



**PRESS ENQUIRIES**  
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# KnoxBhavan

PRESS RELEASE

## MARCH HOUSE

PREFABRICATED, FLOOD RESILIENT, FUTURE-PROOFED HOUSE ON THE BANKS OF  
THE RIVER THAMES

**02/2022**

Knox Bhavan has completed a new, sustainable single-family dwelling on a natural floodplain on the banks of the River Thames in the UK.

The house harnesses modern methods of construction (MMC), showcasing a new prefabricated cassette system developed by the practice in partnership with modular manufacturer BlokBuild and engineers Price & Myers.

The design deploys flood resilience strategies to make a sustainable home which will withstand the site's predicted increased flood risk for the next 100 years, presenting a viable design solution for building on sites susceptible to flooding.

Located on a picturesque stretch of the river which is used extensively as a public amenity by walkers, cyclists, rowers and passing boat traffic, the house forms part of a collection of houses along the riverbank, many self-built as summer houses. The bank opposite is designated permanent pastureland, and the house looks on to farmland, National Trust sites and the unspoilt beauty of Winter Hill.

Designed as a single-storey dwelling with flexible open plan interiors, it provides a future-proofed permanent home for the client, a former professional dancer who has lived on the site for 19 years.

The house, which appears to hover above the ground, nestles within a pre-existing river garden and orchard planted by the client and now reaching maturity. The house plan has been configured around a curated collection of Danish mid-century modern furniture, lighting and art. Included within the brief was a catalogue of every item, listing provenance, record of sale, dimensions, and artist, designer/fabricator.

The new house replaces a two-storey detached house (built in 1926), which was poorly built and presented an obstacle to the flow of water when the river flooded. The redevelopment presented the opportunity to improve amenities to the site, which was originally a mooring for a houseboat; to date services are limited to electrical power. The site now incorporates a borehole for potable water and its own sewage plant.

The house is raised off the ground on a table of slim galvanised steel stilts fixed onto concrete piles supporting a lightweight steel chassis. This lightweight frame touches the ground lightly, avoiding need for a concrete slab, so that the house hovers in the landscape and appears to float when flooded.

The house is constructed of a prefabricated oriented strand board (OSB) cassette system which is insulated and clad in stained larch in a repeating rhythm of narrow planed boards and wide sawn cladding, referencing the houseboats formerly moored here. Balustrades are galvanised steel, and handrails are oiled hardwood. Expansive frameless windows (fixed glazing with opening shutters) are carefully placed to frame views of the landscape and, combined with rooflights, fill the house with light. Solar gain is tempered through overhangs and hidden external slatted timber blinds. The zinc roof features a green roof planted with native wildflowers and grasses to save energy and improve biodiversity.

Deck access on three elevations embeds the house into the landscape; the southwest elevation provides a stepped entrance; the north elevation has wide steps leading into the garden and onto the river jetty; and the south elevation deck provides stair access to a kitchen garden.

The house is designed to emphasise the central north/south axis, which has a raised roof expressing the main living spaces, including a lounge and dining room subdivided by a free-standing wall and lit by the central rooflight. Bedroom suites bookend the central space on the river side. The client's suite is furthest from the entrance and painted in dark colours to create a cosy, intimate and enveloping space. It includes a bedroom and bathroom accessed by sliding doors, and an adjoining fitness room with views across the orchard to Winter Hill. The guest suite is accessed by a small lobby so that it can operate as a separate wing if occupied by a companion or carer in the future. The kitchen is located in the southwest corner, and a study in southeast corner.

A new boathouse and garden shed clad with galvanised sinusoidal sheeting complement the house and complete the design.

An energy-efficient home with a reduced carbon footprint was a key driver of the client brief. Knox Bhavan has developed a carbon calculator system called KBe for benchmarking their projects, and this will be offered to other SMEs. The efficiencies of MMC have resulted in a carbon-negative calculation for the above ground construction of March House, which offsets part of the carbon embodied in the foundations.

Sasha Bhavan, Founding Partner, Knox Bhavan, said:

*"Using MMC directly translated our drawings into a swiftly assembled, ready-to-use external envelope. March House demonstrates how these technologies can be applied to the most specific of briefs."*

Elizabeth Rose, client, said:

*"I am happy to grow older in this inspiring home. I use every room when I'm here alone, but equally the house works for entertaining family and friends in its warm and welcoming spaces. I now have an energy-efficient and flood-resilient house which reflects the expertise and design vision of its architect."*

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**Notes to editors:**

<b>Location:</b>	On the Thames near Cookham, UK
<b>Site area:</b>	2,130m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Gross internal area in m2:</b>	166m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Value:</b>	Confidential
<b>Architect:</b>	Knox Bhavan
<b>Design team:</b>	Sasha Bhavan, Fergus Knox, Katherine Johnson
<b>Structural engineer:</b>	Price & Myers
<b>Landscape designer:</b>	Elizabeth Rose
<b>Services engineer:</b>	Paul Bastick Associates
<b>Quantity surveyor:</b>	Ian Thomson & Company Ltd
<b>Contractor:</b>	Philiam Construction
<b>Timber frame subcontractor:</b>	BlokBuild
<b>Joinery:</b>	Five Furniture
<b>Photographs:</b>	© Edmund Sumner

**Knox Bhavan** is an award-winning practice established in 1995 by Simon Knox and Sasha Bhavan. Collaboration is a central driver, and all projects, including one-off houses, public buildings and conservation projects, demonstrate a fascination with materials and sensitivity to the environment as well as a commitment to craftsmanship and simplicity of form.

Described as “one of the most award-festooned small practices in the UK” by Blueprint Magazine, Knox Bhavan has won numerous RIBA Awards, Civic Trust Awards and many other industry awards.

The practice’s built projects, which have informed the design of March House, include: New Maltings, a pavilion in the grounds of a Ted Cullinan-designed house in Suffolk (2003); Rigg Beck, the Lake District (2011); and Crowbrook, Hertfordshire (2013).

Other significant built projects to date include London Brownstones (2015) and Knox Bhavan studio, Peckham (2018).

The practice has a second house under construction in Hertfordshire which uses the same timber cassette system as March House. It is designed to cater to the specific needs of its quadriplegic owner.

**[knoxbhavan.co.uk](http://knoxbhavan.co.uk)**

**BlokBuild** is an off-site construction company founded in 2015 to drive innovation and sustainability through digital manufacturing technologies. They work closely with architects, engineers and developers to explore the vast, ever-evolving opportunities and advantages of modern methods of construction (MMC). Their innovative approach combines system design, specialist manufacture and on-site construction to offer a fully end-to-end service managed by their hands-on team.

**[blokbuild.com](http://blokbuild.com)**



Photograph © Edmund Sumner