



## ARCH angels

**Nicola Thomas** on building your 'green' dream home...what does it mean?

We often hear the terms 'green architecture', 'green design' or 'green building', but when it comes to creating your dream home, what do they mean? How is a building that is 'sustainable' and 'eco-friendly' defined?



Green architecture, or green design is a building approach that aims to increase resource efficiency, (i.e. energy, water and materials), while reducing impact on human health and the environment. All this may give us an idea of what 'sustainable' and 'eco-friendly' means, but what elements of green building do we need to be aware of and why?

### What are the main elements of green building?

Green building is more than the end result – it is an ongoing process. It starts with proper site selection as well as the design specifications of your dream home. It incorporates the practices, technologies and materials used in its construction. Furthermore, it is determined by how you operate, maintain and develop the building throughout its entire lifecycle.

**Energy efficiency** is perhaps the most important element of sustainable architecture. Reducing the amount of energy used within a home is the ultimate goal. As well as choosing the right heating and cooling system, it involves using the right building fabric, high spec insulation and effective window/door seals.

**Reducing water consumption** can be a challenge due to modern living habits, but low flush toilets, low flow rate taps and showers, water butts and other water harvesting systems can all help.

**Use of responsible materials:** A greater use of locally sourced, recyclable materials as well as natural elements such as timber and less use of UPVC all help to strike a balance between sustainability and cost effectiveness.

**Reducing waste, pollution and environmental degradation** is a key consideration in green building. Making provisions for effective waste disposal and recycling as well as use of eco-friendly products all contribute.

**Occupant health and well-being** is of paramount importance. Maximising natural daylight and ventilation as well as good sound insulation are all key factors in eco-friendly design. Making homes more adaptable throughout their lifecycle whilst minimising costs is considered good practice and design criteria is set by the Lifetime Homes standard to achieve this. (For more information see [www.lifetimehomes.org.uk](http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk))



Attaining a balance between ecology and design, sustainability and cost effectiveness is definitely a challenge in the architects' practice. That's why everyone is involved in the green build process – designers, planners, developers, builders and of course you, the home owner. It's safe to say, the main goal is to meet your individual requirements, while doing some good for the environment along the way.

Find out how to create your dream home at Build It Live at Glow, Bluewater on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 February 2013. Come and see us on Stand B26. Click on the link on our website to claim your free tickets. Plus, if you sign up for a free consultation at the show, you'll get a 20% discount off our fees.

*Richard Zinman and Nicola Thomas are founders of ARCH-angels Architects in Brighton, an approachable local practice specialising in environmentally conscious and cost effective architecture. We work closely with you to maximise your space and provide beautiful integrated buildings.*

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