

# Friendly lifestyle in Green Ecovillage

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NEVER mind going green; you can now live that way with all your household amenities tailored to an environmentally friendly lifestyle.

The Green Ecovillage in Gqunube (previously Gonubie) outside East London is no politically correct eco-estate. You are obliged to go for "green" lessons before you live there and your house has to fit the "green" bill.

There are tremendous payoffs in the end though.

You don't have to use heaters or air-conditioners. Parts of the house and garden seem to look after themselves, with little maintenance; you save water; have your own insecticide-free vegetables and nuts to eat; and you spend less on electricity and can eventually go off the grid.

One of the houses' designer, award-winning Cape Town eco-architect Andy Horn, said: "The idea was to design a small footprint of a house, so it is not lavish and can be passively cooled and heated. Most materials come from the area itself.

"There is a pole roof structure. Timbers are harvested locally, using moon phase harvesting techniques, so there are no poisons on the wood, yet it is protected from insects. All the finishes are non-toxic."

Moon phase harvesting entails cutting wood at certain phases of the moon when the nutrient content of the sap is at its lowest so it does not attract insects or result in fungal decay. Hence

no toxins are needed to protect the wood.

Mud bricks create stable thermal temperatures in the building and help regulate humidity. Women from the local community are being employed to make the bricks as part of the project.

Horn said the design was challenging because the views were south, away from the sun. To counter this he envisioned a thin building to take advantage of facing north.

The perimeter walls, garage and outside flatlet are based around a courtyard, and there is a protected inner space. The house will also come with a natural, bio-filter pool, filtered using plants and gravels with a solar pump rather than chlorine and salt.

The planted roof, with succulents and ground covers, won't require much soil or maintenance, Horn said.

Its aesthetic blends in with the landscape because it will be a low-scale building and ecologically it means the building does not create a mini desert.

"The planted roof attenuates storm water surge - the water soaks in and is gentle. The plants absorb some, but the other water that goes through the gutters is filtered and clean, so the rain-water collection system is cleaner."

Dry composting toilets will contribute to water conservation and grey water will be fed into the garden. Other green features include water efficient shower heads, solar water heating, low wattage LED lights and gas cooking.

Building is already at the plinth stage and is expected to be finished by March next year.



**HANDS ON:** Architect Andy Horn is not afraid to get his hands dirty when it comes to natural building processes.