

The dream builders...



Ready for your call

THE National Home Building and Renovating Show will be held at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham next week (March 7-10). Julian Owen Associates, who will be giving a House of the Future demonstration and holding self-build seminars, are giving away double tickets (worth £14) to the show. The first ten readers to ring Julian's office will be offered double tickets plus the ASBA Facilitate. Phone Nottingham (0115) 922 9831.

● Home help: Architect Julian Owen reckons many self-builders come to him because they can't find a home that suits them. POSTPHOTO 961372/15A

Every year some 20,000 people build their own homes — or, most likely, contract specialists to do it for them. As JEREMY LEWIS reports, it's a booming £2bn business, growing by six per cent a year

IF you're lender-friendly, it couldn't be easier to find a home. It's been a buyer's market since 1990 and whatever your budget and basic requirements there's plenty to pick out from the 8,000 homes for sale in Greater Nottingham.

But for eight buyers out of every 100, somebody else's house will never be right. In spite of the period charm of older properties and the mod-con appeal of mass-builders' houses, those 20,000 people want homes that are built exclusively for their own needs. And if they can get exclusivity, a bigger garden, greater privacy or more bricks and mortar for their money, so much the better. The "self-build" business is booming, reportedly growing at six per cent a year, which makes it the fastest-growing sector of the new homes market.

"Most of the people I've talked to are concerned because although it's a buyer's market they can't find a home to suit them," says Nottingham chartered architect Julian Owen. "Often they find the third or fourth bedroom is too small, or builders don't recognise that people live and eat in the kitchen, and want the dining room kept for formal occasions. Others want a garden bigger than you get with most new homes." Mr Owen reckons the desire to own and live in a unique, custom-built home is a motivator — but value is, too. But however much money you have tied up in your existing home, you will need cash in hand. Some people wait for an expected inheritance; others sell up first and live in a caravan on their new plot. Even after you have budgeted for land and building costs, overall outlay will depend on your own involvement. Some self-builders will commission architects to manage the whole project from finding a plot, designing a home, liaising with planning authorities and commissioning contractors right the way through to an aftercare service (fees for a full management and "hand-holding" service would be about six to eight per cent). Others will want a "hands-on" role. The two Notts self-builders featured here have kept their costs down by doing some of the work themselves.

Guru's wise words

MURRAY ARMOR is a guru of the self-build movement — but he questions some of the statistics.

"A lot of them are generated by public relations people and are unreliable," says the Workshop-based journalist and author. "The big picture is that 18,000 families build their own home every year — that's 9.5% of all new homes and 25% of all new detached homes."

Mr Armor wrote the standard consumer guide, *Building Your Own Home*, now in its 14th edition (available from Ryton Books, Orchard House, Blyth, Worksop, Notts).

- Among the points he stresses to beginners are:
- Budget for insurance — possibly including a life policy to get the project finished if you die or are incapacitated before it is completed;
 - Even if you don't have construction and technical skills, you must have the drive to see the project through;
 - Never pay anyone in advance.

A family plot

UILDERS began work on Stuart Franklin's home in October 1994 and the family moved into the four-bedroom house the following March. The major factor in deciding to self-build was that we could not afford a house of the size we needed for a growing family," says Stuart, who runs West Bridgford-based Kitchens and Bathrooms Business Plumb Interiors. He and his wife have three children and are a family on the way. They found a plot in a village between Nottingham and Nottingham and asked a contractor to build the shell. With his own skills and business contacts, Stuart was able to complete the interior. The plot and building cost the

Franklins £115,000. Six months ago their home was valued at £180,000. Stuart reckons the cost savings, admittedly with a high level of self-involvement, were about £40,000. Apart from the money factor, self-building enable the Franklins to create a home to their own needs. "We wanted an en-suite hallway with angled doors leading to the lounge and dining room. We've got a huge inglenook fireplace in the kitchen — which is where the family spends most of its time. We wanted three double bedrooms for the children, and for ourselves a big en-suite bathroom and walk-in wardrobe. "We wanted things that we wanted them, not where builders usually want to put them."



● Linda Lusard is a mother of two who has commissioned and built her own custom-designed home. ● Ayr Bernard Hill. ● Nick Eddo, Britain's most successful golfer. ● Bob Chrampton, who beat cancer to win the Grand National. ● Former Page 3 girl Linda Lusard.