

#### ON SCHEDULE

An organised approach is vital for project management. The owner of this house in Auchterarder, Scotland, designed by Allan Corfield Architects, took on this role and completed the build in 12 months. The project cost £450,000



# DIY OR THE PROFESSIONALS?

Trying to decide how to get involved in your homebuilding project? Our no-nonsense guide advises which jobs you can do yourself and what's best left to the experts



The five-bedroom Auchterarder home is constructed from structural insulated panels

One of the main reasons for taking on a self-build or renovation project is being able to put your stamp on your new home. There are a variety of reasons for wanting to get hands-on, whether it's trying to save money or the satisfaction of personal achievement, and there are numerous opportunities to do so.

For those with a passion for DIY, helping with the labour or aiding in construction is perfectly plausible, but if that isn't where your skills lie then there are plenty of other areas of your build that you can get involved in. Before your project begins, think about what you want to contribute and where your particular expertise could come in useful – maybe you could use your creativity to provide a detailed design brief, put organisational talents to use in project management or dedicate your time to finishing the interior.

#### Preliminary stages

There are certain parts of your project that warrant professional involvement from the outset. The design, for example, should be tackled by an architect or someone with similar qualifications. Don't select the →



## UPPER LIMITS

Problematic site conditions and complex building processes should be left to the professionals. This clever design by John Pardy Architects was completed to a high standard on a tricky waterside plot in Pembrokeshire in just 18 months thanks to the experience of Carreg Construction. The project cost £975,000



first architect you come across; ask for recommendations from those who have undertaken similar projects and look at the practice's portfolio. Seek a like-minded professional – they will be interpreting your ideas, so you need to be on the same wavelength. You may have definite ideas about what you want to achieve, which can be communicated through a clear brief and moodboards showing your preferred styles and materials. Discuss these with your architect – the more input you have, the more likely you are to be happy with the design.

Planning is another area in which specialist involvement can be helpful. If you are working in a conservation zone,

have a listed building or a tricky site to deal with, professional assistance is worth its weight in gold. Many self-builders and renovators cite gaining consent as the single hardest part of their development, so if you foresee any issues it's advisable to seek guidance from an experienced planner who knows your local authority well, or turn to your architect for advice.

## Project management

A successful homebuilding scheme requires organisation on and off site, and that's down to the aptitude of the project manager. Key to the success of this role is ensuring that →





## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

**>> Get educated** If you want to be involved in project management, it's essential to know the ins and outs of running a construction site. The National Self Build and Renovation Centre runs a course on this every couple of months.

**>> Know your limits** It's important that you have a realistic grasp of what you can and can't do. Explain to your builder what you want to take on so they can quote for the job accordingly.

**>> Get professional advice** If you don't feel confident enough to carry out certain tasks, leave them to the experts. To find a list of local specialists, contact the National Custom and Self Build Association.



## SMART PLANNING

Having professional help with planning issues can be invaluable in some circumstances. Witcher Crawford Architects used its expertise to gain permission for the redevelopment of this Grade II-listed rectory, reorganising the interior layout and adding a kitchen diner extension. The project cost around £200,000



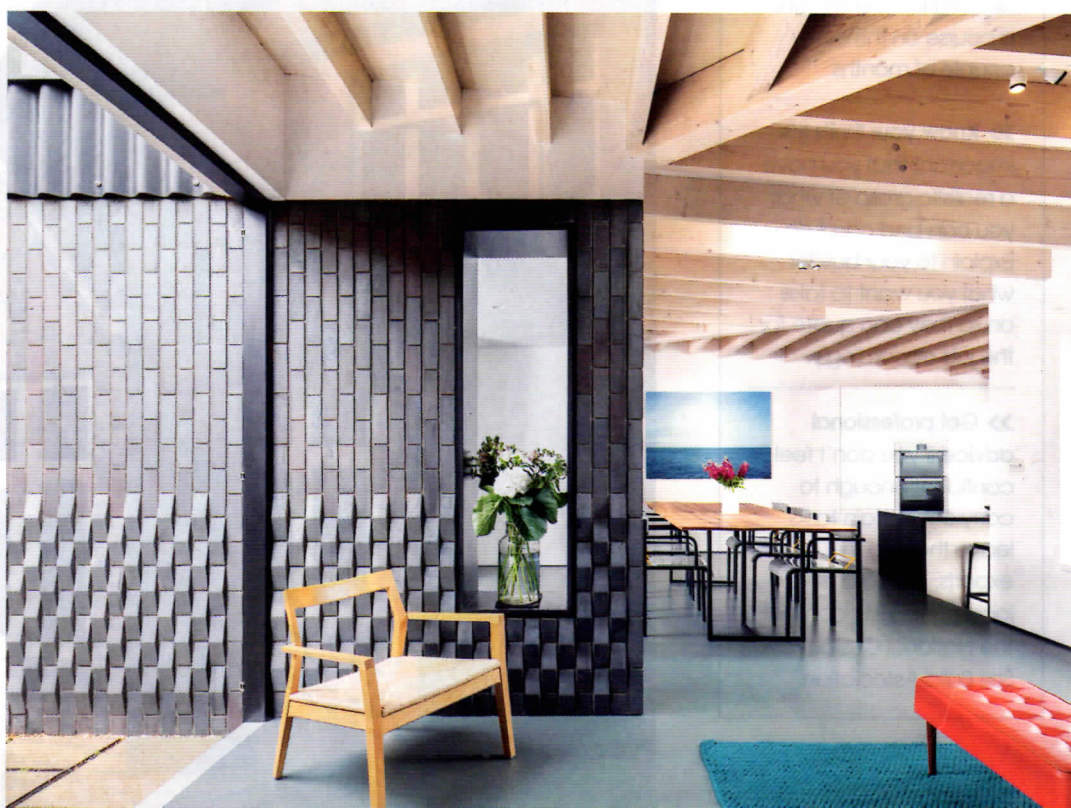


**↑ SITE CONTROL**

Melanie Schubert of SAM Architects took on the project management role for her London self-build. She organised the trades as well as taking on the planning aspect of the development. The build cost approximately £350,000

**→ CREATIVE CONTRACT**

The owner of this house provided architect Dallas Pierce Quintero with a detailed brief so that the practice could easily translate his wishes. He got hands on, too, by prepping and clearing the confined London plot prior to the main contract commencing. The project cost approximately £250,000





## DETAILED DECISIONS

Specification is something that most self-builders can take on with suitable research. The owners of this prefabricated house in Berkshire worked with package home company Baufritz to ensure all their design and layout needs were met. They selected every last detail in the house – from flooring to window treatments – at the outset. The build cost £1,000,000



jobs are done on time and to budget. Managing the build yourself can be a rewarding experience, but be aware that when trouble arises the buck stops with the project manager, so you will be responsible for finding solutions, under the pressure of deadlines and mounting costs.

You need to be up-to-date on tasks that have been completed, those that are under way and who is booked to come on site next. You have to assess the quality of work continually and ensure that it reflects the plans, as well as keeping on top of payments and budgeting. If things are not up to standard, then you need to act quickly to prevent a small issue from having a damaging impact.

If you don't feel suited to the role, you can hire a main contractor to do it for you. Alternatively, enlist the assistance of your architect or seek a dedicated self-build project manager.

## Construction phase

There will be many opportunities to get involved on site, even for novices. If your skills are limited, then consider offering your services as a labourer rather than tackling any structural work. Those with more experience can →







#### CRYSTAL CLEAR

Knowing your DIY limits will ensure a smooth process. Elements such as specifying and installing glazing are jobs for the professionals, carried out on this project by IQ Glass. The glazing cost approximately £37,200



contribute to a more significant part of the build, but remember, you want to provide help not hindrance to your tradesmen – they aren't there to teach you how to do their jobs. If you make mistakes it will be the professionals who have to rectify these, and their time costs money.

If you have a genuine skill, plumbing or carpentry for example, and intend to do a complete trade contribution, make sure that this has been clearly explained to your general builder. It's important that everyone on site knows what your role will be so your works can be scheduled in.

There are some jobs that are always best left to the professionals. Electricians, for example, must be undertaken by a qualified person. And while there's nothing to stop you doing the task yourself, all your electrical work must be checked and a compliance certificate issued before you can obtain a completion notice from your local authority.

### Interior finishes

Generally involving the painting, decorating, flooring and tiling, this stage of the build is something that many homeowners want to do themselves, not least to save some cash on what can be a costly exercise. These can be relatively simple tasks that are well within the capabilities of most people – but key to a good finish is not to rush. Preparation is essential and will influence the end result.

For painting, walls must be thoroughly cleaned, areas taped off to avoid drips, protective floorcoverings secured, woodwork sanded, undercoats applied, and the list goes on. Laying flooring and tiling walls takes time, too. You

need to ensure you have the right tools and equipment to achieve a good clean finish. These elements require a fair bit of skill and an inadequate job will look shoddy, as well as being difficult to rectify. Discuss your plans with the tradesmen on site and don't be afraid to ask for help.

Often it can be useful to live in your new home for a few months before making your final choices about decor, but be sure to keep the momentum of the project going right up until the work is finished to avoid dragging out its completion for too long. **GD**





## ↑ BARN REVIVAL

David Nossiter Architects came up with a plan for the renovation and restoration of this barn on the Essex/Suffolk border. The owners stayed on site in a caravan throughout the project to oversee works, and get involved in various stages, including site preparation and labouring. The project cost approximately £50,000

## ESSENTIAL CONTACTS

**National Custom & Self Build Association**  
(nacsba.org)

**National Self Build & Renovation Centre**  
(nsbrc.co.uk)

**Allan Corfield Architects**  
(01383 737 101;  
acarchitects.biz)

**Baufritz** (01223 235 632;  
baufritz.com)

**Carreg Construction**  
(01348 831 711;  
carregconstruction.co.uk)

**Dallas Pierce Quintero**  
(020 8088 1880;  
dp-q.com)

**David Nossiter Architects**  
(020 8251 8978;  
davidnossiter.com)

**John Pardey Architects**  
(01590 626 465;  
johnpardeyarchitects.com)

**SAM Architects**  
(07813 177 727;  
samarchitects.co.uk)

**Witcher Crawford Architects** (01962 813 344;  
witchercrawford.co.uk)

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