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The term self build homes is a bit of a misnomer. Very few people actually roll up their sleeves, start mixing concrete and invest in a nail gun. The truth is most self builders will hire an architect and only get their hands dirty when it comes to the final decoration.

This being said as a nation we are still curious about self building. Over three million of us tune into Grand Designs and yet only 10% of homes in the UK are self build projects. Compare this figure to 80%, yes 80% of all homes in Austria are self build projects, across Europe 60% of homes are self built and in America and Australia the figure is over 40% and its clear we lag behind.

There are many arguments for and against beginning a self build project. You have to buy the land first, have all amenities put in and then start your project but it works out cheaper than buying from a builder. What you gain financially should be weighed against what hassle you may come across.

In theory you get to design your home around your lifestyle or that of your family. In reality you should check for any planning constraints that may be in place prior to getting the felt tips out.

If you go for the truly self build (sleeves rolled up, hands dirty, nail gun at the ready) then you can expect to save a fair bit of cash but is DIY home building really a good idea?

Then there is the subject of how green can you make your build. New regulations coming in say definitely go green and many of the eco homes shown on Grand Designs can give you great ideas of just how far you can take green architecture but how sustainable a life choice will that be?

Its one thing ensuring all your lights use eco friendly, slightly dim until they heat up bulbs but do you know how to set up a system to recycle grey water, capture rain water for use, what type of concrete and windows will reduce heat loss and how to ensure that your transport of material costs do not make your carbon footprint the size of a small country?

Taking on a true self build project can be as daunting as it is exciting. If clambering up an A-frame brandishing a nail gun is your thing then DIY self building is for you. If however you want the ability to ensure that your new home fits your lifestyle as much as possible but brandishing a paint brush is your limit then hire an architect.

When it comes to self build projects an architect can be worth their weight in gold, time saved and hassle avoided. They will project manage all the other construction professionals required and keep you updated regularly. Engaging an architect prior to selecting your plot of ground can reap great dividends. That gorgeous bubbling stream that you see meandering through your back garden could translate as a genuine flood risk come the April showers, when seen through an architects eyes.

So while the government are keen to double the number of people building their own homes, there are good points and bad points to taking on a self build project and for the downright mad there is true DIY!

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[Lexoremman](#) - About Author:

Kenneth Martin is the owner of Block Architects, a successful architectural practise based in Lanarkshire, covering the whole of Scotland specialising in self build homes. Please visit a [self build homes Glasgow](#) and a [Glasgow architect](#) for more details.

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