

Mole

PRESS ENQUIRIES

Claire Curtice Publicists
claire@clairecurtice.co.uk
+ 44 (0) 20 7613 1442
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PRESS RELEASE

ROMSEY TOWNHOUSE, CAMBRIDGE

07/2019

Romsey Townhouse is a new, self-build house designed by Mole Architects. The two-storey end-of-terrace building replaces a dilapidated warehouse in Cambridge's Romsey Town Conservation Area. The challenge was to make a three-bedroom house with generous living space and two workspaces within a tightly constrained plot. Discussion with the planning authority and neighbours has resulted in a 135m² house that is distinctly different to the adjacent terrace, with a low profile to preserve views of the terrace and reduce impact on the adjoining gardens.

The resulting building has a long, narrow plan, longer at ground floor than the first floor. The scheme builds to the limits of the plot to the north and south, stepping back from the pavement line to the street. On Sedgwick Street, the east-facing front portion of the house is two-storey, with a flat-topped pitched zinc roof. The eaves level in the upper bedrooms is relatively low, with the bedrooms partially within the roof space. The circulation element of the plan is housed within a narrower section to the north. The stepping back of this area to the rear of the house to the west ensures that the building has a minimal impact on the first floor window of the adjacent house. The central portion of the ground floor has a flat roof with a large rooflight, allowing light and air into the kitchen and dining areas, and a view of the apple tree outside.

The materials reflect and enhance the character of the conservation area: brick cladding to the lower levels and cedar boarding with copper panels on the upper floors, presenting a contemporary reflection of traditional timber weatherboarding, and complementing the hanging tiles used on a nearby house.

The client, Mark Brinkley, project managed the build using subcontractors working on a Structural Insulated Panel (SIPS) superstructure. Mark has a long-standing professional interest in self-build, having written and produced the Housebuilder's Bible since 1994. He has used much of the information gleaned from this venture to inform the newly published 13th edition. The triple-glazed house achieves the Passivhaus Institute's Low Energy Building Standard and energy use is offset with a photovoltaic (PV) array on the south-facing roof.

Mark Brinkley said:

"It was a complicated project on a confined plot situated on a narrow one-way street. In fact, it took us the best part of four years to complete, soaking up far more of my time than I ever imagined. Yet with the help of the architects' vision and some really conscientious subcontractors, we've created a Tardis of a house that is visually striking whilst sitting easily on the street. The back of the house is one big open-plan space, bathed in overhead light, and it still gives me a tingle of excitement each time I come into it."

Meredith Bowles, director of Mole Architects, said:

"It took some time to figure out how to shoehorn a three-bedroom house into this end-of terrace plot in a conservation area. The form of the house was derived from a desire to get maximum light and space for the house whilst minimising the impact on the neighbouring house and gardens. It's an intricate set of spaces, with the constraint on the plan being compensated for by a generosity in the section."

Romsey Townhouse won a Cambridge Design Award 2018 in the Small Building category.

FACTS AND CREDITS

Address	73 Sedgwick Street, Cambridge, CB1 3AL
Client	Private client – Mark Brinkley and Mandy Simms
Gross internal floor area	135.05m ²
Construction cost	£415,000
Date of appointment	Nov 2015
Construction dates	June 2017 – Oct 2018
Completion	Sept 2018
Architects	Mole Architects
Project Architect/s	Meredith Bowles, Sasha Edmonds, Alex Gordon, Louise McGarrigle
Contractor	Mark Brinkley
Engineer	Ben Heath, Conisbee
Quantity surveyor	Sheriff Tiplady Associates
Energy consultant	Andrew Fisher, Whole House Energy
Lighting design	Nicky Burrige, nb lighting & landscapes
Heritage Consultant	Jon Burgess, Beacon Planning Ltd
Photographer	Matthew Smith Architectural Photography

Mole Architects

Mole Architects was established by Meredith Bowles in 1997. It is a progressive and innovative award-winning architectural practice based in Cambridge.

Mole produces modern designs that are appropriate to their local context, combining traditional materials and techniques with a more contemporary attitude to design and building. Mole's commitment to 'green building' has been a constant throughout the life of the practice.

From the Black House in the Cambridgeshire Fens (winner of the 2004 Manser Medal and featured in the V&A architecture gallery) to The Houseboat (winner of the 2017 Stephen Lawrence Prize), the practice has been marked out by its distinctiveness, originality and personality.

Recent projects include: Marmalade Lane in Orchard Park, Cambridge, the UK's the first council-led cohousing scheme; a health centre, estates offices and housing at Eddington, North West Cambridge, for Cambridge University; and The Secular Retreat, with Swiss architect and Pritzker Prize winner Peter Zumthor, commissioned by Living Architecture. All three projects have been awarded a RIBA National Award 2019.

www.molearchitects.co.uk



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