



THINKING SUSTAINABLE BUILDING? THINK TIMBER FRAME.

The Government's ambitious plans for sustainable building are wholly achievable. The latest innovations and durable solutions in timber frame construction can deliver both the quantity and quality of new housing needed in the UK – as well as guaranteeing the strongest environmental credentials.

Timber frame is the fastest growing method of construction in the UK. Over the last five years, timber frame's UK market share has risen steadily from 8% to 15% - virtually doubling over the period.

Why such dramatic growth? Industry feedback suggests it's because developers and specifiers working for both public and private sectors trust this proven method of construction, based on a truly sustainable, renewable material like timber, to deliver on all fronts – good build speed, high quality workmanship, durable, cost-effective housing that is low on waste and high on environmental performance.

Timber frame is a well-established, modern method of construction, using off-site fabrication to create buildings in a controlled environment, leaving as little as possible to the vagaries of the weather and on-site labour skills. It meets, if not exceeds, all current and proposed standards of thermal and acoustic performance, waste minimisation, fire resistance and sustainability. And in an area of current concern – flooding – timber frame meets flood resilience standards and has the added benefits of being faster and easier to repair following flood damage.

Affordable housing needs reliable building performance

It's not news to most housing associations and RSLs in the UK (40%

of the social housing sector uses timber frame), but timber frame is fast becoming the only building product that really meets the needs of a modern construction industry.

When it comes to environmental performance, for example, many RSLs favour timber frame because it's sustainable, renewable, natural, recyclable and has low embodied energy as well as excellent thermal performance.

Wood is effectively a carbon-neutral material (even allowing for transport). All of the Sustainable Buildings Task Group recommendations – and the challenges in the Code for Sustainable Buildings – are readily achievable using timber frame. And on a practical level, building with timber frame pretty much guarantees you a better Eco Homes rating, a better SAP rating and ongoing reductions in CO2 emissions.

A tried and tested solution to multi-storey construction

The design flexibility of timber frame is also becoming extremely popular. Everyone knows timber frame has been used for centuries in the construction of impressive detached homes – from Anne Hathaway's 15th century 'cottage' (actually it's a 12-bedroom farmhouse) made famous on chocolate boxes the world over, to the latest architect-designed, award winning, self build projects on 'Grand Designs' that will be the landmark properties of the future.

But now we also have heavyweight multi-storey timber frame buildings of four, five, six storeys and even higher, including flats, apartments and nursing homes, student accommodation, hotels and commercial buildings.

It was the Government's confidence in the performance of timber frame that led to a change in the fire safety regulations over 10 years ago, allowing up to eight storeys in England and Wales without any additional fire resistance requirements other than those existing for many four-storey buildings.

No one has taken any risks. Issues such as construction process benchmarking, stability, differential movements, disproportionate collapse, compartmental fire and timber stair performance have all been assessed. Test results have proven that timber frames are well suited to multi-storey construction – which is great news for designers and developers looking to meet the requirements of PPG3 and best practice in urban design.

Need to know more?

The UKTFA is the foremost authority on timber frame construction in the UK, representing over 80% of timber frame manufacture.

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