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# Building Houses in England and Wales: Methods of Construction and Stages

The majority of new homes in England and Wales are built using traditional masonry construction. Traditional masonry construction is the construction method of choice for new homes in England and Wales. This method is ingrained in our national psyche and most people appear to feel more comfortable putting their faith and money in bricks and mortar.

Most of us are familiar with this method and, along with a number of advantages, there is a deep historical and psychological attachment to masonry construction that has contributed to its continuation as the main house building method in the UK.

## Advantages

- It is a flexible system in both design and construction.
- can be one of the more cost effective of all the build methods.
- plenty of tradesmen and specialist knowledge available to complete your project.

## Disadvantages

On-site construction means that progress can be affected by adverse weather conditions. Materials need to be stored on site and protected from the weather before they are incorporated into the building structure. Timber frame covers a number of build systems and in essence it is a traditional method of construction, however manufacturing developments have moved many of these methods into the classification of modern methods of construction discussed below. It is the second most popular technique for new home construction in the UK and, according to the UK Timber Frame Association, is the fastest growing method of construction in the UK. Traditionally used in areas rich in timber resources such as North America and Scandinavia, it comes with some good environmental credentials.

Along with timber frame, there are many other alternative construction methods being used in the uk. Examples are:(SIPs) Structural Insulated Panels are rigid foam insulation sandwiched between two OSB panels. They can be used structurally and create a wall or roof system with no thermal bridging. These buildings are extremely airtight and have very high r-value, resulting in superior thermal performance in a relatively thin wall. Multistory buildings can be done, but there are structural limitations to the panels as well as fire rated assemblies that need to be addressed for larger commercial use. SIPs can also be used as infill wall panels on frame

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structures. (ICFs) (Insulated Concrete Forms) are continuous rigid foam panels that are used as concrete forms and left in place after the pour to create a wall that has both thermal mass as well as high r-value. Some contractors use these only for foundations, but entire structures can be built from them. These buildings are extremely quiet and thermally outstanding. Roof systems would have to be SIP, truss or rafter, so proper detailing is key. Cons are that local concrete costs can drive price per square foot significantly and these buildings are not easy to modify with conventional tools once built. Radiant wall systems are similar to ICFs, only the rigid insulation is an interior layer, sandwiched by the concrete layers.

This places the durable concrete layer on the exterior and a layer of thermal mass inside the insulation layer, which results in a superior assembly. The interior layer of concrete also has hydronic heat tubing in it, so they can serve as the heating distribution for the building. These walls have to be formed by a special crew trained in the system and as a result, will be more costly. Radiant wall systems are even more difficult than ICFs to modify once built due to the embedded hydronic tubing. Strawbale are essentially stacked straw bales that are finished with plaster, earth or stucco. Straw has relatively low r-value per inch, and not much thermal mass either, but the walls are very thick, so they make up for it. The walls are also very limited structurally. As a result, for anything other than small single story design, a structural frame would need to be incorporated to carry the loads and the strawbale walls would serve as infill material. Log walls have been around for centuries and utilize solid wood logs as the structure and the finish. There are a wide variety of log coping techniques that range from very rustic with chinking serving as the thermal barrier between logs, to sophisticated milled logs that are very airtight. While wood has a relatively low R-value per inch, the thermal mass of the wall counteracts the loss in r-value. Detailing openings and interfaces to floor and roof systems are crucial to maintaining the thermal barrier in a log structure. Not commonly used in commercial building, Log structures can qualify for a type 4 construction and be used in certain fire assemblies. Uk housing laws and prefabricated dwellings Self-build projects account for about 10% of new homes in England each year (about 12,000 homes). My researches showed that more than half of the population would like to build their own homes at one stage in their lives but a lot are clueless on the stages to undertake. It is a large tasks that require:

- Finding land to build on
- Planning permission
- Financing

Anyone intending to get involved with building is required by law to make sure the work complies with the relevant regulations and that they use an approved Building Control Service. This includes the installation of a modular building system whether it is newly manufactured or refurbished.

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## The Difference Between Building Regulations and Planning Permission

Complying with building regulations and obtaining planning permission are separate matters. Building regulations set the standards for the design and construction of buildings. Planning permission is used to guide the way towns, cities and the countryside are developed. Planning takes into account the external appearance and the impact the development will have on the local area. The building regulations are a set of standards for design and construction which apply to most new buildings and many alterations to existing buildings. This ensures buildings, including modular and portable buildings, are manufactured to an approved standard. They cover various parts including structural elements, fire safety, ventilation and the energy use of the building.

If you are purchasing and organising the supply and installation of a modular building personally, the responsibility for approval of the building regulations will be yours. If you are employing a contractor the responsibility will usually be with that company, however, you should confirm this position at the very beginning. You should also be aware that if you are the owner of the building, it is ultimately you who may be served with an enforcement notice if the work does not comply with the regulations. A building control application is submitted to the local authority when the building construction, layout and design is known. The application consists of detailed plans and supporting details e.g. structural calculations, energy performance certificate (EPC) and full plans form. You will have to pay a fee for the application. The charge may vary between local authorities but it is regulated by the Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010. You should contact your local authority for details of their fees. The time to get approval of the application will vary (from 4 to 8 weeks as a guide) and will depend on the local authority and the complexities of the building design. It is not advisable to commence with the works on site until the building control application has been approved.

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