

the Weston

HOME & LIFESTYLE | ISSUE 01



**Live the Weston
Life and Style**

Bob Weston:
An interview with the man
who builds with passion

Small details big ideas:
The Weston difference



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Contents



EDITOR'S LETTER



SMALL DETAILS BIG IDEAS



COLOUR MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE



MEET BOB WESTON, THE MAN BEHIND THE BRAND



BE ON TREND



WESTON HOMES ARE A SUPER-TECH SMARTY



HOUSE PLANTS: BRING THE OUTSIDE IN



GUN HILL PARK: RESTORING OUR HERITAGE



OUR HOME: JUST MARRIED AND LIVING THE DREAM



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WHERE TO SHOP & HOW TO BUY FOR YOUR NEW HOME



BIG IDEAS FOR SMALL GARDENS

Editor's letter



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Janice Morley
Editor, The Weston

Welcome to the first edition of The Weston Magazine. Our opportunity to throw open the doors of Weston Homes and welcome you, in a profile on page 14, to meet Bob, the chairman, his son, Shaun and his daughter, Claire who both work in the business. The three of them are a very passionate trio who are totally dedicated to the work of producing the highest quality homes.

We will show you round their fabulous, high tech factory to give you a flavour of their company's on-trend philosophy, in tune with global warming in the article on car-free living, (page 42), and inspire you with interior decorating ideas for your new home (page 20). Their generous choices of colours of tiles, carpets, kitchens and flooring are all available for you to make your new home your own.

We know how hard it is for you to save for a deposit to buy your new home, which is why Bob, a guy who began with very little, believes in giving you the very best for no extra cost, and offers a first time buyer scheme that will enable you to buy more easily.

The prices, attractive to first-time buyers, include instant boiling and cold filtered water taps in the kitchen, temperature controlled Smart taps in luxurious, fitted bathrooms, carpets in all bedrooms as well as designer wardrobes in your main bedroom.

Knowing how we all like private outside space, there is almost always a balcony with our apartments. There is also plenty of light and space because Weston Homes install in-built emergency sprinklers, which enable the architects to create fabulous open plan spaces which still comply with regulations, whilst taking away the need for light-blocking corridors inside the apartments.

And now we are in a New Chapter – life post Covid – when many of you have made major life changing decisions to move out of cities into rural areas and suburban environments – Weston Homes has made your home search easier. The Weston philosophy is commuter friendly, whether you are going to walk to work, jump on your bike or take a train.

Weston Homes are built close to towns, a cappuccino and a pint of milk, and above all – a station. This way you will not have to pay for parking, and most important of all when you return home from your office meetings you will not have to walk very far before you can put YOUR key in YOUR door.

And that's what it is all about. ✕

The Editor
Janice Morley



SMALL DETAILS

BIG IDEAS

Top tech and a modern spec
By Barbara Chandler

Weston Homes is on a mission to deliver high-design homes for all, at reasonable prices, and recently invested £12 million to make it happen, building a huge, state-of-the-art “logistics centre” in Braintree, Essex.

This complex of hi-tech workshops, warehouses and offices – designed by architects and engineers and borrowing futuristic ideas from the car-making industry to meet a very specific set of needs – is run by Bob Weston’s son, Shaun, a man obsessed with technical innovation and possessing a super-keen eye for detail.

“And we can do it, because what we cannot make, we source. Goods from all over the world, we buy in bulk, and hold them in our own warehouse.” He notes that a final Weston price for a complete home is always all-in: “Everything you see, you get – no dispiriting add-ons.”

Customer choices for their fitted kitchen worktops, bathroom cabinets and bedroom wardrobes are made at the factory and checked for quality, including testing taps and showers. They are then delivered as complete units, needing minimal installation, which again reduces damage and speeds construction.

Bathrooms have carefully designed vanity units to squeeze storage out of every nook and cranny – “because small homes can have just as many beauty and cleaning products as large ones”. Bedrooms have built-in wardrobes with mirrored sliding doors, to make the most of space.

There is storage for many items needed to kit out a new home including flooring, wall tiles, kitchen and bathroom components, cladding, panelling, paving and more. Bulk deliveries can be unloaded, computer-coded and stored quickly and safely in as little as 15 minutes, compared to an average of three hours using a previous system. Waste from transit and storage damage to glass, marble and stone has been dramatically reduced.

‘EVERYTHING YOU SEE, YOU GET’

This enables the economies of scale that can bring Weston Homes buyers luxurious materials to every home. “Everything in the home that you touch, that you feel – we want it to have that sense of quality,” says Shaun.

“**EVERYTHING IN THE HOME THAT YOU TOUCH, THAT YOU FEEL – WE WANT IT TO HAVE THAT SENSE OF QUALITY, AND WE CAN DO IT.**”





“
**WE’RE CREATING
A FEELING OF PLACE.
WE’RE MAKING HOMES,
NOT UNITS. PLACES FOR
PARTNERS, PARENTS,
CHILDREN, FRIENDS
AND NEIGHBOURS TO
MINGLE AND BE HAPPY.**

”

‘THE HOMEOWNER IS AT THE HEART OF WESTON’

“Our owners are at the heart of the Weston design ethos. We always start with a blank sheet and a clear mindset,” Steve Hatton, Weston Homes’ Design Director explains. “We’re creating a feeling of place. We’re making homes, not units. Places for partners, parents, children, friends and neighbours to mingle and be happy. And we start right at the beginning with every single project – though of course we benefit from experience.”

The way a home will be used is imagined in every detail. “How do you walk through the garden to your front door? Then you come in, so where do you put your keys and hang up your coat? What are the first things you see? What are the views from your window?”

Important details, because halls and corridors are giving way to open plan, to make more space. This is made possible by new hi-tech sprinkler systems that Weston Homes install to take care of fire regulations and, more importantly, give you peace of mind.

‘A DIGITAL CLOCK KEEPS YOUR LIFE ON TIME...’

The Weston Homes’ user experience is “souped-up” by top tech. There are sleek digital controls for taps and showers, and mist-free bathroom mirrors with digital clocks. “How people love that little clock,” says Steve. “It’s just a tiny touch but keeps your life on time.”

Kitchens are fitted with a boiling water tap that also delivers filtered drinking water: “Quick cuppa, cuts clutter.” Sink tops have a nicely weighted, built-in chopping board, plus an integrated soap dispenser.



‘OUTSIDE SPACE FOR ALL’

The pandemic has moved outdoor space to the top of many buyers’ wish lists and most Weston homes have a private balcony or terrace – “it’s actually something we’ve been doing for years.” There are usually extensive communal landscaped areas, too.

‘WE BUILD WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO LIVE IN OURSELVES’

Steve Hatton’s design team is versatile and flexible. “We deliver a huge range of layouts and price points. We’ll take on challenges other people reject. We do high-rise schemes and low-rise schemes, conversions of listed buildings and makeovers for offices. But we won’t compromise on the product or the customer experience. The result has to be something we, or a family member, would like to live in ourselves. The company’s core values have been constant – providing affordable, expertly crafted homes that enrich their communities.”

‘DESIGNED TO LAST’

So let’s give Bob Weston the last word: “We’re proudly different from so many other new developers.

We’re building affordable, high-quality, personalised new homes for people, for individuals. Thoughtful homes. Homes designed to last. Homes for life.” ✕





COLOUR MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Article by Joa Studholme,
Farrow & Ball

There is nothing so exciting as moving into a new home and decorating it to your own taste. **Joa Studholme**, colour curator for environmentally friendly paint and wallpaper maker Farrow & Ball, has worked with Weston Homes to bring you expert advice on how to create the perfect look and feel.

When it comes to choosing colours for rooms, you need to consider more than just the aspect and light condition, although they are of course crucially important. The choice of colour for the woodwork and the ceiling is just as important as that of the walls – you must think of the room as a whole. A bright white on either ceiling or trim will make the walls look darker, as well as making you more aware of where the walls end and the ceiling begins, causing the ceiling height to “drop”. Consider using something with the same base colours as the walls – listed on the Farrow & Ball website.

The quality of the light will change how you perceive the colour. So you need to think about what time of day you will use the space, as well as whether it faces north, south, east or west.

Light is your friend when it comes to decorating, so do not fight what Nature has given you. Large, light rooms are best suited to lighter tones while stronger colours bring small, dark rooms to life. Most importantly, choose something that you feel comfortable with. There are no rules.

“

Large, light rooms are best suited to lighter tones while stronger colours bring small, dark rooms to life.

”



If you are decorating a room you use only at night, then you can afford to choose a much stronger colour that will create an intimate, cosy space, as it will be artificially lit anyway. Rooms you work in during the day will probably benefit from being kept light; you still need to consider whether the space would benefit from warm undertones, or if you want to embrace cool light.

South-facing rooms are often the easiest to decorate as they are filled with warm light for most of the day. Pale, soft tones such as Cromarty, Pink Ground, Hay or Skimmed Milk White will maximise the feeling of light and space, while the slightly stronger Blue Gray, Setting Plaster, Sudbury Yellow and Bone will all glow in south light.

North-facing rooms tend to bring out the green in all colours. If you want to avoid this, look to warm-based neutrals such as Jitney, Oxford Stone or Stony Ground.

Alternatively, embrace the cooler north light by using stronger tones, including Sulking Room Pink, Brassica or Banacha. Deeply saturated colours are perfect for use in north-facing rooms.

Choosing colour for an east-or west-facing room is totally dependent on what time of day you use the space. Light in east-facing rooms tends to be cooler in the evening and brighter in the morning. In west-facing rooms it is the other way round. So, if you are lucky enough to have a room that benefits from both east and west light, the colour will change throughout the day - making the walls feel alive.

East-facing rooms tend to benefit from soft, calming colours with an underlying warmth, such as Peignoir or Pale Powder, while using cooler tones like Cornforth White and Dimpse in west-facing rooms will neutralise the warm light at the end of the day. ✦

Farrow & Ball In-Home Colour Consultation – £195 per hour

Farrow & Ball In-Home Online Colour Consultation – £130 per hour

To book please visit [farrow-ball.com/colour-consultancy](https://www.farrow-ball.com/colour-consultancy)

Colour consultations are also available with Joa Studholme, Colour Curator and author of Farrow & Ball titles including *Recipes for Decorating* and *How to Decorate*. £250 per hour for an online or in-home appointment. To book, please email joa@joastudholme.com



Colour thoughts for room aspects

– please note the two colour suggestions are not to be used in combination

SOUTH-FACING ROOMS

Neutrals – School House White and Shaded White create a soft, “shaded” feeling.

Blues – Parma Gray and Stone Blue are clean blues that work well in south light.

Reds – try Crimson Red or Cinder Rose – better to keep to reds with an underlying pink which will be less harsh in southern light.

Greens – Yeabridge Green and Vardo are joyous and uncomplicated.

Yellows – Babouche and Citron are delightfully sunny and uplifting.

Darks – go for Stiffkey Blue or Studio Green (though I tend not to use darks in a south-facing space).

NORTH-FACING ROOMS

Neutrals – Joa’s White and Matchstick are traditional but will warm the space.

Blues – Oval Room Blue and De Nimes create fabulous, dramatic spaces.

Reds – Calamine or Radicchio. You need a bit of punch in north light.

Greens – Green Smoke and Sap Green feel earthy and connected to the natural world in north-facing rooms.

Yellows – Tallow and Dayroom Yellow are magical for bouncing any available light around.

Darks – Inchyra Blue and Tanners Brown are glamorous and sophisticated in north light.

WEST-FACING ROOMS

Totally dependent on when you use the room

Neutrals – Ammonite and Wevet are so delicate that they become almost translucent.

Blues – choose Borrowed Light for a fresh look, or Mizzle if you want to be more mellow.

Reds – Red Earth and Picture Gallery Red, terracotta works particularly well in the ever-changing west light.

Greens – Lichen and Card Room Green both come alive in west light.

Yellows – Farrow’s Cream and Dorset Cream will positively glow in the evening and still be welcoming in the morning.

Darks – Salon Drab and Mouse’s Back will both feel muted in the morning, brown in the day and rich in the evening.

EAST-FACING ROOMS

Totally dependent on when you use the room

Neutrals – Slipper Satin and Off White look like they have been there forever, although they’ll read richer in morning light.

Blues – Pigeon and Mizzle are soft and mellow in east light.

Reds – Setting Plaster and Dead Salmon will look soft and muted.

Greens – French Gray and Treron give a soft and moody feel.

Yellows – India Yellow and Sudbury Yellow are moody and traditional in feel.

Darks – London Clay and Paean Black keep it moody and uncertain.



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DEVELOPING HOMES DIFFERENTLY

HOUSES HAVE TO BE FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Janice Morley meets Bob Weston

BOTH OF BOB'S CHILDREN ARE PART OF THE WESTON HOMES TEAM



HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Bob has spent his life building homes for other people, to give buyers stability which is ironic as he grew up moving home regularly himself – his father, an RAF radar operative, was involved in the Cold War mission to keep track of Russian activity. Bob, his two sisters and their brother were moved around every two years when their father’s posting changed.

Aged 16, Bob left Haverhill secondary modern school in Suffolk for technical college, where he met his teacher and mentor, Harry Meekings. Harry’s passion for carpentry, technical training, creative thinking and problem solving inspired the teenage Bob, who graduated as an electrical engineer and landed his first job with residential developer and homebuilder Fairview, involved in London and the South-East.

Within 12 years Bob had moved from trainee in construction management to Construction Director. Then at 32, when he could have remained in his steady, senior job, he left to strike out on his own.

He swapped his luxurious company car for a pick-up truck and converted the room above his home garage into an office. He was married to Jackie. They had baby Claire, six months, the first of their two children... and no salary coming in. “For the first hour on the first day of my independent life, I sat there thinking, What have I done?” Bob recalls. “Then I started looking for building plots. I found three, hired a digger and bought the land.” Bob still loves a digger. That day he dug a ditch for an access road and with hired help, went on to build three houses.

Six years later, he moved into his first proper offices to run Weston Homes.

FAST FORWARD TO TODAY

Thirty four years later, Bob is a huge success story. And he has earned all the rewards, including a newly converted house in Essex, complete with a pristine stable of classic cars. His absolute favourites are his Reliant Robins. For 10 years there has been a Reliant Robin Continental Rally, in which he shares the laughs with his equally car-mad son, Shaun. His mates are important to him. His golf holiday with 12 long-standing friends is an annual event: a 30-year tradition and Bob plays for pleasure, saying he is not a club competitions man.

Both Bob’s children have engineering degrees and work in the company. Claire, his eldest, worked in IT policing investment bank security before joining Weston Homes 4 years ago as their Compliance Officer.



Shaun runs the Weston Homes high tech, super streamlined new factory creating many of the homes' units and fittings. Bob is immensely proud of his children, who have inherited his work ethic and demands for the highest quality.

Building sites are his second home. He will take his partner Tatiana for a drive on a Sunday to visit one, and site plans are his bedtime reading, especially if there is a problem to solve. He will pore over a site plan with as much relish as he will a good menu and a fine wine list.

From his first-floor boardroom in his contemporary new offices in Stansted, Essex he runs his £300 million company. There are gyms with freshly laundered towels provided daily for the staff,

who tend to stay with the company for years. And the annual staff family fun day each summer in his garden is legendary.

Weston Homes has a well-deserved reputation for providing sustainable, high-quality apartments and houses at remarkably reasonable prices. Bob has thousands of properties under construction but quality control is important to him.

He can crack a problem on a tricky site that other developers would not touch, and relishes the challenge of saving a majestic listed building to give it a new life as new homes.

He sees the sense in building near transport links and a town centre, reasoning that modern, busy people want convenience and cycle racks – and commuters do not like

paying for parking. He has spent millions on a hi-tech, precision-build factory to control and check various components for installation into the properties, which in turn means all buyers of a Weston Homes two-bedroom flat, for example, get a lot of luxury for their money.

With working from home to some degree set to continue for many people, first-time buyers are moving further out of London to areas where they can get more property for their money. In Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, Weston Homes is currently selling two bedroom apartments for less than £300,000. "Buyers should be getting value for money. Money is hard to come by," Bob insists. ✕



“
**HIS PASSION FOR
 REBUILDING CARS IS
 EQUAL TO HIS PASSION
 FOR BUILDING HOMES**
 ”



Q & A

Q: Do you set yourself goals?

A: Small goals. I take small bites. Big dreams can be expensive mistakes.

Q: How has building homes changed since you started the company?

A: Building homes has become a complex business, with multiple interested parties with differing opinions. The red tape is now wider and longer. As part of the planning process we always price good initiatives for the community – build a school, renovate a church, build a car park or develop a culture club but if one group does not like the overall plan, it can all get thrown out which can be really disappointing.

Q: You enjoy a challenge, don't you?

A: Yes, I like solving problems. I know I can take an unloved, derelict, historic building that no-one else will touch and transform it into stunning new homes, at the same time as preserving its heritage and glorious facade.

Q: Buyers are really impressed with what they get thrown in for the asking price when they buy a Weston Home: hi-tech bathroom fittings such as temperature-controlled, water-saving taps and steam-free mirrors; kitchens with instant boiling water taps, quartz stone worktops and seamless surfaces, even hidden washing-up liquid dispenser holders and built-in

chopping boards. Plus fitted bedroom wardrobes, carpets and a big range of on-trend colour schemes to choose from, for everything from tiles to floor coverings. How – and why – do you do it?

A: I give value for money. I like quality in my own life. I don't like bad workmanship. Last weekend I couldn't find the garden chairs I wanted at the right price, so I made some in my workshop at home and saved myself a fortune!

Q: How do you achieve best value?

A: When I could not get the quality at the right price I built a factory to make our own components. My son Shaun runs it. What we have learnt is that parts made in our factory are quality controlled; parts lying around on a building site may not be; they're vulnerable to being ruined by weather, can get damaged, and there is far more waste. Now we in-source everything we can. Our factory has daylight lighting, is warm and organised and there is constant quality control. We only cut and make what we need.

Q: When it was all running smoothly you were hit by lockdown. How did you cope?

A: Drama is part of our lives. When we had the recession, we thought that would bring us down. Lockdown had so many more possible scenarios where it could all fall apart. Sites were shut, overseas construction workers went home, then needed to get back. Sales suites were closed. We had a lot of meetings in the boardroom as we went from one drama to the next. But we are now in a strong position.

Q: Which car are you driving home tonight?

A: An electricity-driven Porsche. I like to embrace new technology.

Bob Weston parks his Porsche in his garage next to a bright yellow vintage Post Office van. You could say that, in a way, it sums up his life's journey. ✂

BE ON TREND AND BE CREATIVE WITH THE WESTON HOMES COLOUR PALETTE



By Felicity Stevens of Haus Interiors, show home interior designer for Victoria Central, the new Weston Homes apartment scheme in Southend-on-Sea.

There is so much to think about when it comes to interior decorating your own home – no wonder so many of us resort to white walls and neutral tones. But a new home is your chance to be brave and stamp your personality on your property.

Weston Homes encourages you to do this with a palette of colour and materials that takes note of developing and current interiors trends. This home builder is able to offer an extensive range of high-quality kitchen, bathroom and flooring choices, enabling every Weston Homes buyer to mix and match, and develop their own look.

So, where should you start when it comes to interior decorating every room in a brand-new home?

Organisation is key to pulling a scheme together. Weston Homes offers a well-lit, spacious area in its sales offices, with large sample boards of tiles both matt and glossy, carpets and so on, so that you can take your time to put colour schemes together. There is also the show home to offer inspiration if you start to play it too safe.



THE SCHEMES

To give you the confidence to select your own Weston Homes kitchen and bathroom fixtures and flooring finishes, I have designed three schemes using the company's available choices, with different styles, trends and personalities in mind.

EXPERT TIPS:

- Trust your gut. Don't overthink how things will blend and work together. If you love something instantly, you won't fall out of love with it quickly.
- This is your chance for a new look – so try not to consider your current interior décor, or whether pieces from your old home could work in your new place. Maybe it is time to move on and sell your old sofa, or those colourful dining chairs.
- Choose with your lifestyle in mind. Practicality is always important, and if you're not a huge fan of cleaning, then matt and darker finishes could be your best friends.
- Layer your choices together in a mood board to create the bigger picture. This is how we design our schemes in my studio, and it works really well.

SCHEME ONE – TIMELESS ELEGANCE

Designed for an individual who wants to create a calming and homely interior.

I named this scheme Timeless Elegance because it captures a combination of traditional British influences and timeless finishes. The Shaker-style door in Partridge Grey is paired with the Blanco Maple quartz worktop, an attractive lighter contrast which creates a fresh and neutral palette. The Light Grey wooden floor is the perfect match for this kitchen due to its cooler tone.

I would style this elegant kitchen with mango wood chopping boards, bunches of fresh herbs, and textured tea towels. Elements that warm up its cool tones will work really well, such as ceramics in earthy shades – no shiny white bone china. Hand-thrown mugs would contrast nicely against the luxurious, glossy worktop.

The Sandstone carpet complements the neutral tones within the scheme, and will be a cosy addition to the colour palette. I try to avoid going “too grey” when it comes to designing interiors. But if you love grey, then it's important to show this off by using warmer, contrasting colours to create interest and layers within your home.



Kitchen
Shaker – Milbourne
Partridge Grey
Blanco
Maple (white)
worktop
Light grey
wooden floor

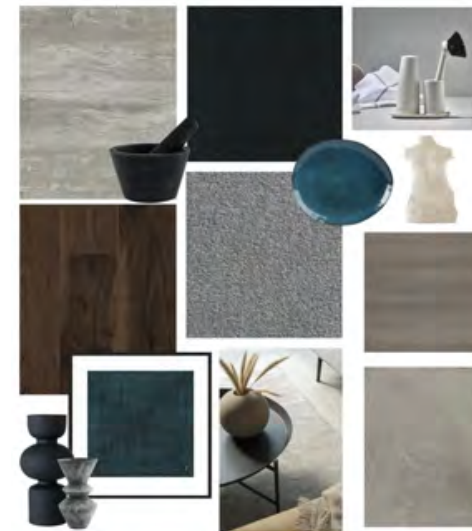
Handle – H060.192.BN
Bathroom
Vanity unit and tiles
– Champagne
Carpet
Wembley 472
Sandstone

SCHEME TWO – TAILORED CHIC

A contemporary scheme with European influences, deep and dramatic, for someone who wants to make an impact using clean lines and darker colours

With a slightly more masculine look, I see the Tailored Chic scheme as being suitable for someone who has a busy, mess-free lifestyle. It's practical and smart, with a design-led approach. In the kitchen, the dark Walnut flooring and black worktop is broken up by the grey doors, which I have left handle-less for a sleek and fuss-free finish. Uncluttered surfaces will work well in this kitchen, but key sculptural pieces in monochrome colours will really stand out.

The Steel Grey carpet will contrast well against the dark wooden flooring, and cool down the warm tones in the wood. Due to the monochrome nature of this scheme, introducing colours such as petrol blues, teals and even burnt orange will complement this almost “urban” style of interior.



Kitchen
Legno Steel
Black Tebas worktop
Walnut (New) floor

Bathroom
Vanity unit and tiles
– Urbano
Carpet
Wembley 76 Steel

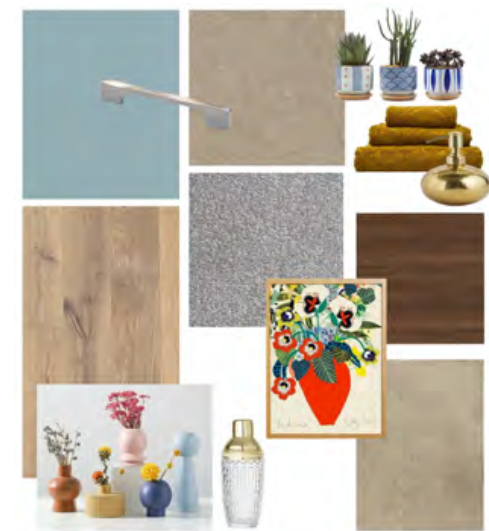
SCHEME THREE – BOLD AND BRAVE

A bold scheme for those of us who aren't afraid of colour, warmth and fun. This brave combination of finishes and styles is perfect for an individual with a varied taste in interiors.

This scheme is the perfect combination canvas that can be built up and developed into a stunning, eclectic interior. The mix of woods, twisted handles and blue kitchen doors is a nod to a relaxed and unstaged look.

Putting your own creative stamp on this interior couldn't be easier. Introducing a variety of colourful accessories and collections of thought-provoking artwork are great ways to add your personality in this home. I wouldn't be afraid of clashing colours, as the more you go for it, the more coherent the interior will become.

A Silver-grey carpet is the perfect backdrop for a colourful bed frame and patterned bed linen, while the Walnut vanity units in the wet rooms will be a great base for introducing brass accessories and flocked towels. ✕



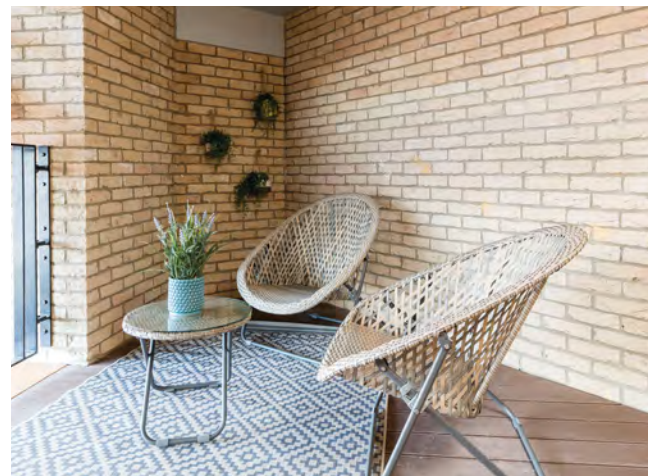
Kitchen
Slab – High-Gloss
Denim
Black Tebas worktop
Oak (New) floor
Handle – H081.128.BN

Bathroom
Vanity unit and tiles
– Foresta
Carpet
Wembley 273 Silver

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“
**TECH FOR THE
 BATHROOM ENHANCES
 YOUR LIFE**
 ”

WESTON HOMES ARE A SUPER-TECH SMARTY

By Barbara Chandler

Precisely calibrated heating controls save energy and money – once you’ve got your head round the instructions. Then come the smart appliances: super-fast, super-eco washing machines and ovens with infinite programmes; fridges that can automatically reorder your food. A lot of this is a digital overdose we find we don’t really need, don’t particularly want – and then don’t use anyway.

BUT... the Weston Homes smart bathroom really is a big and beautiful modern boon. Tech for the bathroom enhances your life and helps it run smoothly – so Weston Homes has given this a lot of thought.

The Weston Homes temperature-controlled tap is a winner with home buyers and also with bathroom industry expert Robin Levien, a Royal Designer for Industry for nearly 30 years. Levien invented many industry firsts, including corner loo cisterns, corner basins and the shower-bath – all fabulous space savers.

“When I started, the smartest thing you could have was a dimmer switch – still actually a good idea,” he says. Now he reckons it’s digital temperature controls that have revolutionised the bathroom, “because a comfortable, constant water temperature is top priority, which is what digital delivers par excellence.



You save energy and water, too.” Forget knobs and levers. Weston Homes digital shower controls have a neat little touch screen on which you simply tap a temperature, which is then saved until you change it. You can also set the flow of water, from a gentle shower to a full “downpour”, and add a water-saving time limit.

Typically, with just another tap of the touch screen, you can divert the water from overhead to a side bar with body-buffing jets, or to a hand spray that’s particularly useful for washing children (and dogs!). You can fill the bath from the same control, and there’s automatic protection from overheating. The whole set-up is smooth and streamlined. Unlike a conventional unit, water is mixed in a hidden box, separated from the controls.

Washbasins share the same technology, with a touchpad for temperature and water flow, again remembered for next time. You can also quickly check the time and date. In all cases, cleaning is easy – no rubbing round taps and into fiddly crevices, or buffing up the chrome.



“

THE DIGITAL BATHROOM MIRROR FROM WESTON HOMES GETS FULL MARKS. IT ALSO TELLS THE TIME, BUT BEST OF ALL IT NEVER MISTS UP.

”



The digital “shower toilet” is a Japanese fetish invented over 20 years ago. It’s basically a souped-up bidet, with tepid water jets, warm air, and an automatic flush that can kick into action when least expected.

However, a recent survey showed that people are actually more concerned about cleaning the lavatory than themselves. And in this respect a pretty practical idea is the newer mode of “rimless” pan introduced by Weston Homes to every house and apartment, with a completely smooth inside and a strong, swishing flush to whisk everything away, including any lingering limescale.

A comfortable, ergonomic design is also crucial. A poll of 2,000 adults found that Brits spend twice as long sitting on the loo each week (an average of three hours and nine minutes) as they do on “moderate” exercise (just 90 minutes of fast walking or riding a bike).

The digital bathroom mirror from Weston Homes gets full marks. It also tells the time, but best of all it never mists up and with its integrated LED lighting, it’s always ready when you want to shave or do your make-up.

If you are super-hungry for tech, there is always plenty at CES – the Consumer Electronics Show. This annual international trade beano showcases savvy tech that’s as glitzy as the event’s Las Vegas venue.

Designs are either wildly futuristic and extremely expensive or simply prototypes. Accordingly, a stand-alone tub for “forest bathing” comes with sweet scents, sounds and fog. Meanwhile, mirrors double up as screens to check emails and Instagram. A Bluetooth-activated robot is programmed to bring you loo paper, and a smell sensor checks in advance that the air is sweet.

You can have a bathroom mat that will weigh you, calculate your body mass index and, if necessary, suggest a change of lifestyle to get you healthier, while a skincare device will deliver customised formulas for creams, foundation and lipstick, using photos and Artificial Intelligence.

Another sophisticated bathroom gizmo takes your blood pressure and monitors your heartbeat. Of course, apps control almost everything. Just don’t lose your phone. ✂

HOUSE PLANTS

BRING THE OUTSIDE IN

Houseplants is such a humdrum name for a dazzling group of plants that have the ability to breathe fresh life into a home, making a sterile space warm and welcoming. And if you don't have a garden, they're a great way of bringing the outdoors inside. With the right kind of greenery, you could turn your living room into a tropical paradise, minus the parakeets; hang wide bowls of lacy-leaved Maidenhair Ferns from the bathroom ceiling; range diverse succulents, in all their intriguing shapes and textures, along a shelf, sill or tabletop; or transform a bland corner with a floor-to-ceiling Moss Pole smothered with greenery, like a living green sculpture.

As a bonus, greening up your home will improve the air quality as well as lower your stress levels.



The key is to use plants to decorate particular spaces. If you want to add a touch of greenery without blocking out the light – or the furniture – choose a palm such as a Kentia Palm or finer-leaved Butterfly Palm, to provide an elegant cascade of foliage with a touch of colonial splendour. Placing two or three along doors leading to a garden or balcony will satisfyingly link the inside space with the greenery beyond.

Invest in a big and beautiful statement plant to fill a space such as an empty fireplace, or to make a central feature on top of a coffee table. Calatheas are a truly exotic choice, providing velvety, paddle-like foliage in stripey shades of green

with smoky plum undersides. Monstera, the trad Swiss Cheese Plant, has become an instagram hit and with its outsize, famously geometric leaves, adds a cool, contemporary feel to any space. For the ultimate talking point, however, bring in a fabulous ZZ plant, native of Zanzibar and in the last few years, widely available. The long, thick stems, laden with glossy leaves, arch outwards so sturdily that they look as if they have sprung out of their container. As a bonus, ZZ is drought-happy and hard to kill.

An empty corner is a direct invitation for some vertical greenery. A Fiddle-Leafed Fig, with its outsize, upright-growing foliage like giant

cabbage leaves, is a novel choice, while a Climbing Philodendron or gold-splashed Devil's Ivy, more usually growing up the trunks of tall trees in Asian forests but growing up a tall Moss Pole in your living room, will take up little space. All will thrive in low light levels. The Madagascar Dragon Tree, Dracaena, and the low-maintenance Yucca are great indoor substitutes for outdoor Palm Trees.

Place it on a pedestal or small side table, and Mother-In-Law's Tongue, with its variegated, sword-like foliage, makes a striking vertical statement; it also claims the title of best plant for purifying the air.



Orchids



Maranta leuconeura

Try a trio of them grouped together to set a jungle vibe. Place them in good light, and they might well reward you with spires of creamy-white flowers.

Choose containers with care: even trails of simple Bird's Foot Ivy look charming when the plastic pot is encased in a pretty junk shop jardiniere.

Purple-Striped Tradescantia is a good choice, but for glamour, the Lipstick Vine, with tubular vermilion flowers at the end of the dangling, leafy stems, is unbeatable. Green as a backdrop has a calming effect in the home, but you could ramp up the atmosphere with colour splashes from Phalaenopsis Orchids, lemon and pink-flowered Kalanchoes and bright orange, trumpet-flowered Clivias. Or you could simply cheat, and tuck in faux sprays of Birds Of Paradise, Mimosa or Bougainvillea, completing the illusion with fragrance reeds of suitably exotic Tuberose or Frangipani. ✂

SOURCES:
beardsanddaisies.co.uk
crocus.co.uk
B & Q: diy.com
patchplants.com
hortology.co.uk

TIPS FOR HEALTHY HOUSEPLANTS

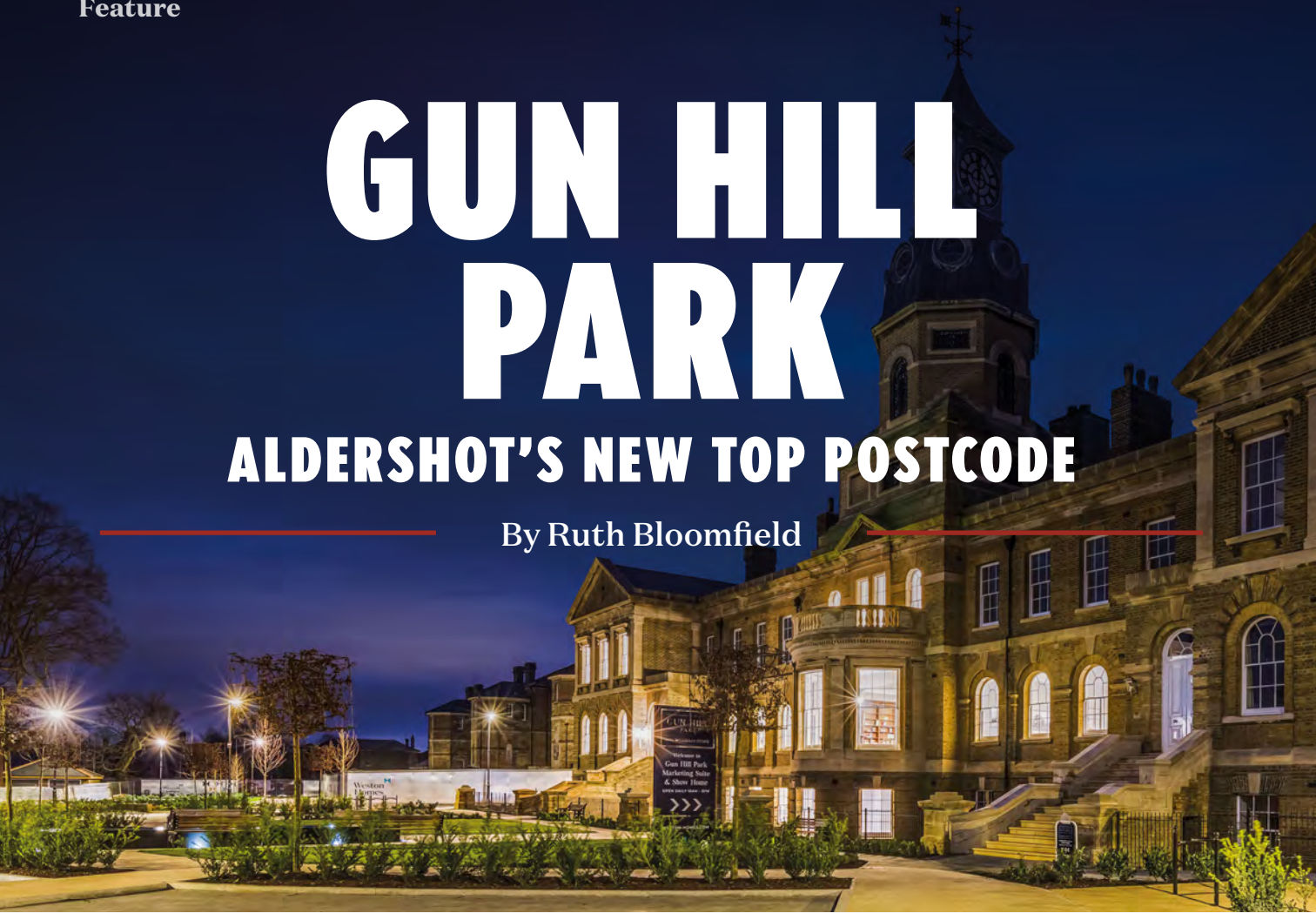
- Keep plants in their lightweight plastic pots so you can drop them into cachepots for displaying, yet lift them out for easy watering so that water can drain away in the sink
- Many houseplants are killed by overwatering. Only water when the top inch of soil feels dry; test with your finger
- Keep a water spray handy and spritz greenery frequently
- If you have outside space, give your houseplants a spa break by bringing them outdoors when the weather warms
- Make sure houseplants never stand in water as their roots will rot



GUN HILL PARK

ALDRSHOT'S NEW TOP POSTCODE

By Ruth Bloomfield



It was a heart-stopping moment when dusk fell and the lights went on at the newly renovated Cambridge Military Hospital in Aldershot, now known as Gun Hill Park. Derelict for so long, now the magnificent Victorian buildings glow and the landmark belltower pierces the skyline.

The hospital was back to help the community again – reborn as a collection of new apartments and mews homes.

People from around the area, many of them born in this hospital, came out to gaze at the handsome restoration of the Grade II-listed building, masterminded by Bob Weston, chairman and managing director of developer Weston Homes. As chandeliers sparkled through the wide period windows, one young mother said: “It just makes us all feel good. It’s so uplifting. We all feel we are sharing in it.”

Florence Nightingale, one the big influencers of the day when it came to hospital design, would have been proud. Perched above the town to provide maximum fresh air for patients, this strong stone landmark was built 150 years ago but in 1996, costly to run, it was closed and left to rot for a quarter of a century. Weston Homes’ project has rescued and restored a striking piece of this Hampshire town’s infrastructure.

Today, some of the apartments are finished trademark Weston Homes – high-quality design – and for sale, while the wider 12-acre site is alive with teams of workers busily transforming wings of this “grand old lady” into mews homes and more apartments, as part of the regeneration of 371 acres of former military land.

The project to recreate the hospital as the centrepiece of a new neighbourhood bigger than Hyde Park, and well over five times the size of central London’s King’s Cross regeneration zone, is an ambitious challenge that some developers decided against. But it was typical of Bob Weston to relish it – and to go the extra mile to add quality.



“

WESTON HOMES IS SPENDING £60 MILLION ON REVITALISING THE HOSPITAL SITE, WHICH WILL EVENTUALLY CONTAIN 97 APARTMENTS AND 43 HOUSES, CONVERTED AND NEW BUILD.

”

Weston Homes is spending £60 million on revitalising the hospital site, which will eventually contain 97 apartments and 43 houses, converted and new build. The homes will be set in landscaped gardens, with seating areas and paths plus a new fountain to replace one long ago demolished.

Weston’s finest architects, stonemasons and craftsmen have been brought in to tackle this painstaking scheme. Build manager Derek Cook oversees the project. It is a three-year project due to the extensive care and attention that is being lavished upon it.

“They are magnificent flats,” says Cook. “The windows are huge and the ceilings are up to three-and-a-half metres. Space and height are some of the joys of a period piece like this. It is very special.”


Aldershot welcomes this start to a new dawn. The Army put it on the map in the 1850s, arriving to set up a training camp. Aldershot’s population grew to serve the garrison.

The Army is still part of Aldershot life, its personnel assisting with the logistics of the Covid-19 vaccination programme. The garrison is vast. In 2011 the Ministry of Defence’s land management arm appointed developer Grainger to create thousands of homes and community facilities on surplus garrison land, extending the town, in one of the biggest regeneration projects in the whole of the South-East. By 2030 it will include new schools, local centres, leisure facilities and 4,500 homes, all surrounded by another 272 acres of woodland.



The military hospital will be very much the showpiece of the new neighbourhood, which has been named Wellesley as a nod to Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, who defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Up to 800 families already call Wellesley home and with the emphasis on nurturing community life, annual events will include a May fete and a Bonfire Night display.

Meanwhile, Aldershot is getting an upgrade, with the multimillion-pound redevelopment of two shopping centres, The Galleries and The Arcade, which will be replaced with smart new shops and restaurants, plus offices and flats, all ranged around a landscaped public square. Aron Lipschitz, head of acquisitions for developer Shaviram, confirmed that work on the site will start this year, with the aim of completing by 2025.

In nearby Union Street, Rushmoor council is spearheading plans for a brand-new high street with almost 24,000sq ft of space for shops and restaurants and dedicated areas for independent traders. Work began in February this year and the project will also include accommodation for students from the University for the Creative Arts, less than four miles away in Farnham. 



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PARK

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OUR HOME

JUST MARRIED AND LIVING THE DREAM

By Janice Morley

Macarena de la Vega Lopez and her partner, James Nicholson, are among the many London Covid-19 “evacuees”. Renting in Earl’s Court they worked full time in the capital – Macarena as a CBT psychotherapist and James as a sport scientist and sport massage therapist, until the pandemic forced them to rethink their lives.

Originally from Argentina, Macarena, 41, had family and friends in Spain who had heard of Covid long before the virus’s relentless march was fully recognised in Britain. She was already thinking that in a pandemic, a city was not a good place to be.

James, 40, hails from Ely in Cambridgeshire, where his mother and brothers still live, so he and Macarena started their search for a home to buy in bordering Suffolk. They found the perfect new-build two-bedroom apartment at Millers Quarter, a Weston Homes development in historic Bury St Edmunds, a cathedral town with great shops. The couple were planning to marry but like so many

others, they had set their date pre-Covid and were forced into a rethink. With restrictions in place, they decided to go ahead in October 2020 with a small celebration for 15 instead of 50, at Kensington & Chelsea Register Office and the Reception at the Eden Room, at The Ivy.

GREAT LINKS WITH LONDON

It was all change for this couple who, like so many Londoners for whom working from home is becoming an established way of life, were moving a long way out of the capital. However, they both still need to see their London clients. So they will be making the two-hour train journey from Bury St Edmunds to King’s Cross on at least some days in the week. And

for that, Millers Quarter offers a great plus – the homes are within view of the handsome Victorian station where trains link to the capital roughly every 30 minutes.

Importantly, James and Macarena’s spacious, third-floor, two-bedroom apartment is well under 30 miles away from family in Ely, and only a short walk from the amenities of Bury St Edmunds town centre. Macarena explains: “My family is in Argentina, so I was keen to be close to James’s family.”

PROVING HIGH-SPEC HOMES CAN BE KEENLY PRICED

Their new home came in at less than £300,000 – a sum that would not have bought comparable quality in London. Weston Homes developments are well known for



“
**WE ORIGINALLY
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 ”



their upgraded specifications and use of advanced technology; high-speed broadband, plenty of storage, plus deep bedroom carpets and a choice of colour packages for tiles and surfaces.

Macarena’s parents in Argentina are architects and her mother is also an artist. “So construction is in my blood,” she laughs. “We originally thought we would buy an old house and work on it. But then we found these apartments, just five minutes from the station.”

Their new home has presented them with one challenge – but it’s a nice challenge to have. Says Macarena: “You would think that it was not difficult working on the interior decorating of a new build. But actually it is very difficult, because it is perfect but not your own and you have to stamp your individuality on to it.”

The couple were very happy to be able to make colour scheme choices and were also impressed with the thoughtful design, including small points such as built-in washing-up liquid



dispensers – helping to keep kitchen worktops clutter free – and the easy-to-use boiling water tap that negates the need for a kettle.

Similarly in the bathroom, technologically temperature-controlled taps keep the water at a constant heat, cutting out

waste while you “run the tap” until it’s warm enough.

To all this, she began adding her own interior design style. “Because we have been in this lockdown and living through chaos, I wanted us to have a place that was calm. So it was going to have calm colours. All from Little Greene.

“
**THE WALLS WERE
 LIGHT GREY TO
 BLEND WITH THE
 WOODEN FLOOR
 COLOUR WE HAD
 CHOSEN**
 ”

The walls were light grey to blend with the wooden floor colour we had chosen. The curtains were natural linen from Ikea. Lighting was peaceful.” And a big tip from Macarena – mirrors were used strategically. “I majored on light and light reflection.”

The couple were keen to keep things sustainable so they bought a second-hand kitchen table and chairs. Macarena says: “I also bought two antique chairs and reupholstered them myself with online instructions.” With a fine eye for scale and colour, and inheriting her mother’s painterly eye, Macarena framed many of her and James’s most memorable wedding pictures.

There are also paintings by her mother, and Macarena bought two stunning, monotone line drawings of prancing horses, which hang above the sofa. Continuing her

careful accessorising and with her instinctive feel for the impact of oversizing, large, metal pendant lamps make a stylish statement above the kitchen table.

While colour is mainly controlled and soothing in this home, there are bright, textured props in multi-coloured woven bedroom cushions and in other rooms, too. “It is comfortable, and a mix of modern and antique in a way that suits us.” Macarena and James provide a lesson in enjoying all the good stuff of modern living, but in a heritage town. This blend of ancient and modern, with a big stamp of personality thrown in, says: “This is now our home.”

CAR-FREE EQUALS CAREFREE

By Ruth Bloomfield

Imagine a future without a car. No more tearing your hair out in long traffic jams – and you could kiss goodbye to surprise repair bills and parking tickets. Not to mention the prospect of cleaner air around you, and the healthier and more active lifestyle you would lead.

Weston Homes has seen this future, embracing the concept of car-free living at many of its town and city centre developments. And it has found clever ways to make freedom from four wheels an easy – even enjoyable – option.

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

We all know that cars are guilty of contributing to the global environmental crisis. The charity Environmental Protection UK says road transport is one of the biggest sources of pollution in Britain, as well as causing noise, disturbance, congestion and, ultimately, climate change.

Road transport accounts for almost a quarter of the UK's total carbon dioxide emissions, and most cars also pump carbon monoxide and other pollutants into the air, damaging the health of all those around you.

COMMUNITY COUNTS

Steve Hatton, planning and design director of Weston Homes, says communities feel the benefits of fewer vehicles on the road. Heavy traffic is, of course, a big pollutant outside your home and nobody wants to open their windows to the sound of roaring engines. We all noticed and loved the quiet roads and clean atmosphere during the lockdowns.

And being car free can bring us together. “If people are out on foot they will see their neighbours and bump into people, stop to chat,” adds Hatton. “People being out and about, and not in the bubble of their cars, reinforces all the good things about a community.”

HAVE WE REACHED CAR PEAK?

Working from home has meant no daily commute and with life becoming more normal as Covid

restrictions ease, many of us will never return to our old working patterns. Daily hour-long walks or cycle rides – often our only escape from four walls during lockdown – have become a way of life. And in the 21st century, driving home with a boot rammed with supermarket shopping feels pointless when you can do your shop online while you save time, fuel and parking costs as you reduce your carbon footprint.

THE YOUNG ARE VOTING WITH THEIR FEET

Car ownership among young people is dwindling. Today, owning a car is seen as less of a status symbol, more a great big drain on the bank account. A Department for Transport study finds the number of teens with a driving licence has plunged by 40 per cent in the past 20 years. A rejection of car ownership is likely to become the “new norm”, it concludes.

DELIVERY HUBS

To help people live car free more easily, Weston Homes is starting to include “community hubs” at some of its larger developments. These act as collection points for the majority of deliveries, which means residents will never again feel the frustration of a card through their door telling them they have missed a delivery and need to wait in for it the next day.

“People don’t perhaps realise that if you have an aborted goods delivery, then the driver needs to come back. So there is more traffic and more air pollution,” Steve Hatton points out.

The community hub system will be a feature at Abbey Quay, the £350 million Weston Homes development in Barking, east London, where more than 1,000 new homes are being created beside the River Roding.

THE 15-MINUTE CITY

If you live in the back of beyond, a car might well be a lifeline. But in a well-resourced town or city with everything you need on your doorstep, a vehicle can be an unnecessary expense.

The 15-minute city is the latest concept being used by developers and planners around the world – the idea that everything you need, from shops to local transport facilities, to entertainment and social life, should be within a 15-minute walk or cycle ride of your front door.

WALK THIS WAY

Walking is a brilliant – and free – way to improve not only your physical fitness but your mental wellbeing, too. It improves cardiovascular health, burns fat, builds muscle and also maintains bone density, which is crucial as we grow older. Taking exercise will leave you feeling energised

and has been shown to help reduce cholesterol levels.

Walking outdoors is also associated with mental health benefits, particularly if you walk somewhere green and leafy. Numerous studies suggest walking can alleviate depression and lower blood pressure.

To make walking, or indeed cycling, a breeze, Weston Homes often includes walking networks and cycle paths on its sites, allowing you to get from A to B quickly and simply – while enjoying a mini-workout at the same time.

“Public transport is the big one here,” says Steve Hatton. “When we look for sites, we look for a station within a 15-minute-walk as a rule of thumb, for quick journeys to where people work. This way they do not need to take a car to the station and pay to park it all day.



QUEENS WALK
EAST GRINSTEAD
RH19 4DW



“
THE 15-MINUTE CITY IS THE LATEST CONCEPT BEING USED BY DEVELOPERS AND PLANNERS AROUND THE WORLD - THE IDEA THAT EVERYTHING YOU NEED, FROM SHOPS TO LOCAL TRANSPORT FACILITIES, TO ENTERTAINMENT AND SOCIAL LIFE, SHOULD BE WITHIN A 15-MINUTE WALK OR CYCLE RIDE OF YOUR FRONT DOOR.
”

“We also look for sites with a nearby town or shops – or both – for daily essentials and, even better, a coffee shop. We look at things like local dentists, pubs, dry cleaners – all the things people are going to want to use in their lives.”

JOIN THE CLUB

Because there may be times when you will need a car there are now easily accessible local car clubs.

Although different clubs have different rules, the general idea is that drivers join up and pay a modest monthly subscription for access to a pool of pay-as-you-drive cars parked in dedicated spaces close to their homes. The cars can be booked using an app or via a website, and members don't have to take any responsibility for tax, insurance or maintenance.

At Watford Cross, Weston Homes will be setting up a car club exclusively for residents, although the development is very handy for the town centre and enjoys a super-quick 16-minute commute into London from the station, which is just a five-minute walk away from home.

MYTH BUSTING

You might feel your car is essential because it saves you time getting around. But you could be wrong. Figures from the Department for Transport reveal that cars on urban roads travel at an average of just 18mph... and the pace is even more snail-like in bad weather or at rush hour.

The average cyclist moves at 10-14mph, and doesn't have to waste time and money finding a parking space when they reach their destination.

COUNTING THE COST

Buying and running a car makes a massive dent in your budget. According to a recent study it costs an average of £3,406 to run a car for a year in the UK, or £5,744 for those with car finance. Most car owners (64 per cent) say their vehicle is their most expensive monthly outgoing, after housing. What you save by not having a car you could put towards a fabulous holiday – or buy a top-notch bike and still have plenty to spare for taxi rides and car hire, for when you do need a little more horsepower. ✕



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Make your house a home

Advice from Award-winning design and interiors writer Barbara Chandler

Furnishing a home can be bewildering to say the least, with so much homeware on the market and a mass of places and ways to buy it. Happily, today's tech puts free online specialist advice at your fingertips.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is first base for inspo and info. **Pinterest** is full of fabulous ideas – do a search then “pin” (save) the best results to your “board” (personal file). You can share them with friends, family and professionals. Save your own photos and add a “pin” icon to your browser to store images from the internet.

Follow **Facebook** pages for useful brands and designers to get updates, advice and links to videos.

Instagram is where the influencers hang out, with their personal snaps and stories. Just follow the ones that appeal, from the countless candidates charting their renovations, design discoveries and opinions – often with links to longer blogs on their own websites – to short videos on IGTV, and/or podcasts.

Videos on **YouTube** will solve most design and DIY dilemmas, including curtain and cushion making, painting, carpentry and gardening, posted by individuals and brands on their own “channels”. Download and/or put the app on your phone.

Even those mini-clips on **Tik Tok** and its rival **Instagram Reels** could spark an idea – and will make you laugh or groan.



Fenella Double Bed, £349, MADE.COM

Home renovators share experiences and expertise at **Houzz** on www.houzz.co.uk in literally millions of pictures and stories. You can refine a search by room, style, colour, size and so on, right down to, for example, the finish of a kitchen unit. There's specialist advice, trends and tips, lists of local tradespeople and a product directory.



Voxlov bamboo chair, £75, and table, £199
Ikea.com

FREE ADVICE FROM YOUR FAVOURITE STORES

Most shopping for interiors is on the web where business is booming. Store closures have spawned new “virtual” ways to get help, fuelled by technology. When things open up, shopping will be a hybrid affair, with virtual advice, planning and colour-scheming online underpinned by shopping and “experiences” in store.

All online design services depend on your input, so double-check your measurements, work out a budget, think about your deadline and collect ideas on colour and style before you start.

Look for the live chat icons bottom right of website screens, to make contact directly with an assistant during office hours. Then you can have a video chat on **FaceTime**, **SnapChat** or similar, or book an appointment with a specialist. For the cleverest tech, download the apps of your favourite brands to your phone or iPad. You may be able to take a snap of your room and then play around with wall colours, or add images of furniture.

Ikea has online planning tools for its most popular living room storage, seating and more. **Next** is doing free interior design with plans and mood boards.

DIY

Bone up on types of paint, trends, colours and inventive DIY from **Dulux** on dulux.co.uk with a virtual paint selector and lots of videos. Or get practical and colour advice on **0333 2227171**. Download a free visualiser app to virtually paint your own room, and instantly match colours. Follow **Dulux** pages on all social media, for links to videos and podcasts.

LET THE EXPERTS TALK YOU THROUGH IT

A bookable furnishing adviser at John Lewis can help online with anything from a cushion update to a room revamp. They will create 3D images of your room showing off their suggestions, fine-tuning as you go along.

ON-SCREEN INSPIRATION

Interior design shows on **Netflix** include Interior Design Masters, Interior Design Challenge, Grand Designs, Tidy Up with Marie Kondo, Amazing Interiors, and The Apartment. ✕

For a full collection of clickable links to help you create your own interior visit:
westonlifeandstyle.com/expert-advice-interiors



Parker large corner chaise in navy plush velvet, £1,925, Lloyd nest of two tables, £225, Amara leaf rug, from £80 to £260, Erin floor lamp, £160 next.co.uk

BIG IDEAS

FOR SMALL GARDENS

— By Pattie Barron | Photography by Clive Nichols —

A NEW HOME is a unique opportunity to take a blank canvas and create the garden of your dreams. There are so many choices – and challenges.

Whether you choose to fill the space with wild flowers, create a streamlined outdoor “room” for entertaining, or simply gaze on a perfectly striped lawn with pristine flowerbeds, you need to know this: a flat garden, all on one level, is a decidedly dull garden. So whatever choices you make, think vertically from the start.

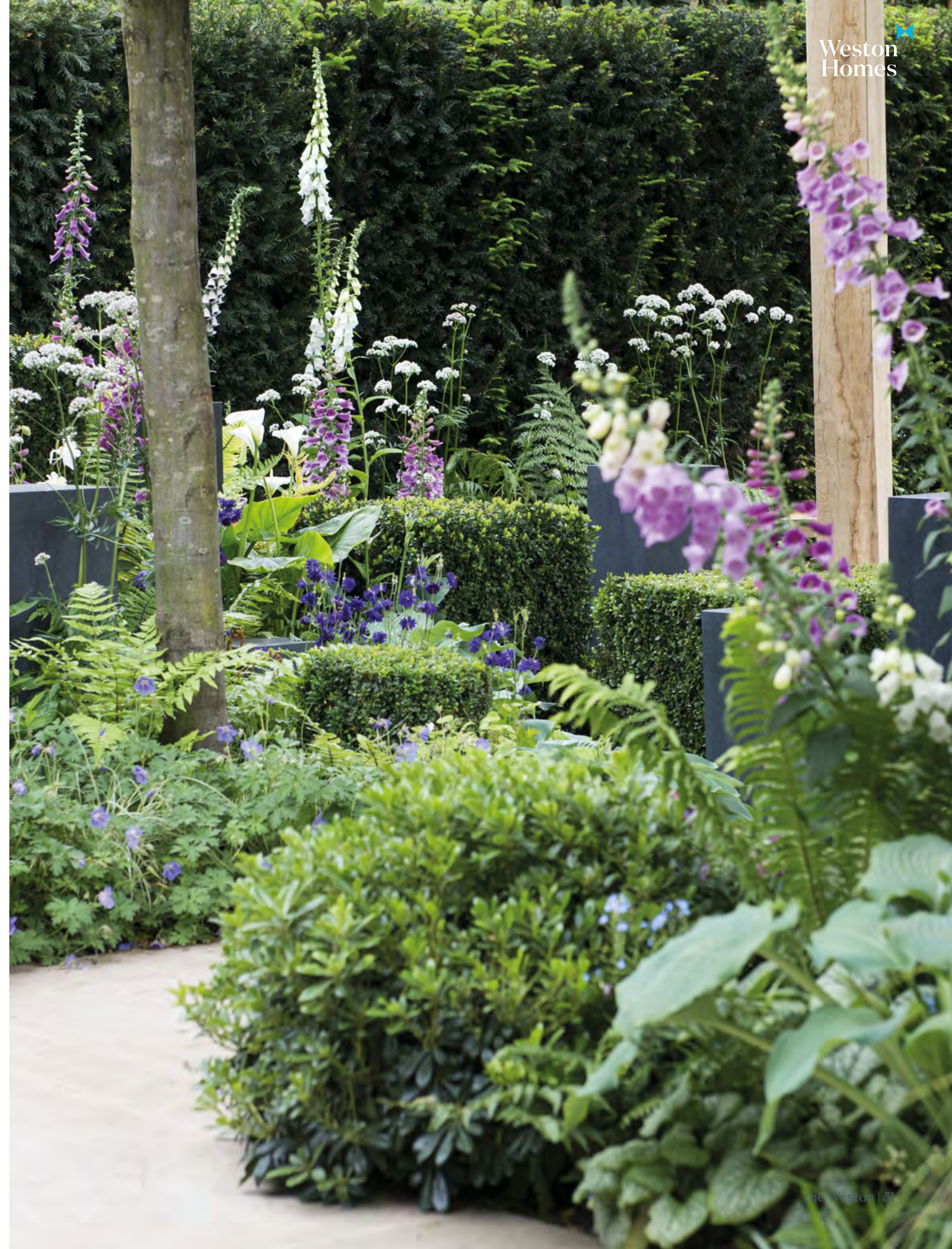


Sculptural garden Obelisk

THINGS ARE LOOKING UP

Adding a tree or even a simple arch instantly makes the space a whole lot more interesting, turning it from one-dimensional to 3D. And if your garden or courtyard is on the small side, going up, using all that valuable air space, will make the most of every available inch.

Trees bring a garden to life, as well as bringing in the birds. You just need one specimen tree to make an impact and break up an otherwise bland expanse. The best all-rounder, delivering starry white flowers in spring, purple berries in summer and rich red foliage in autumn, is justifiably the designers’ darling, Amelanchier Lamarckii. It doesn’t get too big, and has a graceful presence year-round. Or you could plant a crab apple such as Malus Red Sentinel and enjoy a flurry of springtime blossom as well as a mass of glossy, scarlet fruits come September.





GIVE THE GARDEN GRAVITAS WITH A SINGLE ARCH AT THE ENTRANCE; ADD SEVERAL ARCHES AT INTERVALS DOWN A PATH, AND SUDDENLY YOU HAVE A GLAMOROUS COLONNADE.



And if you're struggling with shade, rejoice, because that will suit a multi-stemmed Silver Birch just fine, adding the essential height but also making a striking, stark silhouette, especially noticeable at dusk. It sets the scene, too, for a delicious woodland floor at its feet, of Primroses, Foxgloves and Wood Anemones.

You could create sleek, strong verticals – and summon the spirit of Tuscany – with a trio of Pencil Cypresses which will considerably enhance the horizon, but you'll need to keep trimming them so they don't reach dizzy heights.

PUT PLANTS ON A PEDESTAL

Think of fixed features you could introduce into your plot to provide instant height. A column from a reclamation yard could make a pedestal to showcase, say, a sculptural succulent or a cascade of scented Geraniums in a decorative bowl. Bring in two or three six-foot obelisks and even if they're not clothed with Roses or Clematis, they'll make an effective stand-alone statement at intervals to break up a border.

You can find them in metal, topped with playful swirls or in more classic lines of trellised wood, painted in soft, plant-flattering shades. Even a few standard Roses or Bay Lollipops, standing head and shoulders above every other plant, will liven up the landscape and make a so-so border rather special.

CREATE A SCENTED CANOPY

An arch – or several arches – are a great way of adding height, as well as providing just the right support for a fragrant Climbing Rose such as shell pink New Dawn or velvet-red Prince's Trust. Give the garden gravitas with a single arch at the entrance; add several arches at intervals down a path, and suddenly you have a glamorous colonnade. A pergola needn't be a five-mile walkway, but can delineate an outdoor dining space that provides attractive, dappled shade from overhead beams... it's your choice whether to garland them with a Grapevine. Once you start to think laterally – or rather, vertically – the sky really is the limit. ✂



Arch of Roses



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