

Blazing green trail in USA

BUSINESSMAN: Building eco-friendly homes in Florida

By Danielle Nuttall

A SUFFOLK-born businessman has set up a trailblazing development company in the US responsible for building the first "green" certified home in St Petersburg, Florida.

Former Stowmarket High School pupil Darren Brinkley, 36, has been hitting the headlines across the Atlantic thanks to his new trend-setting consultancy, which provides expertise to people wanting to build an environmentally-friendly property.

His company, Real Building, is constructing a ground-breaking "green" home which will act as a show home to clients.

The four-bedroom property, on a 2,300sq ft plot, is designed to use up to 70% less energy than a conventional wood-framed building and up to 40% less water.

It is the first property in St Petersburg which has been certified by the US Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design and is set to spark a major trend.

Mr Brinkley, who was born and grew up in Stowmarket, trained as a graphic designer upon leaving

Suffolk College and ran his own business in London.

He moved to Tampa Bay, Florida, four years ago where his wife, Amber, was born, and decided to try something new.

"It's a bit of a change to what I was doing but it's pretty interesting," he said.

"I am a little bit green but I'm definitely not an environmentalist or a hippy. I just think the way people build in Florida and the US is quite behind how things are built in Europe.

"We're not actually builders. We're going to be working with people who want to build their own home, working with architects and sub-contractors and educating them on how to develop green building procedures.

"The business is really a consultancy. Our motto is healthy homes."

Mr Brinkley, whose family still live in Suffolk, has designed the new property and will also build it.

"It uses less electricity and water and is healthier. The air quality of a home is important, especially in Florida where we have air conditioning on all day," he said.

The development, which began on March 26, is due to be completed in mid-July.

It has been built on pillars over an



SUFFOLK-BORN: Darren Brinkley, MD of Real Building, who is building the first green-certified home in St Petersburg, Florida

Photograph: CONTRIBUTED

existing property, which was gutted. All materials from the former building which would normally have been sent to landfill were recycled.

One of many environmentally-friendly features is a hot water recir-

ulation system which will allow water to be collected from showers, tubs, sinks and washing machines and used to flush toilets.

Mr Brinkley said demand for greener homes was picking up in the

US. "It's becoming more accepted. There is a lot of commercial and retail being developed in a greener way now," he said.

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