

# Brits Splash Out on Style Over Sustainability—But Later Spend £16K Making Homes More Energy-Efficient

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New research from [Hive](#), the UK's leading eco-tech brand, reveals a gap between Brits' desire for sustainable homes and their actual house-hunting habits. While three-quarters (75%) prioritise 'kerb appeal' over sustainability, one in three (34%) buyers still don't check a property's energy rating before buying.

According to property expert **Scarlette Douglas**, who has partnered with Hive, homebuyers are being drawn in by aesthetics while overlooking crucial energy-saving and smart home features that could save them thousands in the long run.

With nearly a quarter (23%) admitting they want their home to impress passersby and guests, it's no surprise that over a third (35%) have been so dazzled by stylish features that they've purchased a property that wasn't practical or energy efficient.

Sweeping driveways (48%), spacious gardens (42%), a plush ensuite bathroom (40%), open plan kitchen and living space (35%), a walk-in wardrobe (33%), a large utility room (32%) and kitchen island (29%) have all sent house hunters heads spinning, along with skylights (29%), old style cottages (27%) and original fireplaces (26%).

While these aesthetic choices make homes visually appealing, the vast majority of buyers (83%) who were swayed by style later regretted their purchase due to unforeseen costs or maintenance expenses. Nearly two-thirds (63%) admit that eco-friendly features only became a priority after moving in, spending an average of £16,750 on upgrades to create a more energy-efficient home.

Despite 91% of Brits believing estate agents should highlight eco-tech features during property viewings, sustainability often takes a backseat to kerb appeal. Energy-saving solutions continue to rank lower in buyer priorities than aesthetic features such as kitchen islands and original fireplaces—despite their potential to save homeowners thousands in the long run.

However, house buyers' priorities are beginning to shift towards a greener future, with 70% believing a home can be both stylish and sustainable and three quarters (75%) willing to pay more for a property with built in eco-tech.

If given **£10,000**, nearly a quarter (23%) said they would invest it in smart and eco-friendly upgrades, reflecting a growing awareness of sustainability's long-term benefits. Energy-efficient windows and insulation (64%), solar panels (51%), smart thermostats (41%), and heat pump systems (29%) are among the most sought-after eco-tech features.

**Scarlette Douglas** warns that overlooking sustainable features can be a costly mistake. Working with Hive, she's helping homebuyers avoid potential pitfalls by encouraging them to prioritise eco-tech, insulation, damp-proofing, and smart home functionality over short-term aesthetics—ensuring their dream home is both stylish and sustainable.

*"A home should work for you, not the other way around. While winning interiors and kerb appeal can be tempting, overlooking energy efficiency and smart home features can leave you with unexpected costs. Future-proofing your home with sustainable and smart solutions can save thousands in the long run."*

**Tom Pakenham, Commercial Director at Hive** comments on the latest research: *"This research clearly shows that whilst stylish interiors are key part of the house hunting process, more people are considering smart home technology and how it could make their homes more energy-efficient and cost-effective. At Hive, we believe smart home technology should be at the heart of every property purchase. Our breadth of eco-tech – such as solar, heat pumps and EV chargers - help homeowners take control of their energy use, saving money and carbon, proving that style and sustainability can go hand in hand."*

Outside of a property, the nation researches the neighborhood (40%), average house prices (16%), whether a property is freehold or leasehold (13%) and the potential for renovation (5%) when considering a purchase.

**PROPERTY EXPERT, SCARLETTE DOUGLAS SHARES THE TEN MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO**

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## TICK OFF WHEN PURCHASING A HOME – AND THERE’S NOT A FANCY LIGHT FITTING OR SHOWER HEAD IN SIGHT:

- 1. Check the EPC Rating**  
Look for an EPC rating of C or above to avoid costly upgrades later.
- 2. Ask About Smart Tech**  
Smart thermostats, LED lighting, and app-controlled heating can cut energy costs—check if they’re already installed.
- 3. Inspect Windows and Doors**  
Prioritise double or triple glazing, draught-proofing, and well-sealed frames to reduce heat loss.
- 4. Assess Insulation**  
Poor insulation leads to major heat loss. Ask about cavity wall and loft insulation, and check for sustainable materials.
- 5. Look at the Boiler and Heating**  
A-rated condensing boilers and heat pumps are energy-efficient options. Check if radiators have thermostatic valves for better control.
- 6. Ask About Renewable Energy**  
Solar panels can cut bills by up to 70%. Check if they’re owned or leased and whether the roof is suitable for future installation.
- 7. Check House Orientation**  
A south-facing home benefits from natural light, reducing the need for artificial lighting and heating.
- 8. Consider Building Materials**  
Brick, stone, and concrete retain heat well. Green roofs and living walls enhance insulation and regulate indoor temperatures.
- 9. Look Beyond the Kitchen Island**  
Energy-efficient appliances (A-rated fridges, dishwashers, ovens) save money—check what’s included in the sale.
- 10. Investigate Water Efficiency**  
Low-flow showerheads, dual-flush toilets, and rainwater collection systems help cut water waste and lower bills.

## TOP PROPERTY PRIORITIES ACCORDING TO BRITS:

1. A driveway - 48%
2. A spacious garden - 42%
3. An ensuite bathroom - 40%
4. Open plan kitchen and living space - 35%
5. A walk-in wardrobe - 33%
6. A large utility room - 32%
7. A kitchen island - 29%
8. Large windows and skylights - 29%
9. Insulating windows - 29%
10. An old country cottage - 27%
11. Original fireplaces - 26%
12. A Victorian townhouse design/layout - 26%
13. High ceilings - 25%
14. Underfloor heating - 25%
15. A balcony - 24%
16. Beautiful kitchen tiles - 22%
17. A Georgian property design/layout - 21%
18. Smart eco-tech features - 20%
19. A gated entrance - 19%
20. A free-standing bath - 19%
21. Solar panels - 19%
22. A traditional door with a brass knocker - 19%
23. Rainwater collection system - 18%
24. Heated floors - 18%
25. A pantry - 17%
26. A range cooker - 17%
27. A spiral staircase - 15%
28. Reclaimed wood floors - 15%
29. Period features such as cornicing - 15%
30. Pretty radiators - 14%
31. Tudor beams - 13%
32. Period/sash windows - 12%

- 33. Stained glass - 12%
- 34. Rainwater showers - 10%
- 35. A thatched roof - 9%

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