



Stepping Stone House

The site was heavily constrained: conservation area, green belt, flood zone and surrounded by listed buildings. Five planning applications over the course of three years were required before permission was obtained.

The architects were asked to propose how 3 disconnected, under used and flood prone out-buildings could be re-developed to form additional living accommodation for the existing house. Specific attention was given to the children (5 boys aged 8 to 15) who all suffer, in varying degrees, with ADHD. The design therefore seeks to engage the family with the calming effects of nature. This is achieved through the abundant use of daylight, an organic structure and natural materials.

The smaller of the two new buildings is a self contained guest house and contains a kitchen / living space, utility corridor, bathroom and bed deck. The larger building is a multifunctional space with a bathroom and bed deck and will primarily be used by the children as a play room. It is connected to the existing house via a structural glass bridge. Both buildings can be "opened" up to each other as all of the glass at ground floor level is designed as sliding, opening, door panels. At night time, the spaces can be "closed" and "screened" from each other with blinds. The stilts elevate the buildings above the lake, lifting them clear of the flood waters and allowing flush access to the existing house. They also make it possible to swim under the buildings.

The architect's landscape design is integral to the concept of engaging the family with their surroundings and included the swimming lake as well as creating a continuous route around the buildings. The path snakes through a sheltered garden of large, primordial tree ferns. 2 to 3 metres high and then leads out onto the stepping stones in the lake. Steps rise up to an elevated tree fern walkway and the bridge which connects the two buildings. At night time, the exterior lighting design highlights mature trees in the garden, to create longer views out from the buildings, whilst jets of water form an archway of illuminated lights over the stepping stones.

The architecture and landscape merge with each other to create a playful and engaging place that is both calming and spiritual.

Much of the building was pre fabricated which allowed for a brief construction period on site and minimised waste. The architects have developed the design as a building system that can be deployed on sites where water is prevalent such as lakes, coastal land and flood plains.