

Self-builders embrace the 'green' option

Apart from wanting to create a stunning new home at a greatly reduced cost, 'self-builders' are more likely than most to view environmentally-friendly building methods as a worthwhile extra bonus – especially when it means that the energy-efficient home created leads to big savings on heating bills.

The surge in popularity of HEMSEC-SIPs' self-build service is in part a tribute to the technological advances in both the performance and quality of Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs), as well as to the design flexibility which the timber-based materials provide.

“What is also emerging as a deciding factor in choosing our self-build option,” says HEMSEC-SIPs Sales Manager, Brian Hxxxxxx, “is the money people can save by taking what is also an environmentally responsible route.

“Most customers who enquire about our self-build homes quickly get to grips with all the advantages of using SIPs panels... the structural strength, design flexibility, speed of erection and so on.

“What they may not appreciate – to begin with at least – is that environmentally-friendly SIPs also mean energy-efficient buildings that can make a big savings on heating bills.”

Research by respected independent body, The Carbon Trust, found that the heat-loss from buildings accounts for 45 per cent of carbon emissions in the UK. Most people point to cars as the greenhouse gas 'demon'. The public's lack of awareness of the energy-wasting nature of our buildings is a strong case for switching to Modern Methods of Construction like SIPs.

Buildings constructed from inter-locking SIPs panels are much more airtight than those which use conventional materials. They therefore require less heating which in turn leads to a reduction in the potential outflow of CO² gases.

Related to this are the high insulation levels of SIPs panels. Made from timber OSB 3 facings (using timber from renewable sources) with a core material of fire-retardant polyurethane foam, the insulation performance levels of HEMSEC-SIPs were tested by Dow Chemicals. 'U' values were shown to be between 0.08 and 0.28 depending on panel thickness – impressive figures which fall well within Building Regulations standards.

Also reassuring is the off-site manufacture of SIPs. Not only does this ensure consistency of product (and therefore nothing is rejected); it also means much less waste is produced on-site. What's more, the amount of energy used in the manufacture of SIPs panels is much less than the amount used to make bricks and blocks.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- Timber OSB 3 (Orientated Strand Board) provides high structural strength.
- Panels are available in thicknesses from 75mm to 245mm, with optional finishes of OSB 15mm and cement particle board.
- Sandwich construction of panels produces similar characteristics to I-Beam.
- The polyurethane core contains a fire retardant to inhibit accidental ignition when tested to BS4735.
- U-values for insulation of 0.08 (245mm thick) to 0.28 (100mm).
- Excellent U-value to panel thickness ratio minimises wall thickness, thus maximising internal space.
- Multiple options for external finishes.
- Air-tight structure drastically reduces energy loss.

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