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A PROPELLING MARKET

The fear of embarking on self-build projects is now a thing of the past, as more than half of UK households want to build their own home. By: Jacqueline James

Not only is the government aiding the growth of this sector in a bid to bridge the housing gap in the UK, as Housing Minister Grant Shapps declares that "the age of self-build has come", according to the Building Societies Association, more homeowners are increasingly attracted to the ability to have control over their homes design and layout. It's not surprising as Vanessa Brady, President of the British Society of International Design (SBID), the UK's leading accrediting

body for the Interior Design profession, notes that from her 'years of experience as an interior designer, a prominent trend is the greater consciousness of design in homeowners and the fact that far less people are prepared to settle with not only their grandmothers old coffee table but rather the very structure of their homes, demanding to live in an environment more suited with their personalities and lifestyles'. According to a report published by The Department for Communities and

Local Government, in 2012 to 2013 alone almost 11,000 new homes were self-built. This propelling market, currently worth approximately £1.9bn in the UK, has not only sparked a national interest but also and perhaps more interestingly, has been responsible for driving careers into existence. We get acquainted with two Interior Designers, both accredited members of the Society of British and International Design (SBID), about their very different journeys from brave homeowner to established designer.

CASE STUDY | Designer: Sophie Stevens | Company: SGS Design Ltd | Website: www.sgsdesign.co.uk



Sophie, now an experienced residential interior designer from SGS Design, tells us about her first commercial self-build project she undertook, converting an old bank into a cafe and office space to expand her business. She too developed a flair for the industry while experimenting with her home, later retraining at KLC whilst working part-time. "I have to confess this wasn't the self-build project I had anticipated undertaking. I have a theory we grow up either aspiring to wear couture versions of our dolls fabulous dresses, or to live in adult size versions of our childhood dolls houses. For me, it has always been the latter; I envisaged using my passion for design to develop the full-size version of my double-fronted dolls house, complete with antique chandeliers and wisteria climbing

across the portico door; instead we were selling our family home and investing in an old bank and car park. Having worked as a residential interior designer with experience of high-end new build and refurbishment projects undertaking a commercial self-build was an intimidating process but came with a sweetener; the building provided an opportunity for me to create a studio space for me to grow my business. We found the property details whilst on holiday and I left my husband in the Alps with his bicycle, to attend the open view. Along with a number of experienced developers, I trailed across the wavy carpet tiles and nosed through endless blue and orange fire doors to explore the bank's original vaults, bullion

lift, bank manager's office and shiny beige corridors leading to numerous cubicles of staff toilets and two further floors of back-offices. It was larger than anything we'd considered previously but the high ceilings on the ground floor, charming sash windows, steel vault doors and flag pole immediately excited me and within a couple of months we had the keys. Fortunately I have developed a network of skilled and very patient trades, essential in this industry; Julian Mills of Charles Mills Construction was my obvious choice of builder and Duncan Bruce of Duncan Brice Fine Furniture for all the joinery/shop-fit work. My husband's vision, after he retired from the city, was to convert the space into a bike shop and cafe with my office located in one of the rooms at the top of the building, along with a back



office for the bike shop business. The brief was to create a homely space as a welcoming clubhouse for cyclists but not intimidating to non-riders. We stripped the layers of the bank off to uncover areas of woodblock parquet, original terrazzo flooring, grey plaster walls and shuttered-concrete ceilings. These original features influenced our design direction and we embraced the scale of the building and its industrial feel. Other than repairing and painting walls, we retained the original fabric of the building and the only new surface installed was an Armourcoat polished plaster Velodrome wall. We sourced reclaimed factory light fittings to compliment the building proportions, prepared the raw, mixed flooring and sealed it for use and reinstated the missing

original staircase with a steel powder-coated replacement. My one regret was that I failed to source Crittal windows for the workshop and retail doors within budget but the extra-tall, internal glazed joinery door worked well with the original pair of hardwood bank front doors. The garage doors were adapted to form the entrance to the new bike workshop, located in the old bank manager's office and laminate ply and scaffolding poles have been combined with map tables in the cafe and shop fit to create an interesting and robust space ideal for heavy traffic. Sitting here now in my new office, with MAC's recently installed for my two members of staff, bespoke joinery shelves and cabinets for my material sample boxes, books and files, I can smell fresh coffee and hear the chatter

of cyclists and local cafe goers and I feel immensely proud. It was a build that wasn't without disagreement and change but our lack of commercial experience was compensated for with a fantastic team of tradesmen and vision for the finished product. It was an emotional moment to see the reconditioned flagpole being repositioned to the building facade and our new flag hung for the first time. Whilst I was delighted to see trading commence, I must confess I miss the daily builders walk through and project managing the build. We will just have to start looking for self-build number two".

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:
SBID
www.sbid.org