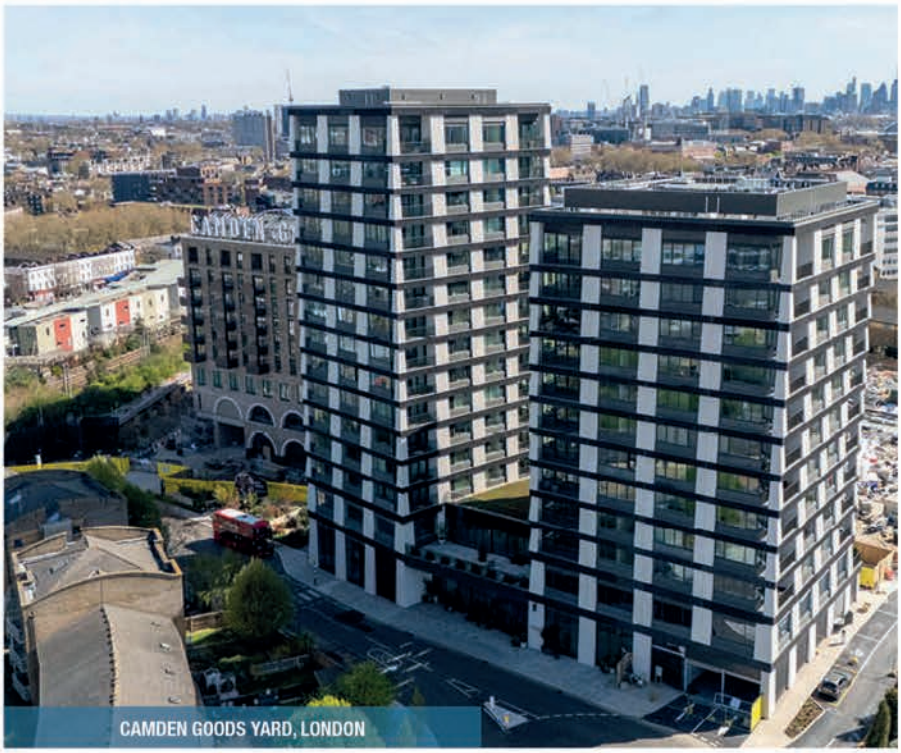
Work began on site in 2024, in the form of the demolition and clearing of some existing garages and hardstanding on the site. Construction was traditional brick and block; the floors and stairs are precast concrete, and the roof comprises structural timber with a single layer composite. While in this instance it was the developer's choice to use more traditional methods, Mather says ForHousing uses MMC systems on approximately 50% of their developments.

The housing provider is committed, says Mather, to "delivering more sustainable homes." This includes a decision to no longer install gas on any of their schemes, switching to air source heat pumps with efficient panel radiators for heating. "White Lion follows this intentional approach for homes designed without a gas connection; residents benefit from low carbon heating technology; the heat pumps help reduce

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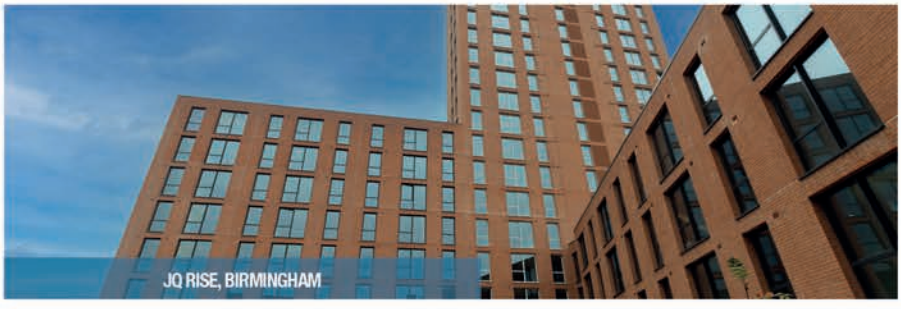
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carbon emissions while supporting lower long term energy costs," explains Mather.

As well as the air source heat pumps, the homes also have high levels of insulation within an energy efficient building fabric – to further help reduce properties' energy consumption as well as support lower running costs for the building's residents. EV charging facilities have been provided in the secure parking area. The homes have an EPC rating of B, and SAP scores range from 82 to 88. "Delivering affordable homes that are also efficient to heat is increasingly important in helping residents manage household costs while reducing environmental impact," Mather says.

Externally, the development includes landscaped amenity areas at the front, creating an "attractive setting" for residents while also boosting kerb appeal and "improving the street scene," says Mather. At the rear of the development is a secure parking area, which "maintains a clear separation between communal and vehicle spaces."

Following handover of the development, it was fully occupied immediately, showing the demand in the local area for affordable housing. Feedback from residents has been, says Mather, "extremely positive." Surveys were conducted three months post-occupation and returned 100% satisfaction from those who responded.

Residents highlighted "the quality of their new homes and the difference secure, affordable housing has made to their lives." One resident in the new scheme, Jayden, described the positive impact having his own new home has had on him personally. "I do feel more settled here. Especially at a young age, to be offered a new build home is like fulfilling a lifetime ambition," he says. "I can't thank ForHousing enough for how much support they gave me throughout the process."

For Mather and the ForHousing team, this scheme is a key example of what can – and needs to – be achieved in the areas where affordable homes are needed most. "The White Lion scheme demonstrates how housing associations, local authorities and development partners can work together to unlock brownfield land and deliver high quality affordable homes," he says. "With demand for social rent continuing to grow, developments like this play an important role in helping people access safe, secure and affordable homes while strengthening local communities." ■

"THE SCHEME MAKES EFFECTIVE USE OF A BROWNFIELD SITE WITHIN AN ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY," CHRIS MATHER, FORHOUSING



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BUILDING INSIGHTS LIVE

In association with Burdens BUILT ON SERVICE

Working Together to Streamline SuDS Schemes



Sponsored by specialist builder's merchant Burdens, a Building Insights LIVE round table was convened partly to tackle the glaring issue of industry misconceptions around sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS). The revelations could help more housebuilders embrace this still unregulated key sustainability area, unlocking benefits for all concerned.

The round table, featuring SuDS experts, housebuilders, supply chain representatives and industry bodies gathered at London's Building Centre in September to share knowledge on how the housebuilding industry was addressing the challenge of stormwater management, explore the issues, and find realistic solutions. Although it isn't legally mandated, SuDS is now required under certain criteria in the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Delegates highlighted how streamlining potentially overdesigned schemes could

ROUND TABLE ATTENDEES

- **Steve Wilson,** Technical Director, Environmental Protection Group
- **Chris Carr,** Managing Director, Carr & Carr Builders (ex-President of Federation of Master Builders)
- **Patrick Flood,** Technical Director UK, Juta UK
- **Charlotte Markey,** Specification Manager, Skygarden
- **Mark Shearer,** Business Development Director, Polypipe Civils & Green Urbanisation
- **Sean Robinson,** Commercial Director, Polypipe Civils & Green Urbanisation
- **Matt Moore,** Strategic Flood & Partnership Manager, Anglian Water
- **Thomas Sturtridge,** Senior Flood Risk Engineer, MEC Consultancy Grp
- **Paul Shaffer,** Director of Policy & Projects, CIWEM (Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management)
- **Glen Westmore,** Co-Chair, The Association of SuDS Authorities
- **Habib Khan,** Director, Meristem Design
- **Colin Nessfield,** Technical Manager, Mineral Products Association
- **Shane Frost,** Technical Director, Green Blue Urban
- **George Grant,** Head of Engineering & Water, The Environmental Protection Group
- **David Owen,** Group Head of Engineering, Taylor Wimpey

SPONSOR ATTENDEES:

- **Ken Graham,** National Sales Director, Burdens
- **Mark Gillies,** Director of Technical Solutions, Burdens
- **Andrew Taylor,** Technical Sales Manager, Burdens



SHARING IS CARING
Our 18-strong group brought key advocates for SuDS delivery together with housebuilders and suppliers to share tips for success

bring cost-effectiveness alongside natural amenity, lessening the impact of new schemes, and bringing future resilience for increasingly extreme storm events.

The SuDS approach to tackling stormwater flows as close as possible to source (rather than 'shifting' the problem to watercourses and drainage outside a site) comprises a palette of solutions. Holistic design and engineering can significantly slow the speed and volume of water, while including landscaping expertise can introduce natural features that help to filter out pollutants. Often combining natural elements like ponds and swales with below-ground methods of attenuating and retaining water, SuDS can bring amenity benefits to residents too, and support biodiversity to help builders comply with Environmental Delivery Plans and BNG requirements.

Chaired by James Parker, Managing Editor of *Housebuilder & Developer*, the round table included leading figures driving SuDS uptake in the industry; Paul Shaffer, director of policy at CIWEM, and Glen Westmore, co-chair of the Association of SuDS Authorities. In addition, key delivery side representatives such as engineer Steve Wilson of Environmental Protection Group, David Owen, head of engineering at Taylor Wimpey, and Construction Leadership Council member Chris Carr (MD of Cleethorpes-based SME housebuilder Carr & Carr Builders), gave insights from their varied experience of how SuDS can be implemented in projects.

Representing our sponsors Burdens were Ken Graham, National Sales Director, Mark Gillies, Director of Technical Solutions, and Andrew Taylor, Technical Sales Manager. They showed how early consideration of design issues and innovation, as well as future maintenance, could bring a series of compelling benefits for clients, countering some industry assumptions.

SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE

As a specialist merchant supporting the sector with groundworks and SuDS solutions, Burdens has positioned itself as a trusted industry voice on SuDS solutions, including advising housebuilder clients on appropriate approaches – from natural SuDS to 'engineered' below ground systems, to hybrids of the two. They shared issues together with other delegates, and gained knowledge on the design and delivery process from them. We worked with Burdens on recent research looking at housebuilders' views on stormwater management approaches and SuDs. This helped to inform the discussion, and root it in real-world experience of housebuilders.

The round table explored the potential of both natural and engineered SuDS, across a range of housebuilding contexts. Delegates however also acknowledged issues such as lack of Government regulation in England, the dangers of cost-based value engineering, and accountability in the industry. There was agreement that traditionally groundworks had not been holistically considered in terms of SuDS factors and robust solutions to managing water, often treated as 'out of sight and out of mind.'

By choosing a planning policy route rather than implementing Schedule 3 of the Floods Act to mandate SuDS as had been hoped, concerted action has been largely left to the industry's own volition. Therefore design approaches, as well as funding and specification of each installation, has largely been done ad hoc according to each client and delivery teams' criteria, with a resulting variable picture in terms of finished schemes' quality. The recently updated NPPF has stronger wording around encouraging natural SuDS solutions, and delivering multiple benefits through single solutions, and clarifies that all projects in Flood Zones 2 and 3 or Critical Drainage Areas must include SuDS.

Achieving the right solution for a particular site requires the kind of expertise and knowledge that was demonstrated at the round table. With tight urban sites in particular likely to struggle to easily deliver large areas of natural SuDS, and the amenity these can provide as well as biodiversity and water quality, there is a pressing need to engage good cross-disciplinary expertise. Delegates including Burdens' representatives revealed how the aims could be delivered with more streamlined approaches – combining lower cost and higher value with effectiveness and amenity, if the right design knowledge and advice is engaged.

The discussion showed that this could mean more time needed to be spent in the design process, and also that some time-honoured groundwork approaches may need to be challenged. But a questioning approach which takes in established SuDS principles, while involving residents, is a no-brainer for achieving successful schemes on our diverse range of both new build and redeveloped sites.

THE DEBATE

Ken Graham, National Sales Director at Burdens, kicked off the session by thanking the group for attending, and reiterating the 'four pillars of SuDS' (as defined in CIRIA's 'SuDS Manual' – showing Burdens' focus on the broad range of benefits and solutions (water quantity, water quality, amenity and biodiversity). He said that "rather than seeing water as a problem to be solved,

the industry should be saying water is an asset to be looked after." Graham also stressed Burdens' sales maxim of "time, cash, carbon" – highlighting time savings, as well the crucial sustainability benefits of retaining water on sites, but also avoiding the carbon emissions of traditional approaches.

The first session of the debate looked at current challenges, but also the current state of play on the quality of SuDS, according to our delegates, who identified a very mixed picture across the country. They also delved into some of the ways that designs could be refined and streamlined, saving cost but even improving functionality long-term. When housebuilders are employing SuDS, is the design of schemes given enough prominence/time by contractors in programmes, especially given the possible cost savings? Is overengineering and reverting to received wisdom a default setting? Several in the meeting agreed it was a common risk, but one that could be surmounted.

Our joint research with Burdens found that most housebuilders asked said they were using SuDS on projects, but did this reflect the experience of delegates? Designer Habib Khan said his firm had completed 100 SuDS projects in schools, but it's only this year that demand in the residential sector has really started to ramp up. "A huge amount of projects have come up in residential; specifically private residential properties funded by water companies," he said, however admitted they were finding these "very challenging." And Patrick Flood of Juta UK asserted there was a "massive disconnect" between SuDS installation design, and procurement and delivery," which was leading to the preponderance of "bomb craters" masquerading as SuDS.



SUCCESSFULLY STREAMLINING SUDS
Representatives from round table sponsors Burdens explained the compelling cash and sustainability savings possible from replacing stone with geotextiles

DEFINITIONS

Part of the problem with defining progress in housebuilding is that definitions of SuDS vary, as Paul Shaffer of the Chartered Institute of Water Environmental Management said, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." So 'while some developers would say they are delivering SuDS, engineers and SuDS champions might say they are just doing 'pipe to pond,' in crates." He said it was impossible to be confident that SuDS was in fact being delivered across the country as "there isn't enough clarity on what good SuDS are," and that "there is so much more that can be delivered within the 'four pillars; it's about unlocking those multiple benefits, that we aren't seeing as much as we'd like."

Charlotte Markey, ex-Polypipe and now at sister company Skygarden, said her firm had been working with Anglian Water to try and identify "what good looks like" from their perspective. But she was adamant that professionals "have to really understand whether something is a SuDS feature, or just a basic solution that we're trying to treat as something special?"

Glen Westmore accepted there was "lack of consistency" in LLFA approvals, but that the National Planning Policy Framework has "now specified the standards, as a national consideration." David Owen of Taylor Wimpey admitted that "three or four years ago, we were pulling features off the shelf," but developers' SuDS knowledge is now evolving.

COLLABORATION

The key organisations driving local SuDS projects are Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs), with a more wide-ranging resilience remit than the originally planned SuDS Approval Bodies (SABs). Thomas Sturtridge, a flood risk engineer from MEC Consulting Group, said that their real issue in designing SuDS schemes was trying to identify consistency through the planning process. Representing LLFAs, Glen Westmore said that he believed "everything was in place" to drive SuDS adoption, from the new NPPF, to the existing standards, but it was "about linking up the approach through all of the people involved in that process, from land acquisition all the way to delivery."

Delegates agreed that collaboration across the sector including early stage working on schemes to integrate SuDS was crucial, but what should it look like, for example how should landscape architects be involved? Matt Moore described some of Anglian Water's collaborative approaches, which included "getting more engaged with insurers early on, and trying to get them on board to actually contribute towards schemes. Because ultimately it reduces their flood risk."

Steve Wilson, bringing vast experience of engineering different installation types, cited issues around the disciplines involved and who 'owns' SuDS design: "You do get landscape people saying that it's a landscape discipline, and you don't need engineers, or they just do a few calcs. That is entirely wrong. It's multidisciplinary, and the engineers are just as important as the landscape architects; both disciplines have to realise the value that the other brings to the party." He added that by the same token, to achieve the right biodiversity goals, landscape design and ecology must be prioritised.

Mark Gillies said that from experience with contractors, even after successful education programmes, some "have their own agendas; where is it in their interest to put SuDS in when they're going to make more money doing it a different way?" Charlotte Markey said that if SuDS adoption becomes more widespread, contractors and merchants needed to expand their knowledge, giving



EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION
Steve Wilson of the Environmental Protection Group insisted that a "massive public education campaign" was needed to explain why SuDS features had to be installed

the example of Wales which successfully implemented Schedule 3, but this still led to challenges in terms of upskilling. "We've got SUDs, but nobody knows what they are and how to deliver them – merchants need to be enabled through the supply chain to explain what those different components are, I think that's the major gap in delivery."

Glen Westmore said that clarity of language was part of the solution for ensuring that everyone is on a level playing field, and cautioned against using engineering jargon with residents and the wider supply chain.

Steve Wilson said that there was a stigma attached to natural SuDS features, but that education of residents was fundamental to helping understanding, and avoiding perceptions of danger. "The Government needs a massive public education campaign to explain why these things are so important."

And Paul Shaffer of CIBSE added that being overly 'solutions-led' was unwise, advising "trying to make sure there's an understanding of the philosophy and principles around good drainage before we jump to the products and solutions." He said "there has historically been a dependency on the products out there, rather than the process and philosophy of managing rain where it lands; people miss the basic elements of drainage design and place making around it."

David Owen from Taylor Wimpey pushed back against criticism of developers' delivery on SuDS, and Anglian's Matt Moore's call for a change of mindset away from a 'tick box' approach. Owen said responsibility needed to rest with LLFAs as "they pass our designs," and also questioned how schemes' design could be revisited once approval had been obtained.

RESPONSIBILITY

While collaborative approaches informed by design expertise could even be cost-neutral, planning authorities needed to become more engaged in driving them forward, despite resource challenges. Our Industry Viewfinder research among housebuilders found patchy levels of awareness of SuDS methods across the country, and Burdens' representatives said that ownership and therefore maintenance responsibility for SuDS features was a huge problem remaining to be solved.

Andrew Taylor of Burdens drew attention to the fact that with a lack of clarity on who was responsible came issues around designing schemes for proper future maintenance. He told delegates: "I see lots of drawings with an attenuation tank with no way of accessing and maintaining it once built. Over time, it's going to get full of silt and not do the job properly." He said that because inspection points "aren't on the drawing, they're not considered."

Charlotte Markey said that trials of a particular smart solution – smart gullies – had failed until now, but the industry would keep trying to " integrate smart in a cost-effective way to reduce the maintenance burden." She added however that the industry was "still in a mindset of reactive maintenance, and trying to almost overmaintain certain things," and this needed to change.

Markey said that "what we really want is to use smart to even out the peaks and the troughs – we don't need 'all systems go' 100% of the time. We can let the ecology do some of the work for us, and I think using that intelligence is going to help us." However, when it came to maintenance schedules, she said "appropriate" practice should be the goal.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

Chris Carr of Carr & Carr Builders said that using SuDS as "part of the BNG package" was a crucial part of success for housebuilders looking to make SuDS installations viable. Steve Wilson said that one of the things that distinguished 'good SuDS' was achieving biodiversity net gain; "it's a win-win situation, but you need ecologists to design it. You can't just put a bit of grass in a swale."

However, Charlotte Markey said that sometimes harnessing the power of SuDS for BNG compliance could lead to conflicts that have to be resolved: "The water company might want to store as much water as possible within a component, or remove as much as possible, and you're trying to hold some back to support vegetation; there's often a challenge to create products and innovations that deliver all those four pillars in one solution, but one size fits all doesn't necessarily always work."

SOLUTIONS

In the second session we turned the focus to SuDS solutions and design approaches, led by our sponsors who posed a series of points and questions to the group. One solution to many issues proposed was for housebuilders to ensure early design engagement with the SuDS part of their plans – before it reaches product selection – when currently it wasn't always given enough attention.

Burdens representative Mark Gillies asked why SuDS was not featuring more in early stage design thinking, when there is ample opportunity to design out waste, reduce carbon and disruption to communities, but moreover, reduce cost. And by implication, whether innovative solutions such as geosynthetics were being overlooked.

They shared examples of success including using geotextiles to replace the large volumes of stone typically specified for drainage in housebuilding projects, with significant carbon savings alongside reduction in site disruption. However there were barriers to making

the shift, such as long–standing groundworks techniques and mindsets.

Mark Gillies cited a project which saw Burdens shortlisted for a Ground Engineering Award, where they managed to "completely eradicate" a specification of 9000 tonnes of drainage by introducing geosynthetics. This meant that 444 truckloads were reduced down to just 10, and the overall package cost reduced from £1.7m to £600,000. He said "we managed to get that over the line through working with the groundworker, the main contractor, engineer, and council.

However, Gillies said that since that project, he'd seen "countless designs with that same 500 mm layer of 6G stones specified," and "trying to get the groundworker to look at this proven solution just constantly falls on deaf ears."

Mark Shearer from Polypipe said the answer for more engineered solutions was full collaboration, but "it will fall at the first or the second hurdle, unless that whole chain wants to take ownership and work together." He added: "Normally the biggest constraint is time." Charlotte Markey highlighted the importance of smart solutions, even saying that smart solutions were the "fifth pillar of SuDS, alluding to technologies which are able to fine-tune how installations store water for future flexibility.

One aspect of managing water onsite which there wasn't time to discuss in depth was the controversial subject of rainwater harvesting and reuse. Housebuilder Chris Carr (also representing the Construction Industry Council) told attendees that the Ministry of Housing was looking to harness industry insights around rainwater harvesting and SuDS in its upcoming Water Smart Growth Board which is currently being set up.

Paul Shaffer said that despite years of wrangling in the sector about whether Schedule 3 would be implemented, and Suds Approval Boards would materialise to bring forward schemes across the UK, we should not "put too much emphasis on regulation and legislation." He said "that's not necessarily going to happen, " and encouraged people to "weaponise that evidence base to actually make sure the right thing gets done; the economics stack up, the science stacks up."

CONCLUSION

With the climate changing, all new housing developments need to consider mitigating their impact in storm events, and pursue good practice in SuDS. In order to achieve the high new build numbers the Government is seeking, a concerted effort is needed across the industry, supported by education of customers – who will ultimately benefit from resilient, attractive schemes.

Our round table discovered that developers must move from a 'tick box' mindset to "engineers working for those developers doing SuDS because it's the right thing to," in the words of Anglian Water's Matt Moore. "It adds amenity value, increases house values, and makes a better place for their children to grow up."

But the key to effective installations long-term is a holistic, but also tailored design approach that gives full consideration to all of the site-specific parameters; Burdens showed how this can avoid waste, extra cost, and overengineering. While this subverts preconceptions, it does also mean new levels of collaboration at early stages.

The round table was a successful example of working together across the chain, with the industry required to deliver the solutions to this resilience challenge. It can only be done successfully by harnessing this kind of key experience.

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INDUSTRY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **David Owen, Taylor Wimpey:** It comes down to maintenance and the adoptable side of the features that we're putting in; if that could be clearly defined, that'd be a major step forward.
- **George Grant, The Environmental Protection Group:** Early and consistent involvement throughout the development, and more people that champion collaboration.
- **Patrick Flood, Juta UK:** Designs by appropriately qualified personnel, changes to performance specifications approved by the design team, and verification and inspection by qualified people.
- **Matt Moore, Anglian Water:** Developers need to be upfront with buyers of properties on the features installed, what they're there for, and have a realistic conversation around what that development looks like when there's a one in 100 year storm event.
- **Colin Nessfield, Mineral Products Association:** We need to improve training, education, and in particular competence.
- **Habib Khan, Meristem Design**: Bring the right landscaping team in at the beginning, and a realistic, costed maintenance package.
- **Shane Frost, Green Blue Urban:** Early engagement, and validation at different stages in an installation is very important.
- **Thomas Sturtridge, MEC Consulting Group:** Education across the value chain to make sure everyone is aware of what needs to be done, and why things have been specified in certain ways.
- **Mark Gillies, Burdens:** We need collaboration – try to ensure that everyone's working together, and it's the same vision.
- **Andrew Taylor, Burdens:** Maintenance; who looks after the installations and ensures they do the job they are designed to do?
- **Ken Graham, Burdens:** The messaging to people is very important – SuDS may be in the contract, but does the buyer know, and can we simplify the language? And – water should be treated as an asset.
- **Sean Robinson, Polypipe Civils & Green Urbanisation:** We need to celebrate the good examples of SuDS and use them for education.
- **Mark Shearer, Polypipe Civils & Green Urbanisation:** Think about what you want, be realistic, and try to keep it simple.
- **Charlotte Markey, Skygarden:** Simplify it; SuDS is a bit like smoke and mirrors at the moment, people are much more savvy with energy than they are with water.
- **Paul Shaffer, CIWEM:** Concentrate on competency – and maybe registration for people who know about nature-based solutions.
- **Glen Westmore, ASA:** Until we have SABs, some powers for local authorities for inspection and enforcement of maintenance.
- **Chris Carr, Carr & Carr Builders:** More informative handover packs, including SuDS and BNG, as part of a home's digital passport.
- **Steve Wilson:** The Government needs to bring in Schedule 3!

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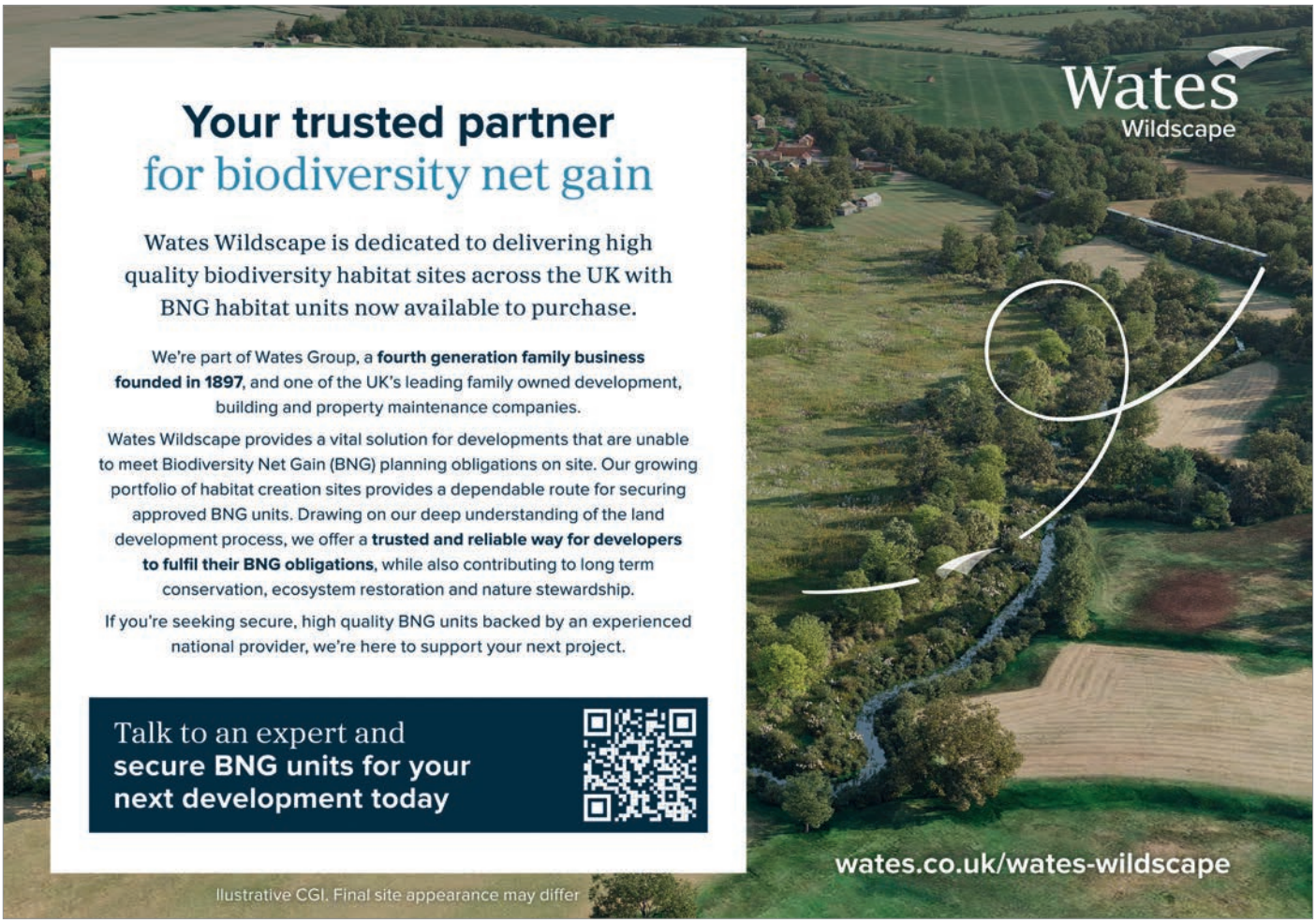
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Senior Architectural Systems joins London's Building Centre

Senior Architectural Systems has returned to the Building Centre with a new permanent product stand that showcases the company's latest aluminium window, door and curtain wall systems. Located in central London, the Building Centre is a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting innovation in the built environment and features a large exhibition area where manufacturers such as Senior showcase a selection of products. Positioned within the Building Centre's permanent product gallery, Senior's main stand provides architects and specifiers with a convenient way to view the company's latest aluminium window, door and curtain wall systems without the need to travel to its main showroom and manufacturing facilities in South Yorkshire. The manufacturer's stand features a curated selection of Senior's most innovative products, including its patented low U-value PURe® aluminium window and door range, slimline aluminium curtain wall systems and doors for both residential and commercial buildings. The dedicated display also highlights Senior's ongoing investment in its in-house UK manufacturing and powder-coating facilities, as well as its ongoing environmental and sustainability initiatives. For more information about Senior's product range, please visit the website.

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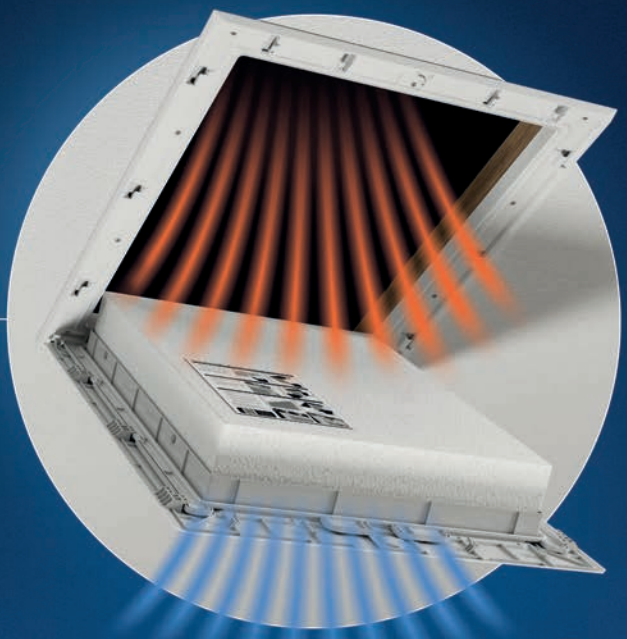
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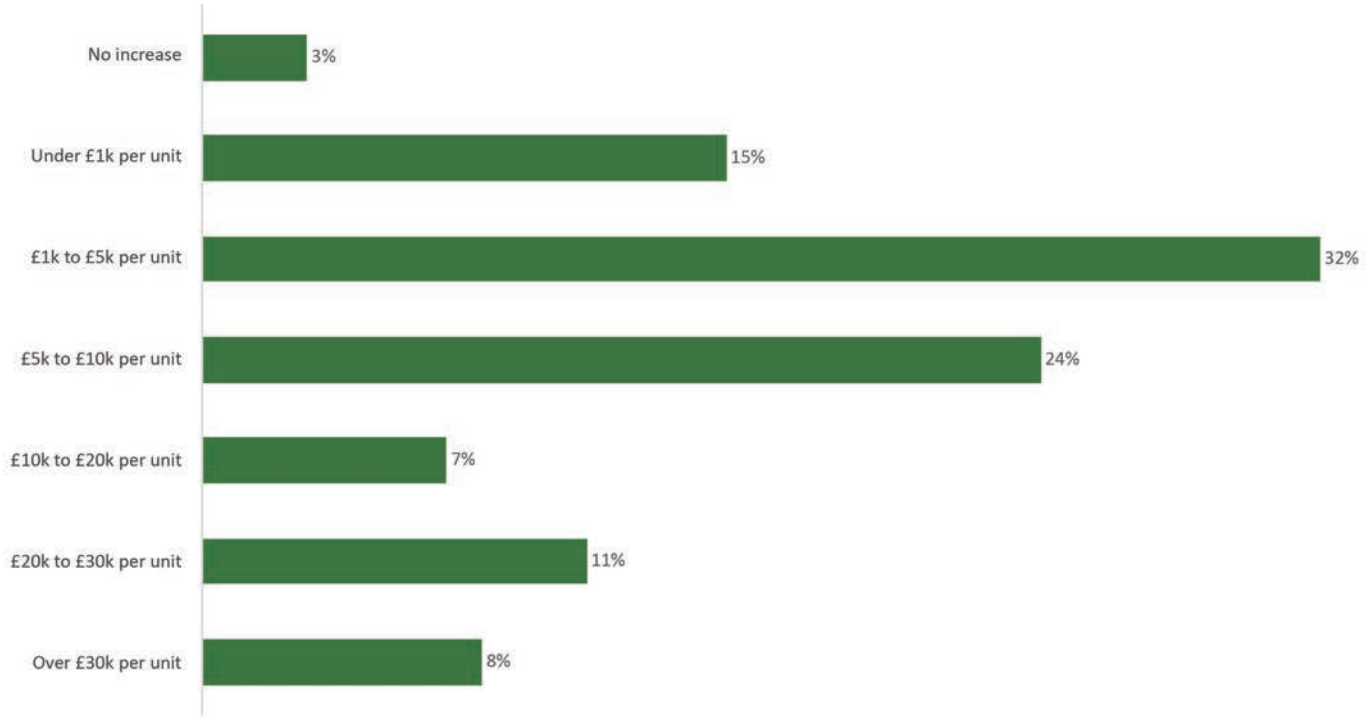


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ENVIRONMENTAL EPD DECLARATION

TRACKING HOUSEBUILDERS' STRATEGIES FOR FUTURE HOMES STANDARD COMPLIANCE



What impact, if any, has the Future Homes Standard had on your build costs (using a three-bedroom home as an example)?

INTRODUCTION

The Future Homes Standard (FHS) is due to come into force on 24 March 2027, albeit with a 12-month transition period for the industry to adjust. The change, alongside the expected simultaneous launch of the required Home Energy Model software, and revisions to Part L and Part F, marks a major shift in how new homes across the UK will be designed and built, but also how they will be powered and heated.

Housebuilders face a series of key challenges on compliance, to be followed by EPC reforms in later 2027. These include higher build costs forcing more pressure on already slim profit

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margins – resulting from upgrades to building fabric, including insulation and glazing, low-carbon heating such as heat pumps, as well ventilation and renewable electricity systems including solar PV; all increasing upfront construction costs.

The Government's own impact assessment on the Future Homes (and Buildings) Standard, to give it its full title, estimates significant additional costs to business, which for housebuilders must either be absorbed or recovered from customers, in a price-sensitive market.

The end product will be homes that emit at least 75% fewer carbon emissions than homes built to 2013 standards, but exactly how this will be calibrated and achieved will not be clear until the Home Energy Model finally emerges.

The key challenges for housebuilders include providing heat pumps at scale as the central means of moving away from gas boilers. In addition, the requirements of the FHS means certain changes to house design, to achieve greater air tightness, heating specifications, hot-water systems and installation processes.

The industry still faces shortages in trained designers of new low carbon HVAC systems, as well as installers and commissioning skills, with the latter in particular causing issues for in-use performance in some cases. Other risks for volume housebuilders include achieving consistent quality, lead times, technical support and pricing, across thousands of plots.

In addition, electricity infrastructure and grid connections to support the shift to decarbonisation, meaning electricity-based developments, means much greater demand on the electricity grid. Developers may need to prioritise earlier engagement with Distribution Network Operators and, on larger sites, additional substation/network capacity. Solar generation, export capacity and electricity demand management also need to be considered.

The FHS requires a rethink on pre-existing house designs; the changes and upgrades required cannot simply be 'bolted on' to existing house types. Heat pumps and associated infrastructure such as hot-water cylinders need design though applied, as do the ramifications of roof-mounted PV, insulation thickness, and thermal bridging. Also, ventilation and, increasingly, overheating requirements can all affect floorplans, roof design, elevations, plot layouts, and saleable area.

More airtight, energy-efficient homes can create overheating issues, and indoor-air-quality risks, and ventilation and shading need to be designed in a holistic, site-specific way to counter this. Compliance with the new Part O standard governing overheating adds another design and coordination challenge, and some conflicts with Part L, particularly affecting apartments and higher-density developments.

Construction quality must be increased to achieve the designed building performance, but also to address the 'performance gap' that has been experienced due to onsite compromises and challenges. Airtightness, insulation continuity, thermal junctions, ventilation commissioning and heat-pump sizing all require tighter site quality control and higher subcontractor competence than may be common in previous schemes. A substantial 71% of our respondents said they were 'very' or 'moderately' concerned about the performance gap currently in housebuilding.

There are particular challenges where planning permissions, infrastructure agreements or house-type approvals are already in place. Potential changes to existing pre-consented schemes are likely to be required post-March 2027, or where construction doesn't begin before March 2028, to make them comply with tightened requirements under the FHS. These changes will likely increase air-tightness, new site infrastructure such as PV, or redesigns to include heat pump systems. They may also mean acoustics upgrades, new substations for increased electricity demand, or other increased plant space.

SME-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

The FHS places further strain on already cash-strapped SME housebuilders, battling a weak homebuying market.

Larger volume builders can spread design, training and procurement costs across thousands of plots. One of the key findings of our survey of housebuilders was that "build cost inflation" was the biggest risk perceived by respondents around compliance, with nearly half picking this factor, although most said it would only add less than £5,000 to the cost of each house.

This shows how SMEs are facing proportionately greater challenges in accessing technical expertise, training, procurement leverage and specialist consultants will be particularly confronted by such cost issues. The Government has explicitly considered the potential impact on SMEs and resultant housing supply. The one-year transition period is welcomed, but needs to be carefully managed by housebuilders. Essentially, they face a strategic question over whether to bring forward sites/designs under existing standards, or redesign pre-emptively for the FHS.

Our survey of housebuilders builds on previous surveys we have undertaken on the changes to Parts L, F and the new Part O, and the emergence of the FHS itself. Acknowledging the challenge for housebuilders has now evolved from understanding the Standard's provisions, we canvassed them on their build strategies now the standard is here. The results help us gain a picture of how the sector is looking to deliver efficient compliance at scale; without eroding margins, disrupting programmes, or being derailed by skills and supply chain issues, grid capacity, or customer issues.

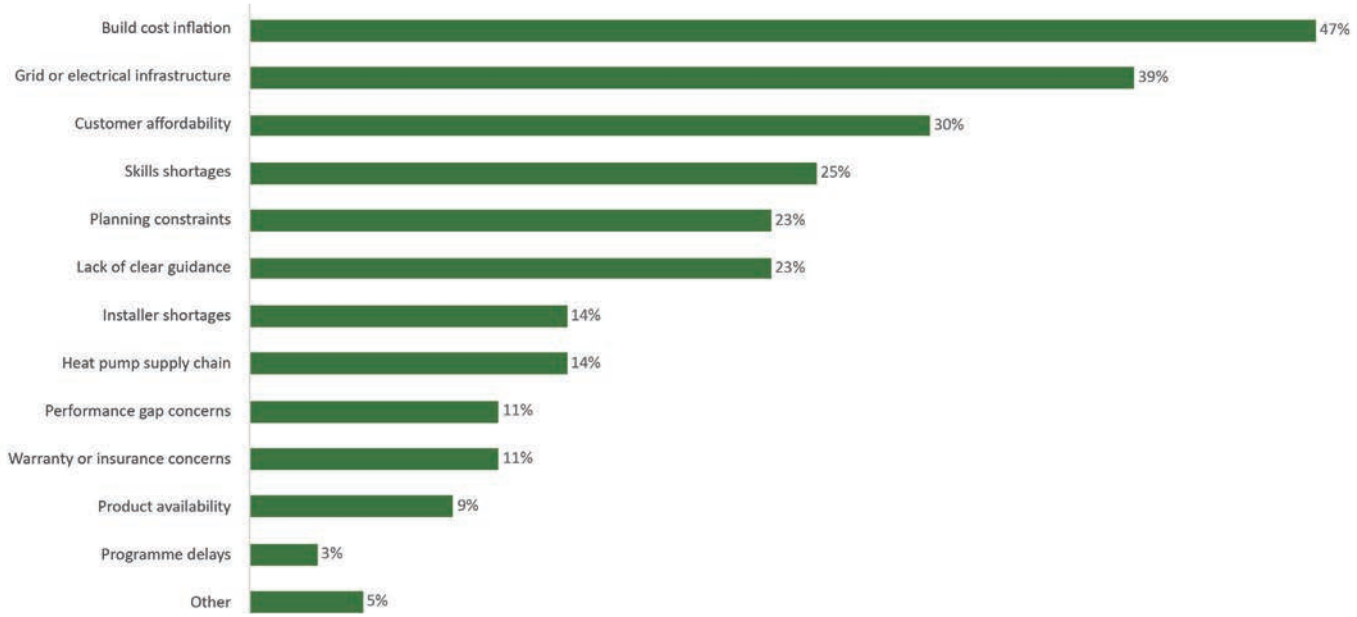
As housebuilders and developers move from consultation and planning toward practical implementation, our research examined how the industry is preparing for the legally mandated delivery challenges which firms must address to produce energy-efficient, 'net zero-ready' homes.

The study explored how developers are adapting fabric specifications, heating strategies, ventilation systems, glazing, renewable technologies and construction methods to meet the new requirements. It also investigated the key commercial and operational pressures facing projects, including build cost

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Which of the above options, if any, do you consider to be the biggest risks to delivering Future Homes Standard-compliant homes?

inflation, installer skills shortages, grid constraints, supply chain readiness, and customer demand.

The research provided an updated picture of industry readiness, delivery confidence and specification trends as the sector prepares for the transition towards FHS-compliant developments.

The key change under the new Part L, brought in under the FHS umbrella, is the airtightness target used in the 'notional building' (used as a model to test a home design's performance against). This increases from 5 $m^3/(h \cdot m^2)$ at 50 Pa (Part L 2021) to 4 $m^3/(h \cdot m^2)$ under the interim SAP 10.3 compliance route used for the initial phase of the FHS. There is a 'legal backstop' minimum air tightness of 8 $m^3/(h \cdot m^2)$, but that's seen as "a worst-case ceiling, not a working target."

Most new build homes achieve air-tightness in the 4-6 $m^3/(h \cdot m^2)$ range, but achieving the new notional target of 4 m^3 can't be achieved by design only. It demands a better level of site discipline, better detailing at junctions and penetrations, and independent verification of the finished building's performance by a qualified professional.

As stated earlier, the transitional arrangements for firms building FHS-compliant homes mean that home designs with an initial building notice or full plans application submitted before 24 March 2027 can be built under previous Part L 2021 rules, provided construction commences by 24 March 2028. Realistically, all new home schemes which are being initiated currently should be designed and built to the new requirements.

KEY CHANGES

Aside from limited fabric upgrades, the main changes in the FHS are the requirement to transition to low-carbon heating, alongside the introduction of renewables in the form of PV (to the tune of 40% of a home's ground floor area in the notional building). Phasing out gas boilers means shifting entirely to electric-powered alternatives like air-source heat pumps or heat networks, which means changes in utility coordination and grid capacity requirements.

Higher insulation and tighter airtightness demand complex mechanical ventilation and wastewater heat recovery systems to prevent indoor air quality and overheating issues. On-site renewable integration and EV charger installations complicate roof design, procurement, and site logistics.

Beyond these practical challenges, the issues of the work pipeline for schemes with multiple homes boil down to the need to manage mixed timelines across different phases and sites. If done badly, this creates inconsistent specifications, supply chain confusion, and potential costly reworking of projects. And as ever, the perennial skills shortages in the industry compound all of these challenges, with a lack of specialised labour, and technical expertise in planning and SAP assessment makes signing off projects and verifying good quality execution at scale difficult for traditional builders.

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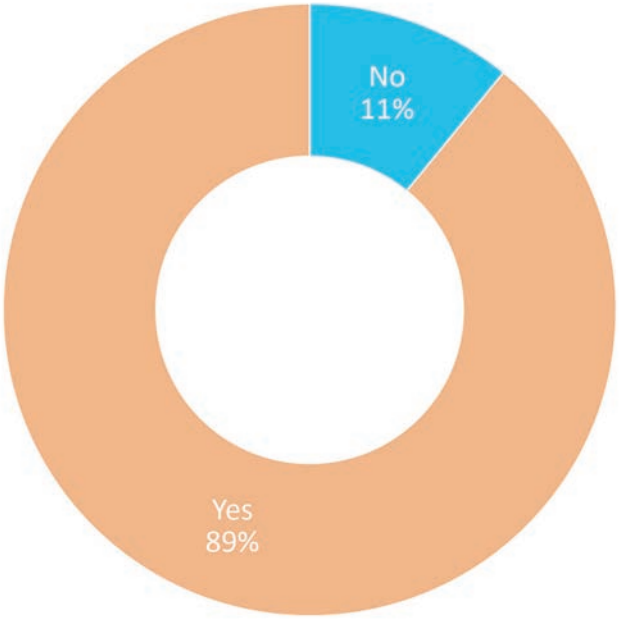
SURVEY FINDINGS

Having looked at housebuilders' anticipated issues and readiness previously, our questions ranged across a selection of issues that homed in on initial reactions to the standard, as published in March 2026.

We asked respondents how they felt about their awareness, knowledge and preparedness for the FHS in practice, given that it had officially launched in March. However, given that it comes into force for new schemes in March 2027, how prepared were our respondent housebuilders?

The answers were not conclusively positive, with a significant 35% saying they were 'not very prepared,' or 'not prepared at all.' However, a reassuring 21% said they were 'very prepared,' having witnessed an extended industry consultation process, although how they remained quite so confident given the lack of the essential Home Energy Model software for designing schemes, is somewhat hard to fathom.

It was a similarly mixed picture around the understanding of the requirements of the FHS, for example the key combination of 40% of ground floor area PV, and an air source heat pump or 4th generation heat network, together with air tightness to 4 $m^3/m^2/hr$, dMEV (direct mechanical ventilation), and potentially Waste Water Heat Recovery. Unfortunately only 14% said they 'completely understand' the requirements, although 40% did say they 'mainly understand,' with a much lower 27% admitting they only 'partially understand' them.



Have you adopted a fabric-first strategy for Future Homes Standard compliance in your projects?

Yes *No*

COST INCREASES & DELIVERY RISKS

Although awareness was limited on the practical requirements among our survey cohort, they offered useful insights on the estimated increases in cost per home that they were facing. These were potentially more moderate than many estimates have suggested, which have typically extended up to around the £10,000 mark. We asked, based on a three-bedroom home, what the estimated cost increase would be, and the most popular option was a £1,000 to £5,000 uplift per home, but the responses did vary, with 15% saying that cost increases would be under £1K, but 11% saying it would be between £20K and £30K. Among our respondents, a surprising 8% even thought that compliance would add an extra £30,000+ per home.

This cost increase feeds into concerns around the commercial viability of delivering FHS-compliant homes, a particularly acute issue given the current pressures in the housing market from a continued cost of living crisis, geopolitical concerns, and high mortgage interest. This combination of headwinds saw some understandable concern among our respondents about the potential of homes to recoup the added investment required for compliance, from consumers to make schemes viable. Challenges such as making sites climate resilient using SuDS and other approaches further compromise the potential return on investment from maximising plots on sites.

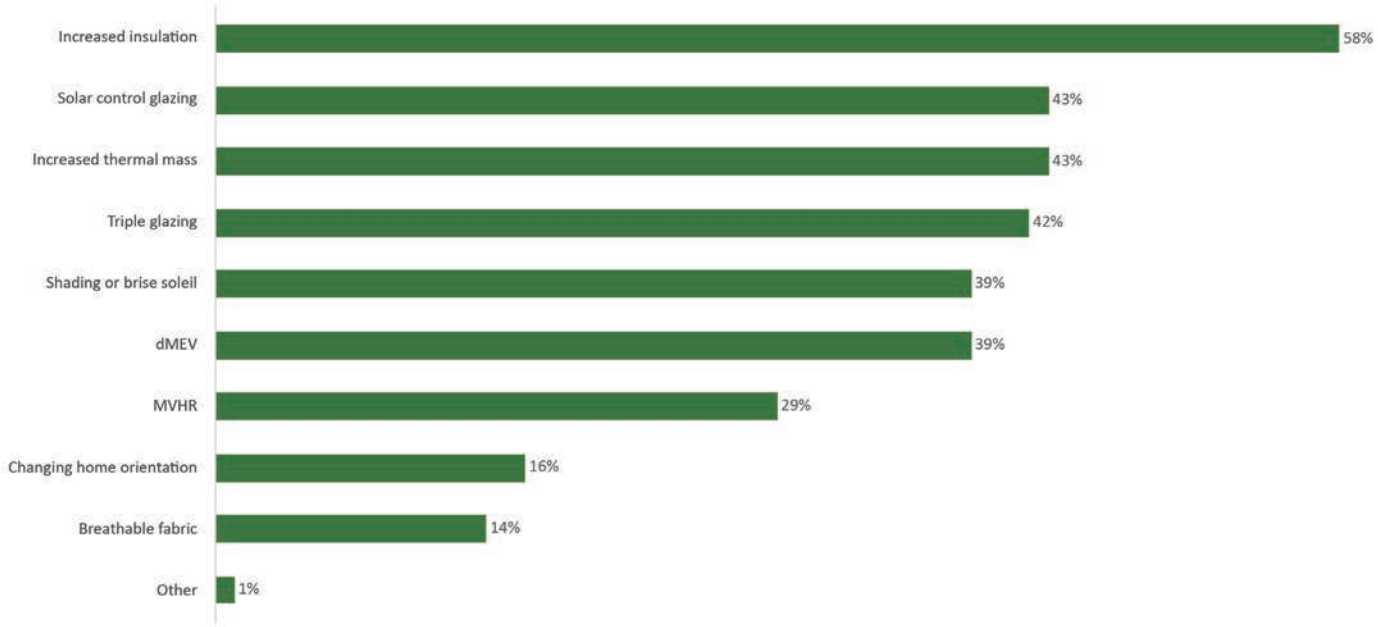
There was a fairly predictable majority of 52% who were 'moderately' or 'very' concerned about the viability of schemes, however there were also 26% who were not concerned at all. Potentially they had managed to strategise some very effective viability in advance, have a customer base which will support the uplift, or may even be residing in a mindset of professional optimism.

While the biggest perceived risk was inflating build costs, a close second at 39% were concerns around grid constraints. This was in a context of utility connection lead times for an elevated set of electricity demands. On larger sites, additional substation/network capacity may be required. Solar generation, export capacity and electricity demand management also need to be considered.

Unsurprisingly, skills shortages featured highly in the list of risks (25% picked this), as did the perennial issue of 'planning

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Which, if any, measures have you introduced to improve comfort and reduce overheating risk?

constraints' (23%), but also a 'lack of clear guidance' on the routes to delivery and compliance (23%). Perceived as somewhat less important was the previously reported shortage of installers, such as for heat pumps, and the supply of heat pumps themselves. Possibly showing the difficulties posed by the more commonly selected risks, continued concerns around the performance gap between as-designed and as-built building performance was only seen as an issue by 11%, and so was 'warranty or insurance concerns.' While good news, these two areas should not be discounted as ongoing problems for the sector, as buildings need to continue to evolve and scrutiny of as-built performance tightens.

The low figure on the performance gap posing a risk for compliance was slightly counterintuitive, particularly given that 71% of respondents said they were concerned about this issue. Factors cited as reasons for the gap were topped by 'installer skills shortages' (69%), 'poor installation quality' (53%), and importantly for heat pumps' efficiency, "inadequate commissioning." Issues such as airtightness failures, occupant behaviour, product substitution (in value engineering processes), and a lack of post-occupancy evaluation, were seen as less prevalent. One verbatim comment nailed the crucial issue of a gap being caused (literally) by airtightness layers being "damaged by follow-on trades."

There was a reasonably strong vote of confidence in the supply chain's readiness to deliver on the FHS, as far as its provisions are known. Most respondents (67%) believed suppliers had made preparations to deliver compliance (although 36% of these said that the supply chain was only 'partially prepared.') And there was a contingent saying that suppliers were 'poorly prepared' (25%), and 'not prepared at all (8%). If this is representative of the wider sector then clearly the jury is out, and the supply chain needs to do a lot more to convince many of its customers on its 'FHS-readiness.'

CONCLUSION

Although the FHS is still not yet in force, our survey gives an interesting sample of housebuilders' views and their approaches on how its requirements, as far as we know them, are being tackled in the sector currently. In some ways presenting a major shift to higher amounts of renewables, alongside more robust fabric and more rigorous design, for more progressive green advocates, the FHS still doesn't offer a high enough bar for many enlightened developers.

But, as housebuilders and developers move from consultation and planning toward practical implementation, this research gives a glimpse of the industry's response, and remaining challenges.

SURVEY SPONSORS

We are grateful to our two survey sponsors for their participation in this White Paper report:

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BUILDING INSIGHTS LIVE



Round table chair, editor James Parker

Unlocking MMC & Offsite in Residential Developments

MMC (Modern Methods of Construction), and more specifically DfMA (Designing for Manufacture and Assembly), have long been hailed as the answer to the housebuilding sector's 'triple whammy' of meeting spiralling housing targets, while achieving building performance and tackling the skills crisis. We brought together leading modular construction specialists, volume housebuilders, consultants, architects and academics, to discuss solutions to one of the industry's biggest conundrums; why can't mainstream housebuilding seem to embrace MMC?

As well as unforeseen blockers like post-Brexit inflation, Covid, conflicts, and a housing market slowdown, the industry culture is wedded to ultimate supply chain flexibility in project decision-making, despite the current model having seen many 'traditional' businesses go under in recent years. There have been some key examples of MMC success, particularly large scale, but takeup has been noticeably slow – when engagement with the methods will be essential to deliver the Government's housebuilding goals (including new PM Andy Burnham's promise of the "biggest council house building programme since the post-war period.")

It's impossible to shy away from the reality that a series of high-profile firms have pulled MMC investment following a lack of a pipeline of work to support their factories. But while major players from L&G, Berkeley and Top Hat to Ilke Homes, Caledonian Modular and Swan Housing Association have retreated from the fray, a few like Vistry (present at the round table) are doubling down on their commitments to MMC. At a time when volume housebuilders are reticent to even buy land and build traditionally as sales plummet, is an increasingly de-risked offsite sector looking more viable?

In order to achieve the Government's 1.5 million new homes target, a large proportion will need to be offsite manufactured, whether Category 1 (volumetric), Category 2 (panelised), or other varieties. But a major shift is still required in the industry to embrace production of precision-made homes at scale offsite; although a long-term view would see this as a means to recruit a new generation of professionals.

In order to try and identify solutions, the round table delved into why MMC still only figured in around 8% of UK homes, and timber remained underused in England. Traditional approaches to building houses have been seen as potentially inadequate in the era of more rigorous performance standards and policing, and with sponsor partners Ibstock Brick and Medite Smartply, we explored how to break down the stubborn barriers to adoption.

Sponsors took a key role in the discussion, giving it a practical focus, with Medite Smartply for one having recently tackled the problem in a survey of timber frame firms on their views around MMC, and accepted the need for more standardisation. We also discovered how architects have embraced MMC – Nigel Ostime of Hawkins\Brown explained how he was working with RIBA, on its third iteration of the Overlay to the RIBA Plan of Work; helping to inject MMC design into projects in a systematic way. However, fellow architect Rory Bergin of HTA Design noted that "very few architecture schools teach MMC."

We also heard how a few volume housebuilders like Barratt London are fully tethering their business model to the approach. And the Timber Roadmap was being "really positively supported" by the industry, in the words of Medite Smartply's Roly Ward, who added that seven out of the 10 "top housebuilders" were investing in offsite timber frame.

With Vistry continuing to invest in MMC (restarting the Leicester timber offsite

ROUND TABLE ATTENDEES

- **Sam Stacey,** Director, A7C
- **Tony Woods,** Technical Manager - Construction and Sustainability, Procurement for Housing
- **Rory Bergin,** Partner, HTA Design architects
- **Andrew Orriss,** Interim Chief Executive, Structural Timber Association
- **Stephen Wightman,** Director, UK MMC Lead, AtkinsRéalis
- **Nigel Ostime,** Consultant, Hawkins\Brown architects
- **Richard Quarry,** Equity Partner, Baker Ruff Hannon LLP
- **Jack Brayshaw,** Director of Research and Innovation, Vistry

ROUND TABLE SPONSORS

- **Andrew Shepherd,** Managing Director, Ibstock Brick
- **Roly Ward,** Head of Business Development, Medite Smartply

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facility that its acquisition Countryside had mothballed), it was great to have research director Jack Brayshaw present to share the company's MMC experience. Our delegates acknowledged how lack of consistent pipelines of work had led to a Catch 22 situation where business trust and confidence in MMC won't be established in the mainstream until there are a significant number of successes.

The round table was a chance to share these, as well as to challenge assumptions around MMC such as on build costs, carbon and aesthetics.



OFFSITE, ON MESSAGE
Leading architects and contractors were in attendance (Vistry's Jack Brayshaw, far right)

THE DEBATE

Because accelerating MMC spans many cultural issues, the discussion naturally broadened into a look at the motivations and business imperatives of housebuilding, beyond comparing solutions. However it also touched on some of the well-researched existing approaches to optimising offsite construction, such as an MMC 'kit of parts' and digital P-DFMA methodologies.

There was some agreement that the current mainstream construction model was not working, with a series of major plc liquidations from Carillion in 2018 to Ardmore in June 2026. The chastening symptom in housebuilding was that SME housebuilders numbers had dwindled from around 12,000 to currently around 2,500, so they would need to be carefully incentivised to be involved in MMC innovation. As delegate Andrew Orris of the Structural Timber Association pointed out, "we're relying on the top 10 house builders delivering 70% of the volume."

Delegates discussed whether the backtracking of several major players from MMC housebuilding was a sign of a crisis in offsite, and the chair, *Housebuilder & Developer* editor James Parker asked whether the various industry headwinds, plus recent industry casualties had "killed off optimism in the sector around MMC being the panacea for new build homes."

Ultimately, delegates including Stephen Wightman, UK MMC Lead at AtkinsRéalis, said that in order to accept MMC, the industry's delivery model needed to fundamentally change, from procurement, and contracts to risk management. He said: "We've tried to ram this new technology into it, and it doesn't fit; it breaks the delivery model in so many ways – the way risk sits, where value sits, where responsibility and some of the design responsibility shifts from the architects and the engineers to the manufacturers." He added however that the long-standing existing model was "pretty ingrained," and "recognition was needed that people need to make money."

However, delegates such as Vistry's Jack Brayshaw suggested the slowdown was partly a regular factor of economic turbulence generally across the sector. "When we're coming out of any type of recession we see the proportion of MMC increase," adding that its developments were "probably around 35% timber frame now, and will go further as those drivers will always be there."

Others played down the likelihood of a major downturn in offsite adoption, saying that the initial volume housebuilders' retreats were around the fact that they were pursuing full-blown volumetric modular solutions. Andrew Orriss of the STA said that it was important to understand that MMC means different things to different people, and that Category 2 was still doing well. "The tricky bit is to be clear about what we think about what MMC is today…the list of names [who withdrew from MMC recently] were largely volumetric."

Large-scale investment in volumetric had faltered, said Tony Woods of Procurement for Housing, because contractors began taking all the risk on having a pipeline of work, as manufacturers for the first time. "Normally he gets his site for free, from the client, but unless you are getting products out, you're just stacking up costs. There's always something that can happen on site, for whatever reason. Manufacturers like to make something, take it to the factory gates, and pass it on to someone else."

Jack Brayshaw said the company had taken a fairly cautious approach, and that volumetric was "just a step too far, too soon." He said Vistry was seeking the "sweet spot in terms of speed, cost, trade availability, design onsite – what was realistic and viable," adding it was "no coincidence that Barratt, Persimmon, Taylor Wimpey, Vestry and Bellway all have their own panelised factories, because it gives you the incremental growth that you can control, plus flexibility." Stephen Wightman said that the non-volumetric forms are effective "because they don't break the model completely."

Brayshaw added that the other 'big four' housebuilders needed that flexibility more in order to be able to "slow production when sales may not be as good," due to them being largely dependent on the whims of the private sale market. Vistry's business model was different, he explained, as they were tending to build a "pre-sold PRS, social housing and Section 106 affordable homes, so our build rate needs to match our sales rate, although we can't do MMC on every single site." However, he added that "certain regions are only doing timber frame, and if they went back to traditional, they'd struggle."

COST ISSUES & THE IMPORTANCE OF PREMANUFACTURED VALUE

Roly Ward of Medite Smartply got to the root of the funding issue for supply chains, saying "if we're going to adopt more MMC, then we will need to accept upfront payments are needed to procure materials and give cash flow to those operations; procurement

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for manufacturing, rather than on a project by project basis." Construction innovator Sam Stacey of A7C (ex-director of innovation at Skanska who oversaw the previous Government's £170m Transforming Construction Challenge), addressed the cost uplift. "You will need to spend a little bit more on your build, and therefore people who bought their land on the basis of particular development appraisal are going to take a little bit of a hit," he said, doubting that mortgage lenders currently appreciated the resulting lower running costs.

There was an extended discussion on PMV (Premanufactured Value – the key metric for developers), from how it clashes with traditional means of supplying and construction, but also its scope and definition, with some believing it covers a lot more than people assume. Medite Smartply found in its survey that half of timber frame firms claimed confusion around what it means meant they were not declaring PMV on projects.

As it's a requirement to achieve 55% PMV on homes (within the 25% that need to be MMC in each development to get Affordable Homes Programme funding from Homes England), it's extremely important to provide clarity on what PMV actually means. The Government's MMC Taskforce, in order to help achieve its goal of driving adoption, as well as pushing forward the Timber Roadmap, needs to try and ensure this is done. But, delegates such as Stephen Wightman of AtkinsRéalis said that the target did not in practice constitute a major advance in offsite, as "you can meet 55% using traditional construction – a window counts as 'pre-manufactured value.'"

SOLUTIONS

The second half of the round table brought the chance to hear from the sponsors on their key issues around MMC, and provide insights from the group. We also delved further into likely realistic solutions that could help adoption in housebuilding, in particular the prognosis for standardisation, and what it could look like. This was partly driven by Medite Smartply's question, which spoke to the accepted wisdom that greater standardisation of designs was fundamental to MMC viability, and greater uptake of timber frame, but it came with a host of challenges.

While volumetric construction has faltered, with the massive initial outlay and logistical challenges allied to housing market fragility, and persistent insurance problems, panelised Category 2 timber solutions are providing resilient. (Stephen Wightman pointed out that "there are some very successful volumetric businesses in the UK, and none of them are in housing.") Flat-packed wall, floor, and roof elements are more flexible, allowing bespoke designs to be realised on complicated urban sites, and align with the fabric-first agenda, as well as being easier to transport.



NEW STANDARDS
Sam Stacey of A7C explains why more acceptance of standardised design is fundamental

Medite Smartply's Roly Ward zoned in on the need for developers to "restructure financing, procurement, and risk-sharing models," asking how they would do this in order to "transition to a standardised, pipeline-driven approach that makes MMC and offsite solutions such as Category 2 timber frame the commercially viable default."

Roly Ward added that the solution to growing timber frame's use in housing cannot lie with the "top six or seven house builders" alone; "we need the smaller people in that category to be scaling up." Unfortunately, stigmas persist around the use of timber frame, said Tony Woods of Procurement for Housing: "Systems have been around a long time, and most of them work quite well, but it's perceived risk. I always liken it to the 'Three Little Pigs' story."

But the 'macro' cultural change would be the biggest nut to crack – Rory Bergin said that for HTA Design, accountability driven by often vertically-integrated and therefore 'joined-up' delivery was the key: "Projects that have been most successful have been where the manufacturer, developer and contractor have all been the same entity, so they haven't been fighting against each other." In these cases, there has been a single point of responsibility, he said.

However, Richard Quarry of Baker Ruff Hannon said that that legislation was "driving the industry down the MMC route anyway," from Part L and O to the Future Homes Standard; "a lot of my clients are looking at 'EPC A', and you've also got local sustainability goals; the hurdle rate on that is so vast you wouldn't get over it with traditional forms of construction anyway."

Sam Stacey concurred, but also focused on the overwhelming benefits of MMC – "quality, waste, technical complexity, all much better addressed with MMC." Stephen Wightman gave an example of a new timber frame system to the UK which "out of the box" provided air tightness of 0.3. He said "if the Government imposed those kinds of standards it will drive uptake, because they can't achieve it [with traditional construction]."

There was also in-depth discussion bemoaning the demise of the Code for Sustainable Homes, and praising the AIMC4 collaborative project on affordable sustainable housebuilding solutions.

AESTHETIC ASSUMPTIONS

In his question to the group, Andrew Shepherd of co-sponsor Ibstock Brick focused on the role of design, and the "myth that architects don't like MMC," asking delegates how standardised MMC can be deployed "without compromise on architectural freedom and longevity." He said part of dispelling the myth was realising that some of the UK's most loved developments are terraces of homes

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DESIGNING THE FUTURE

Rory Bergin of HTA Architects asserted "buildings cannot solve all the problems clients have"

rather than stand-alone properties.

The chair James Parker asked the group whether there was a risk of "characterless boxes," and how this could be avoided. Jack Brayshaw stressed how Vistry had managed to standardise MMC developments, but offset any potential formal monotony with "softer landscaping," an approach endorsed by others including Nigel Ostime of Hawkins\Brown. Brayshaw said that with over 300 standard house varieties, non-standard was "very difficult to manage," and Vistry had extrapolated a "standard kit of parts" for a collection which is "complementary to timber frame.'

HTA Design's Rory Bergin pushed back against the idea that the "building should solve every problem the clients have," in terms of functional requirements, as this would be very, very difficult for any kind of MMC to enter the market." In light of this, he said "there does need to be a kind of "dFMA overlay, where at some point in every project, someone says, 'can this building be built simply, quickly, and easily, and if not then we know there's a lot of additional costs baked in."

INTERVENTIONS

The group explored potential industry initiatives, such as developers potentially sharing their MMC templates, in order to share them, and better data on MMC solutions from manufacturers. This would enable "real comparisons," said Stephen Wightman of AtkinsRéalis, and counter assumptions on MMC and carbon efficiency from engineers, for example. But what Government intervention was needed, especially for SME housebuilders to engage more?

Sam Stacey, speaking from his varied experience, echoed other delegates saying that the "current system hasn't been working." He added: "There are strong political and societal incentives to get better outcomes, and that has to involve the Government using levers to make it happen; there needs to be much more Government control."

One intervention we certainly need to see is the new housebuilding-focused Andy Burnham-led administration listening more than predecessors to expert groups such as those gathered at our round table. Ploughing ahead with ideas around, for example, growing MMC without learning lessons from the vast experience of people in the sector, is sure to end in failure. The recommendations we gathered for both industry and Government are the starting point to help identify the practical ways forward.

While delegates like Stephen Wightman stressed how a new delivery model around a different, more wellness-based idea of 'value,' possibly a more pragmatic, yet no less ambitious solution came from Andrew Shepherd of Ibstock Brick. He advocated the Government pivoting to seeing housing delivery as part of critical social infrastructure, rather than being solely market-led.

Such a change of approach would be critical for widespread MMC adoption and the better quality built future we all want to see.

We would like to thank the sponsors of our Building Insights LIVE round table – Ibstock Brick and Medite Smartply – for their support and participation in the event.

To listen to a podcast capturing the discussion's highlights, please visit: insights.netmagmedia.co.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDUSTRY & GOVERNMENT

We asked the round table delegates to give their key recommendations for driving MMC in residential

- **Nigel Ostime, Hawkins\Brown:** "We know how to do MMC, but we need the right environment; that involves Government buy-in, procurement reform, and clients who understand the benefit of long-term value rather than short-term costs."
- **Jack Brayshaw, Vistry:** "Standardisation doesn't mean characterless boxes. We've got housebuilders, architects and Government on board, the missing piece of the puzzle is local planners; the Government needs to help, with the National Planning Policy Framework"
- **Richard Quarry, Baker Ruff Hannon:** "We need to look at the quality of systems – including fixings."
- **Roly Ward, Medite Smartply:** "Government to give the assurance on work pipeline to enable medium sized businesses to scale and work on standardisation and repetition."
- **Andrew Orriss, Structural Timber Association:** "Return to funding local authorities if they use MMC, and attract more SMEs, and 'unsilo' Government Departments to work together – at the moment they don't talk to each other."
- **Sam Stacey, A7C:** "The current system hasn't been working; better outcomes have to involve Government levers."
- **Stephen Wightman, AtkinsRéalis:** "We need a new delivery model, with need new ways of recognising value, around things like wellbeing."
- **Andrew Shepherd, Ibstock Brick:** "We need to start treating housing as infrastructure."
- **Roy Bergin, HTA Design:** "If you want to do something different, you've got to set up a vehicle, and you've got to make people responsible for doing it, measure their success, and remove them if they're not achieving."

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One of Europe's key joinery manufacturers, the Vicaima Group, have announced the appointment of Patrick Guest as Vicaima Limited's Managing Director. Responsible for its operations and activities throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland, Patrick is a highly accomplished and well-known timber industry figure. He brings with him an immense wealth of strategic acumen, which, when combined with the skilled and professional resources at his disposal, will enable Vicaima Limited to build on its position as one of the leading exponents of innovative and sustainable quality interior timber doors, door sets and associated products, for a multitude of construction markets.

Patrick brings with him, a wealth of past and relevant experience, having held executive positions at numerous and brand leading timber distribution businesses. In addition, Patrick retains his Executive Chair status at Timber Development UK, where he has held a part-time role for over a decade, collaborating and adding his tactical and thoughtful guidance for the benefit of the wider timber community.

Excited about the opportunities ahead, Partick commented: "I have known Vicaima and its considerable reputation as a quality innovator in the doors market for a great many years, so to have been given this opportunity to play such a significant role in shaping its future, gives me great pleasure. I look forward to starting the next chapter with the team, as we harness new technologies to elevate the door segment to even greater heights".

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SHOW PREVIEW

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25-26 November

BUILD KNOWLEDGE AT LONDON BUILD

This November, London Build 2026, co-located with elementalLONDON, will bring together architects, designers, developers, contractors, manufacturers and built environment professionals at Excel London for two days of insight, networking and collaboration.

Taking place on 25-26 November, the event will explore the ideas, technologies and approaches shaping the future of architecture, design and construction, with a strong focus on housing, sustainability and digital transformation.

ARCHITECTURE IN FOCUS

The Architecture Stage will be a key destination for architects and designers, with a programme exploring some of the major opportunities and challenges facing the profession.

Among the sessions to look out for are "Collaboration in Action: Designing in the Digital Era," "The UK's Path to Net-Zero: Architects Driving the Agenda" and "Rethinking Residential Design: Meeting the UK's Housing Needs." The programme will also feature "Meet the Women Shaping the Future of UK Architecture," highlighting the people driving change across the profession.

Newly announced speakers include senior representatives from Chapman Taylor, Hawkins\Brown, Gensler, AHMM and KPF, alongside a growing line-up of architectural and design professionals.

DISCOVER PROJECTS & IDEAS

The Architect's Hub will provide a visual highlight of the event, with a walk-through gallery showcasing upcoming projects and innovations from leading architectural practices. Already announced practices include HS2, Dela Architects, Pascall + Watson, HOK and Zaha Hadid Architects.

For visitors looking to discover new ideas, materials and approaches, the hub will offer an opportunity to see what is currently being developed across the sector and connect with the practices behind these projects.

HOUSING & SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Housing will also feature prominently, with the UK Housing Stage bringing together professionals from across the residential sector to discuss development, delivery and the future of UK housing.

Sessions including "Affordable Housing: Meeting the UK's Growing Needs", "Government & Industry Collaboration: Accelerating the UK's Housing Delivery" and "MMC in Action: Unlocking the UK's Housing Potential" will explore how the industry can respond to growing demand while delivering high-quality, sustainable homes.

The Sustainability Arena, shared with co-located event elementalLONDON, will offer further insight into design and specification, with sessions including "Tackling Embodied Carbon in UK Construction" and "What's in the UK Net Zero Building Standard?"

Visitors can explore the latest products, materials and technologies from 450+ exhibitors, creating opportunities to discover new solutions and connect directly with manufacturers and suppliers. The co-location with elementalLONDON will also bring additional focus to HVAC, energy efficiency and building performance, giving specifiers a broader perspective on the technologies influencing project design and delivery.

With 25,000+ attendees, 450+ exhibitors and 900+ speakers across 17 CPD-accredited stages, London Build 2026 promises two packed days for architects, designers and specifiers looking to discover new projects, explore emerging solutions and connect with the people shaping the built environment.

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To register for your ticket, please scan the QR Code.

Proctor Group's supports Irish developer to implement Passivhaus standards at Piper Square



Pipers Square in Charlestown, Dublin is one of four projects currently under construction by Cairn, Ireland's largest house builder. Pipers Square represents the company's first foray into delivering residential accommodation to the Passivhaus standard. Over 1700 units are expected to be delivered by the first half of 2026, with some 600 units of those ready to occupy at Pipers Square by the end of 2025.

The Proctor Group's external air barrier, Wraptite®, is part of the external wall specification at Pipers Square. In addition, the Group's technical services team assisted Cairn with U-value calculations, and a condensation risk analysis to explore the effect of vapour permeable insulation.

ADAPTING EXISTING SPECIFICATIONS TO MEET THE PASSIVHAUS STANDARD

The site was acquired with planning permission for a scheme that was never designed with the standard in mind.

A feasibility study carried out by Cairn, looking at what they would need to do over and above a 'nearly zero energy' specification, allowed them to make the commitment to Passivhaus. As reported in Passive House+ magazine, the study found that "Cairn's quality assurance focus and approach to meeting the nearly zero energy building standard required under Irish building regulations made passive house surprisingly attainable."

"The building regulations in Ireland are already quite onerous," adds Tony Ruth, Regional Sales Manager for the Proctor Group in Ireland. "The gap between the regulations and Passivhaus is not as significant as it might be elsewhere. Our Wraptite membrane was already part of the Pipers Square specification, playing an important role in delivering weathertightness and as-built performance."

Wraptite is a Passivhaus-certified component, reinforcing its credentials as a high-quality product suitable for use in Passivhaus buildings. That it was already part of the external wall specification serves to demonstrate the existing 'quality assurance focus' of Cairn Homes.

INSTALLING WRAPTITE AT PIPERS SQUARE

Installation of Wraptite at Pipers Square was the responsibility of specialist contractors Platt & Reilly Ltd. As a company they have plenty of experience of the product.

Wraptite is an airtight and vapour permeable membrane with a W1 water penetration classification. It played a crucial role at Pipers Square in conjunction with an internal airtightness line.

"The external weathertight layer mitigates airflow within the building fabric and avoids 'thermal looping,' allowing the insulation to perform at its best," says Jamie Lacey, Technical Manager at Cairn. "In addition, early application of the Wraptite membrane allowed Cairn to commence internal works sooner, and with confidence."

The vapour permeability of Wraptite also allows the passage of moisture vapour and helps to eliminate any condensation risk in the wall. With the decision to adopt the Passivhaus standard, Cairn worked with the Proctor Group's technical services team to fully assess the external wall build-up for any moisture risks.

They chose to explore several options for internal vapour control layers, including the possible effect of using a vapour variable membrane with the vapour permeable mineral wool insulation. A comprehensive condensation risk analysis, carried out using WUFI® software, showed the proposed build-up was not subject to any moisture risk due to condensation.

01250 872 261 proctorgroup.com/products/wraptite

An innovative off-site construction solution



FP McCann's Structural Precast Concrete Frame division is delivering an innovative off-site construction solution for the new Overstone Gate Primary School in Northampton. Working alongside Steele & Bray, pHp Architects and West Northamptonshire Council, the project will provide a modern, energy-efficient learning environment for 420 pupils. The precast concrete frame system, incorporating hollowcore floors, insulated sandwich panels and architectural features, supports the school's operational carbon reduction targets while accelerating construction. Manufactured off-site using Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), the system offers enhanced quality, programme certainty, reduced waste and improved site safety.

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Marmox on display at London Build 2026 Expo

Insulation specialist, **Marmox**, will be displaying its range of products at London Build 2026 Expo at Excel on the 25 and 26 November on Booth B175, including flying the flag for a NEW Fireproof and sound absorbing product. The UK's largest construction show involving some 350 exhibitors will be attended this year by an estimated 30,000 visitors, the numbers embracing builders, architects, engineers and developers, many of whom will have the chance to look over its well-respected and highly versatile Multiboard, along with the Marmox Fireboard. Fireboard can be specified for both internal and external wall insulation (IWI/EWI) applications and shares Marmox's honeycomb surface structure with its XPS forerunner, Multiboard, to create an A1 non-combustible certified render-backer which is weather resistant. It can further be used internally across walls or ceilings to take a plaster finish, while providing acoustic absorption properties, as well as thermal insulation. Fireboard has been tested to prove compliance with EN1182 (Efectis,) EN 1716 & EN 13823 (BRE) (Reaction to fire test) conducted by UKTC, along with other testing completed by the BRE. Multiboard also on display meanwhile, remains a tried and trusted construction material across building sites around the country.

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LONDON BUILD 2026 BOOTH B175



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THE INNOVATION HUB

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Combining the benefits of modern slate technology with the look of natural slate: Why choose a Cedral roof



Over the past few decades, the popularity of fibre cement slates has grown as architects, contractors and homeowners have come to appreciate the aesthetic look, ease of installation and sustainable credentials of this material. A large proportion of new build developers now specify this material for residential projects. It is also increasingly prevalent in the domestic retrofit / replacement market.

Initially, the material was used in panels as a facade on buildings, due to its low cost, low weight, excellent fire performance and water tightness. During the post-war era, its use grew significantly, with technical developments enabling the manufacture of roof slates, which were thinner and thus lighter than the panels.

Fibre cement slates perform well on key criteria including fire safety, protection against extreme weather, energy efficiency, sustainability, maintenance and lifespan. Roofers also want a material that is easy to install. While Cedral's fibre cement slates are all pre-holed, most natural slate alternatives are not. Fibre cement slates are consistent in terms of quality and size, so are much more efficient from the outset. Fibre cement slates come in square or dressed edges, smooth or textured finishes and are available in a variety of colours such as Terracotta or Stone Green in addition to Blue-Black which mirrors the traditional slate grey colour. The manufacturers like Cedral also provide an expanding range of fittings and accessories.

Fibre cement slates are also a strong option for future proofing residential roofs against extreme weather. Increasing temperatures can cause blistering or cracking on roof tiles and slates. Fibre cement is highly resistant to intense temperature fluctuation with a minimum life expectancy of 50 years. With heavier rainfall becoming more normal in many places, the relative weight of the roofing can also be a key consideration.

Fibre cement slates are consistently lighter yet just as strong as clay, concrete and natural slate products. With the layered production and fibre matrix supporting the cement, fibre cement is thinner than concrete, but has the same performance benefits. They don't require a heavy load bearing roof construction, so less timber is required for the structure.

Fibre cement roofing tiles work well as an option for decisions about eco-friendly building processes and materials. Fibre cement which is made of cement, water, cellulose, textile fibres and air can help improve circularity and carbonation impact. Cedral already supports refurbishment with robust, long-lasting material that is re-usable and with a production process that avoids causes of waste and uses local sourcing and transportation.

CEDRAL FIBRE CEMENT ROOFING FOR THE UK'S FIRST ZERO CARBON COMMUNITY

Lead developer A2 Dominion is running the initial phase of the North West Bicester Eco town project, which has the long-term vision of providing up to 6,000 sustainable new homes and is the first of four planned Eco towns in the UK.

Announced in the Government's Planning Policy Statement in 2009, the Eco towns are designed to achieve zero carbon development and more sustainable living using the best new design and construction.

The initial phase of the North West Bicester project is called the Exemplar and main contractor Wilmott Dixon has already started to build the first 94 of the 393 planned highly efficient true zero carbon homes which will create the UK's first zero carbon community that is using Rivendale Fibre Cement Slates for its roofing.

Bicester Eco town was designed to achieve zero carbon development and more sustainable living using the best new design and construction.

Rivendale fibre cement slates were specified for the roofs on the Exemplar phase by main contractor Wilmott Dixon. The homes are highly efficient true zero carbon homes which helped to create the UK's first zero carbon community.

Cedral's UK technical team supports specifiers through the process. Visit Cedral's website for design inspiration, technical documents and certificates.

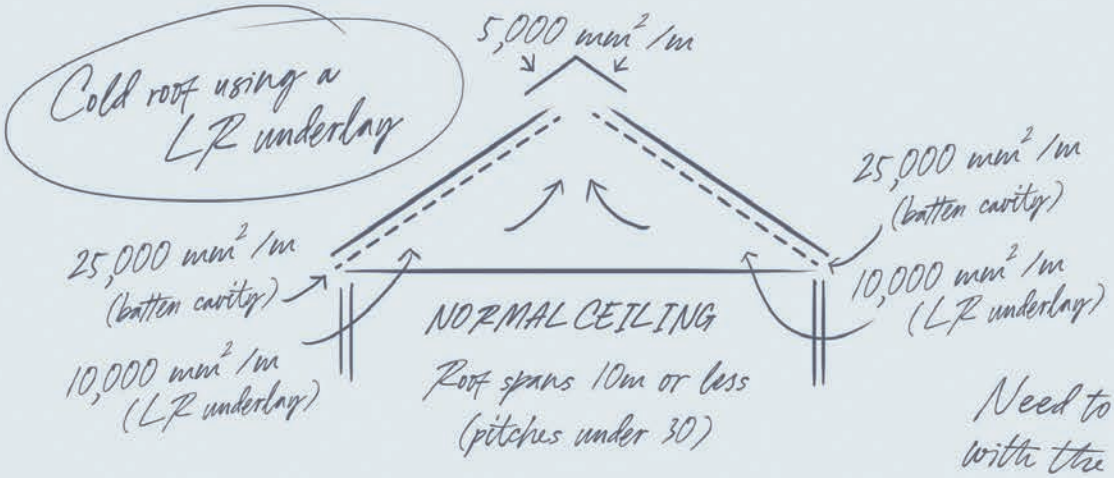
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Client wants to wrap the slates down the gable. Full envelope effect.









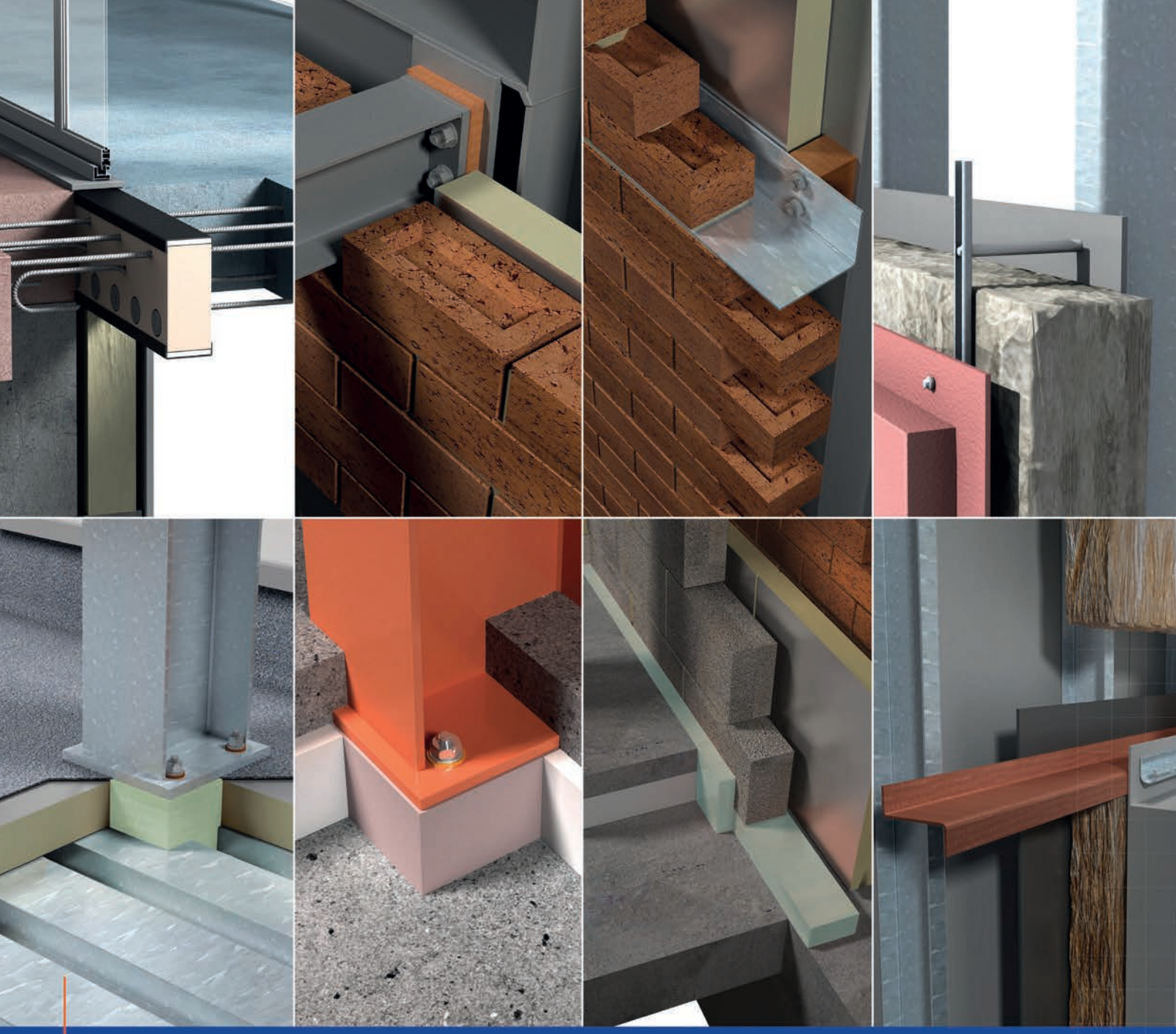
Need to balance ventilation strategy with the low 20° pitch shown here.

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A PROACTIVE STRATEGY ON PASSIVE FIRE PROTECTION

John Malone at Kilnbridge Fire Protection explains why passive fire protection needs to be inserted at early stages of our increasingly complex developments, in order to yield the maximum benefits.

As residential developments become more and more complex, developers are taking a more proactive approach to passive fire protection. Rather than viewing fire stopping as a specialist package delivered during construction, there is growing recognition that successful fire safety outcomes are shaped much earlier in the project lifecycle.

From compartmentation strategies and service routes to digital coordination and information management, the foundations for effective passive fire protection are often established long before installers arrive onsite. As building safety expectations continue to evolve, developers are seeking greater certainty through early engagement, structured coordination and robust digital assurance.

FIRE SAFETY IS A PROJECT-WIDE RESPONSIBILITY

Passive fire protection plays a critical role in maintaining compartmentation and supporting a building's overall fire strategy, but its success is influenced by decisions made throughout design, procurement and construction planning.

All too often, contractors are asked to become involved in projects where service penetrations have been coordinated within BIM models, yet insufficient consideration has been given to how those penetrations will ultimately be sealed using tested and certified systems. Often, discussions around fire stopping begin after significant service installations have already taken place, limiting the options available to project teams.

The reality is that decisions relating to service routes, structural interfaces, facade design and construction sequencing can all influence the effective delivery of passive fire protection. As residential schemes become more technically demanding, fire stopping can no longer be viewed as an isolated activity. Instead, it relies on effective coordination between designers, contractors, specialists and manufacturers from the outset.



INCREASINGLY, CLIENTS ARE MOVING AWAY FROM FRAGMENTED DELIVERY MODELS AND TOWARDS INTEGRATED APPROACHES

MOVING BEYOND TRADITIONAL DELIVERY MODELS

Historically, passive fire protection has often been incorporated within wider trade packages such as drylining, facades and MEP installations. While this can appear efficient from a procurement perspective, it can also create challenges around accountability and interface management.

Fire protection systems rarely operate in isolation. Service penetrations pass through compartment walls and floors, cavity barriers interface with external wall systems, and fire doors depend on surrounding construction being installed correctly. Every interface requires careful management to ensure fire performance is maintained.

Increasingly, clients are moving away from fragmented delivery models and towards integrated approaches that establish accountability, coordination and technical responsibility much earlier in the project lifecycle. This reflects a growing recognition that many fire safety challenges arise not from product selection, but from gaps in coordination between disciplines.

BRINGING PASSIVE FIRE PROTECTION UPSTREAM

One of the most significant developments across the residential sector is the shift of passive fire protection from construction-stage problem solving towards design-stage coordination.

Many historical installation challenges can be traced back to decisions made during design development. By engaging specialist contractors, manufacturers and technical advisors earlier in the process, project teams can identify suitable solutions before construction begins. This allows tested details to be incorporated into project information, improves buildability and reduces programme risk.

Early engagement also provides the opportunity to review compartmentation strategies, penetration types, service routes and facade interfaces before they become construction issues, helping developers achieve greater certainty around compliance outcomes.

BETTER FIRE PROTECTION BEGINS IN THE DIGITAL MODEL

Digital technologies are transforming the way passive fire protection is planned, coordinated and delivered. The industry is seeing greater use of BIM-led design reviews to assess service penetrations, compartment requirements, containment systems, ductwork interfaces and fire ratings long before installation begins.

This approach enables project teams to identify potential issues earlier in the programme, when there is greater flexibility to resolve them. Digital reviews can assess opening dimensions, penetration positioning, system compatibility and fire resistance requirements before work starts onsite.

Where challenges are identified, teams can explore alternative tested solutions, adjust designs or develop engineered solutions supported by

appropriate technical justification. By resolving potential conflicts during design development, projects can reduce programme risk, improve buildability and strengthen compliance outcomes.

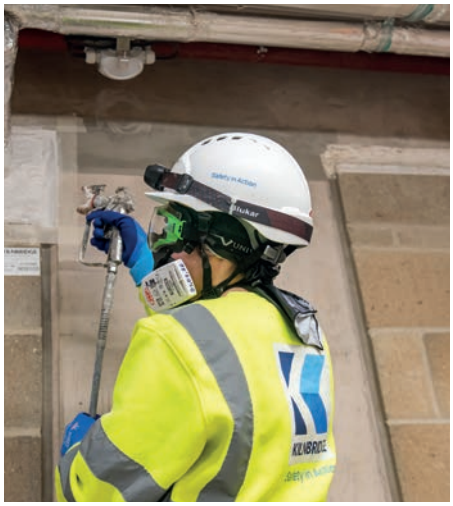
BUILDING THE GOLDEN THREAD

Alongside physical installation, there is increasing recognition that compliance information is equally important in demonstrating building safety. Developers are expected to understand what has been installed, where it has been installed, which system has been used, who completed the work and how compliance has been verified.

The most effective projects begin generating this information well before handover. Digital platforms allow installation records, inspection reports, photographs and quality assurance documentation to be captured progressively throughout construction, creating a robust record that supports future maintenance, refurbishment and building management.

AN EXEMPLAR APPROACH AT TWELVE TREES PARK

The importance of coordination, traceability and early engagement can be seen on major residential developments such as Twelve Trees



Park in Newham. As one of London's largest regeneration schemes, the project requires extensive coordination between multiple contractors, consultants and specialist disciplines. The passive fire protection package includes fire-stopping works throughout residential and communal areas, protecting penetrations where services pass through compartment walls, floors and ceilings.

Projects of this scale demonstrate that successful delivery depends on more than installation alone. Alignment between design, services coordination, construction sequencing and quality assurance processes is essential. The project also highlights the growing importance of digital traceability, with installation records and quality assurance information captured throughout delivery to support future building management and long-term compliance objectives.

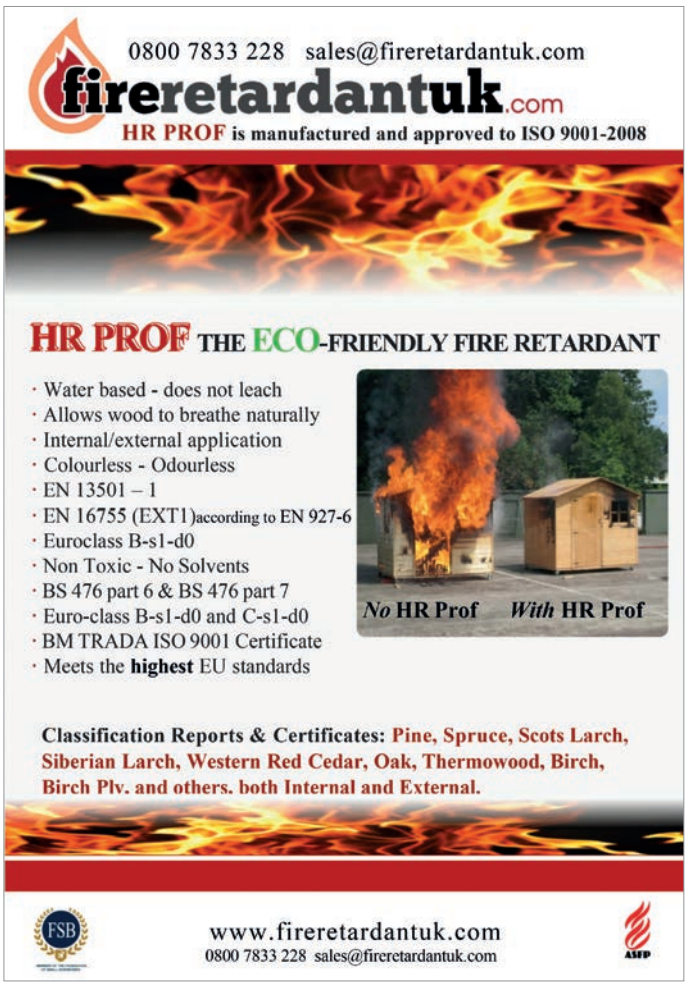
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The future of residential fire safety will not be defined solely by the quality of installation onsite. Increasingly, it will be shaped by the quality of coordination that takes place before installation begins.

Developers who engage specialists earlier, establish clear accountability, integrate fire protection into design development and embrace digital assurance are better positioned to achieve predictable compliance outcomes while reducing programme risk and supporting long-term building safety objectives.

Passive fire protection remains a fundamental element of any fire strategy, but its successful delivery depends on a coordinated process that brings together design, engineering, construction and information management from the very beginning of a project. Ultimately, better fire protection starts with better coordination.

John Malone is MD at Kilnbridge Fire Protection



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premiermarblefireplaces.com

New look column radiators from Stelrad



Stelrad Radiators has introduced an Italian-designed new look, improved range of its popular Column radiators – in both its vertical and horizontal column radiator ranges. The new range is available through all existing outlets streamlining the existing range, enhancing the performance from its Column radiator selection, and strengthening long-term value for purchasers of the range. The most obvious changes are to the design of the radiators that will now feature a new rounded column design. The streamlined model range will feature 54 horizontal radiators and four vertical options with heights between 300 mm and 2,000 mm and lengths from 348 mm to 1,866 mm. They will feature an increased warranty from five to fifteen years.

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The Pallet LOOP welcomes its latest partner



The Pallet LOOP is proud to announce that Lime Green has signed up to use its reusable green pallets. The new partnership will see Lime Green move its products onto The Pallet LOOP's distinctive green pallets, supporting the recovery, repair and reuse of pallets across the construction supply chain. The company's decision to adopt LOOP pallets represents another step in its commitment to environmental sustainability and the responsible use of materials. Unlike traditional construction pallets, which are often discarded after a single journey, LOOP pallets are designed to be recovered, repaired and used again. This helps keep them in circulation for longer, reducing timber waste.

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DRU turns up the warmth with three stylish new fires for autumn 2026



DRU Valo 130/3 3-sided electric fire



DRU Global Ivar 5 CF gas stove



Dik Geurts Instyle U700 3-sided wood fire

As the evenings draw in and thoughts turn to making our homes warmer and more inviting, the fireplace once again becomes the natural heart of the living space. And whether your taste is for the convenience of gas, the flexibility of electricity or the timeless appeal of a real wood fire, there are now more ways than ever to combine warmth with contemporary interior style.

Dutch fireplace manufacturer DRU, which has been creating fires and stoves since 1754, has introduced three new models for autumn 2026, designed for very different homes and lifestyles.

A CLASSIC STOVE STYLE WITH THE CONVENIENCE OF GAS

For anyone who loves the traditional appearance of a wood stove but prefers the ease and convenience of gas, the new DRU Global Ivar 5 CF offers an appealing alternative.

Based on the popular Dik Geurts Ivar 5 wood stove, this compact model has been designed specifically for installation into UK chimneys, making it equally at home in a period property, country cottage or more contemporary interior.

At its heart is DRU's TrueFlame® burner, creating high, dancing flames around a realistic log bed. A Ceraglass interior enhances the effect, producing an impressive three-dimensional view of the fire.

With efficient performance, low maintenance and instant controllable warmth, the Ivar 5 CF provides the atmosphere of a traditional fireplace without the need to store or handle logs. It is available for natural gas or LPG, with an RRP of £2,095.

ELECTRIC FIRES ENTER A NEW ERA

Electric fires have become an increasingly popular feature of contemporary interiors, particularly with the growth of media walls and bespoke fireplace installations.

The new DRU Valo range combines modern LED technology with real wood to create a more natural-looking fireplace display. Its Purewood log set features individual pieces with their own unique wood grain, complemented by wood chips and a luminous glow bed to produce a warm, organic effect.

Available in 130 cm and 150 cm widths, Valo can be configured as a single-sided, two-sided or three-sided fire, providing plenty of scope for creative interior design.

And at just 29 cm deep, it can be incorporated easily into media walls and false chimney breasts without taking too much space from the room. Operation is by remote control or app, making it a particularly convenient option for modern living.

Prices start at £2,020 for the 130 model and £2,130 for the 150.

MAKE A STATEMENT WITH REAL WOOD

Dik Geurts is the brand under which DRU designs and produces its extensive selection of wood stoves and fires.

For larger rooms and dramatic open-plan interiors, the new Dik Geurts Instyle Triple U700 turns a wood fire into an architectural feature.

Built into a feature wall or room divider, its three-sided design provides an expansive view of the flames from different areas of the room – ideal for creating a visual connection between living, dining and kitchen spaces.

With a generous 8-12 kW heat output, the Instyle Triple U700 combines the atmosphere and natural warmth of burning wood with modern technology. The DG Smart Assist air control system can be operated using a remote control or app, helping to make managing the fire easier.

For households looking to reduce environmental impact, optional GreenBlocks features include a room-sealed configuration and catalytic converter, designed to lower emissions and improve air quality.

A WARMER WELCOME TO AUTUMN

From a compact gas stove sitting comfortably within a traditional fireplace to a sleek electric media wall or a dramatic three-sided wood fire, today's fireplaces can be as much a part of the interior design as the furniture, lighting and decor.

And as autumn arrives, there are few additions to the home that can transform its atmosphere quite as effectively as the glow of a fire.

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PLANNING WARMTH INTO NEW HOMES

Peter Mintoft from Charlton & Jenrick considers how electric fires can support comfort, design flexibility and clear homeowner expectations within increasingly efficient new build homes and developments.





As new homes become more energy efficient, the way residents use heat is changing. Better insulation, airtightness and system control reduces the overall energy needed to maintain a stable temperature within the home. However, purchasers still value the comfort, ambience and focus created by a fireplace. For housebuilders, the opportunity lies in treating an electric fire as a planned element rather than an accessory added after the room layout is fixed.

The distinction between primary and secondary heating is essential. The 2026 edition of Approved Document L for dwellings is scheduled to take effect in England from 24 March 2027 for building work not connected with higher risk building. Setting out how the energy and emissions impact of secondary heating should be included in the approved calculation. It also states that a heat pump should meet the full design demand without assuming support from secondary heat sources. An electric fire therefore needs a defined role. It may provide local comfort and visual ambience, but it should not compensate for an undersized primary heating system or weak building fabric. Secondary heat sources can add complementary short-term, rapid response for these comfort warmth needs.

When that role is established early, the specification can support the wider design strategy. Almost all new electric fires allow the low energy flame display to operate independently from the heater, so the feature can contribute to the character of a living space throughout the year. When warmth is required, local temperature, presence and time controls can help residents use the flexible heating function for defined periods in the room they occupy. Developers should present this as a desirable choice for rapid response and comfort rather than a guaranteed energy saving, since actual use, tariff, controls and the efficiency of the primary heating system all affect running costs.

Early coordination also protects the architecture. The fire influences the width and depth of a feature wall, the position of a television, the route of electrics, and the need for future service access. If these points are left to the fit-out stage, you may risk an awkward projection, trailing cables or a layout that limits furniture placement. A coordinated approach allows the appliance, surrounding materials and adjacent joinery to read as one part of the room. It also gives the electrical designer and fire manufacturer an opportunity to confirm power requirements, clearances and any enclosure ventilation provisions before work gets underway.

Standardisation can make this approach best practice across a development. A housebuilder may select a small number of configurations matched to popular house types, with each arrangement supported by a clear drawing and specification. The base build can include the necessary power supply and wall depth, while the fire itself is offered as standard in selected plots or as a buyer option for a turnkey property. This reduces late variations and gives site teams a repeatable template. It also helps procurement teams compare costs on a consistent basis, including the appliance, framing, finishing, electrical work and commissioning.

The size of the room matters as much as the size of the fire. In a compact living room, a wide installation would dominate the elevation and restrict storage. In a larger open plan space, a smaller appliance may feel visually disconnected from the architecture. The chosen proportions should respond to the wall, viewing distance, TV sizing (particularly if located above) and possible furniture arrangement. Heat output also needs consideration because new homes can warm quickly. Thermostatic control and suitable heating settings can reduce the risk of the room becoming too warm, but correct product selection remains important.

Developers should also consider how the feature will be explained at point of sale and on handover. Buyers may assume incorrectly that every visible fire is intended to heat the whole home, or that a low energy LED or LCD electric flame effect always consumes the same power as the heater. Clear marketing copy and resident instructions should distinguish the low power flame display function from the heating function, state the rated heat output, explain the controls and describe the appliance as secondary heating. The intended purpose for flexible rapid response to comfort warmth needs,

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY HEATING IS ESSENTIAL

not continuous heating, is a strong selling point that should not be missed. This protects trust and helps residents operate the home as designed.

Product choice should follow the service strategy. Access for maintenance, replacement parts and eventual appliance removal should be resolved without damaging the finished wall. Check that the appliance supplier can provide full technical support, spares and that the products can be serviced fully from the front when installed. Where a television is positioned above the fire, the design team should follow the relevant installation instructions and consider the effect of any heat on surrounding equipment and finishes. Materials should be selected for their suitability in the completed assembly, not simply for their appearance in a showroom image.

Electric fires can also support consistency across mixed tenure and varied plot sizes, provided the specification remains disciplined. The same design principles can be adapted for apartments, starter homes and larger family properties without forcing one visual solution into every room. A restrained schedule of sizes and finishes gives buyers meaningful choice while keeping the construction detail manageable. For developers, that balance between personalisation and repeatability is often more valuable than an extensive options list.

The broader lesson is that responsive comfort features should be part of design coordination from the outset. As building fabric improves and primary heating systems become more carefully engineered, secondary appliances need an equally clear purpose. An electric fire can add focus, atmosphere and rapid transitional local warmth, but its success depends on proportion, controls, installation detail and honest communication. When these issues are settled before work begins on site, the finished feature can support and enhance both the performance of the home and the experience of the purchaser.

Peter Mintoft is managing director at Charlton & Jenrick





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BATHROOM WALL PANELS – FAST & FABULOUS

Amanda Mills at SFA Saniflo and Kinedo discusses why housebuilders should consider wall panels for bathrooms in residential new builds.



Bathroom design has moved on considerably in recent years. Homeowners increasingly want bathrooms that feel individual, stylish and contemporary, rather than simply functional. For housebuilders, however, delivering attractive bathrooms also means balancing design expectations with installation time, labour costs and the need to complete new homes efficiently.

This is where wall panels can offer a compelling alternative to traditional tiling.

QUICKER TO INSTALL

One of the biggest advantages of wall panels for new-build projects is speed. Panels can be installed considerably more quickly than traditional tiles, helping to reduce the time required to complete each bathroom.

Many modern panels can also be cut to size, if required, onsite using standard tools prior to installation onto suitably prepared wall surfaces. It is important to remember the walls in a shower area must be tanked prior to fixing the panels, the same requirement for conventional tiling. However, clearly there is no grouting, once the panels are up, it's just a case of allowing the panel adhesive and silicone sealant to thoroughly dry before the shower can be used – usually around 24 hours.

For housebuilders working to tight construction programmes, saving installation time across multiple properties can make a significant difference to the progress of a site and enables trades to move on to the next stage of the build sooner, meaning cost savings are possible.

DESIGNED TO BE EASY ON THE INSTALLER

Looking after the installer and reducing the risks of manual handling are top of the list for housebuilders – and the sector now has some of the most stringent health and safety policies. It is worth looking for wall panels that are exceptionally lightweight and therefore easier to handle, manoeuvre and position as they are best placed to support those credentials.

Lightweight doesn't mean low quality either – innovative materials such as aluminium and polyethylene used in the manufacture of waterproof wall panels are high quality and durable, but less physically demanding to install.

A HUGE CHOICE OF PANELS TO CREATE THE PERFECT SPACE

Speed and efficiency do not mean compromising on appearance. Modern wall panels are available in an increasingly wide choice of colours, patterns and finishes, allowing housebuilders to create bathrooms that reflect current tastes.

Marble remains a particularly popular look for housebuilders and other specifiers, offering the appearance of a luxurious natural material without the cost and maintenance associated with genuine marble. Darker marble effects



ONE OF THE BIGGEST ADVANTAGES OF WALL PANELS FOR NEW-BUILD PROJECTS IS SPEED

can create a dramatic statement, while lighter versions provide a brighter and more timeless appearance.

Nature-inspired designs are currently on trend too, with stone, botanical and other organic patterns helping to create bathrooms that feel calm and connected to nature. Wood-effect finishes offer another way to bring the outdoors in.

For homeowners looking for something more contemporary, geometric designs such as herringbone, hexagonal, wave and other repeating patterns can provide visual interest without overwhelming the room.

MAKING A STATEMENT

The beauty of panels is that they can be used throughout the whole bathroom, cloakroom or even utility room. Alternatively, rather than covering the whole space in an identical design, a statement panel can create a stunning focal point, whether that is in the shower, above the bath or on a single wall. As well as offering a premium appearance, this method could be adapted to offer customers a choice of bathroom decor if they are buying off plan.

PRACTICAL & BEAUTIFUL

For new-build housing, wall panels offer the lot. Quick to install, straightforward to handle, less preparation, no grouting. All available choice of patterns, colours and natural finishes that today's homeowners want, delivering contemporary bathrooms faster.

So, will it become the norm for housebuilders to offer panels to customers just like they do carpets in a new house?

Amanda Mills is marketing manager at SFA Saniflo and Kinedo



What could changing wall surface specification save you in the long run?

What if one of the simplest ways for housebuilders to reduce costs, accelerate construction programmes and minimise environmental impact was to rethink how they finish bathroom walls? Traditional tiling is labour- and resource-intensive. According to **Wetwall's** internal calculations, tiling bathrooms across 17,000 homes could consume approximately one million litres of water, alongside millions of disposable plastic tile spacers destined for landfill. Beyond the environmental implications, water used for mixing grout and cleaning tools can become contaminated with construction residues. If disposed of through newly installed drainage systems, this wastewater can cause costly blockages. Wetwall bathroom wall panels offer a practical alternative, eliminating the need for grout and tile spacers while significantly reducing installation-related water consumption. The time savings are equally compelling. Traditional tiling involves multiple stages, from adhesive application to grouting and curing, potentially extending completion over several days. Wall panels, by comparison, can be installed in a fraction of that time. While these efficiencies benefit individual installations, their impact becomes particularly significant across multiple plots, helping to reduce installation labour and accelerate construction programmes.

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As housebuilding ambitions grow, what gives new-build buyers confidence?

By Katie O'Shea, National Contracts Manger, Beko UK & Ireland

With bold government housebuilding targets and Your First Home aimed at helping more first-time buyers into homeownership, there is a renewed push to help people onto the property ladder.

Buying that first home is one of the biggest financial decisions people make, so what gives buyers confidence in their choice? What reassures them that they are spending their savings wisely? And who can they turn to for help once they have the keys?

Settling into a new home brings unfamiliar controls and routines, so technology that takes some work off buyers' hands has an obvious appeal. According to Beko's upcoming Housebuilder Index, which surveyed more than 500 recent and prospective new-build buyers, almost half of buyers say automated energy management would save them time in everyday life, while a similar proportion say smart appliances need to be simple to use before they feel confident using them.

As homes incorporate more connected technology, buyers want it to deliver practical benefits. For housebuilders, that creates an opportunity to focus on specification that saves time, reduces effort and makes everyday living easier.

Technologies such as HomeWhiz are one example of how manufacturers are responding to these expectations helping homeowners monitor energy and water usage, receive notifications about potential issues before they become faults and access software updates, helping them get more from their appliances over time. For specification teams, it is worth asking suppliers how connected features can save homeowners effort, what guidance is built in and how the appliance will be supported as its software develops.

Knowing help is available can reassure buyers about the home they have chosen, with almost two in five saying good aftercare and support gives them confidence in new-build quality. Familiar names matter too, with more than a third saying the same of appliances and fittings from brands they know and trust. For specification teams, this gives service provision and brand familiarity a place alongside performance, efficiency and price when choosing products and partners.

At Beko, that commitment to aftercare is supported by a network of more than 1,100 engineers covering 99% of the UK, helping provide homeowners with access to support if it's needed. Agreeing how advice and repair requests will be handled during procurement helps customer care teams give buyers a clear route to assistance.

For buyers settling into their first home, useful technology and strong aftercare can make unfamiliar routines easier to manage, supporting confidence in the choice they have made.

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Meadfleet team raises £2,200 for Macmillan



Eight members of the **Meadfleet** team have raised £2,200 for Macmillan Cancer Support after completing a 13-mile charity walk between two developments managed by the company. The team, from open space management company Meadfleet, walked cross-country from Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire to Oakham in Rutland, surpassing their original fundraising target of £1,500. Thanks to the generosity of colleagues, customers, friends, family and supporters, the team raised an incredible total. Inspired by a colleague who has recently come through their own cancer journey, the challenge held special meaning for everyone involved.

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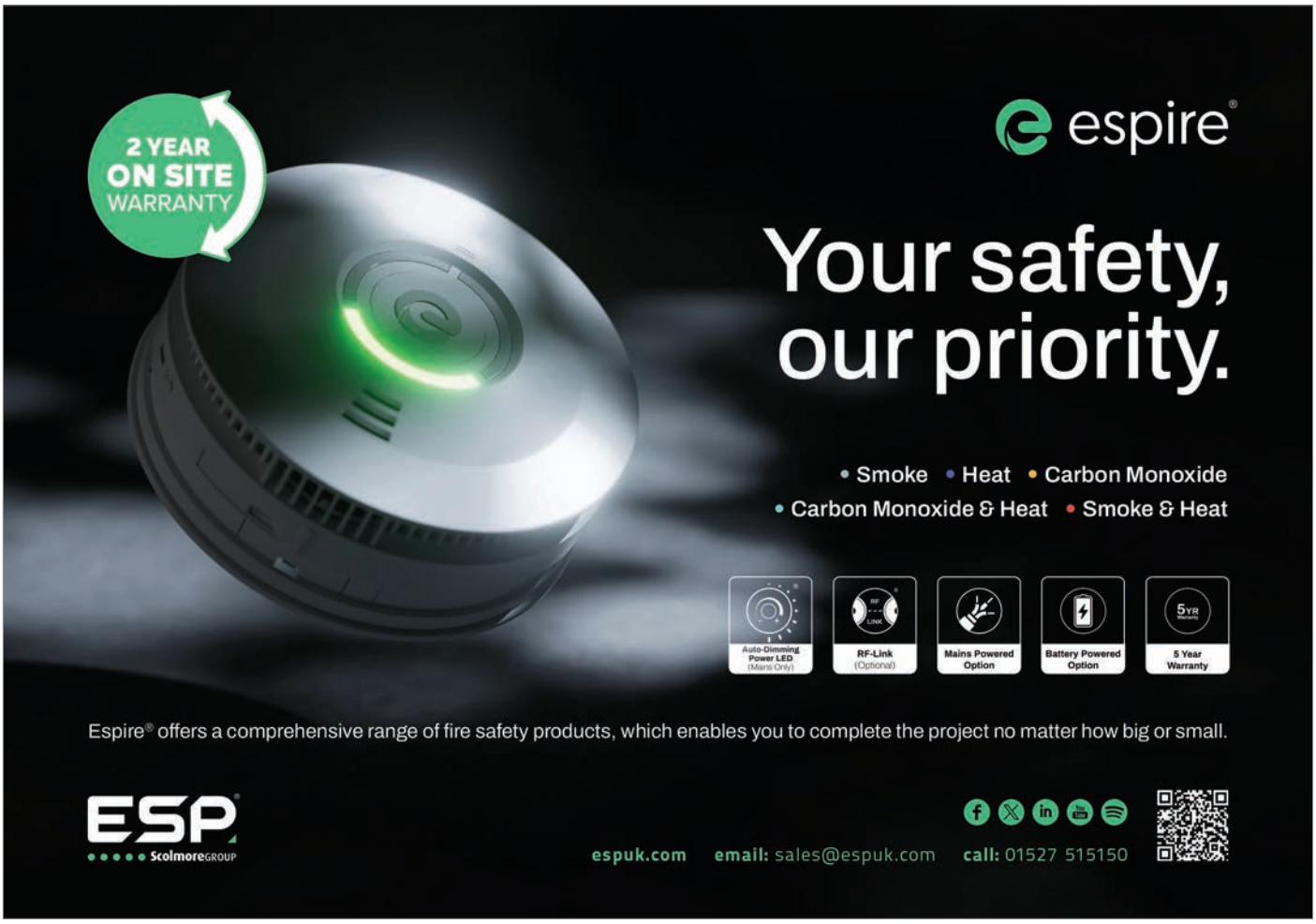
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New Altro Oceanis brings the beauty of nature to bathroom floors

Altro Oceanis is an innovative new safety floor solution inspired by the timeless elegance of nature and expertly engineered for bathrooms and wet rooms. Designed to unite natural aesthetics with practical performance, Altro Oceanis offers the warmth of natural wood, stone-effect and mineral designs, while benefiting from trusted slip resistance in high-risk environments. Set to revolutionise wet room and bathroom design, this fresh new range was driven by customer feedback wanting style without compromising safety, and it delivers that even in challenging wet and dry conditions. Drawing on the calming influence of biophilic design, Altro Oceanis features a range of visually striking options inspired by nature, and brings a sense of tranquillity and comfort to any space, whether residential or commercial, while maintaining Altro's renowned standards for slip resistance and durability. Altro Oceanis is constructed with added comfort, and a smoother surface underfoot, making it a pleasure to walk on even in bare feet. The finish enhances the user experience, while its decorative versatility means it complements interiors from contemporary spas to accessible bathrooms, wet rooms and family homes. Wet slip resistance exceeds PTV 50+ and is guaranteed for the lifetime of the floor.

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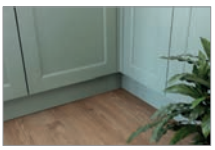


BG'S new GridLite modular switches make installation Lite work

Easy, flexible and faster to install, the new **BG** GridLite is an innovative clip-in modular switching system that rethinks traditional modular wiring accessories. Combining a screwless, clip-in design with a unique yoke-free construction, GridLite is the first modular switch range of its kind from BG, enabling installers to build bespoke switch configurations quickly, replace individual modules with ease and adapt installations without changing the entire device. Designed in response to installer feedback, GridLite delivers a simpler, more versatile approach to modular switching whilst maintaining the premium quality, reliability and aesthetics synonymous with the BG brand. At the heart of GridLite is a screwless clip-in modular system that removes the need for fiddly fixing screws and allows modules to simply push into place. The innovative yoke-free design also means modules can be installed either way up, giving electricians greater flexibility on site. Installers can wire modules before fitting the faceplate, allowing the plate to be added at the final stage of the job. As well as making installation quicker and more efficient, this helps reduce the risk of damage during decorating or final fix. GridLite's single-width modules are rated at 20A, while standard switch modules fit 16 mm back boxes, helping to minimise rework on many installations.

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Housing development completed with Forbo



The luxury Pippins Beck residential development in the Lake District demanded high expectations from its interior finishes. **Forbo Flooring System's** Allura LVT was specified as the ideal solution to match both the desired aesthetics and required performance. The developer chose to specify Forbo's Allura fully adhered luxury vinyl tile (LVT) flooring throughout the ground floor, from the hallway to the kitchen. Forbo's Allura LVT collection is specifically designed to not only meet functionality needs but also creative demands. Its proven wear layer offers lasting durability in the most demanding of family homes, while its PUR protective finish ensures reduced maintenance and cleaning for homeowners.

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EGGER delivers quality and speed of build for Dandara, on beautiful new Buckmore Green

Buckmore Green is the latest development from award-winning housebuilder Dandara, on the edge of the beautiful South Downs and built with a strong emphasis on landscape. Continuing its relationship with structural flooring manufacturer EGGER, Dandara has specified EGGER Protect flooring boards on the development, chosen for durability and its contribution to streamlined build schedules.

Delivered by Dandara, Buckmore Green is an exclusive new housing development located in the market town of Petersfield, on the edge of the South Downs National Park. Comprising a beautiful collection of 85 units, ranging from two-bedroom apartments to four-bedroom homes, the properties are designed to complement their surroundings, with materials, designs and architectural features reflective of the local character.

Speaking about the development, Luke McCarthy, Site Manager at Dandara, said: "Sustainability is at the heart of everything we do; we're building homes for the future and for the community. Our houses have a variety of sustainable features, including air source heat pumps, solar panels, EV chargers and enhanced insulation, all compliant with Part L of the Building Regulations."

At the core of any house build are structural flooring boards, heavy-duty and load-wearing



panels that are installed directly onto floor joists to form the main subfloor.

Luke continued: "As a site manager, my priority for any flooring product or system is always for it to be durable and easy to handle for my teams on site, as well as positively contributing to quality and speed of build. It's for all these reasons and more that we work closely with EGGER UK."

EGGER and Dandara have been working collaboratively for a number of years, with a specification agreement in place for EGGER's Peel Clean Xtra and Protect structural flooring systems.

"All products are designed with the build team in mind," explained Luke. "They're lightweight for the trades to carry, provide protection against the working environment and are durable; they can be installed in all sorts of conditions, enabling us to continue the build effectively. For us, working in construction in England at different times of year, you can be faced with all manner of weather conditions. The 100-day exposure rating offered by EGGER Protect provides the freedom to be a bit vulnerable at times, giving you added time to continue with the build, without worrying about weather damage or delays."

Trusted by housebuilders nationwide, EGGER offers a wide range of structural flooring boards, with each product undergoing rigorous testing to ensure they meet the highest industry standards. EGGER Protect can be left exposed to the elements for up to 100 days and has been classified with a 'Low Slip Potential' by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). When installed with EGGER Joint & Joist Adhesive, all products benefit from EGGER's Advanced Lifetime Guarantee.

Mike Tozer, National Housebuilding Account Manager at EGGER, added: "We've been in partnership with Dandara now for a number of years, working collaboratively and discussing their sustainability requirements. We're really pleased to support Dandara with our portfolio of structural flooring systems, as they continue to grow and expand at brilliant developments, such as Buckmore Green."

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