



Our Self-Build Column

How do you design a self-build?

At a recent self build showcase event we hosted in Norfolk, it was clear to see the enthusiasm and sheer number of self builders in the East Anglia region, with over 100 visitors attending. Our 1:1 sessions allowed people to bring along their designs and industry experts were on hand to offer vital advice, creating a really positive buzz.

Many had already put together their design plans but for those starting out, when it comes to designing your ideal home, it's all about getting the right balance between what you really want, with what you can actually have. Naturally there are limits to any self build project usually due to planning, budget, or building regulations but that doesn't mean you must compromise completely, just adapt here and there to maximise the potential.

Good design is about how your home performs, how the spaces interact and flow together, and also how it meets your needs. We always recommend working with architects, architectural technologists and similarly qualified professionals to help you to achieve the right results. They will also save you time in the long run regarding building regulations and they know what is likely to pass the planners!



Although we regularly work with architects to provide self builders with the complete flexibility on the design for their bespoke homes, another option allows self builders to work with companies such as Beattie Passive who offer a design 'package' from a selection of pattern-book designs, most of which have been built before and are customisable to suit your needs.

Wants vs Needs - Start with your physical requirements and let the stylistic decisions flow from here. Number of rooms, sizes and shapes, plus any special features such as a large window to maximise the view. Then decide what you can live without as it's easy to run away with notions of a cinema

room or indoor pool! Think laterally, too, such as do you need space to accommodate audio equipment or a wine cellar?

What are the restrictions? Building Regulations will influence your home's design but it's the local planning authority that will have the biggest say in what you can and can't build. Planners can dictate the materials, size, shape, height and orientation of your home, all of which have a great bearing on its design, so making a first port of call to the planning office will pay dividends to ensure your time is spent on creating a realistic design.

Sympathetic style - a design that is sympathetic to its surroundings is more likely to be approved, so take account of the street setting and vernacular, and whether or not the house is visible from the road. Scale is very important in this aspect, as it can make the house dominate or recede from the neighbouring properties.

Cost effectiveness - Your budget will probably be the main factor that controls what you can and can't have. Try to make a connection between design features and cost. Over-designed homes are expensive to build and the results sometimes questionable, so be prepared to edit the plans. Conversely, having a limited budget doesn't have to mean a poorly designed house, but it will require careful planning to make the most of what you have.

Designing your home is the most exciting part of the whole build process and time will be well spent researching your ideal layout to ensure your dream home is exactly that.

To read the blog on the EDP website [click here](#)