

GREEN LIGHT

ECO-HOMES NOT ONLY LOOK BEAUTIFUL AND HELP SAVE THE PLANET – THEY CAN ALSO HELP YOU SAVE MONEY, DISCOVERS **CHERYL MARKOSKY**



As captivating as the tension was between Gemma and her two-timing ex, Simon, in BBC drama hit *Doctor Foster*, it was nothing compared to the magnificent dream home that stole nearly every scene.

A glass-and-steel palace with indoor pool and sauna proved to be the perfect setting for the posh party Gemma audaciously gatecrashed to get back at scheming Simon.

However, the stylish Surrey home used as the breathtaking location is not only gorgeous. It's extremely eco-friendly, too.

The prefab Huf Haus – made at a factory in Germany and then shipped in parts to Britain to be assembled by craftsmen on site – gets its green credentials from triple glazing, superior insulation and alternative energy.

"Working with a ground heat source and photovoltaic roof panels, the house produces its own heat and electricity," explains Afra Bindewald at Huf Haus UK in Weybridge.

She explains that the houses can even go totally off-grid with new domestic batteries storing electricity. As well as getting their energy for free, Huf Haus owners can sell excess energy back to the network for others to consume.

The Government approves of such innovations:

a recent pledge promises better insulation for over six million homes in Britain by 2032. It's estimated that over the next 15 years families can save £650 annually on heating costs.

A study by Strutt and Parker indicates that many of the attributes associated with eco-homes – such as improved insulation, grey water harvesting and filtered air systems – have gone mainstream.

Head of research Stephanie McMahon says buyers have "a strong sense of environmental responsibility and look to reduce carbon footprints". She thinks people also recognise financial and lifestyle benefits linked to eco-homes.

Respondents to Strutt and Parker's survey said environmental features they want in their next home are natural light, insulation, double/triple-glazed windows, energy-saving appliances, renewable energy and living walls.

Matthew Gilbert of Savills Ealing, who's selling a home made from recycled materials, admits most purchasers don't come through the door asking for green houses. But when eco-homes come onto the market, interest's high.

He believes the eco-home Savills has on the market in Hazelwood Close – with reclaimed brassware, doors and timber – is an artful blend of old and new.

HAZELWOOD CLOSE, EALING W5

£2,395,000

Inventive four-bed home made from reclaimed timber, brassware and doors, and fireplace made from materials that were part of flooring at Heathrow Terminal 2.

www.savills.com



LOWER MILL ESTATE, SOMERFORD KEYNES, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

FROM £250,000

Habitat First's holiday homes come with air-source heat pumps, underfloor heating and living roofs on an estate where beavers have been reintroduced.

www.lowermillestate.com

"All the flooring's made out of salvaged wood from schools and gyms. People like the fact that it's imperfect, but once sanded and sealed it looks great."

Some planners have given permission to builders to lift up original flagstone flooring in period houses, lay underfloor heating and then replace the flagstones to ensure sustainability.

"Damage done by huge central heating pipes was perceived to be more detrimental than 21st-century techniques," explains Linda Wesson in Hamptons International's prime country house department.

Pascal Wessink, director at EPR Architects, believes we've moved on from "green bling" – think obvious wind turbines on roofs – to "softer skills", such as "good insulation, orientation and ventilation embedded into design".

It's bonkers having to refit cooling corridors where hot pipes run along ceilings in badly executed designs, he suggests, when all you needed in the first place was a window or decent air circulation.

There's a social aspect to sustainable living that many forget about as well. "Solar panels on the roof might not contribute a great deal,

compared with growing food and talking to your neighbours regularly," Pascal notes.

Of course, new developments have been quietly getting on with producing cohesive communities and highly energy-efficient dwellings for some time, as builders adhere to strict green building codes.

Examples are high-performance windows, heat recovery and biodiverse landscaping in Berkeley Homes's Urban Houses at Kidbrooke Village; and Lendlease's Futurehome townhouses using 90% less energy than standard homes.

Futurehome at Elephant Park in Elephant and Castle would suit eco-conscious consumers who want homes that reduce their impact on the environment without compromising on comfort, design or location.

"As the first new-build homes built to Passivhaus standards in Zone 1 London, Futurehome marks a significant milestone for sustainable modern living," remarks Jonathan Emery, managing director of Property, Europe at Lendlease.

Tailoring time-honoured Victorian style to modern lifestyle needs, in line with ultra-low energy standards, gives buyers the prospect



FUTUREHOME, ELEPHANT AND CASTLE SE17

FROM £1,495,000

Airtight, triple-glazed, double walls, green roofs and smart heating and lighting in these Zone 1 townhouses built to Passivhaus standards.

www.lendlease.futurehomeslondon.co.uk



WOODBERRY DOWN, HACKNEY N4

FROM £550,000

Bio-diverse habitat for birds and bees at Berkeley Homes' latest phase, Hartingtons, with its own nature reserve, parkland and sailing lake.

www.woodberry-down.co.uk



WORLDS END LANE, ORPINGTON, KENT

£1,250,000

Eco-house formed from sustainably sourced larch wood and with heat energy recovery system, grey-water harvesting and sedum green roof.

www.alandmaid.co.uk



WELL COTTAGE, MAIDENHEAD, BERKSHIRE

£1,100,000

Detached five-bed house with geothermal ground source heating system, ventilation air filtration and low-energy lighting.

www.hamptons-int.com



PEMBROKE GARDENS, EAST SHEEN SW14

RENTAL £6,995 A MONTH

Richstone Properties has produced an eco-friendly home with recycled bricks, diadem green roof and sustainable timber.

www.featherstoneleigh.co.uk



KIDBROOKE VILLAGE, GREENWICH SE3

FROM £410,000

Owners of Urban Houses in this Berkeley Homes scheme save up to 30% on water and 83% on gas bills with their heat-recovery system and energy-efficient methods.

www.berkeleygroup.co.uk

of residing in a "highly ecological home within the capital's new green heart," he observes.

Another green pioneer is Lower Mill Estate, a second-home hideaway in the Cotswolds aimed at weekenders.

Red Paxton from Habitat First says its focus is "on house designs that blend into the natural environment", where a key feature is the use of structurally insulated panels, creating efficient, airtight structures.

In addition, combining air-source heat pumps, underfloor heating and heat recovery systems results in sustainable holiday homes with low running costs.

Everyone wants to reside somewhere aesthetically appealing, too. Green "living" wildflower roofs not only look attractive – they also "enhance opportunities for birds and other wildlife".

And the roofs are not just benefiting smaller invertebrates. "Hanging tile facades are perfect for roosting bats," adds Red.

If you're an eco-warrior keen on helping bats flourish, then make it clear to estate agents this is important, so they'll flag up anything that's

remotely environmentally friendly, advises Louise Ridings of Stacks Property Search.

Although some eco-homes have "an over-modern look" – it was historically a habit of architects to make eco-houses look radical – Louise says you shouldn't be put off by appearances.

Similarly, don't allow your determination to purchase an eco-house persuade you to buy in the wrong location.

"It might be better to consider building your own place," Louise counsels. "Finding a plot and starting from scratch is a daunting task, but it gives you a great opportunity to incorporate as much eco-friendliness as you choose."

A good compromise, she adds, is to buy a property with plenty of scope for extending and incorporating energy efficiency into the additional build.

Whatever you decide, well-designed eco-homes can produce stunning results – remember the allure of the *Doctor Foster* house that almost outshone the actors – as well as saving you some cash and making the world a better place.