

PROJECT OF THE MONTH

Sowton Barn

by Woodford Architecture + Interiors

Situated within the grounds of a working farm, this quaint grade II listed building has been modernised by the addition of an attractive new extension. The original part of the house is constructed in cob, sitting atop a rubble stone base. A thatched roof and striking stone chimney structure complete the traditional dwelling. The owners tasked the team at Woodford Architecture + Interiors with developing a design that responded sympathetically to the main house.

The first undertaking was to remove the previous single-storey extension to make way for the new addition, which accommodates a bright and spacious kitchen, sitting and dining area, fit for modern living. A single ply roofing membrane system provides the covering for the new structure, revealing historic features of the principal dwelling that had previously been covered up. Slim-line architectural bronze windows and doors have been specified to remain in keeping with the heritage aesthetic of the original building. These broad expanses of glazing also help to bathe the interiors in natural light.

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For more information call 01364 654888 or visit woodfordarchitecture.com

Norfolk MP calls for self-build revolution

Richard Bacon MP wants more land to be made available to help people commission their own homes. Bacon says more plots should be sold to groups or individuals so they can self or custom build their own houses. "If we were developing as many self-build units as the Netherlands, we'd be creating an extra 60,000 homes a year," says Bacon. The MP championed 2016's Right to Build Act, under which councils are obliged to monitor the demand for self-build in their catchment area, and provide sufficient sites to meet that.

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before you plan to begin your project onsite is the point at which you should book in a contractor to avoid missing out, according to new research published by the Federation of Master Builders (FMB). The findings also show many homeowners don't ask for essential details, such as a contract and references, before engaging a pro. "We're urging people who are keen to crack on with their schemes to get in touch with prospective builders as soon as possible," says Brian Berry, chief executive of the FMB.

Graven Hill releases new pocket plots

A selection of sites, aimed at people who want to build affordable homes, has been launched at the Graven Hill development in Oxfordshire. The plots provide the option to develop up to a three-bedroom house for £230,000 via a full turnkey service, or £200,000 if you take on some of the work yourself. "This provides a versatile solution for those looking to self-build with a modest budget," says Karen Curtin, managing director of the Graven Hill Development Company. Situated near Bicester, the scheme is the largest of its kind in the UK.

New financial packages launched for self-builders

Saffron Building Society has introduced a new interest-only mortgage aimed specifically at people creating their own homes. It can be used to cover up to 65% of the plot purchase price, 100% of the construction costs and 75% of the gross development value. Tranches of money can be accessed as and when they're required, rather than at set stages of the project. "We've listened carefully to the feedback of self-builders, who tell us they want to keep mortgage costs to a minimum," says Anita Arch, head of mortgage sales at Saffron. Furness Building Society has also launched a new advance stage payment product – the only package of its kind available to those developing their own homes in Scotland. For more information on self-build mortgages, head to page 138 to read our interview with BuildStore's Rachel Pyne.

need to know

An eventful month

Some months I'm sitting here chewing the end of my HB pencil, wondering what to write about. Others, it seems that everything is happening at once. As I write this piece, it's a few short weeks after the general election results were announced. We're all reeling from a series of unexpected events that have shattered the cosy confidence of the Tories and given an unforeseen boost to Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party. One possible factor being mooted for the shock outcome was the high turnout of young voters disaffected by a perceived lack of opportunity for home ownership or rental at sensible prices, because we simply aren't building enough new dwellings – especially at the affordable end. It's a fair point.

Indeed, one of the high-profile casualties for the Tories was Gavin Barwell, the Housing and Planning Minister. Once again we have a new appointee, the seventh to hold the post since 2010. The new Housing and Planning Minister is Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West. I'm sure the National Custom and Self Build Association (NaCSBA) will waste no time in getting a date in the diary to discuss self and custom build issues with him – especially the 10-point manifesto listing our priorities for the sector. Also on the agenda will be how self and custom build can do its part in meeting what is now a critical shortfall of new homes.

Other events are more sobering. I was watching the television, aghast at the images of the recently refurbished Grenfell Tower in North Kensington as it was engulfed in flames. It would be wrong to speculate on causes and point any fingers before a full enquiry into the tragic event is made. However, my heart goes out to anyone affected by that terrible inferno, and to the emergency services that risked life and limb to get so many people out.

I've seen a few comments to the effect that "all work was done in accordance with Building Regulations" and that the refurbishment "complied fully with fire safety requirements" – but that wasn't enough here. It made me think of the number of conversations I've had with people trying to add extra space to existing dwellings – either via a loft conversion, the creation of a basement or trying to reconfigure a house for multiple occupancy. In a small but significant number of these projects, I've found myself explaining the Building Regulations for escape routes and fire doors to people concerned with how little they can get away with, and how to avoid spending the sometimes considerable sums of money necessary to comply. I know that there are countless loft conversions done under the radar of building control where there's no staircase, no fire doors and no escape route. These shortcuts only come to light when the house is being sold, and potential buyers ask to see the building control certification to show the work has been done right. Given the events we've witnessed, I think it shows how important it is to get this crucial element of your building project right.

What's on?

RETROFITTING HEMPCRETE

26th AUG
£65
POWYS, WALES
courses.cat.org.uk

WINDOWS: FINISHES & PAINT

1st SEPT
£115
SUSSEX
wealddown.co.uk

TIMBER FRAME SELF-BUILD

1st – 5th SEPT
FROM £500
POWYS, WALES
courses.cat.org.uk

SELF-BUILD COFFEE MORNING

2nd SEPT
FREE
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
selfbuildacademy.co.uk

HEAT & ENERGY COURSE

2nd SEPT
£150
NSBRC, SWINDON
nsbrc.co.uk

HAND-BUILDING A WIND TURBINE

2nd – 3rd SEPT
FROM £155
BRIGHTON
brightonpermaculture.co.uk

REPAIR OF SLATE ROOFS

3rd SEPT
£195
SURREY
spab.org.uk

FIRE & HISTORIC BUILDINGS

6th SEPT
£25
SUSSEX
wealddown.co.uk

SUPERHOMES TOUR

9th SEPT
FREE
CLACTON-ON-SEA
superhomes.org.uk

PREPARE & PAINT

12th SEPT
£140
LONDON
thegoodlifecentre.co.uk

BASIC PLUMBING

14th SEPT
£70
LONDON
thegoodlifecentre.co.uk

OPEN HOUSE LONDON

16th – 17th SEPT
FREE
LONDON
openhouselondon.org.uk

SELF-BUILD COURSE

16th – 18th SEPT
£375
NSBRC, SWINDON
nsbrc.co.uk

LIGHTING MASTERCLASS

19th SEPT
£35
LONDON
johncullenlighting.com

ECO SHOWCASE

19th SEPT
FREE
MANCHESTER
ecoshowcase.co.uk

100% DESIGN

20th – 23rd SEPT
£15
LONDON
100percentdesign.co.uk

ANTIQUES & COLLECTORS FAIR

25th SEPT
£5
NEWARK
iacf.co.uk

FIND & APPRAISE A PLOT

30th SEPT
£40
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
selfbuildacademy.co.uk



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