



VELUX®

HOUSE IN THE WOODS

A Countryside House in Hampshire, Great Britain



MAKE WISHES COME TRUE

In 2009, Caspar Rodgers, Chris Bryant and Tristan Wigfall founded their office led by the wish for independence and development of projects on their own rules – in conversation with all stakeholders involved in the process. With no substantive projects to work on, the trio set up a street stand offering free advice on architecture; after numerous conversations made in a couple of days, they met their first clients. Twelve years later, their practice, employing nine people, is still loyal to the ideals of participative design. Asked about the House in the Woods project, Tristan Wigfall starts speaking about the house owner and their needs, understanding the role of an architect as someone providing advice and the necessary know-how to make the client's dreams come true.

The client wished for a expansive place to accommodate her children and their families visiting her in rural Hampshire. Yet, she did not want the house coming across as huge, either from the outside or in the interior.

"The house hunkers down from the more public approach side; its facade reminds of vernacular brick buildings. The building opens towards the garden with large windows on the west, revealing its contemporary nature."

Tristan Wigfall, alma-nac



"At first, the house appears to be a typical English dwelling, but it reveals many unexpected solutions and spaces as you move around."

Tristan Wigfall, alma-nac





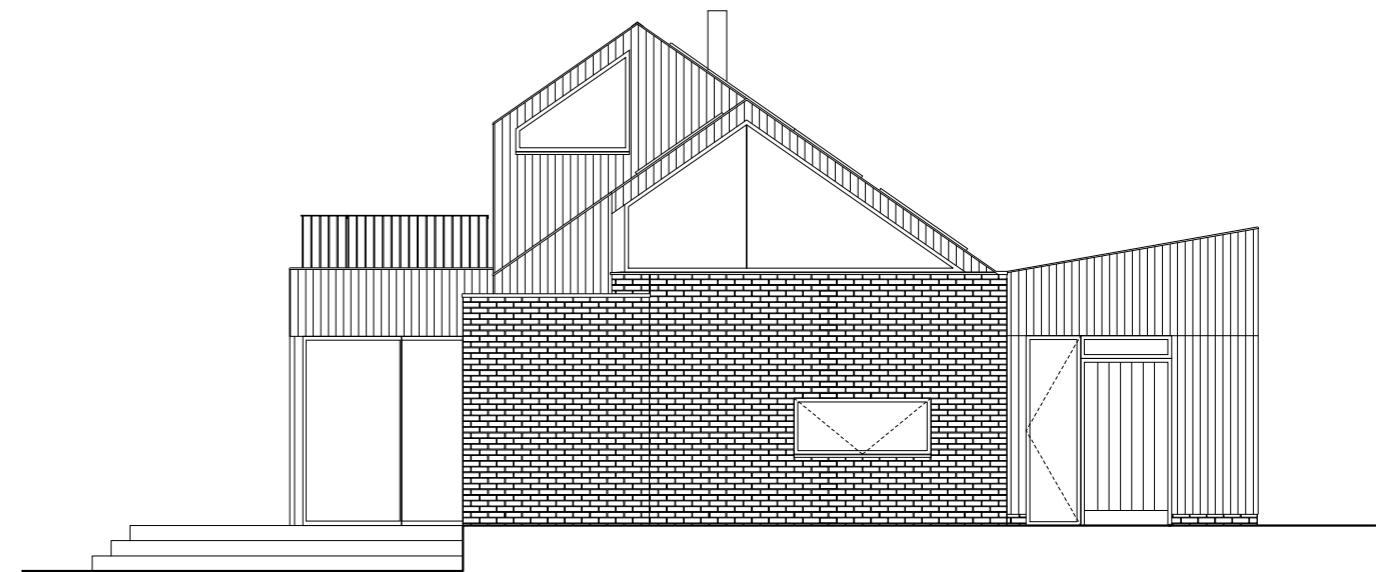
LIVING IN THE PARK

The house replaced a dilapidated bungalow from the 1950s which was coming to the end of its natural and useful life. The footprint of the building has been kept to preserve familiar views and protect the established trees and all the client's favourite spots, like the outdoor breakfast table on the eastern side. The openings were placed to frame the owner's preferred views of the garden.

The five-acre park surrounding the house was the apple of the family's eye for two generations; historic trees, thoughtfully placed bushes, and a lush lawn can be enjoyed from the generous terrace. The big trees provide natural shading, necessary in the summer months. On the upper floor, treetops provide an original addition to the interior design.

"The exact views of the garden were of great importance to the client. As an architect, I helped to make her dream house come true. It is a very personal project since I have known both the family and the site for years, and it was great to have the opportunity to work on it."

Tristan Wigfall, alma-nac



South facade with glazed gables



TWO IN ONE

The main axis of the House runs parallel to the longer side of the volume, starting in a spacious kitchen, through the living room with an open staircase, to the guest wing. The latter can be cut off from the central part of the House with a sliding door. An internal corridor leading to guest bedrooms and a garden entrance, usually a dark, unfriendly function area, is a double-storey high space drenched in daylight.

An open staircase leads to the house owner's private kingdom: on the left, a painting room. On the right; a cosy bedroom with an ensuite bathroom and a dressing room. The painting room is lit by two VELUX windows, providing optimal daylight necessary for watercolours, the home-owner's favourite pastime. A row of balcony doors leads to a generous terrace. In the bedroom, Another VELUX window opens the views up to the crowns of trees.

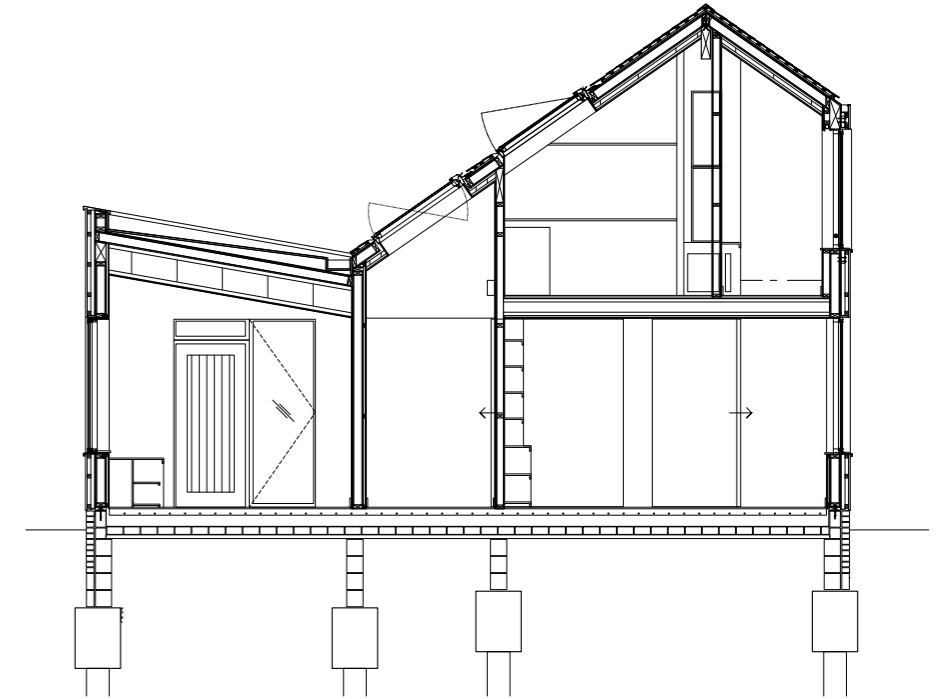
The ground floor is organised around a traditional fireplace. Its solid volume, built using the same brick as the façade, stands between the double-heighted kitchen and a lower sitting room. Passages on both sides enable free circulation between the rooms.

"We developed the project in sections to control the proportions of each room. The client wished for non-intimidating spaces in which she would feel comfortable and safe, also when alone on the property."

Tristan Wigfall, alma-nac

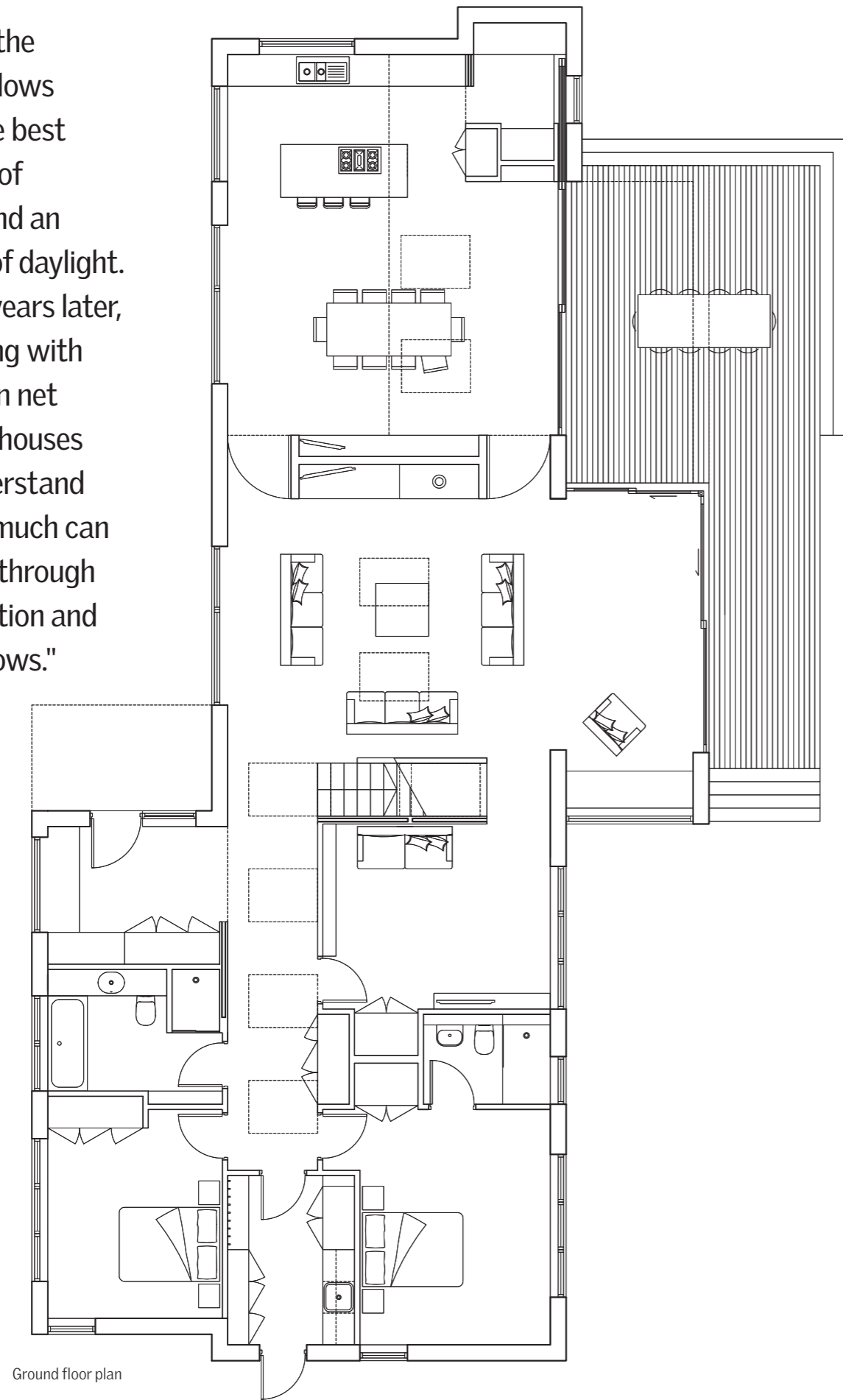
Contemporary solutions, like open space floorplans or glazed gables, are co-existing with traditional materials, like brick, and no-nonsense rooms, like a larder in the corner of the kitchen, or a garden entry.

Cross-section through the double-height corridor and the bedroom.



"We placed the VELUX windows to obtain the best proportions of the rooms and an abundance of daylight. Now, some years later, we're working with specialists on net zero carbon houses and we understand better how much can be achieved through optimal position and size of windows."

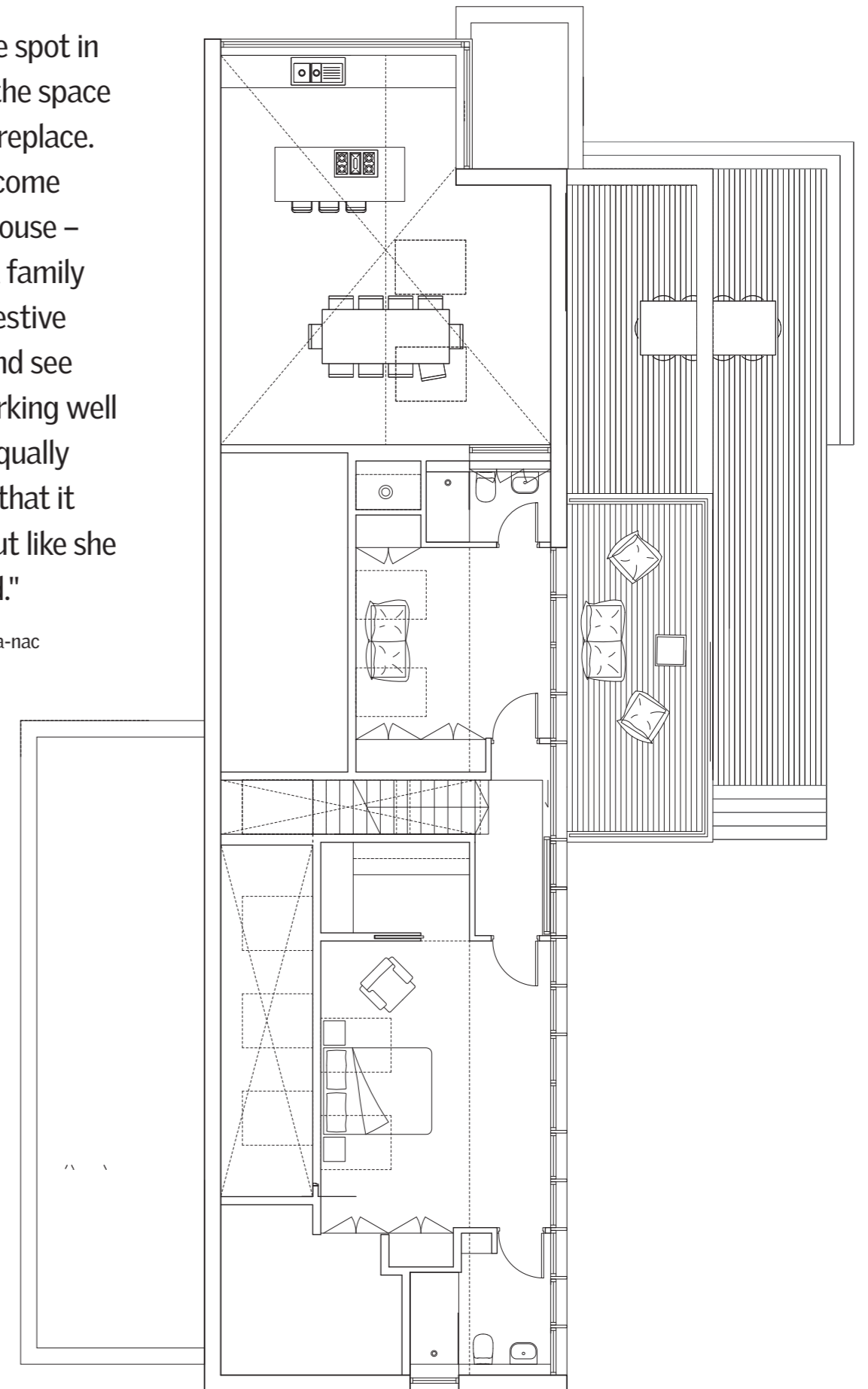
Tristan Wigfall,
alma-nac



Ground floor plan

"My favourite spot in the house is the space around the fireplace. It's lovely to come back to the house – the client is a family friend – for festive gatherings and see that all is working well and what's equally important is that it has turned out like she had imagined."

Tristan Wigfall, alma-nac



First floor plan



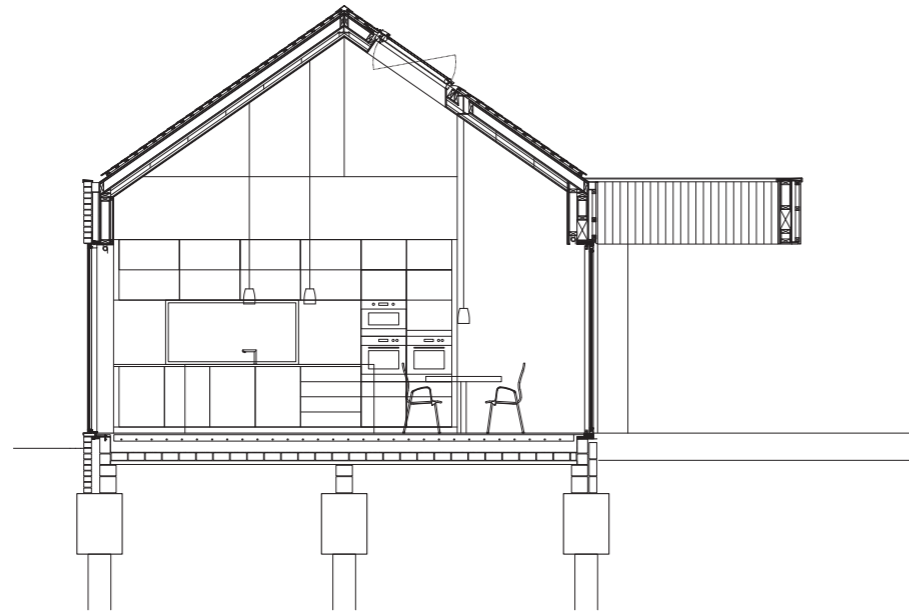


TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

A mix of factors and influences shaped the appearance of the house as much as its construction. Although the brick façades suggest a massive structure, the house is constructed with SIPs: structurally insulated panels. The entire house has been prefabricated in the factory, brought with two lorries and assembled on-site by three workers within ten days. Elements were designed to be transported with smaller trucks suitable for local roads and to be lifted by a tractor crane. As soon as that part had been completed, the finishing work could start. East and north elevations are clad with warm toned hand cut brick, while the western garden elevation features thermally treated timber cladding that will silver over time. Natural slate roof tiles round up the collection of natural materials.

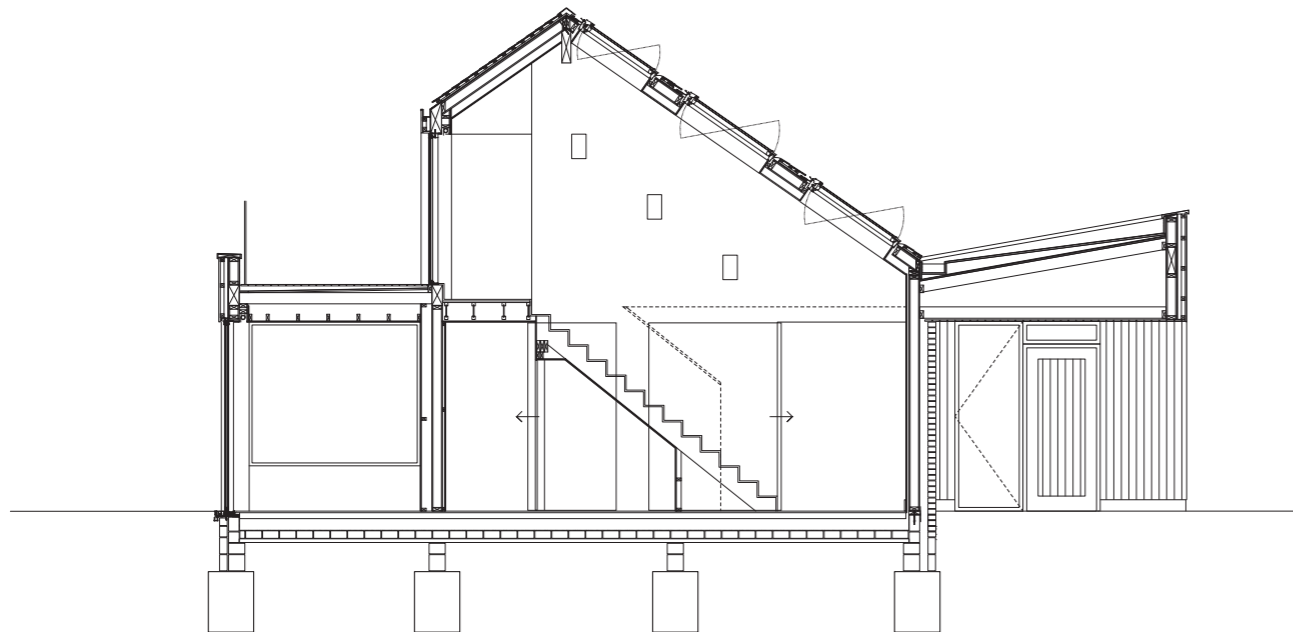
The heating system is divided in two, corresponding to the division of the house into main- and guest areas. Also, a so-called "heat sink", meaning a ground floor slab with a large thermal mass, contribute to energy saving, by evening out temperature differences thanks to its thermal inertia. The floor heating in the house is being fueled by an air source heat pump. It also covers the varying domestic water requirements thanks to two separate water cylinders.

The numerous VELUX windows open automatically should the indoor temperature rise above the comfort range. alma-nac describes it in detailed technical description: "To prevent the air indoors becoming stale or moisture laden as a consequence of the airtight design, the house is continuously mechanically ventilated when all windows are closed. A heat recovery unit extracts the heat from the exhausted air whilst simultaneously heating the replacement, fresh air introduced into the house.



"It's a complex issue of how to combine energy-saving qualities of an airtight building with the natural need for fresh air. Even in a space with good air quality, humans want to open a window to feel the breeze."

Tristan Wigfall, alma-nac



Cross-sections reveal a richness of forms and visual connections between the rooms. Above, a section through the kitchen, showing the frame along the edge of the terrace. Below, a section through the stairs, brightly lit by three VELUX windows.



East facade (above) features ten VELUX windows, providing daylight and fresh air in the house. West facade is dominated by vertical glazings, connecting the interiors to the lush garden.



PROJECT DATA

Project: Single-family House
Location: Hampshire, Great Britain
Design: Alma-nac, London
Time: 2016
Area: 240sqm

Photos: Jack Hobhouse

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Bringing light to life

