



**VELUX®**

**RETAIN AND REUSE**  
Countryside House in Oxfordshire, Great Britain





# RETAIN AND REUSE

The outskirts of many British villages grew rapidly in the 1960s, due to changes in urban design regulations, resulting in a large number of good plots with outdated, mostly single-storey buildings entering the market over the past few years.

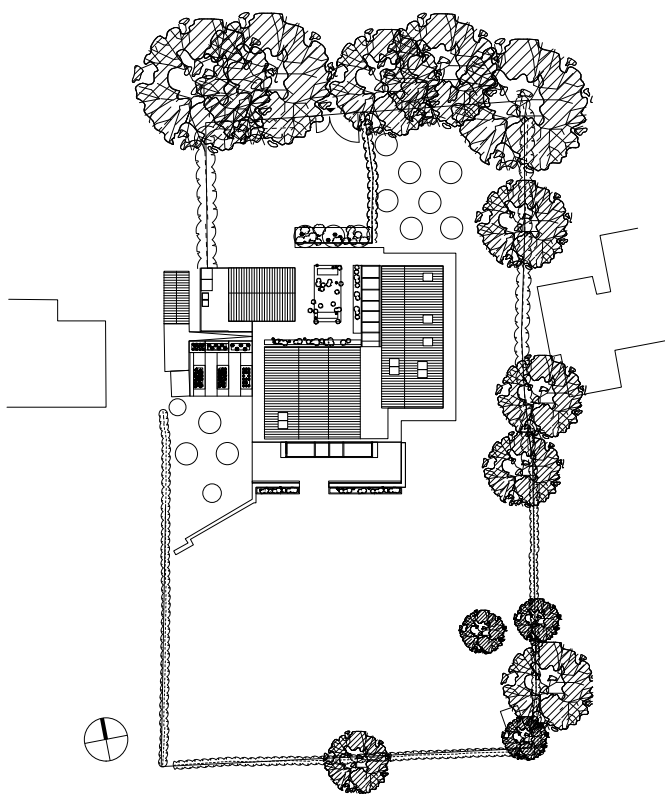
While most of the new owners tear down the houses and start from scratch, some embrace a more environmentally conscious approach during the process.

Such was the case with the clients of Charlie Luxton Design, who approached the office after purchasing a piece of land in the Cotswolds have imagined building an entirely new house.

But Charlie Luxton – in line with his belief to do architecture in an environmentally conscious way – persuaded them to use at least the existing foundations.

Charlie Luxton is one of the most widely known young architectural designers in Great Britain thanks to appearing on various TV shows, among them "Building the Dream", in which he helps people build their dream homes. He is advocating for an eco-friendly approach to architectural design on all scales and in various fields of architectural design.

Having built – partially with his own hands – a house for himself and his family, he learned a lot about how to achieve beautiful, ecological design while keeping the investment costs low.



Site plan.  
The building stands in the centre of a large piece of land with majestic trees and rare, old orchids in the garden. The entrance to the site is from the north; behind the property gate a low dry stone wall defines the northern edge of a courtyard with a water basin between the buildings.

"The decision to keep the foundations and the "skeleton" of the house set restraints on the design. The walls were covered with a thick layer of outside insulation, clad with local stone. An additional floor, supported on the existing foundations, with a metal roof, extended the living area. In the planned second project phase, a garage will be refurbished, pergola extended and the gas boiler replaced with a ground pump.

I am looking forward to going back to complete the scheme."

Charlie Luxton

# STRATEGY

Although the building seduces with its straight forward beauty, Charlie Luxton, asked about the design, talks about lowering the carbon emissions and natural ventilation.

"It's a great, breezy site, which is great for cross-ventilation of the house. We did a window above the kitchen, high in the roof, through which the high-level heat leaves the house. The pergola on the south is the place to sit on hot summer days; one can easily add more louvres, should they be needed."

One of the essential points in avoiding overheating is good roof insulation; Lamorna's well-insulated tin roof does not let the heat into the structure of the house. A fascinating insight in Charlie Luxton Design strategies on how do build ecologically conscious can be found on the office's website. Although lightly written, the texts are full of precise information enlightening for both architects and future clients. The question about what is a good insulation is answered witty and on the point: " We ask ourselves a simple question when specifying insulation, 'Would we eat our dinner off it'! If you'd be happy to use the material the insulation is made from as crockery, then it's probably fine. Materials such as mineral wool, glass fibre, wood fibre, polystyrene and ceramics are all simple products whose raw materials would be fine for a plate!"





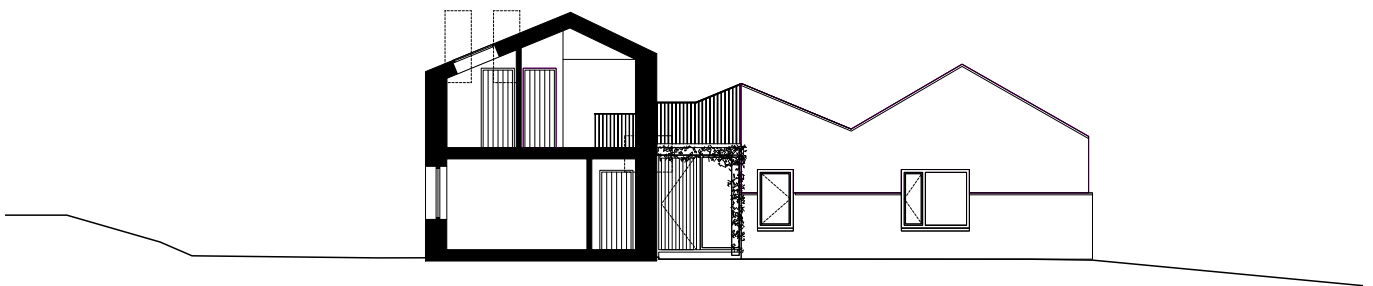






"I like VELUX triple-glazed windows a lot. Here we used the automatic version of Integra window: they work well and are reliable, they are often a part of our projects. I am not for making life easier just for one owns comfort, but as some people might not be aware enough to regulate the indoor climate by themselves, technology in the form of an automatically steered roof window gives a helping hand. It's great when we can use it to lower the energy consumption and enhance the living conditions at the same time. I'm all for intelligent support, which does not imply disconnecting from nature nor giving up control. It's important to be able to open a window oneself in the morning and listen to the birds singing."

Charlie Luxton



Section.  
Playful silhouette of the roofs of the ensemble contrasts with the flat terrain of the site.

On the left: view from the walk-in closet towards the en-suite master bathroom. The combination of materials and colours is modern and traditional at the same time. Thanks to a large amount of light from above, it was possible to use darker colours in small rooms for cosy, yet friendly spaces.





"We try to make beautiful buildings that respect both the planet and the people. We believe in importance of involving future inhabitants in decisions where and how they want to live. Engagement a is fascinating driving force!"

Charlie Luxton



# NORTHERN LIGHT

Charlie Luxton describes the climate on the northern hemisphere as challenging and points out that overheating is a serious problem even in regions which are not considered exceptionally warm and sunny.

“Alternating, there is too little or too much sun. On the one hand, one tries to scavenge as much light as possible for the inside space for the winter months. Then, to avoid overheating, one adds vast overhangs. These don’t protect against the light from the west, the biggest challenge, friend and enemy at the same time. So dumping the heat through roof windows and by doing so, cooling the structure overnight is a great solution.”

Charlie Luxton

“Roof windows protect the house from insects, and therefore are better than normal windows, because the bugs don’t fly down, seriously!” – jokes Charlie Luxton before changing to a more serious tone to describe the beauty of daylight and the importance of a differentiated, well thought through use of openings:

“Light is coming into a house from all directions. Light is the key, whether you design from scratch or convert a building. Good, natural light indoors can both enhance or ruin a room. I understand architecture as painting with light, creating contrasts. Walking through darker rooms toward bright ones is a beautiful experience you’ll never have in a glazed box. Staircases and rooms with different ceiling heights let the sun rays wander vertically through the building. Roof windows add a lot of possibilities to the play of contrasts; before them, the centre of a house was often plain dark and uninviting.”

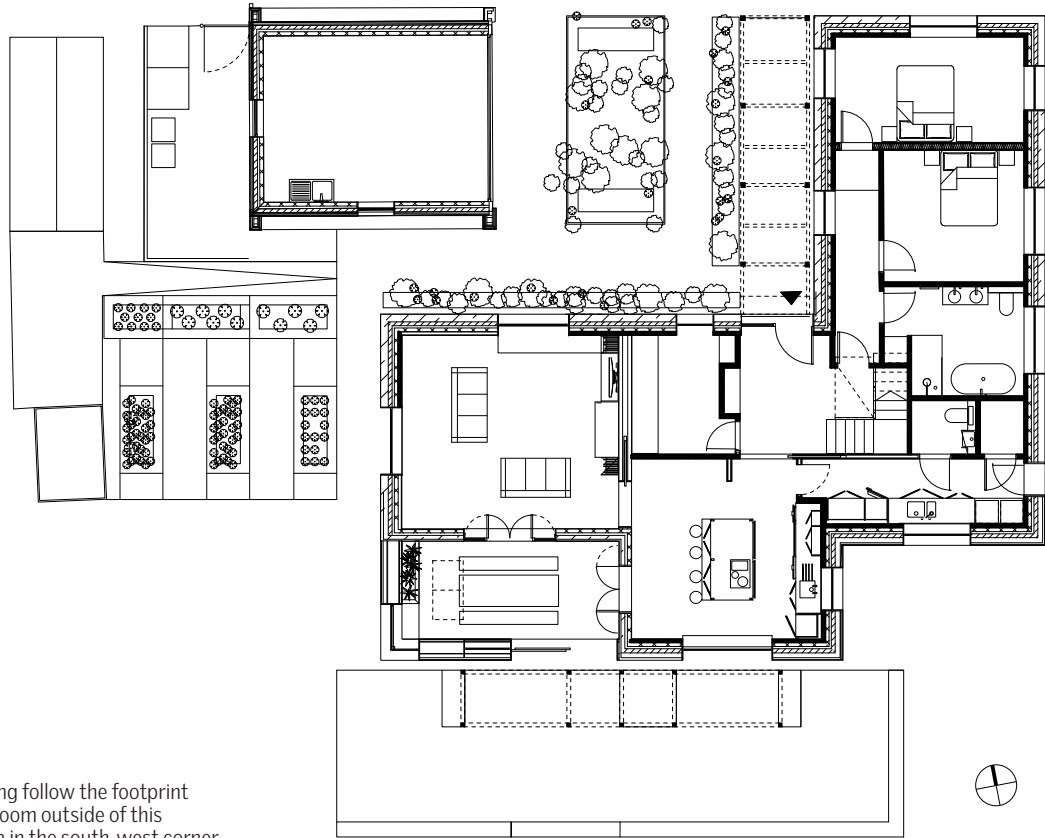
Charlie Luxton

"The transition from  
day to night on the northern  
hemisphere is long and beautiful."

Charlie Luxton





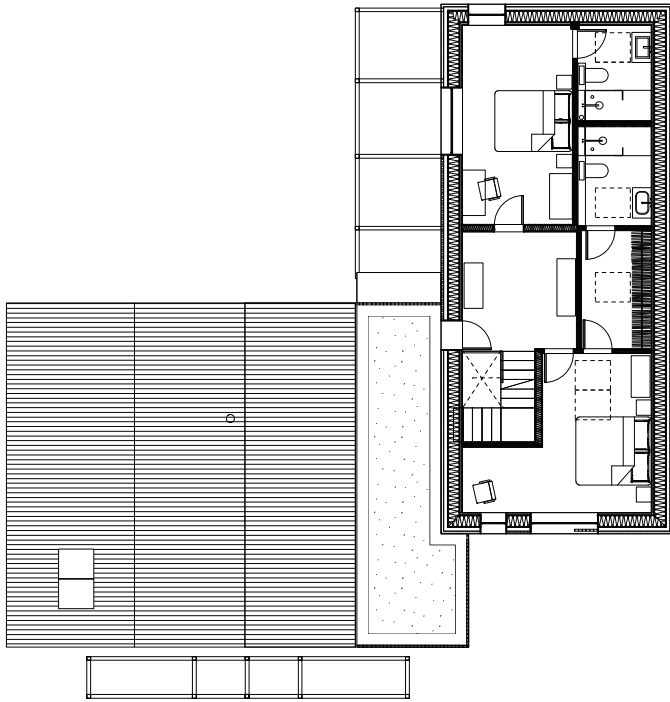


Ground floor plan. Contours of the new building follow the footprint of the old house. The only room outside of this perimeter is the dining area in the south-west corner of the house.

Below: dark green walls of the living room accentuate ceiling's geometry.







"There is huge pressure on self-builders and renovators – especially with the growing trend in valuing houses using floor area – to do away with double-height spaces. This is a mistake — double heights don't waste space, they make space."

Charlie Luxton

**First floor plan.**

The added floor in the east wing of the house contains two large bedrooms, walk-in closet and two en-suite bathrooms. Several VELUX windows lighten up the spaces; the smaller rooms rely entirely on them. An opening above the staircase provides zenithal light on the ground floor.


Below: The light enters the spacious, cosy kitchen from all directions, thanks to the special form of the roof.





## PROJECT DATA

Project: Single-family House  
Location: Oxfordshire, Great Britain  
Design: Charlie Luxton Design, London [www.charlieluxtondesign.com](http://www.charlieluxtondesign.com)  
Time: 2017 - 2018  
Photos: Ed RS Aves

A modern interior space, likely a balcony or a bright room, featuring a large skylight in the ceiling and a window on the right. A large, leafy plant in a teal wicker basket sits on a wooden floor. A black metal railing is visible in the foreground, and a white spherical pendant light hangs from the ceiling.

"Our architecture is about stirm design combined with painting with light and a lot of practical information! We are looking at the stars and digging in the construction site dirt at the same time."

Charlie Luxton

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