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Fundamentals of Construction Technology

ACBA4016

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Word Count - 1493

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1). Introduction

This report outlines three conventional construction methods for a single, two-storey detached domestic building, focusing on their characteristics, advantages, disadvantages, and suitability.

2). Definition of 'Offsite Construction'

The phrase 'off-site construction' refers to the completion of elements or components of a construction project at a different location to where they will be permanently installed. Typically, this can involve planning, design, fabrication and assembly in purpose-built off-site factories. The completed item is then transported to site and assembled in place (Designing Buildings 2017).

3). Three Construction Methods

A). Timber Twin Frame Construction

Description:

Timber twin frame construction uses two parallel timber stud walls, usually with an insulated area between them. Walls range in sizes but are commonly seen as 300mm being the total insulation area. The outer frame/wall mostly supports the main structure of the building and allows the external finishes and barriers to be fixed directly to it. The inner frame usually holds the internal finishes. They can be counter battened for more insulation or a service void and then covered with the desired finish.

Characteristics:

Material: Treated timber (CLS) different sizes to suit.

Structure: Two parallel timber stud walls with an insulated cavity.

Insulation: Different thicknesses and material insulations sandwiched within the cavity.

Speed of Construction: Speed can vary, offsite construction would decrease assembly time (panels can be prefabricated and pre insulated).

Thermal Performance: Good thermal properties due to the large cavity of insulation.

Sound Insulation: Good sound insulation properties due to the twin frame/wall and insulation thickness.

Flexibility: Good flexibility for design and adaptations.

Sustainability: Timber is a renewable resource, offering good environmental properties if sourced sustainably.

Advantages:

Thermal Effectiveness: The cavity allows for greater thicknesses of insulation, allowing low energy usage for heating and cooling.

Sound Insulation: The twin frame/wall system effectively decreases sound conduction.

Speed of construction: Prefabrication can speed up build time allowing for less operatives working on different elements.

Design Flexibility: Pliable to different architectural layouts and styles.

Weight: Compared to other forms of construction, the frame is lighter, in theory cutting foundation requirements.

Sustainability: Timber is a renewable resource, offering good environmental properties if sourced sustainably (Smith, 2022, p. 4).

Disadvantages:

Requires Skilled Labour: It is important that skilled labour constructs a twin framed build due to avoiding thermal bridging and ensure the strength of the build is up to regulations.

Moisture: Timber is susceptible to rotting if in contact with any moisture. It is important that all moisture barriers are installed and fitted correctly.

Fire Resistance: Sufficient fire stopping is needed in areas where timber framing is exposed, and suitable / fire rating coverings need to be used.

Shrinkage and Movement: Timber is susceptible to swelling and shrinking giving the environment that it is in. This needs to be considered in the final stages of the project e.g. designing the decoration details.

Cost: This can be comparable to other methods. The cost will depend on the price of timber at the time of the build, how much is being prefabricated and the complexity.

Suitability:

Twin frame timber construction works well for projects seeking a high energy performance rating. It is very adaptable and a good foundation for more sustainable and modern designs especially on projects where speed is a factor. Timber needs careful consideration to detail during design and construction to eliminate risks with fire and moisture.

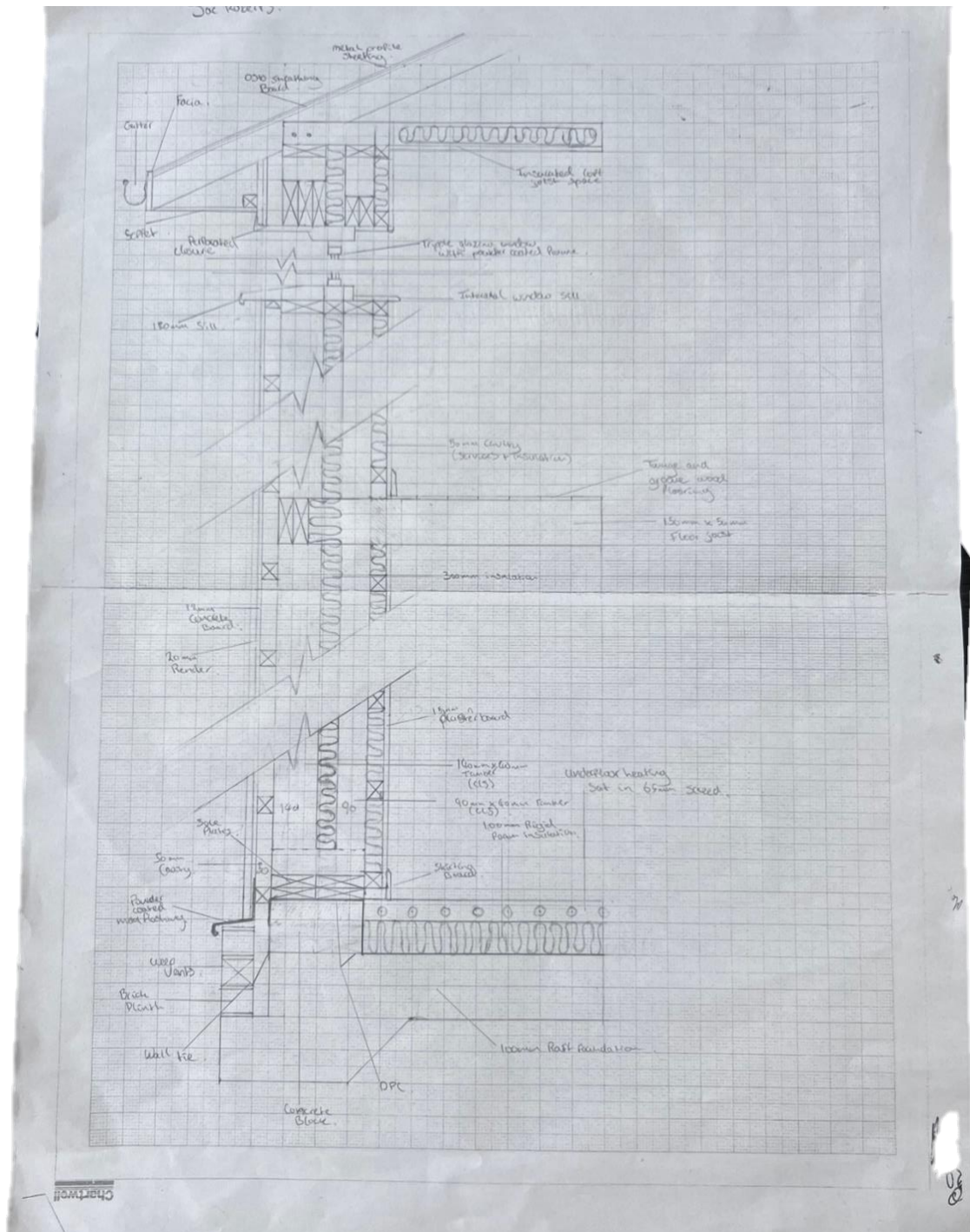


Figure 1 (Scale 1:100)

B). Structural Insulated Panels (SIPS) Construction

Description:

SIPS are highly efficient constructed panels consisting of an insulated cavity crammed between two walls (internal and external), These panels can be constructed to form load-bearing walls, roofs, and floors and can be designed to a shape and size of choice.

Key Characteristics:

Material: Insulating core (can be wool or rigid foam) and structural facings (typically timber like ply or OSB).

Structure: Composite bespoke units that are load-bearing and very insulating.

Insulation: As the insulation takes up any void within the frame it allows for some of the best thermal properties.

Speed of Construction: Extremely fast construction speed due to the prefabricated panels and simplicity of assembly.

Sound Insulation: these Pannels can be deigned with sound transmittance in mind and low DB figures can be achieved.

Design Flexibility: Sips can offer great design flexibility due to their bespoke design process. Pannels can be made to the clients requirements.

Advantages:

Very High Thermal Efficiency: SIPs offer excellent thermal insulation and air tightness, making them ideal for energy-efficient buildings (Lowe Group, 2024).

Construction Speed: Panels are fast to erect, reducing on-site labour and expenses.

Air Tightness: The panel construction creates an airtight building envelope granted that they have been sealed when joined.

Reduced Waste: Off-site manufacturing can lead to little construction waste and timber recycling.

Disadvantages:

Requires Expert Design and Installation: Precise design and skilled installation are crucial to guarantee proper sealing and structural properties.

Cost: Cost can be greater than traditional timber frame or brick and block, although the reduced on-site labour and long-term energy savings can counterbalance this.

Fire Regulations: Requires careful specification and detailing to meet fire safety regulations(fire stopping is required in all areas exposed or have a low burn time)

Suitability:

Sips are Perfect for projects aiming for very high energy efficiency and fast build times. Appropriate for contemporary designs and situations where airtightness is a priority. However, installation requires skilled labour to ensure performance and safety (Goycon, 2024).

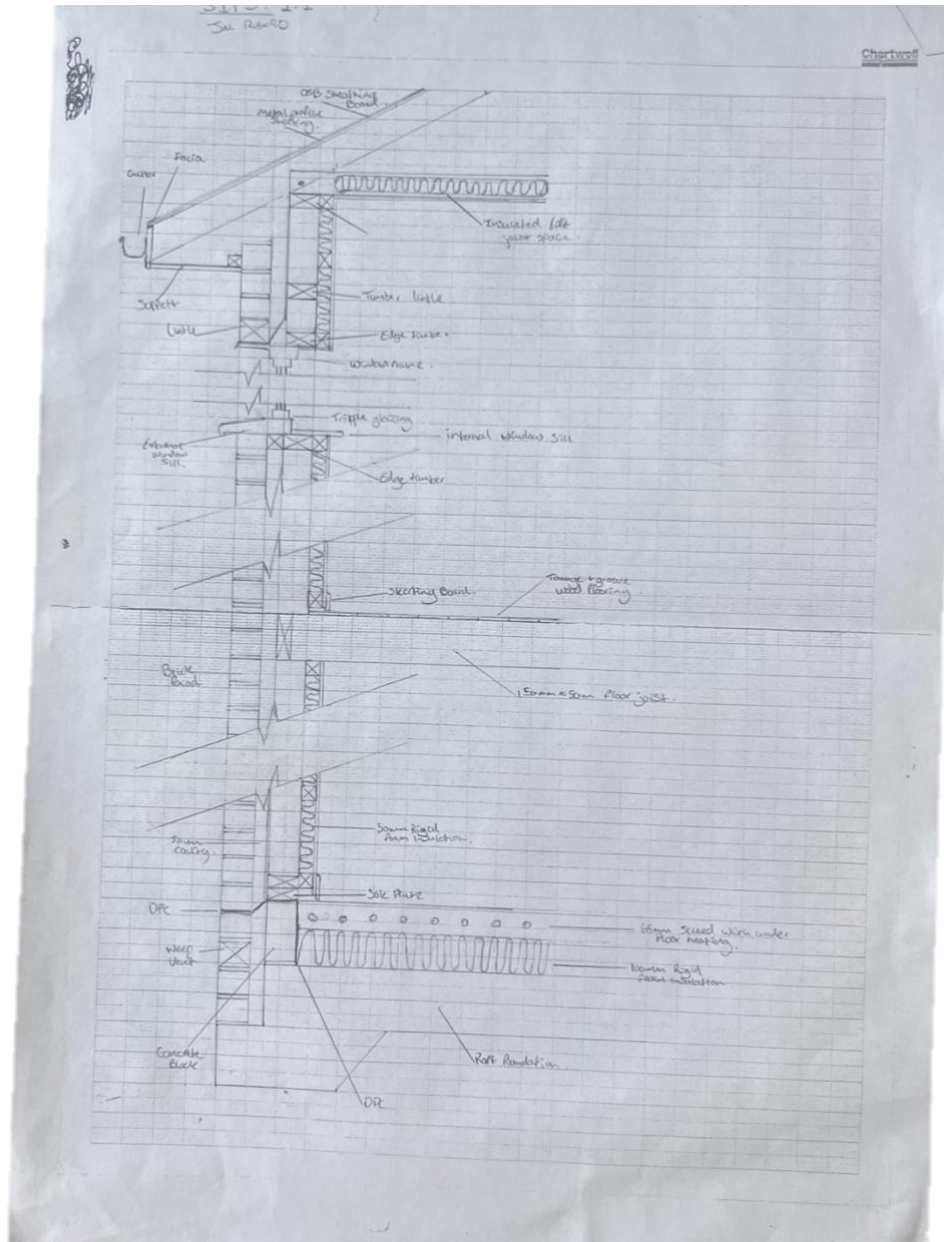


Figure 2 (Scale 1:100)

C). Brick and Block Construction

Description:

Brick and block construction is a traditional method including external walls using an outer leaf of brickwork and an inner skin of concrete blocks, with a (usually 50mm) cavity between

them. This cavity is typically parallel with a further 50mm of insulation. Brick and block construction is known for its durability, fire resistance, and sound insulation (Smith, 2023).

Key Characteristics:

Material: Clay bricks for the outer layer with concrete blocks for the inner skin and internal walls.

Structure: Two separate leaves of masonry with a cavity for air flow and elimination of thermal bridging and insulation. Internal walls are typically load-bearing and constructed using dense concrete blocks tied in with the outer leaf.

Speed of Construction: Usually much slower than timber frame or SIPS due to the manual laying of bricks and blocks and wait times.

Sound Insulation: Good sound insulation properties due to the density of the brick and blockwork.

Durability and Maintenance: Brick and block structures are durable and require minimal maintenance. The outer brick leaf can stain however this can be cleaned.

Fire Resistance: Outstanding fire resistance due to the density of the non-flammable bricks and blocks.

Design Flexibility: Good design flexibility however amendments can be costly and time consuming.

Advantages:

Durability: Brick and block buildings have a huge lifespan.

Fire Resistance: Masonry products like bricks and blocks are not flammable and withstand great heat.

Sound Insulation: The density of the bricks and blocks allow for little sound transmission.

Known Construction Method: Commonly understood by the construction industry, therefore leading to a greater collection of skilled labour.

Disadvantages:

Slower Construction: Laying individual bricks and blocks is a lengthy process, especially compared to panelised and timber systems.

Weather Dependent: Construction can be affected and stopped due to bad weather.

Labour Intensive: Requires a significant amount of on-site labour and skilled workmen.

Potential for Thermal Bridging: Messy works can lead to thermal bridging for example mortar can fall down the cavity, build up and then create a bridge between the two skins.

Suitability:

Brick and block is a reliable method suitable for a range of domestic and commercial buildings. Particularly preferred for its durability, low maintenance, and fire resistance. While building is slower, it remains a popular method due to the widely available skills and materials.

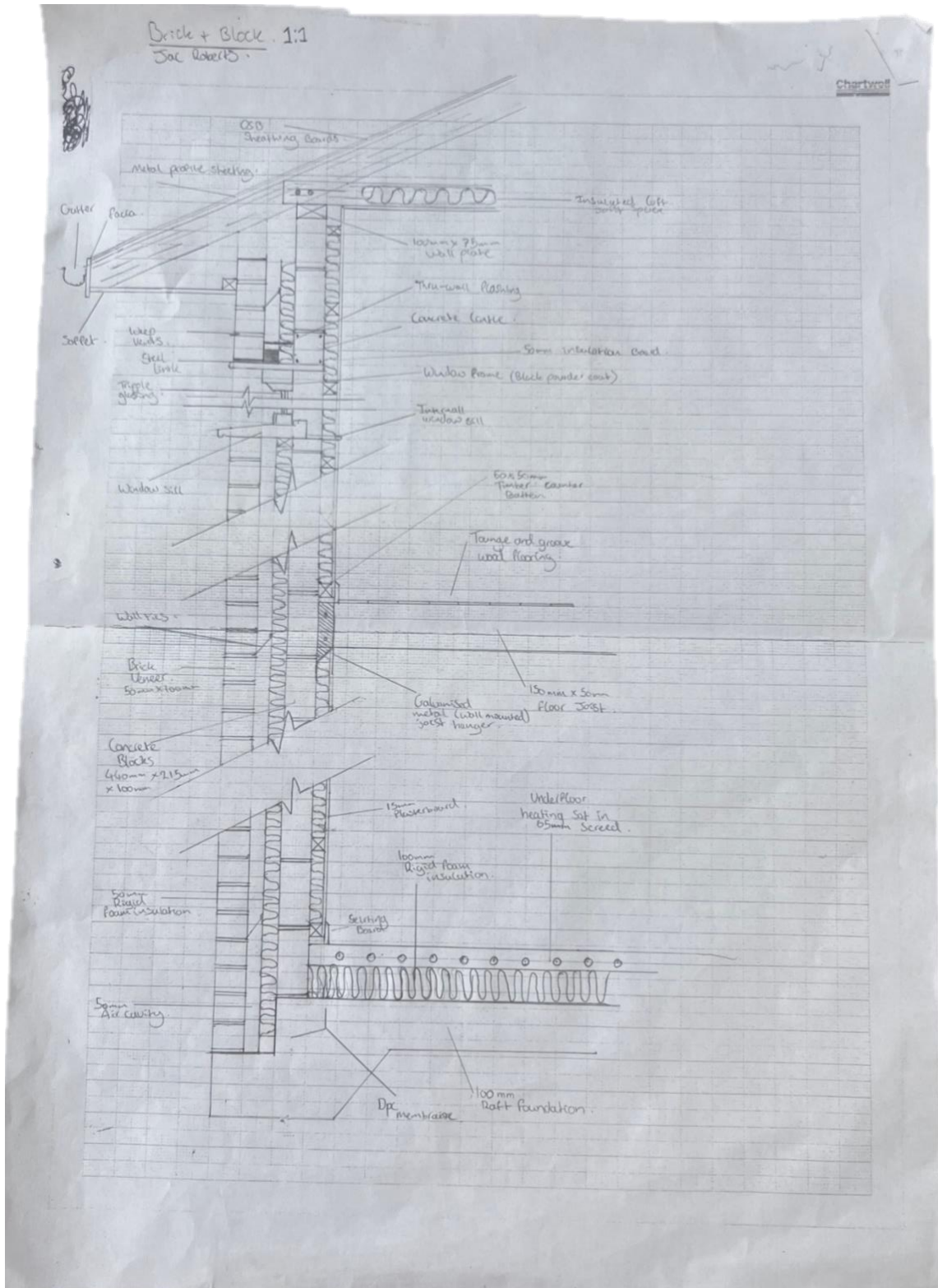


Figure 3 (scale 1:100)

3) Construction method recommendation for this project

For Miss A Client's new dwelling on the reclaimed site with a raft foundation, SIPS (Structural Insulated Panels) offer an unprecedented construction method. Their high thermal performance and outstanding airtightness all helps to create a high energy-efficiency home. The fast construction offered by prefabricated panels cuts down on build time. SIPS are structurally strong and lightweight, making them appropriate for a raft foundation. Incorporating the specified outer skin and internal service zone is achievable when designing. Although skilled installation is required, the longstanding benefits of energy savings and efficiency make SIPS a strong recommendation for a modern, high-performance home.

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