

# Transitioning from Traditional to Timber Frame Construction

A Practical Guide for Small Housing Developers from Scotts Timber Frame



## Introduction

Timber frame construction is rapidly gaining popularity in the UK due to its speed, sustainability, and performance benefits.

For smaller housing developers accustomed to traditional masonry builds, transitioning to timber frame methods requires a shift in mindset, planning, and on-site coordination. This guide provides a practical overview of what this transition entails and how to manage it successfully.

## Ready to Take The Next Step?

Scotts approaches timber frame with the same focus on product and service quality as it does with all its timber engineered products.

Our timber frame kits are designed in-house by our highly qualified and experienced design team, enabling us to provide our clients with rational and cost-effective solutions which take planning regulations into account.

Our clients range from self-builds to independent contractors and architects through to national housebuilders and from residential, one-off builds, self-builds, education to healthcare.

For more information on the benefits of making the leap to Timber Frame construction, please contact us via phone on 01832 732366, email the Timber Frame team on [thrapston@scottste.co.uk](mailto:thrapston@scottste.co.uk), or visit our website at [www.scottste.co.uk/timber-frame](http://www.scottste.co.uk/timber-frame).

## Key Differences: Timber Frame vs. Traditional Build

Feature	Traditional Brick & Block	Timber Frame
Speed of build	Slower (weather dependent)	Faster (prefabricated)
Weather Impact	Delays common	Enclosed quickly, fewer delays
Thermal Performance	Dependent on insulation and blockwork	High performance with ease
Design Flexibility	Some onsite changes possible	Requires final design before manufacture
Cost Certainty	Variable costs	More predictable with fixed-price kits
On-site Labour	Bricklayers focused	Carpenters and precise co-ordination
Sustainability	Higher embodied carbon	Lower embodied carbon

# Typical Workflow for Timber Frame



MEETING



QC REVIEW

## Benefits of Timber Frame for Small Developers

- Faster build times with rapid dry envelope creation.
- Factory-built consistency for quality assurance.
- Superior thermal efficiency for SAP compliance.
- Easier internal coordination with early weather-tight stages.
- Stronger sustainability credentials.

## Project Planning & Design Changes

- Freeze design early to suit off-site manufacturing.
- Coordinate with the frame supplier during design.
- Ensure M&E runs and structural plans are finalized.

## Site Setup and Logistics

- Accurate foundations are critical
- Plan for crane access and covered panel storage.
- Avoid delays with timely delivery scheduling.

## Workflow & Programme Changes

- Timber frame speeds up first fix and internal works.
- Requires precise scheduling and contractor readiness.
- Drylining and service installs can happen earlier.

## Managing Subcontractors

- Bricklayers still needed for external skins.
- Frame installers and joiners become central.
- All services must avoid structural timber.

## Building Control & Warranty Providers

- Ensure providers are informed of timber frame use.
- Use certified suppliers and adhere to construction details.
- Comply with all structural, acoustic, and fire requirements.

## Fire Risk and Health & Safety

- Follow HSE guidance on fire during construction.
- Implement site-specific fire management plans.
- Secure and monitor sites, especially during frame erection.

## Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- Avoid last-minute design changes post-manufacture.
- Double-check all groundwork tolerances.
- Follow supplier instructions on fixing and bracing.

## Cost Implications

- Upfront design and manufacturing costs may be higher.
- Labour and on-site time savings offset this.
- Fewer weather delays and less rework = cost stability.

## Getting Started

- Trial timber frame on a small project first.
- Partner with an experienced frame manufacturer.
- Provide training to site managers and teams.

## Resources & Further Reading

- Structural Timber Association – [www.structuraltimber.co.uk](http://www.structuraltimber.co.uk)
- NHBC Timber Frame Guidance
- HSE Fire Prevention (HSG168)
- TRADA technical resources

## Conclusion

- Timber frame offers speed, quality, and sustainability.
- Requires good design, planning, and coordination.
- With preparation, small developers can adopt it successfully.