



Timber: the natural choice for your home

With impressive environmental credentials and cost efficiencies, timber is increasingly becoming the building material of choice for self-builders, currently accounting for around 75% of the market.

Building your own home can be extremely rewarding in many ways, including financially, and building your own home using timber as the main structural component gives you a great head-start. Structural timber delivers a whole host of advantages, in both the long and short term - it's sustainable, economic, thermally efficient and can be constructed quickly. In short, it's a great way to build!

Faster construction

- Using timber saves around 30% of build time for a two storey house
- Your home can be erected and watertight in around 5 days
- Factory prefabrication makes for simple on site assembly

Better thermal efficiency

- Structural timber easily exceeds current Building Regulation requirements
- Superior thermal efficiency means that the building remains warmer in the winter and cool in the summer.

Cost benefits

- Using timber allows for more accurate budgeting
- The finished building is better insulated, making your energy bills lower

Greater accuracy and design flexibility

- Guaranteed accuracy, with components fitting together exactly as designed
- New systems allow for timber to be used in more applications than ever before

Kinder to the environment

- Structural timber has the lowest overall CO₂ cost of any building material
- For every m³ of wood used instead of other building materials, 0.8 tonnes of CO₂ is saved



10 Tips for self-builders

Tip 1

Leave plenty of time when looking for a plot. There is a lot to think about. Is it serviced? Is it zoned for housing? Are the boundaries defined? Do you have clear access? Are ground conditions suitable for drainage and load-bearing capacity? Look out for overhead power lines and underground existing main services crossing the site.

Tip 2

Remember to go to local farmers' and landowners' organisations as well as to local house builders and to estate agents and specialist magazines.

Tip 3

Make sure you get all the legal and technical surveys you need. A valuation will tell you what a plot is worth, but will not tell you if it is suitable for building. You need a structural survey and site investigation for that. Remember too, that zoning for housing does not mean structural suitability for housing.

Tip 4

Get your funding in place early and take into account the fact that most funding packages are paid in arrears, i.e. you do part of the build then get staged payments. You will therefore need some capital to start!

Tip 5

Hidden costs. An amazing number of people forget to take into account the cost of their temporary accommodation when they budget for self-build! Also remember costs like furniture storage and legal professional fees.

Tip 6

When choosing the style of house you want, take time to check what the local planners will find acceptable. This will save on abortive design fees. Most local builders and architects - and all STA members - are well up to speed with what each area demands and all areas are different. Some areas, particularly rural ones, publish helpful planning guidelines.



Tip 7

Be sure your house is not just designed for today but for tomorrow too. Make sure that it is a house which you can not only afford to build but to run as well, particularly in terms of heating and long term maintenance.

Also consider the re-sale implications of individual designs.

Remember that your design can be created to allow for extensions and change of use, e.g. when the children come along, or indeed when they leave the nest; when granny comes to stay; or when you opt for a home office.

Tip 8

This is your chance to build what you want for now and for the future. Be sure that you build responsibly, being mindful of neighbours and adjoining properties and consider using methods of construction which are as environmentally friendly as possible. With timber-based construction, which is recognised as being the greenest building method around, this need not create additional cost. Identify permitted working times on your site.

Tip 9

Be wary about taking on a self-build project on a DIY basis, if you have absolutely no skills or experience of the construction industry. It is not impossible in such circumstances, but can be very time consuming. Self managed projects do, however, cost less in the long run. Obtain professional help with preparing budgets then stick to them!

Tip 10

This is going to be the most important and exciting investment of your life. Be sure that you have considered all the options and that whatever method of procurement you choose, architect, builder or package company, you select one which is fully accredited. For architects it is the RIBA in England & Wales and the RIAS in Scotland; for package companies it is the STA which is the recognised trade body and for builders look for a NHBC Guarantee. Allow time to carry out a full tendering process for sub-contractors, getting as many quotes as possible.

Buy with confidence

The Structural Timber Association (STA) is recognised as the authoritative voice of the structural timber industry, which includes timber frame, structural insulated panel systems (SIPS), cross-laminated timber (CLT) and glulam. We represent the vast majority of the structural timber industry, from suppliers and manufacturers to erectors and designers.

So why should you choose an STA member when building your own home?

- The STA logo is a sign of reassurance
- Using one of our members means the delivery of only the highest standards of technical excellence
- STA members have access to a professional support network, as well as reliable technical guidance at all times
- You can feel confident in the fact that STA members must meet our strict Quality Standards
- Members are monitored to ensure that they are consistently delivering industry best practice and the highest quality in building standards
- The comfort factor an STA member brings is effectively a kite mark of quality and an assurance of craftsmanship

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