

This timber-frame house is a bespoke design by Baufritz



Eco-friendly new builds

We're all keen to be green. Even house builders are now looking at ways of making new homes more environmentally friendly

Each year, the construction of new flats and houses accounts for 27% of the UK's carbon emissions – the greenhouse gases that cause global warming – and the way we heat and maintain our homes adds another 26%. As a result, people want change and seem willing to pay for it. A recent survey by insurance company More Than showed 70% of owner occupiers believe all new-build homes should be more eco friendly. Some 31% said they would be willing to spend up to £500 to make their current home greener, another 18% would spend up to £1,000 and a further 10% would spend more than £1,000.

In the past two years, the number of homes built with timber frames instead of concrete, brick or steel has doubled. 'Timber has the lowest "carbon cost" of any mainstream building material,' says Stewart Delgarno of the UK Timber Frame Association. 'The CO₂ emissions generated while making one detached,

three-bedroom, timber-frame home are 16.5% less than its traditional equivalent, and new research shows it's possible to achieve a reduction in greenhouse gases of up to 86% just by increasing the amount of timber in buildings.'



Solar panels are among the energy-saving features being introduced by developers

Cutting-edge features

Just as greener construction methods are being used, eco-friendly heating methods are being developed, including ground-source heat pumps. 'These suck warmth out of the ground and transfer it to the property,' explains Andrew Murray of Morpheus Developments, which builds luxury homes using ecologically responsible construction methods. 'We position the boreholes under drives so they're accessible without being too close to a house.'

Homes are being designed to use bio-fuels (vegetable-oil-based fuels) for heating. 'Reliable supplies of carbon-neutral biodiesel will be available in south-east England within a couple of years,' says Mark Wilkinson of estate agent Knight Frank.

Among other cutting-edge features are: green roofs (a grassy covering that keeps homes warm and prevents excessive rain run-off); rainwater farming (collecting rain and using it for irrigation or to flush toilets); waste compactors (to reduce household rubbish and recycle some of