

Article published in Self Build Homes – Essential Guide 2013

Also see <http://free.yudu.com/item/details/647621/Self-Build---Essential-Guide-2013>



Doing away with myths about timber houses

By Barbara Fischer-Clark, Stommel Haus UK

Our clients are often confronted with myths about timber houses and the prejudice of friends or family when deciding to build a contemporary timber house.

“A timber house – won’t that look like a log cabin or garden shed?” is what our client from Leicestershire heard from a friend. Do you think that these houses look like log cabins or sheds?

twist. Timber which is not painted weathers with time and the silver grey, which looks so attractive on our deckchairs, looks old and worn on big surfaces. However, if treated properly, timber houses do look beautiful at all times. Whether you like a woodstain or a more colourful exterior, Stommel Haus homes are painted with high quality, durable open porous paint. The main difference however is that our homes are not built with thin cladding but with solid 50mm thick heartwood polar spruce.

There are no limits to architecture and style when building a modern timber house. The experience of decades of working with wood combined with the creative imagination of architects and clients speaks volumes. There are no grids or patterns in a Stommel Haus limiting the creativity of architects and designers.

“Aren’t you worried about the lifetime of a timber house?”

Well built timber houses have an almost unlimited lifetime as long as they are not standing in water for extended periods. Using high quality wood and constructive wood protection, skilled craftsmen set the timber house on a base well above the wet soil. The bottom part of the house must be kept dry which is easily achieved by applying some simple rules when building paths, driveways and patios.

There are countless examples of timber houses and timber frame houses built centuries ago, for example in the UK, Germany, Scandinavia, Austria, Switzerland and Japan which are still standing strong today.

“Do you think a timber house is solid and warm enough?”

This question can certainly be answered with a clear YES when looking at high quality timber houses. Wood has a much better thermal insulation than stone. The SAP energy cost in a 3 to 4 bedroom Stommel house is around £430 per year!

“How do you stop your timber house from looking shabby?”

When looking around at timber clad houses they often look shabby due to the use of thin boards which buckle and



“What about the fire insurance?” One of the major prejudices against timber houses is the fear of fire. Timber houses like any other house in the UK have to be built according to building regulations. A timber house does not catch fire easily, on the contrary, when 50mm thick solid and dense wood is exposed to fire it initially gets more difficult to burn as it chars and the fire then has little sustenance to continue burning. Fire tests using gas flames onto solid timber walls with 600°C show that after 35 minutes only the first 5mm to 10mm have charred; the wall does not burn.

The fire insurance for a high quality timber house built by a premium manufacturer with the appropriate certification is not more expensive than for a non-timber house.

“What about a mortgage for a timber house? What about the resale value?”

Finding a mortgage lender in this day and age is a challenge for most of us. Mortgage lenders should not have any problem with a premium timber house built from top quality materials to the highest standards. So far we were able to find mortgage lenders for our clients and the premiums are not higher than for other types of construction. The advantage of a pre-fabricated, high quality German timber house is the security for both, client and mortgage lender, of an on-time and in-budget finish.

The resale value of a very energy efficient timber house with SAP certification, with triple glazing, state-of-the-art heating system, under-floor heating on all storeys, plus top quality fittings should be high and a Stommel Haus home is a very sound investment.

Owners enjoy the healthy atmosphere, low maintenance and low energy costs; Stommel Haus owners do not typically want to move or part with their bespoke homes.

German manufacturers have done a lot in successfully educating the public about the benefits of wood construction. With energy costs rising dramatically and with most people more conscious about a healthy lifestyle, timber houses are becoming increasingly interesting to consumers; and the myths about timber houses are slowly dying out.