



Day 5 -Friday 24 March  
Lifestyle

### **MODERN LIFESTYLES SHAPE MODERN HOMES**

Did you know that 17% of living space goes unused in an older home?

Translate this into monetary terms and for a £150,000 house, a massive £25,000 worth has been wasted. As the price tag of the house increases so does the money lost; cash that can be better spent or invested.

The study of size, layout and use of space in homes both old and new was carried out by Dr. Lindsay Asquith and revealed that new homes are far more effective at meeting modern living needs than their predecessors. It also highlighted that today's lifestyles in the home are more informal than ever before; traditional rooms such as the dining room are simply becoming less and less used.

New home developers are responding to this and are becoming more adept than ever at finding out exactly what the customer wants with some homebuilders even commissioning their own research into lifestyle habits.

The New Homes Marketing Board explains, "Over the last twelve months we're seen a number of significant projects designed to assess how we live. It's certainly an exciting time in the industry and buyers will definitely see the benefits of research filter down into the way new homes are designed over the next few years.

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## MODERN LIFESTYLES ARE SHAPING MODERN HOMES/2...

### **Project:LIFE from David Wilson Homes**

One developer looking carefully at what the public want is David Wilson Homes who has just completed Project:LIFE, a major research project undertaken in conjunction with the Universities of Nottingham and Leicester.

The Parnell family, chosen from 70 volunteer families spent six months 'test driving' a research house in Sheffield designed with an unusual four-storey layout and equipped with the latest technology. Data was collected for three two-week periods and during the research the parents and two teenage daughters, wore radio frequency identification (RFID) tags to monitor their movements in the house.

David Wilson Homes wanted to evaluate usage of rooms not normally found in a traditional newly built home: a family den; a laundry room linked to floors above by a laundry chute; a boot room entrance for muddy dogs, children or gardeners. And with building land becoming scarcer, to accommodate this number of extra rooms, the house was built downwards as well as upwards over four storeys, and included a basement.

In addition, the company wanted to assess whether new technology in the home would actually be used and with what success. Manufacturers volunteered leading edge equipment and technological and environmental elements were included for the family to test under real life conditions, from self-cleaning windows to an automatic shirt ironer to energy-saving ventilation.

Commenting on the project, David Wilson Homes' development director, James Wilson said: "Volume house builders tend to be conservative. There were many aspects of house design which we wanted to trial one day but which we would not have risked in the commercial marketplace, acknowledging that some elements might not be successful. We called it our "one-day" house. In Project:LIFE our objective has been to update, in the most real life way possible, our understanding of how house design impacts upon people's lives.

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## **MODERN LIFESTYLES ARE SHAPING MODERN HOMES/3...**

The findings from Project:LIFE have been immensely valuable and are already benefiting David Wilson Homes' designs that will roll out this year and elements of the research house will be found even in much smaller homes.

For the Parnell family, well they didn't want to leave, but their time in the house did provide some valuable information on the way we live today. Initially the researchers were concerned that the family structure had been fragmented by the sheer size of the house. It appeared that many living rooms were being used by only one person at a time. The reality was somewhat different as the open-plan design of the ground floor allows people in separate rooms to be within talking distance of each other. "We call it 'living together but apart'," said James Wilson.

The family found that there was a wide choice of places to be apart and the space has undoubtedly provided a calming backdrop to family life. Indeed, the parents remarked that there was less bickering between the teenage girls because they had their own space.

### **UK's largest home builder trials four new homes**

Working with partners across the spectrum including Help the Aged, Groundwork, WRAP, The Energy Savings Trust, SUSTRANS, The Wildlife Trusts, ENCAMS and the National Urban Forestry Unit, Persimmon Homes is constructing four radically different new homes at its Riverside development in Irlam, Greater Manchester.

Each of these unique homes will trial a different range of construction methods and materials and will showcase the very latest in home technologies. The homes are also designed to be ever more eco-friendly again responding to calls for all of us to change our lifestyles in terms of the environment.

Unit 1 is a detached timber-framed 'Eco-house' and will be constructed to achieve a very high Eco Homes rating. All components will be focussed on energy saving and sustainable/recycled products. Unit 2 will be a detached steel-framed home with a basement and a focus on hi-tech products and cutting edge technological, communications and security systems together with a number of off-site manufacturing techniques.

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## **MODERN LIFESTYLES ARE SHAPING MODERN HOMES/4...**

Units 3 and 4 are a pair of semi-detached homes also with basements which will focus on off-site manufacture and modular construction. Unit 3 will be a lifetime home, utilising the basement and third floor to allow the home to grow and adapt with the family. Unit 4 will include the use of wireless control technology.

All four homes will be retained by Persimmon for up to the first two years of their lifetime to enable the various technologies to be monitored and assessed by the company and its partners, with feedback from the occupants helping to determine each home's success.

John White, Chief Executive, Persimmon Plc said: "As the UK's leading home builders, we recognise our responsibility and ability, to help shape the wider community and the environment for the benefit of all. We are committed to creating balanced communities that meet the needs of today's modern homebuyer and, working with our partners, we hope to drive positive change through our industry.

"This project is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the wider sustainability agenda and we will be involving a broad range of audiences to help shape where we go from here. We build more houses than anyone and the specification that we include within them can rapidly become the standard expectation of consumers. Due to the volume of homes in question, we see these specifications becoming more economically viable more quickly thereby dramatically speeding up the rate of adoption across the industry."

### **Pentland gets flexible**

Kent based Pentland Homes has introduced an innovative flexible interior treatment (FIT) at two developments with buyers able to choose room layout and finish, both when they buy the property and, if they wish, at a later date during their occupancy.

"It's as close as you can get to designing you own home," commented one Pentland buyer, having experienced the benefits of the scheme.

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## MODERN LIFESTYLES ARE SHAPING MODERN HOMES/5...

A purchaser might, for example, decide to have a large, open-plan kitchen on the ground floor to start with, and then move the kitchen upstairs and turn the ground floor area into a home office or dining area later on.

Martin Hart, managing director of Pentland Homes, explains the benefits of the scheme: "Most people looking for a new-build home soon realize that there's no such thing as a perfect plot or the perfect property and they will have to compromise somewhere along the line to get the home they want. With our FIT scheme, they have an opportunity to influence how their property looks and feels to create interiors which really suit their needs."

For further details of the homes offered by the developers named please contact:

David Wilson Homes contact Dianne Page on 0121 713 3784

Persimmon Homes on 08459 10 10 11

Pentland Homes contact Carol Vale on 0845 634 7111

**-ends-**

To find a property in your area visit [www.new-homes.co.uk](http://www.new-homes.co.uk), the no. 1 website dedicated solely to advertising new homes.

**MEDIA INFORMATION:** we have case studies across the UK so please call for one specific to your area. All featured case studies and supporting pictures are available to download at [www.new-homes.co.uk/nhw](http://www.new-homes.co.uk/nhw) (media & public zone).

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