

SECTION HEADER

Why lean and green does not have to be *mean* on design

AS environmental awareness has grown, architects have become increasingly focused on sustainability, energy efficiency and green building. But in the quest for green growth, many are conscious this should not compromise the scope of design. ARCH-angels Architects in Brighton is one such practice committed to integrating sustainable, cost-effective construction with sophisticated, practical designs.

Co-directors Nicola Thomas and Richard Zinzan share more than 20 years of developing an environmental identity through private practice. Founding ARCH-angels Architects in 2009, they saw the opportunity to take this further. "Our aim is to create green designs that do not forego on form or function and deliver on the use and quality of space for our clients to enjoy," says Nicola.

The practice strives to constantly push the boundaries of eco architecture; taking on large-scale community projects as well as small domestic renovations. And now, the team have incorporated bespoke one-off new-build houses into their repertoire. Whatever the project and whatever the size, it seems ARCH-angels Architects are intent on exceeding current building regulations as well as client expectations. "We can often find solutions a client or builder might not have been able to envisage," says Richard.

Many people shy away from green architecture, because of the misconception that sustainable building is more expensive. There is also the fear that architects will impose their own ideas and style onto a project. But that's exactly where ARCH-angels Architects come into their own. "Matching our ideals with those of our clients is at the heart of what we do. It is important to us that our clients are at the centre of their project and we work on a fixed fee basis so there are no hidden costs," says Nicola.



New country house project with plans for an educational facility to serve local school children and public artworks using reclaimed materials

ARCH-angels Architects understand that an integrated design process is fundamental to the success of a green building project — and that should actively involve all members of the team as well as the client. As a result, every building is unique in its architectural style. "As you will see from our projects, our practice does not have an 'office' style," says Richard. "The look and feel of the property is dependent on the wishes of the client and the context of the development."

A typical example of domestic-scale architecture carried out by the practice is Radinden Manor Road in Hove. The project came to them as an uninspiring modern house with no green credentials. ARCH-



Stunning barn-like architecture replacing an outdated 1950s bungalow



angels Architects introduced much needed space and natural light by creating a versatile free-flow space between the ground floor living areas and the garden. Additional accommodation was added through a roof extension with locally sourced and coppiced sweet chestnut cladding, completely transforming the front of the building.

The practice has taken a radically different approach to a new country house project in East Hampshire. The building's orientation turns the archetypal country house on its head. As well as maximising passive solar gain, the building addresses any potential planning issues due to its green field location. All the requirements of modern



"ARCH-angels' expertise took our project from ordinary to exceptional. We are delighted with the results"

living are quietly dealt with underneath a timber gridshell roof, while earth sheltering keeps the visual impact minimal and increases biodiversity.

Adding bespoke one-off new build houses to their portfolio, ARCH-angels Architects have recently completed a stunning family home with barn-like architecture. Other projects in the pipeline include an impressive contemporary 5 bedroom 3 storey house in Brighton as well as an interesting two storey 'upwards' extension to a bungalow in the same town and two new eco-houses in Leatherhead.

"We have a strong green vision," says Nicola. "One which we can apply to different types of projects, from the most ordinary to the most extraordinary."

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