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**RICHARD WITCHER** is an architect and founding partner of Witcher Crawford Architects and Designers, based in Hampshire. Established in 2004, by Richard and Geoff Crawford, the practice is known for its luxury residential property designs around the south of England, Channel Islands and the Caribbean. Richard lives in a 1960s house which he's in the process of renovating.

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## Real Homes Q&A

# How can I use cladding to add wow-factor to my home's façade?

Using wood, metal or the latest innovative materials could transform your home, creating a modern exterior and boosting energy efficiency

**1 THINK ABOUT YOUR AREA** First, consider your property's setting, the materials used on the existing building, and its composition to see how new cladding will complement it. The form of a building often dictates a suitable style of cladding, so understanding orientation and openings for natural light are key. A house with lots of right angles would look great with feature timber cladding, while a 1960s-style design may benefit from a mix of render and wood. It's important to think of your home as a complete design, and while you can create a statement with new cladding, maintaining a link to the building's heritage and surroundings often results in the most pleasing aesthetic.

**2 EXPERIMENT WITH FINISHES** The colour and texture of materials should complement each other and it's advisable to source samples of a product, ideally in a large format, to see how it works in context with your home's surroundings and proposed design. Remember, images or small samples never tell a true story as light will differ from site to site.

**3 KNOW WHAT'S ON TREND** Zinc, tin and timber offer great versatility. All can be used on modern or traditional builds and are available in many styles for walls and, for zinc and tin, roofs. Timber is available in many shades and materials, offering almost endless possibilities – look out for modern thin slats. Composite products, such as Trespa panels, traditionally used on commercial buildings, are now being used on residential homes for a utilitarian look.

**4 SEEK APPROVAL** Permitted development allows for extensions to be built with materials matching the existing building, but if you'd like contrasting cladding, you'll most likely require planning consent. Building Control will also be concerned that the house meets regulations for thermal efficiency, so always consider whether cladding will alter its eco performance. Some will boost insulation, but it's vital that airflow is maintained. If you live in a listed building or Conservation Area, detailed consideration needs to be given to how cladding will impact the character and fabric of the house.

**5 ASK IMPORTANT QUESTIONS** Appearance is one of the key considerations. Will the cladding sit well in context? How will it change over time? Will patination or weathering change its appearance? Think about maintenance, too; natural timber can be left to silver or can be stained, leading to a schedule of redecoration.

**6 CONSIDER COST** Cost will be a major consideration. Always talk to a designer or expert cladding company early to weigh up the costs of different options and compare quotes from different suppliers as prices vary on the material and quantity. 🏠

### CLADDING TYPES

**Timber cladding** There are various types but, western red cedar is a great choice. There is minimal movement in the wood once installed and it has a natural resistance to moisture absorption and decay so can be untreated, painted or stained. It needs careful handling during fitting to avoid knocks.

**Zinc and coated tin** Crisp lines, curves and angles can be clad in a variety of colours and textures and a long life is guaranteed. Can be a cost effective way of creating beautiful designs and are 100 per cent recyclable.

**Clay tiles or slate** Both traditionally used natural materials, they are durable, sustainable and improve with age. Good-quality slate is extremely durable.

**Manmade composite panels** Can provide a weather-resistant, low-maintenance, stable-colour option. However, the lifespan is much shorter than natural materials. Not suitable for curved applications, limiting the design to linear uses only.



The first floor of this home appears to float above the predominantly glazed ground floor, while a mix of cedar and black-painted wood cladding further separates the two floors and disguises the joins between the existing commercial building and new first and second floor extensions.