

Teamaker's Guesthouse

The brief for this project was to design a guest-house and workshop on the farm of a tea-producer in Latvia. Tapping into the eco-tourism industry, the farm will supplement its income by accommodating visitors who will be able to attend workshops where they will learn about the process of sustainably producing herbal teas. The site is currently occupied by a stone-walled barn and the farm is surrounded by forest.

The proposal has been driven by a desire to create a backdrop against which guests can switch off from their hectic lives, and instead practice mindfulness, reconnect with nature and the environment, and reset.

Underpinning this notion is a careful consideration of space (the distinction between public and private, domestic and non-domestic), materiality (the way different materials come together and provenance) and sustainability.

The proposal seeks to separate domestic and non-domestic spaces through employing a spine wall - to be formed from repairing and extending the existing stone - that runs the length of the building. This architectural device serves as an anchor for the various programmatic elements, allowing different uses to be practically separated, whilst minimising dead circulation space, and also tying the whole building together into a coherent, and logical arrangement of spaces.

A connectedness with the environment is encouraged. Openings provide a series of carefully curated views, whilst the landscaping 'reaches out' to the surroundings and encourages guests to explore the woodlands and nearby lake.

In contrast with the heaviness of the stone, the new structures, which will be inserted into, and attached to the spine wall, are relatively lightweight. The larger spans are achieved using a primary structure comprising of sustainably sourced, inexpensive timber, such as Douglas Fir, with engineered metal fixings and ties. The simplicity of this frame means it could probably be erected by largely unskilled labour, potentially with the help of the local community or even 'pioneer guests', at a barn raising. The frame is strategically set-out to allow the use of standard-sized sheet materials with minimal cutting, resulting in minimal material waste.

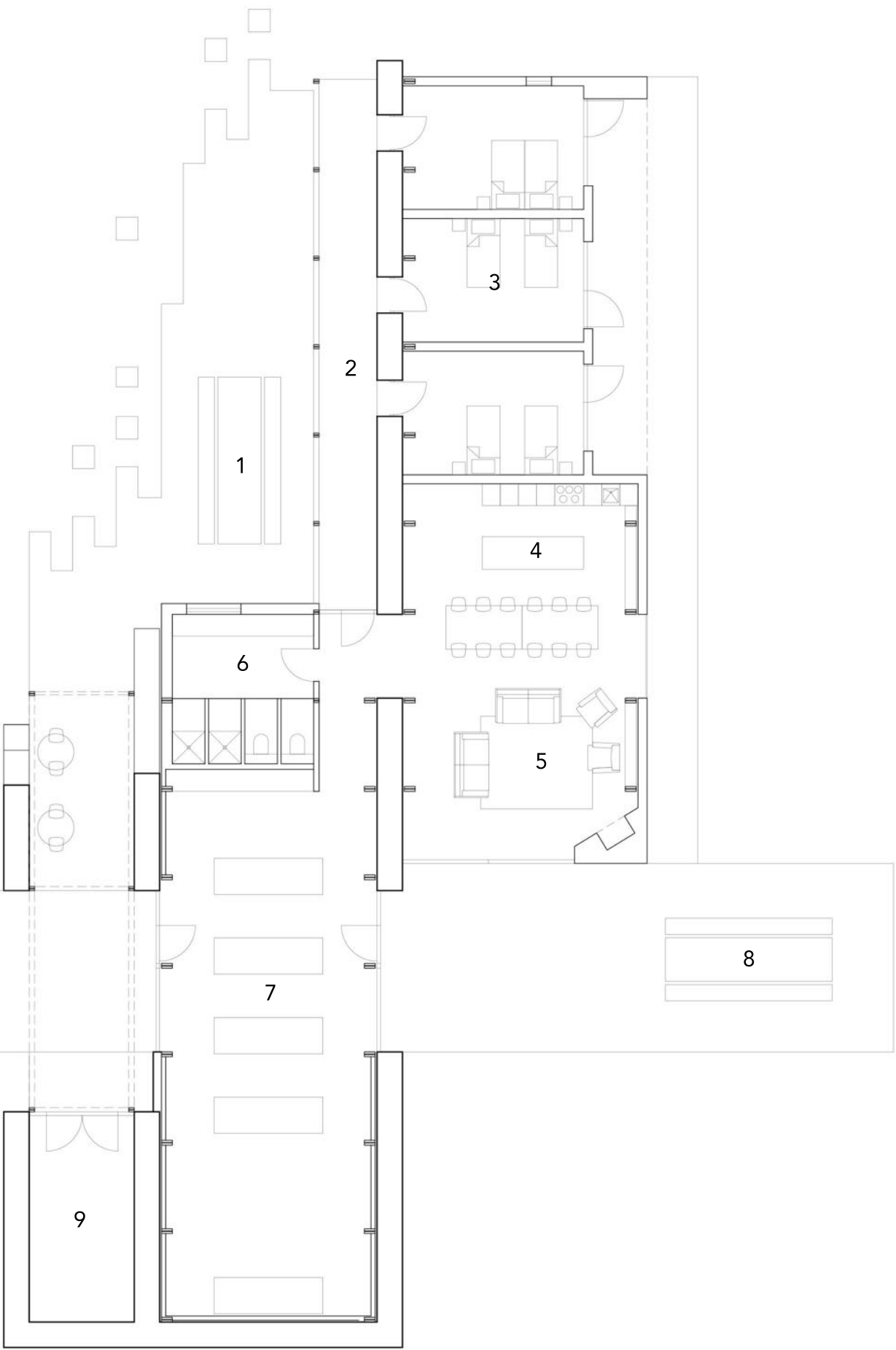
To further economise on materials, several aspects of the construction are designed to perform multiple functions. For example, the stud work forming the external walls is left exposed internally, so that it can also provide an integrated storage solution, and the plywood racking board also serves as the final finish.

It is envisaged that space heating and hot water will be provided by a biomass boiler combined with a large thermal store, and this can be combined with secondary heating in the form of modern clean-burning log stoves.

Finally, in order for this proposal to remain a valuable asset to the farm, the arrangement and scale of spaces, means that they can be used flexibly, and new programmes can be accommodated in the future as need arises.

The project is currently at the concept design stage (RIBA Stage 2).

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Left: The east-facing terrace overlooking the forest with the guest-house in the background.

Above: Floor plan of the workshop and guesthouse.

Bottom (from left to right): Context plan; A view from inside the tea-making workshop; A view inside the communal living space.

Floor Plan Legend:

- 1: West-facing outdoor dining space
- 2: Covered walkway
- 3: Guest bedrooms
- 4: Kitchen
- 5: Open-plan living space
- 6: Showers and WCs
- 7: Tea-making workshop and drying/packing space
- 8: East-facing outdoor dining space
- 9: Boiler room



Site Plan Legend:

- 1: Teamaker's guesthouse
- 2: Ozolini house
- 3: Forest trail
- 4: Lake Bezdi bene
- 5: Guest parking

