

SOUTHERN, SUSTAINABLE comfort

A timber framed sustainable house in Co Cork, proves that timber frame can be more flexible and eco friendly than other materials when it comes to contemporary design.

words: Caroline Allen photos: Ger Lawlor

The Owner: David Pearson.

The Location: Rochestown, Co. Cork.

Type of House: Two storey contemporary dwelling.

Size of House: 170m²

The Architects: John Morehead and Paul O'Leary of Wain Morehead Architects.

The Brief: To create a comfortable, modern family home integrating sustainable principles, with freeflowing space and extensive hard and soft landscaping. The connection between the house, pool features and garden was vital to the green-fingered owner.

Biggest Challenge: One of the biggest challenges, according to David, was the installation of the heating system, which involved quite a bit of work. However, he is delighted with the end result. "It really is a warm comfortable house and we've barely had to turn the heating system on."

Build Route: Groundworks contract and design build off-site fabrication.

Method of Construction: Closed wall timber frame from Griffner.

Planning Time: Three months in planning process.

Build Time: Ten months.

Build Cost: Circa €500,000.

Verdict: Both architect and client regard it as an excellent outcome. "The finished product is an A3 rated dwelling, well deserved for an enthusiastic client who had an uncanny ability to get the best from everyone involved," remarks John Moorhead.







He bought the site in May 2006 and had final grant of planning permission in September of that year, without any objections. The brief required a family friendly modern home incorporating spacious living areas, three bedrooms and a dedicated mezzanine level to accommodate a library and home office area. "I didn't want any part of the house to be closed off and I wanted to maximise the sense of space. I also didn't want a very large house as I had come from a very large property."

Significant hard and soft landscaping was also envisaged from the outset. As a keen gardener, the interrelationship between the house, pool features and garden was fundamental to the client. All existing vegetation on the site was also retained in so far as possible to enable the new structure to seamlessly integrate with the existing surroundings. The existing mature

trees on the south-east corner of the site are also dominant and were integrated into the overall screen effect, considered vital in this rural setting.

House setting

To address the existing topography and mitigate the impact of the dwelling in its surroundings to prevent overlooking and other issues, a new stone garden wall comprised of indigenous stone was constructed to the northern side of the site off which the new development straddles. The northern façade fronting onto the street is private, with small protective openings and includes timber screens to the entrance area. Render, natural stone and timber cladding are juxtaposed in the cladding.



The zinc clad, low-lying mono pitch roof opens up to the north and the ground floor to the principal part of the house is set at a level approximately 1.5m below the existing cul de sac avenue which also reduces the visual impact of the property, particularly from the north. An entrance canopy completes the sheltered nature of the approach.

The fenestration pattern on the north consists of high-level windows to give direct light to the kitchen and utility areas. On the east, minimal windows were strategically placed to permit morning sun, yet prevent overlooking of the adjacent property and large expanses of glazing to the south, which form an integral part of the dwelling's passive solar design. This is further complemented by the array of solar evacuated tubes erected in the garden, also acting as a shelter for log drying.

The predominantly glazed southern façade aims to maximise solar gain but can exhaust hot air through high-level openable sections. The open plan ground floor living accommodation is double height and overlooked by a first floor gallery.

Heating

Underfloor heating and the solar panel keep the house toasty. "A temperature gauge on the solar panel allows me to see it working and it's phenomenal," enthuses the client. The fireplace in the living area is accompanied by another ope for log storage and a camp on the chimney system means that it can be closed off when a fire is not lit. "Although I haven't lit the fire yet, including a fireplace is probably a kickback to my childhood. I felt I couldn't leave it out," David reflects.

Griffner mainly looked after kitting out the house but the owner selected his own kitchen – a SieMatic – and other aspects of the décor with the assistance of interior designer Valerie Hogan of Hogan Interiors. Foster Glass doors were used in the bathrooms to make the most of natural light. Wooden flooring features throughout except in the kitchen and utility areas and the bathrooms.

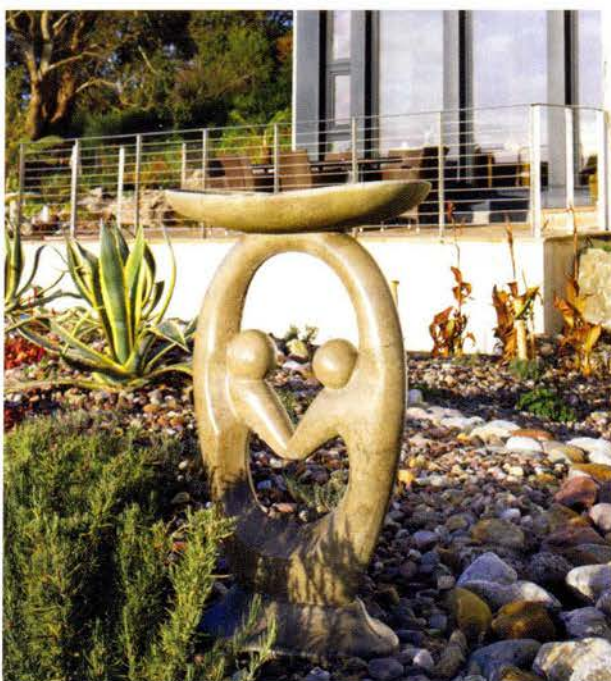
The house was constructed in a factory in Mullingar which has since closed with all building work now done in Austria, and brought to Cork on 40ft flat backed truck, lifted off with an on-site crane and put in place in various sections. Arlyn Developments, which had previously done the groundwork, had the slab and stone faced wall ready.

‘We had put a lot of thought into the design before we went to Griffner and they took John’s plans and subject to engineering issues, implemented what he had specified,’ says David. He worked with landscape designer, Graeme Coates to devise the pool features and garden. So passionate is he about gardening that it was planted out before the house was finished.

Sustainable savings

Now that everything is finished, David enjoys being able to kick back in his light-filled, airy, streamlined and sustainable home. Just ten minutes’ drive from the city centre, it is a beautiful setting in which to chill out. “I really feel like I can get away from it all here.”

Although he hasn’t been living in the house long enough to assess the savings from the ‘green’ features, he is confident that they make the house significantly cheaper to run. With sustainability, style and serenity combined in this project, there is a great sense of satisfaction all round.





Useful Contacts

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