

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

# HOME Improvement

from The Federation of Master Builders

## Finding the perfect builder

To match your expectations

## New dimensions

Making the best use of space

## The Generation Game

Different ages want different homes

## Energy efficiency

Insulate before you generate



# Welcome

If you are planning to extend your home or enhance existing living space, this guide to home improvement is essential reading. From the basics of how to choose a builder, to achieving sensational style for your home, we've got it covered.

We've asked the experts for their top tips, talked to Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen about style ideas and listened to people like you describing their successful home improvement projects. Whether you are planning a conservatory, a new kitchen or bathroom, a loft conversion or garage makeover, this guide has the advice you need to help you turn your dreams into reality.

With climate change very much on our minds, we have also included plenty of ideas on how to cut your home's carbon emissions and make it more environmentally friendly when carrying out home improvement.



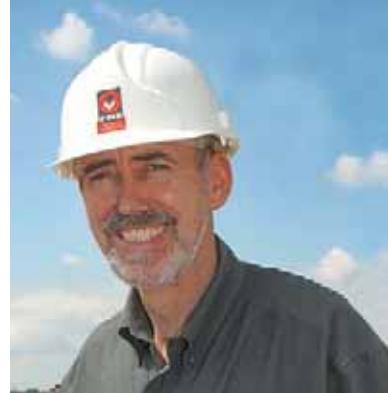
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Front Cover:  
Interior of a winning project in the 2006 FMB Master Builder of the Year Awards.

# Finding the perfect builder



Identifying a builder who can match your requirements and hopefully exceed your expectations requires some work on your part, but it will be rewarded.

First, ask friends for recommendations and look on the Federation of Master Builders' website – [www.findabuilder.co.uk](http://www.findabuilder.co.uk) – for good local builders. Once you have a few names, check them out by talking to previous clients, visiting recently completed jobs and making sure you would be happy with the quality of the builders' work.

When you know exactly what you want, give a shortlist of builders the information they need to draw up written quotations. When the quotes are in make sure you are comparing like with like and remember that the cheapest quote won't necessarily be the best. As well as finding a good builder, you need a builder you can get on with throughout the project. After selecting a builder, agree terms and write everything down. Depending on the scale of your project, you should enter into a formal contract with the builder. You can download a contract from the Federation of Master Builders' website. Include a timeline for stage payment that covers the completion of segments of the work in your agreement.

Making firm decisions about what you want and agreeing costs with your builder upfront means you will be able to manage the finances with no nasty surprises, although you should set aside a contingency fund of 10% of the contract price for unexpected costs. And remember that if you do make changes or add things that were not in the original contract, they will add extra costs that could bust your budget.

## Benefits of an FMB builder

The Federation of Master Builders is the building industry's largest trade association, representing over 13,000 UK firms. In line with its logo, 'The sign of building quality', the FMB only accepts as members builders who can prove their skills and business acumen. Complaints against members are taken very seriously. The FMB investigates all disputes fully and in the vast majority of cases, they are resolved through their intervention. However, where that is not possible, the FMB will help arrange independent dispute resolution.

The dispute resolution procedure has teeth, as members can and are removed from the register and the FMB works closely with local Trading Standards officers to ensure that expelled firms are not continuing to represent themselves as members.

## The joining criteria for the FMB are:

- At least 12 months trading.
- 6 references, including one from a 'professional' or Local Authority Building Control.
- Local FMB Branch approval.
- Public and employer liability insurance.
- No un-disclosed bankruptcies or relevant outstanding County Court Judgments.
- VAT registration where appropriate.
- Confirmation of business address/details.
- Credit checks, public record and director checks.

For further information visit:

**[www.findabuilder.co.uk](http://www.findabuilder.co.uk)**

# Up close and personal

Many building projects succeed or fail on the strength of the relationship between the builder and the client, so take a proactive approach and create a working partnership that will deliver exactly what you want.

**W**hen a building project starts to go wrong, it's easy to point a finger at your builder, but as in most business engagements, with a little effort on both sides and a lot of communication, it is possible to create a working relationship that will support your project through good times and the more tricky moments.

First and most important is hiring the right builder for you. Take time to understand what you and your builder expect from each other and you will be on your way to a great relationship. As the project progresses, make sure you nurture the relationship by communicating frequently and clarifying any potential misunderstandings. An honest and open conversation should highlight and clear up any differences, while an occasional word of praise will go a long way to help cement the relationship.



*The original Golf Club in 1935*



## Top tips for a successful relationship

- Choose your builder carefully – make sure you trust your builder and that you both understand how you will work together
- Draw up a contract – this should include an agreed timetable that both you and your builder are comfortable with. The FMB's Plain English Contract can help to prevent problems and can be used for any building project. Download it free at [www.findabuilder.co.uk](http://www.findabuilder.co.uk)
- Be realistic – builders aren't mind readers, so if your project is not going according to plan, you must explain what you want and discuss the options
- Making changes – if you want to make changes during the project, make sure you communicate these clearly to your builder and discuss any implications to the programme and budget to avoid nasty surprises later
- Keep talking – good communication is essential to success
- Be available – let your builder know when you will be around and how to contact you when you are out so that you can make quick decisions when they are needed
- Just ask – if you don't understand building jargon ask for an explanation sooner rather than later so there are no misunderstandings
- Pay promptly – set a timetable for when and how payments will be made through the project so that you can plan ahead and, when each project stage is finished, check you are happy with the work and pay promptly.



## The lawyer

Tony Bingham, a barrister, arbitrator and adjudicator who works to resolve disputes in building projects, cites projects not finishing on time, poor administration skills in small building companies and issues around payments as common causes of disputes between builders and their customers.

Most disputes start on site with a simple disagreement, but they quickly escalate and once solicitors are brought in, the builder is unlikely to finish the project, leaving the customer looking for another builder and incurring more costs.

Tony suggests the best way to avoid disputes is to decide up front exactly what you want, engage a professional architect or building surveyor to manage the project for you and, only then, start the search for a builder and a request for quotes.

## A winning team

**When Pat and Stuart Smith embarked on a £500,000 redevelopment of a rundown 1930s golf clubhouse overlooking the River Dart, they knew they needed to find a local builder with great experience of large projects.**

The couple spent 18 months planning the refurbishment with local architect Lee Guilfoyle and then interviewed three potential builders. The builder they selected could not start the project at a suitable time, so Lee Guilfoyle went to view work carried out by Manor Building Company in Torbay and recommended the company. An initial meeting with Peter Passmore, one of the company's three proprietors, went well and the company was selected for the project.

"Peter and his team were motivated by the quality of the job, rather than by money", says Stuart Smith. "We gave Peter a lot of responsibility and he used his extensive technical experience to develop the project, working well with specialist contractors and with subcontractor Carpenter Oak, a local company that built the enormous oak frames and 50 metre outside gallery for the house. The contractors had great respect for Peter, they were always on time and discussed any problems as they occurred."

While architect Lee Guilfoyle held technical meetings with Peter, the Smiths met him regularly to discuss progress and made a few changes in their plans along the way. These included the addition of a hot tub on a roof terrace, which required additional steels to be put in, and changes to the main living area to accommodate furniture that the Smiths selected after the room was complete.

"We were pretty realistic on the client front, so we would talk to Peter about changes and additional costs and come to a compromise as we went along. Peter was very flexible and we never had a tricky moment in the relationship," says Stuart Smith. "I think the key thing to remember in a big project is that it is a team effort and the architect, builder and client must all stay involved." For Manor Building Company, the Smith's project proved a resounding success, winning not only the clients' approval, but also the top industry accolade of Master Builder of the Year 2006.

## The psychologist

Psychologist Corinne Sweet says trust and honesty are key to any good relationship, adding: "Many people's houses are a projection of themselves and they can feel very defensive when letting strangers into their homes. Like any relationship, it is important for a builder and customer to have an understanding of how both parties tick so that they can work around each other and fit into each other's lives."



# From the ground up

Building your own home is an exciting prospect, but you need to keep your feet on the ground when it comes to planning and cost control.

**A**s property prices continue to rise, buying a piece of land and getting the builders in can be an affordable way of acquiring your perfect home. But without meticulous planning and careful cost management, your dream house project could spiral out of control and become a nightmare.

**To avoid disaster you need to pay great attention to detail in every stage of the project.**

## What to consider

Before embarking on a search for land, you need to decide the size of the plot you need to accommodate your home, garage, parking space and garden. Do you want a single-storey or two-storey home and how many rooms will you need?

## Planning

You also need to consider the location of your new home in terms of proximity to schools, shops and transport. And don't forget to cut through the red tape of building regulations and planning permission before building work starts.

## The builder

With a clear view of what and where you want to build, it is time to engage an architect or builder. Don't go for the first or cheapest quote. Instead, go for a professional who understands what you want and can show you other reference sites. You also need a good deal of mutual trust to turn your dream into reality within budget.

## Finance

If you have a regular income you should have no problem securing a loan or mortgage to build your new home. Look out for special self-build mortgages, as many lenders won't provide money to cover buying the land, and check out all the tax implications.

Ask your architect or builder to make sure you have covered every potential cost involved in the new build before you start and then stick to your plans and your budget.

## A magnificent country home

Ciaran and Gillian Montague drew up plans for their dream home with an architect and won planning permission to build a five-bedroom, detached country home and double garage on land in Limavady, County Londonderry.

With the plans in place, they called in local builder John McAuley Construction to turn theory into practice. One potential problem was a World War II bunker located on the site, but the builder resolved this by creating a reinforced concrete base over the hole the bunker occupied.

While not changing the Montague's overall scheme, John McAuley, acting as project advisor, took a proactive approach to helping the couple get the very best out of their new build.

John advised that the planning application be resubmitted to move the house back a little, giving the house greater visual impact, with a long, sweeping drive from the road to the house. Other suggestions the Montagues implemented included a change in the kitchen windows that saved money, gave a more aesthetically pleasing look and improved the functional layout.

The result of working closely with the builder was a fabulous home that exceeded Ciaran and Gillian's expectations and won John McAuley the Best New Homes Builder at the Master Builder of the Year Awards 2006. "We were delighted," says Ciaran.



# d up

## Before you start

- Decide what and where you want to build
- Engage a professional architect or builder
- Check planning permission
- Draw up a detailed budget
- Draw up a contract and timetable
- Secure a loan or mortgage
- Buy all-risks self-build insurance
- Set up a contingency fund for unforeseen problems



## GO GREEN!

It's easier to factor in energy efficient measures when designing and building a new home, so make sure you discuss your options with your builder to gain environmental benefits right from the start.

If you are committed to an eco-friendly home, pick a like-minded builder and your relationship will blossom.

## Becoming energy efficient

When Rob and Lorraine Ralph decided to build a new home in Yarpole, Herefordshire, their top priority was energy efficiency. They were on a limited budget, but as they wanted their home to be as eco-friendly as possible, they engaged an architect with a similar interest in building ecologically sound homes. Builder, Phillip Butler of The Wells Joinery, Shelsley Beauchamp, transformed their ideas into reality and the project won a Master Builder of the Year Award in 2005.

In pursuit of energy efficiency, the house has extensive glazing to the south and much smaller windows in its northern elevation. It features under-floor heating and a wood-burning stove, although these are rarely needed as the property is well insulated throughout with roof insulation made of recycled newspaper blown between the rafters.

The Ralphs are delighted with their new home; "Our house was designed and built with energy efficiency in mind, but it also allows in as much light as possible."





# Insulate before you generate



Unless you live in a brand new home, it is unlikely that your house will gain an A-rated Energy Performance Certificate, under one of the latest government schemes to encourage homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their houses, and to help save the planet.

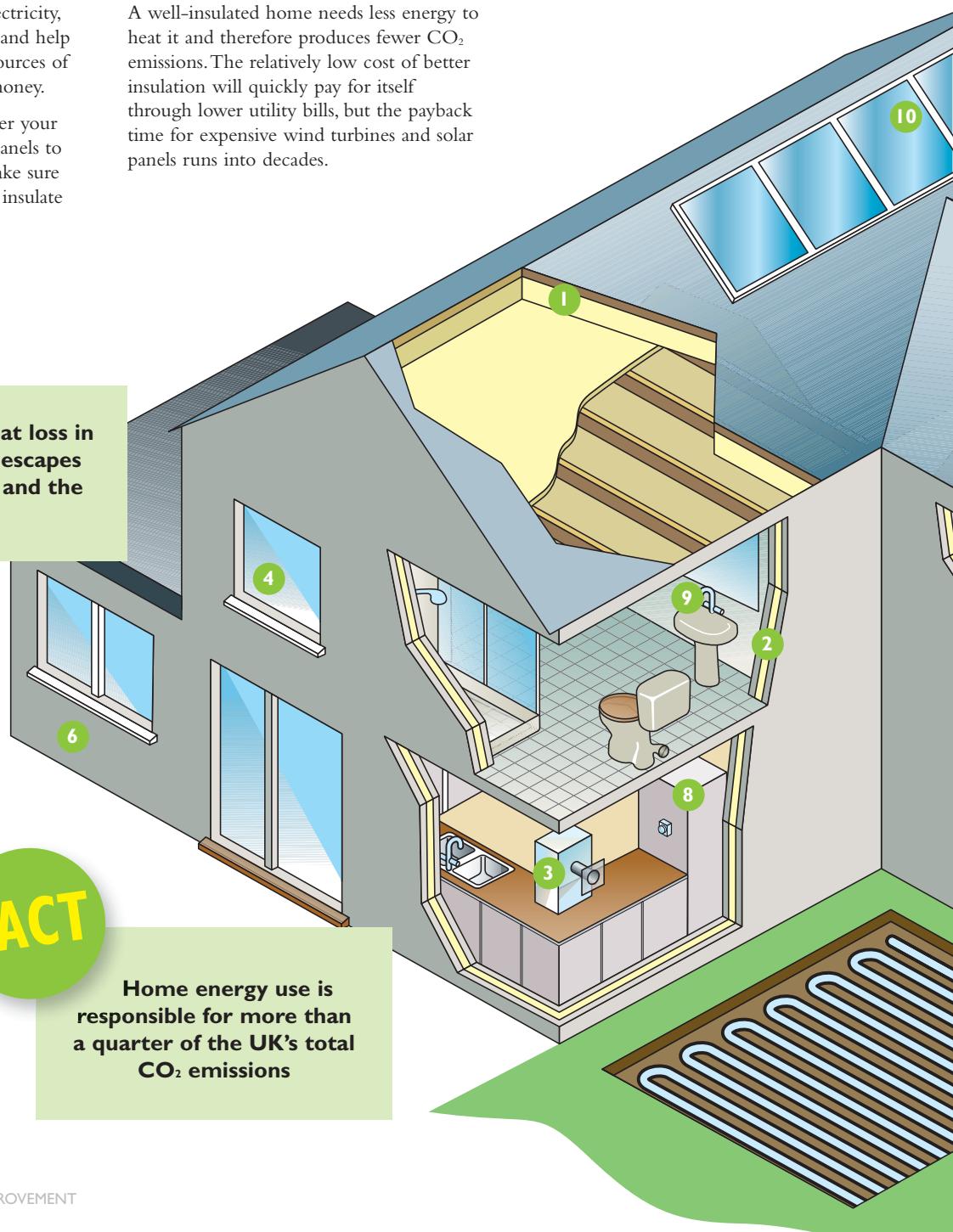
Cutting energy use, especially electricity, will not only cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and help to protect the Earth's limited resources of fossil fuels, it will also save you money.

But before you rush out and cover your roof in wind turbines and solar panels to generate your own electricity, make sure you get the basics right first, and insulate your home properly.

A well-insulated home needs less energy to heat it and therefore produces fewer CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The relatively low cost of better insulation will quickly pay for itself through lower utility bills, but the payback time for expensive wind turbines and solar panels runs into decades.

## FACT

**Half of the heat loss in a typical home escapes through the walls and the loft space**



## FACT

**Home energy use is responsible for more than a quarter of the UK's total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions**

## 1 Roof insulation

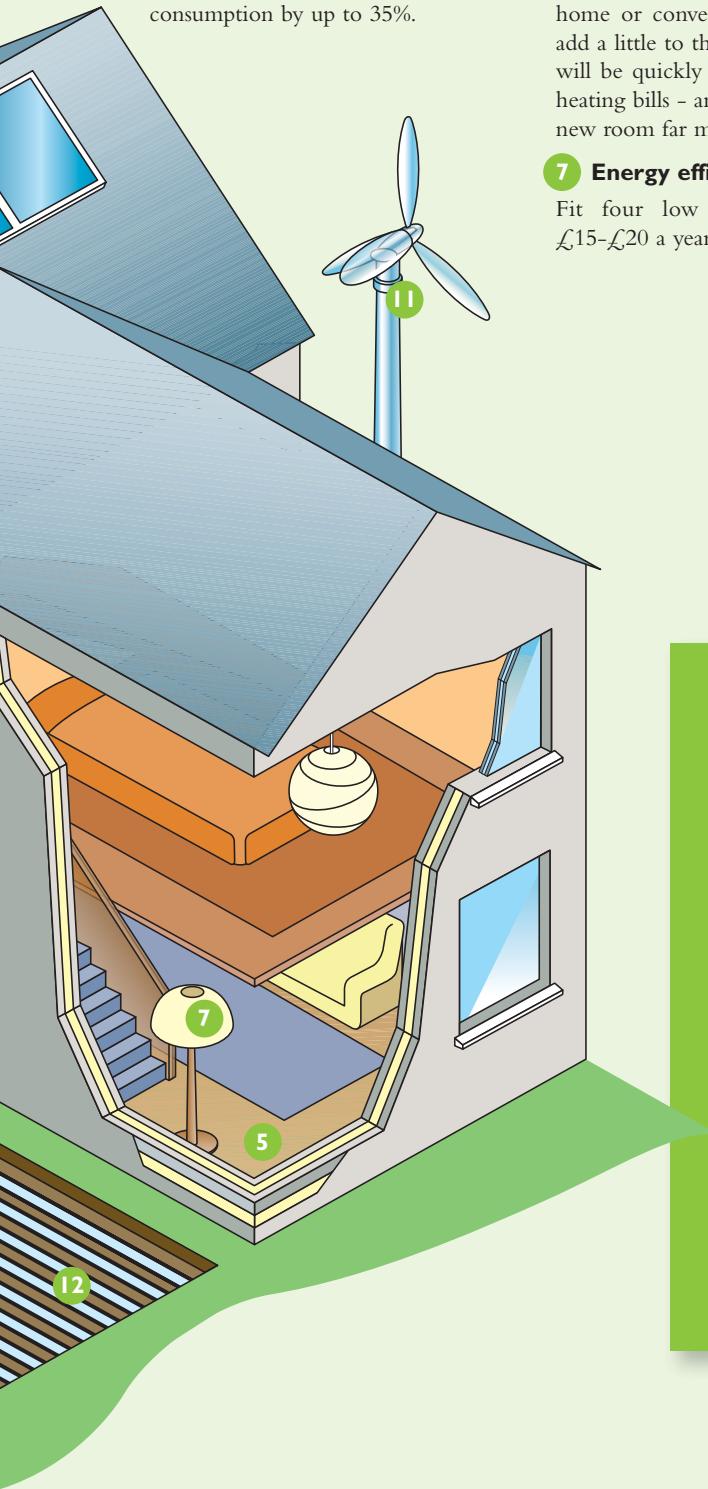
270mm of loft or roof insulation can reduce heating costs by up to 20% and can pay for itself in less than a year.

## 2 Cavity wall insulation

Cavity wall insulation can reduce the heating costs for an average house by over a third, and will pay for itself in less than three years.

## 3 A-rated condensing boiler and heating controls

High efficiency boilers and modern controls for heating and hot water use fuel more efficiently. Upgrading an existing gas boiler with an A-rated gas condensing boiler and full control system could reduce consumption by up to 35%.



## 4 Double glazed windows

Double glazing cuts the heat loss through windows by half, and can save £80-£100 off your annual heating bill. Always look for the Energy Saving Recommended logo when choosing your windows.

## 5 Ground floor insulation

Insulating an existing ground floor cuts draughts and reduces heat loss through the floor by up to 60%. It is extremely cost effective to add insulation when the builders are already lifting the floor boards to install new pipes or wiring.

## 6 Extensions and conversions

Using high levels of insulation in new building work, for example extending your home or converting a loft or garage, may add a little to the cost of the work, but this will be quickly recovered through reduced heating bills – and you will enjoy your cosy new room far more.

## 7 Energy efficient lighting

Fit four low energy lamps and save £15-£20 a year.

## 8 A-rated white goods

Make sure your new fitted kitchen is equipped with A+ or A-rated appliances. The higher the rating the more money it saves both in energy and metered water costs. An A+ rated fridge freezer and an A rated dishwasher will each save up to £45 a year.

## 9 Low flow showers and taps

Stop money going down the drain! Low flow showerheads and taps aerate the water and reduce consumption.

## 10 Solar systems

Solar thermal systems use energy from the sun to pre-heat water for your hot water or space heating needs. Solar photovoltaic systems use cells to convert solar radiation into electricity. In theory, these systems can provide up to 50% of an average home's needs – but as their average cost is £5,000, this is an expensive investment that will take many years to recoup.

## 11 Wind turbines

Wind turbines should only be considered in areas where the windspeed is 6 metres/second and there are no nearby obstacles, such as buildings, trees or hills to reduce the windspeed or increase turbulence. Ideally, you should undertake a professional assessment of the local windspeed for a full year at the exact location where you plan to install a turbine.

## 12 Ground source heat pumps

Ground source heat pumps take heat from the earth to heat your home. Space is needed to dig a borehole and a large trench, but can be a good solution where mains gas is not available.

# Go Green!

The government is tackling the issue of home energy performance by phasing in a requirement that every home for sale has an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). Initially limited to homes with four or more bedrooms, EPCs will detail the current energy performance of the property, how it can be improved, how much the improvements will cost and the annual savings they will achieve.

Peter Bolton King, chief executive of the National Association of Estate Agents, explains: "Once people have bought a property, they should consider energy performance when they are deciding what home improvement work to undertake. Improvements will not only reduce home running costs in the short term, but will also give the home better energy performance in the longer term."



# Showing your age

According to recent research, style-conscious 20-something homeowners spend more money than any other generation doing up their homes, but we all have a tendency to make particular types of home improvement at different stages of our lives.

Today's homeowners stay in their homes longer than people did 20 years ago, mainly due to the high cost of moving. Seven to eight years in the same house is pretty much the norm these days, leaving plenty of time to make improvements.

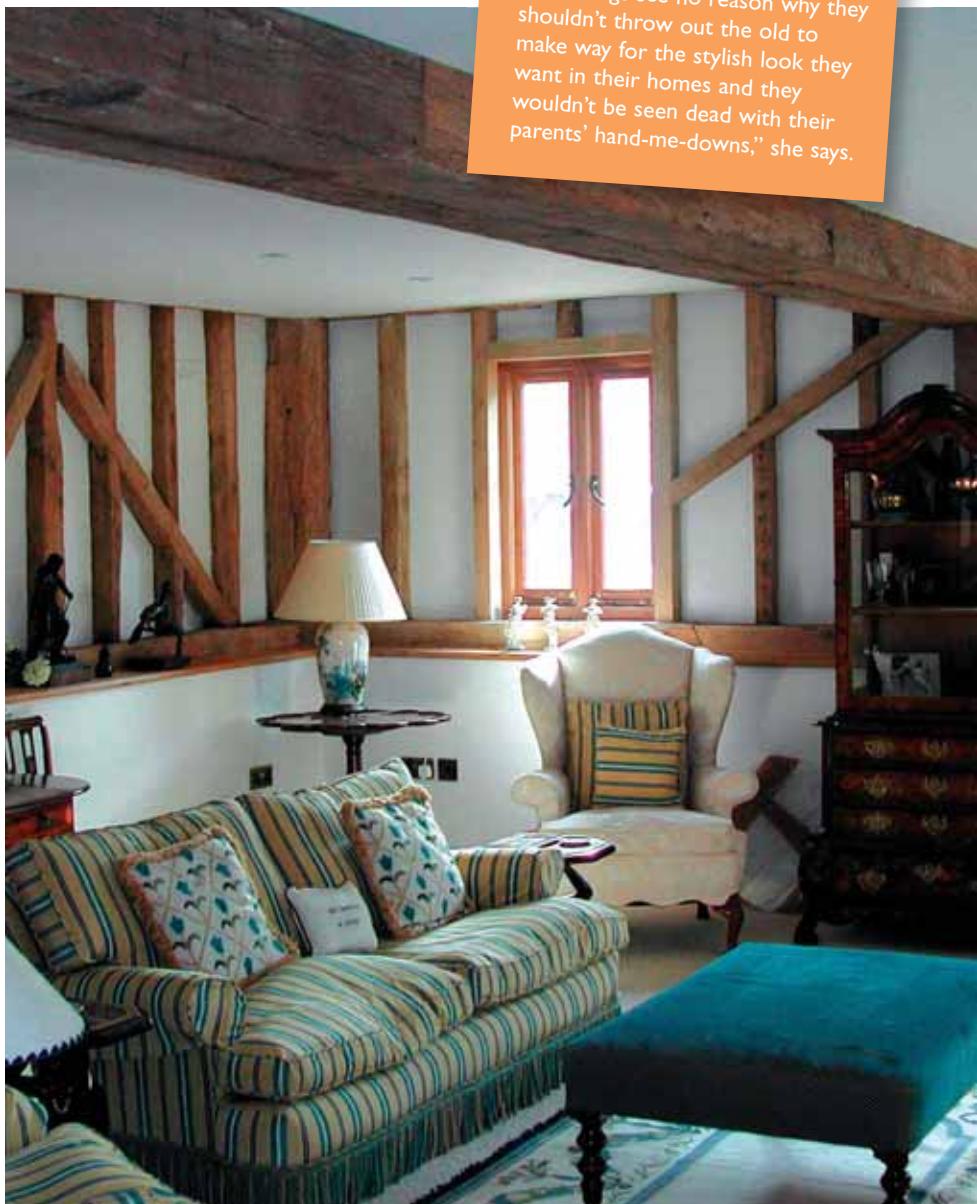
The reasons for choosing a property have also changed over the decades, with more of us willing to rent or buy a property on our own because we marry later, the divorce rate is higher and because women generally outlive men by a considerable amount of time.

Work is also a factor in today's house buying trends. With more men and women working than ever before, many buy a home with a smaller garden that needs less maintenance. And with an increasing number of people working from home, there is more demand for extra space to create a home office.

Independent research carried out on behalf of the Federation of Master Builders, found that UK homeowners spend an average of £2,000 a year on cosmetic home improvements, with less than one in 10 fixing the all-important basics. But our choice of how to spend home improvement funds is greatly swayed by the age group to which we belong.

## The psychologist

Psychologist Corinne Sweet notes that the newest home-buying generation has grown up with celebrity and makeover programmes, making it very design savvy. "This generation has high design standards and sees no excuse for 'making do'. Twenty-somethings see no reason why they shouldn't throw out the old to make way for the stylish look they want in their homes and they wouldn't be seen dead with their parents' hand-me-downs," she says.





## An estate agent's view

**Carl Davenport**, sales manager of Dulwich & Village Residential in south east London, says: “Home buyers in their early 20s have a romantic view of what they would like from their homes. How the house looks from the outside and feature fireplaces are winners with this group.

Buyers in their 30s and 40s tend to look more at location and the practical nature of their homes. If you are starting a family or already have children, a garden is essential, a downstairs toilet is handy and proximity to good local schools is a must have.

The conventional middle-aged buyer often looks to downsize as children move away and this can ignite the excitement of looking for a totally different kind of property. One priority for these buyers is access to transport as they often enjoy a cultural social life.

Retirement can be a great time for downsizing, but there are also many retirees with formidable budgets to spend. Never mind the stereotypical bungalow, these buyers are looking for large gardens, friendly communities and homes close to their children and grandchildren.”



## GENERATIONS OF CHANGE

### 20-somethings

- This age group is more aspirational than older generations and keen to add value and create a stylish look for their homes.
- Given unlimited cash, half of homeowners in their 20s would install a new kitchen, conservatory, loft extension or redecorate their house – far higher than any other generation.
- However fewer than one in ten would spend their cash on re-wiring their homes or having their gutters fixed – something far more popular with the 50 and 60 year olds.

### 30-somethings

- In their 30s and 40s, when children often come first, homeowners have more practical priorities.
- Top of the list came extensions and loft conversions followed by a new bathroom, and kitchen.
- 30-somethings do still have some desire for non-essential improvements, including decking, a new patio and a new design for their garden.

### 40-somethings

- In search of more space without moving house, those in their 40s put loft conversions and extensions at the top of their lists.
- New kitchens, bathrooms, perhaps ensuites and smartening up the exterior are also top choices.

### 50-somethings

- This age group is most likely to spend on replacing the kitchen and would spend the most on garden decking and replacing worn out carpets.
- In terms of building work, the most popular choices are conservatories, new kitchens and bathrooms.

### 60-somethings

- As people approach retirement, they are more likely to spend money on maintaining the fabric of their homes, investing in a new roof, replacing leaky gutters, installing new windows and doors and sprucing up the exterior with a new drive or patio. They are least likely to add space with a loft conversion.
- Warmth is an important issue, pushing new boilers and radiators high on the list.



# Money, money, money

Making improvements to your home can add value, but are all improvements worth the effort and expense?

**A**dding an extension, fitting a new kitchen or installing a utility room can add thousands of pounds to the value of your home, but some improvements need to be viewed as personal comforts rather than as extras that will provide a return on investment.

Experts say that adding an extension is an ambitious way to maximise space, but it will give you rewards in terms of extra room and regain your investment when you sell. Squeeze in as many extras as you can, such as a utility room or downstairs cloakroom, but beware of the effect on your garden and make sure that inside space remains in proportion with outdoor space.

A loft conversion, usually cheaper than building an extension, adds value and should cover its cost when you decide to sell your home, but beware of basements as you are less likely to recoup money spent converting or creating a basement space. Similarly, open-plan living is an attractive proposition to potential buyers, but don't overdo it – opening up the whole of your downstairs is a mistake; go instead for an open-plan kitchen-diner.

Upstairs, you need to be more restrained, as you probably don't want to knock down a wall and turn a three-bed des res into a two-bed starter home. An additional bathroom will usually add value to your home, as will a new kitchen, but think long term and go for a simple, classic design rather than high fashion.

## Before you start

**Peter Bolton King**, chief executive of the National Association of Estate Agents, advises that before you invest in a building project you should consider that:

- If the new configuration of your home, perhaps five bedrooms and three reception rooms, is well above the average configuration in your road you will not add much value as the average price for the road will hold down the price of your home.

## PLANNING PERMISSION

The Government has proposed reforms that it claims will simplify the local planning system in England and make it far easier for homeowners to extend or improve their homes. Whilst good in theory, the planning proposals could have the reverse effect for loft conversions because of the proposed 'impact test' on neighbouring properties, which could mean that planning permission is denied.

The FMB is lobbying the Government to rethink this proposal before it comes into force in 2008, as it runs counter to the Government's aim to speed up the planning process.

For an update on this campaign visit [www.findabuilder.co.uk](http://www.findabuilder.co.uk)

# Maximise your loft space

Loft conversions are a great way to make the most of existing space in your home and they can provide a good return on your investment when you sell.

**W**ith the cost of moving home in search of more space running into many thousands of pounds, you may chose to move up rather than move on and convert your loft into additional living or bedroom space.

If you decide on a loft conversion, you need to check planning permission and make sure that your loft is suitable for conversion. One easy guide is to see if you can stand upright at the loft's highest point, as this needs to be at least 2.3m above the floor.

With the basics covered, you need to consider what sort of space you want in the loft and, if it includes a bathroom, consider how the plumbing will work and whether your boiler will be able to heat the extra space and provide enough hot water.



Consider lighting at an early stage too – you may want something subtle for a master bedroom, or bright spotlights for a home office.



## Top tips for loft conversions

- Check planning permission and building regulations
- Hire a professional architect and structural engineer
- Get at least three quotes from reputable builders
- Consider any changes needed to your existing house
- Check whether you need a party-wall agreement
- Be decisive and try not to change your mind during the project.



Loftspace Specialists Ltd

## Having it all

Louise Evans decided to push up into the loft of her Victorian home in West London after building a two-storey extension to the house that she felt made it 'bottom heavy'. Louise turned to Kevin Walker of Loftspace Specialists Ltd, a Master Builder of the Year award winner, for help and never looked back. She described the builder as the best she had come across, but not the cheapest,

and the loft conversion was a resounding success.

The first floor ceiling had to be dropped to fit in the staircase to the loft room, but Louise said this did not cause too much disruption. She chose a contemporary design for the loft area, including an open-plan bedroom and bathroom, with the loo hidden behind a three-quarter height wall. Clever use of the eaves space created a small

## GO GREEN!

Take the opportunity offered by a loft conversion to improve the insulation in your roof.

walk-in wardrobe, while four Velux windows and three sash dormers let in loads of light.

"The conversion is very simple, but feels like a hotel room. It's a really good use of space and adds value to the property," said Louise.

# New dimensions

## Basements

If you can't extend your home upwards or outwards, how about going downwards and converting your basement into living space or digging deep to create a new floor for your house?

Converting an existing basement is more expensive than extending into the loft – and building a new basement costs more than converting – but it does give you a great space to use for absolutely anything.

Perhaps you dream of a home cinema, kids den, gym or indoor swimming pool, or maybe you need extra accommodation for a growing family or relatives. Costing around £80,000 a basement conversion with the same footprint as your ground floor provides flexible space and could be cheaper than buying a larger home.



**Before you start**

- Ask a specialist building firm to assess feasibility and cost
- Check the water table height in your home
- Seek planning permission if necessary
- Ask a surveyor to manage any Party Wall Agreements



## Outbuildings

Turning derelict outbuildings into usable family spaces throws up plenty of issues, as Scottish beef farmers Charles and Catherine Bothwell found when they hired Forth Roofing Services of Wilsontown, near Lanark, to restore and convert their derelict listed bothy into a four star holiday rental home on a working farm.

"As our bothy was attached to a listed farmhouse, we spent a great deal of time talking to Historic Scotland to make sure we not only preserved the building, but also made it workable as a home," said Charles Bothwell. "We only decided to use the bothy as a holiday home after we had agreed with Historic Scotland how we could widen the building and where every window, door and feature would go. So we had to do a fair amount of shuffling about inside to get it to work," he added.

Charles advises anyone considering turning derelict outbuildings into a usable home to spend time considering the design and usage very carefully before embarking on the project. Secondly he strongly recommends finding a really good builder, through word of mouth and past experience. Thirdly, Charles says there's no point scrimping and scraping to save money with your project: "If you're going to do it, do it as well as you possibly can, finances permitting, don't cut corners," he adds.

Builders Jim and Gordon Paterson were able to recover and reuse stones and slates that were once part of the original cattle shed to reincorporate them back into the building. This satisfied Historic Scotland and pleased the client, as it kept costs down.



*The London Basement Company*



Garage Conversion Company

## Garage space

If you have a garage that stores junk rather than a car and you need more space, a garage conversion could solve the problem. A brick built garage is easiest to convert, but don't give up on the idea just because your garage is made of another material.

The space you gain can be really useful as a playroom, office, bedroom, bathroom or kitchen - and you could build an extra room on top.

You may need planning permission and you will need to meet building regulations, but the upside is little disruption and a relatively quick win of new space. Remember to factor parking space into your plans.



The Garage Conversion Company

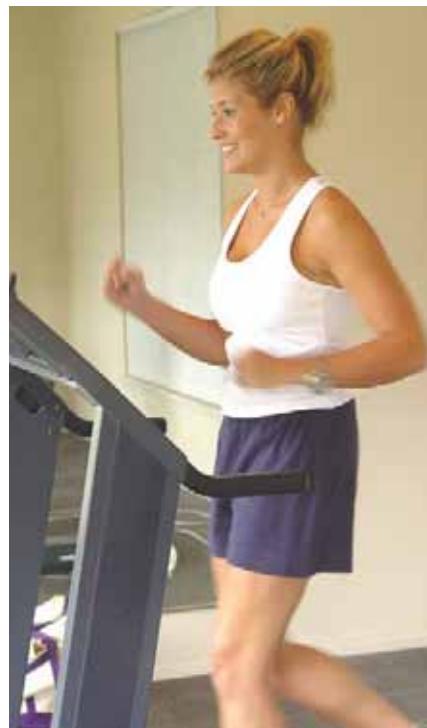
## Treat yourself

If you're a fitness fanatic or just want to keep fit, install a gym in your home. A basement, extension or garage conversion would be a great place to site the equipment and, depending on space and a load-bearing floor, you can have as much or as little as you want. What you won't have is an excuse for not going to the gym!

Relax in a hot tub. You can buy a hot tub for anything from £2,000 to £20,000. Running costs are low and all you need is access to get the tub into your garden and a place to put it that can withstand the weight of the tub plus water.

A playroom won't guarantee peace and quiet, but it will create a safe environment for your children to play in and provide great storage space. Best of all, you won't have to clear up the whole house once the children are in bed!

Bring your living room to life with a surround sound system that delivers movies, music TV and games. Choose a wireless system for the hottest in high-tech – and enjoy.





# Let in the light

*Building a conservatory is the cheapest and quickest way to add extra living space to your home, but consider the internal options before you get started.*

A conservatory is the perfect way to transform your home, giving you a wonderfully light extra room or extension that can be used all year round as living space or, perhaps, a play room or dining area.

Under current rules, if the structure can be closed off from the rest of the house you don't usually need planning permission or building regulations approval, to build a conservatory, but check with your local authority just in case. Then consider the style of conservatory that will match your property and be sure you don't consume too much of your garden with the new build.

The basic structure of a conservatory generally consists of a concrete foundation and floor slab, cavity brickwork for any lower walls, glazed upper walls and roof panels set in a framing system. Options for framing include UPVC – the cheapest and relatively maintenance-free choice, timber – which is more attractive but expensive and needs more maintenance, and metal – which is good for modern designs.

The glass wall and ceiling panels must be safety-toughened or laminated and if you want to use your conservatory all year round, you should opt for solar control glass, such as Celsius Performance Glass from K2. This transparent coated glass keeps unwanted glare to a minimum and deflects excessive solar heat. Polycarbonate roof panels are a low-cost alternative but can be noisy when it rains and will not prevent solar gain.



Underfloor heating is a cosy addition to any conservatory that will be used in the winter, but remember to include opening windows, roof vents and perhaps a ceiling fan or air-conditioning unit for the hot summer months.

## TOP TIPS

- Buy the best structure within your budget.
- Opt for a size and shape that will complement your home and garden.
- Check with your builder what is included in the quote – for example, does it include flooring and electrics, or will you be left with an empty shell?
- Include adequate ventilation for the summer and heating for the winter.



## What a winner

Jen and Bob Gay wanted a large conservatory that would complement their farmhouse home and provide a living space that integrated with their garden and would be usable all year round. They chose to work on the construction with Shaun Armstrong and his team from Cardiff Glass, a two-time Master Builder of the Year award winner.

The T-shaped conservatory is unusual in having a mahogany exterior frame, which matches the farmhouse's window frames, attached to the structural steel frame and a durable and stylish white UPVC internal frame. Other aesthetic features include stone walls and flags, and top caps made of aluminium rather than plastic.

To make the conservatory comfortable all year round, the Gays selected high-performance solar reflective self-cleaning glass that keeps the conservatory cool in summer and warm in winter, while temperature-controlled fanlights and roof ventilation panels are linked to a rain sensor.

Jen says: "Changes were made to the original

design, but these were discussed step-by-step and agreed with the builder. The speed of progress was good and we are absolutely delighted with the overall result."



### GO GREEN!

Use performance glass when building your conservatory, this will reduce heat loss in the winter and overheating in the summer.

### BRIGHT IDEAS

If a conservatory is not for you, but you want to let more light into your home, consider an atrium that will allow light to pour down from a large skylight. Alternatively open up the back of your living space with floor-to-ceiling sliding or folding glass doors. Add a balcony or decking for a wonderful open-air extension to your home. Where it is difficult to add conventional windows to let in more light, look at Velux-style windows that can be installed in sloping roofs. Inside, glass brick or partition walls can create the living areas that you want, while maintaining as much light as possible.



# A style to suit you

Finding an interior design style that will work for you in your home can be time consuming, so before you embark on a project take some advice from our experts

**B**edfordshire couple John and Pat Barnsley bought a large brick built barn with the intention of converting it into a six-bedroom contemporary home. However, until then they had lived in a fairly conventional home and had a list of have-nots and vague ideas, rather than tangible plans.

“We just knew we didn’t want radiators and carpets, and were thinking of underfloor heating and some sort of tiles,” said Pat Barnsley.

“The secret of our success was through hiring the services of a great architect who

was able to provide us with lots of initial ideas. Our vision grew with the project and more ideas came from our many visits to other barn conversions and properties that were in keeping with the style we wanted.

“You can read magazines until you’re blue in the face, but what you can see in the flesh just makes it so much clearer,” she added. Indeed Mrs Barnsley’s choice of stunning limestone flagged flooring was borrowed from a friend’s barn conversion and she also confesses to pinching the style of tiles for her bathroom from a friend of a friend.





## Expert advice

Interior design expert Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen suggests some contemporary style choices for your home

● **Feature walls** – many people dismiss wallpaper as being dowdy, but it is back in fashion and one of the most stylish things you can add to a room. Make sure you choose the right wall to cover, as it will become the dominant feature. If you have a rectangular room, always feature one of the short walls.

● **Windows** – it might sound flippant, but keep your windows clean. If your windows are dirty they can reduce the amount of light entering a room by 20%.

● **Lighting** – many rooms are overlit by one central point in the middle of the ceiling. The best way to light a room is from its corners, using lamps on low tables.

● **Prioritise patterns** – rather than just using patterned cushions or a sofa throw to add style, look at patterned lampshades that bring patterns up to eye level.

● **Consider colour** – green is a fabulous colour to use for interior decoration as it is poised between the cool tones of blue and the hot tones of yellow. One of the most fashionable greens errs towards the yellowness of light passing through green leaves. It's a lime zesty colour, rather than the muddy, grey green of the heritage colour palette.

● **Embrace clutter** – celebrate your personality by liberating clutter from cupboards. Don't hold back, if you buy some new shoes, jewellery or a posh frock use them as part of your interior design scheme – hang things over lampshades or drape them over mirrors.

## Go green!

- **Wood** – check that any wood you build into your home has the Forest Stewardship Council mark as this shows it comes from a sustainable source.
- **Flooring** – avoid vinyl flooring, which is made from polyvinyl chloride and can leak hormone disrupting phthalates into the environment. Instead choose natural materials such as cork, wood from a sustainable source, marmoleum, hemp, coir or natural rubber. Seal floorboards with an eco-friendly wood oil or wax rather than a polyurethane varnish.
- **Paints** – use eco-friendly paints, they are the only ones that you can be sure are free of polluting solvents and volatile organic compounds.
- **Wallpaper** – choose wallpaper made from recycled paper or sustainably produced wood pulp. Make sure it is formaldehyde free and printed with water-based inks.
- **Home furnishings** – when buying carpets, rugs, sofas or soft chairs check that they haven't been treated with brominated flame retardant or formaldehyde – both are carcinogenic.
- **Light bulbs** – change ordinary light bulbs for energy efficient ones that will reduce your lighting bill and save energy.
- **Green sources** – look out for builders and shops that are committed to eco-friendly projects and supply environmentally friendly decorating products.

# Outside edge



Protecting your home against the elements avoids interior damage and gives a great first impression.

Wind, rain, ice, snow and even intense sunshine can cause damage to the outside of your home, that will, in turn, affect the interior, so it is important to check outdoor elements such as roofs and gutters on a regular basis and fix any problems sooner rather than later.

It is also essential to paint the exterior of your home on a regular basis to protect it from the elements. Every three or four years should be enough, but the frequency will depend on where your property is located and how exposed it is to the weather. Older houses tend to need more maintenance than new builds, but occasionally every home needs a thorough check over.

Roy Ilott, a chartered building surveyor and member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, says: "As well as checking roofs and gutters, look at parts of the building that you don't see every day, for example flat roofs, chimney stacks and roof space. Also make sure the damp course is not breached. This is a classic issue of a stitch in time saves nine - money spent on maintenance advice is money well spent."



## CHECK LIST

- **Roofs** - check the roof for any missing or damaged tiles or cracks in roofing felt.
- **Gutters** - Check rainwater pipes and guttering for any damage and clear away any blockages. Replace damaged or rusted cast-iron guttering.
- **Drains** - make sure your drains are working properly and unblock them regularly.
- **Damp course** - make sure you have up-to-date damp proofing.
- **Rendering and brickwork** - Get cracked brickwork and crumbling pointing repaired.
- **Window paintwork** - repaint peeling external paintwork, especially on wooden door or window frames. Repair or replace any damaged frames.
- **Chimney stacks** - check your chimney stack for cracks or signs of damp.
- **Check draught proofing** around letterbox, doors, windows.

## Kerb appeal

Your home may look fantastic on the inside, but for all-round appeal you also need to dedicate some time and energy to the outside.

- Keep your garden looking gorgeous and make sure the boundaries of the property are neatly defined with a small brick wall, a fence or hedges.
- Check, mend and treat fences with wood preservative.
- Make simple repairs to the exterior of your home as they are needed and keep window sills and frames fresh by touching up any paint chips.
- Your front door says a lot about your home, so keep the paintwork in good condition, make sure your door is clearly numbered and add welcoming touches such as a porch light or potted plants.
- Clean, wash and polish the windows of your home for a bright and well-kept look.

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For more information including details of the seminar and events programme go to [www.mykindofhome.co.uk](http://www.mykindofhome.co.uk)

## REASONS TO VISIT

- Select your construction materials, fixtures & fittings from suppliers in the Trade Village
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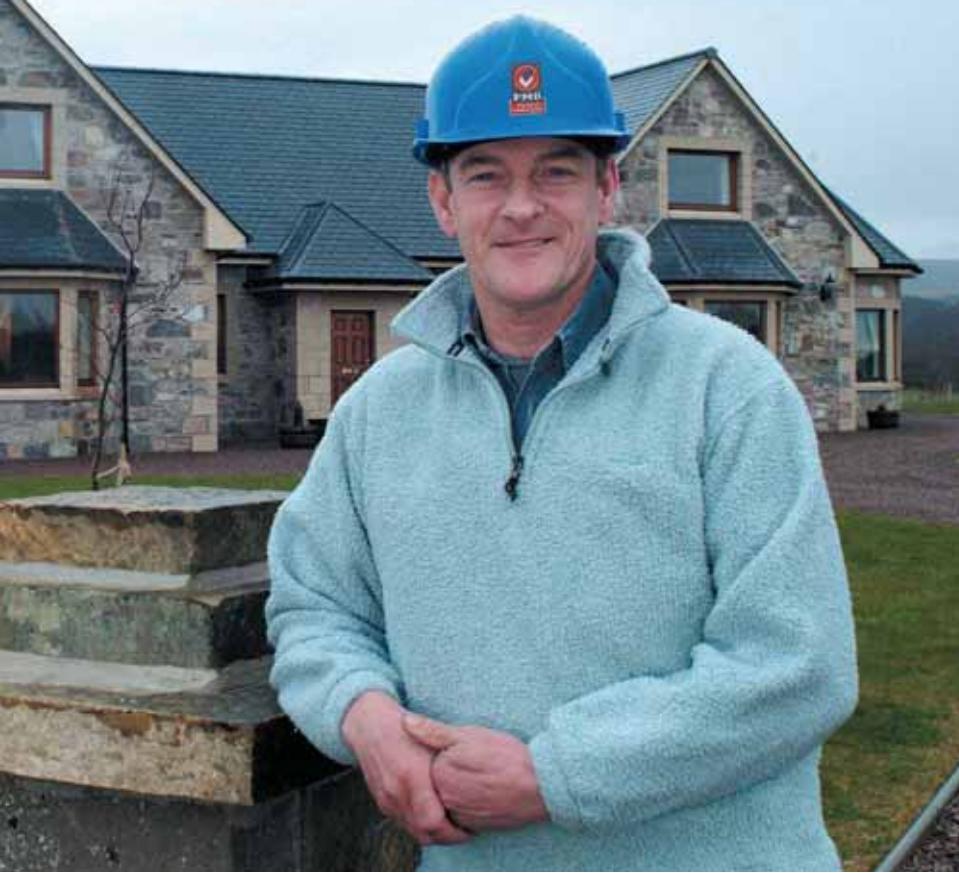
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- The policy provides cover if the building company goes out of business, is declared bankrupt, or if the principal dies.
- It can be passed on to the new owners if you move house during the 10-year term.

Only FMB MasterBond builders can offer the MasterBond warranty. To do so, they must undergo additional professional and financial checks, and provide three years' business accounts. The FMB's 3,000 MasterBond builders were amongst the first to be recognised under the TrustMark scheme.

### What is TrustMark?

TrustMark is joint initiative between the building industry and consumer groups that sets Government endorsed standards for workmanship, fair dealing and protection of consumers. Standards are high. FMB inspects every new applicant before allowing them to join as a MasterBond TrustMark member, and existing members are inspected at least once every three years. If a customer reports a problem, the builder will be inspected every six months and removed from the scheme if they fail three inspections.

### Is there a builders' Code of Conduct?

All FMB builders work to a strict Code of Practice, which they commit to every year when they renew their membership. The Code of Practice covers their relationship with customers throughout the building process. For full details log on to [www.findabuilder.co.uk](http://www.findabuilder.co.uk).

### Always use a contract

The majority of problems between customers and their builders occur when there is no written contract clearly outlining the full extent and cost of the work to be done. Log on to [www.findabuilder.co.uk](http://www.findabuilder.co.uk) to download a **free copy** of the MasterBond insurance policy and a **free FMB contract** that can be used for any building project.

\*Conditions and policy limitations apply

# The Directory

## Sources of information and advice

### ARCHITECTS

**RIBA** (Royal Institute of British Architects), 020 7580 5533, [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)

**RIAS** (Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland), 0131 229 7545, [www.rias.org.uk](http://www.rias.org.uk)

**ARB** (Architects Registration Board), 020 7580 5861, [www.arb.org.uk](http://www.arb.org.uk)

### BUILDERS

**FMB** (Federation of Master Builders), 08000 152 522, [www.findabuilder.co.uk](http://www.findabuilder.co.uk)

### CONSERVATORIES & GLASS

**Glass & Glazing Federation**, 0870 042 4255, [www.ggf.org.uk](http://www.ggf.org.uk)

**K2 Conservatories**, Freephone 0800 376 1880, [www.k2conservatories.com](http://www.k2conservatories.com)

### DECORATING

**Dulux**, How to paint your Home, [www.dulux.co.uk](http://www.dulux.co.uk)

**Crown Paints**, [www.crownpaint.co.uk](http://www.crownpaint.co.uk)

**Farrow and Ball**, [www.farrow-ball.com](http://www.farrow-ball.com)

### ENERGY

**Energy Saving Trust**, 0800 512 012, [www.est.org.uk](http://www.est.org.uk)

**The Carbon Trust**, 0800 085 2005, [www.carbontrust.co.uk](http://www.carbontrust.co.uk)

**The National Energy Foundation**, 01908 665 555, [www.nef.org.uk](http://www.nef.org.uk)

**Friends of the Earth**, 020 7490 1555, [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)

### EXTERIORS

[www.gardenlaw.co.uk](http://www.gardenlaw.co.uk)

### HEATING, BOILERS, ELECTRICS

**Solid Fuel Association**, 0845 601 4406, [www.solidfuel.co.uk](http://www.solidfuel.co.uk)

**Corgi**, 0800 915 0485, [www.trustcorgi.com/consumers.htm](http://www.trustcorgi.com/consumers.htm)

**NICEIC**, Approved electrical contractors, 0870 013 0382, [www.niceic.com](http://www.niceic.com)

### HERITAGE AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS

**English Heritage**, 0870 333 1181, [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

**The Victorian Society**, 020 8994 1019, [www.victorian-society.org.uk](http://www.victorian-society.org.uk)

**The Georgian Group**, 087 1750 2936, [www.georgiangroup.org.uk](http://www.georgiangroup.org.uk)

**SPAB** (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings), 020 7377 1644, [www.spab.org.uk](http://www.spab.org.uk)

**Heritage information** - [www.heritageinformation.org.uk](http://www.heritageinformation.org.uk)

**Historic Scotland**, 0131 668 8600, [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)

**CADW**, Welsh Historic Monuments, 01443 33 6000, [www.cadw.wales.gov.uk](http://www.cadw.wales.gov.uk)

### REGULATORY BODIES

**Local Authority Building Control**, 020 7641 8737, [www.labc-services.co.uk](http://www.labc-services.co.uk)

**HM Land Registry** (England and Wales), 020 7917 8888, [www.landreg.gov.uk](http://www.landreg.gov.uk)

**Registers of Scotland**, 0845 607 0161, [www.ros.gov.uk](http://www.ros.gov.uk)

**Planning Inspectorate**, 0117 372 6372, [www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk](http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk)

**Communities and Local Government**, 020 7944 4400, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

**Welsh Assembly Planning Division**, 029 208 25111, [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

**Scottish Executive Planning advice line**, 08457 741 741, [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

**Northern Ireland Housing Executive**, 028 9024 0588, [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)

### SURVEYORS

**RICS** (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors), 0870 333 1600, [www.rics.org.uk](http://www.rics.org.uk)

**CIOB** (Chartered Institute of Building), 01344 630 7000 [www.ciob.org.uk](http://www.ciob.org.uk)

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