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# A coastal retreat

This stunning home by the sea offers a touch of luxury for its owners

PHOTOS: Richard Downer

Is it possible to combine the human desire for luxury living with creating ideal habitats for all those creatures already inhabiting the space? Moulded into a south-facing grassed slope in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty near Port Isaac, the Coastal Retreat attempts to create this perfect balance. The building itself replaces a dilapidated farmhouse and outbuildings with a new luxury home that embraces its countryside setting of wildflower meadows and Cornish hedges with careful attention paid to provide ideal homes for the many other inhabitants that occupy this stunning part of Cornwall's coastline.

The sympathetic design of the house responds to the sensitive site. The house has two wings

linked by a glazed central entrance and stairwell. Entry to the house is down a flight of granite steps, set between two Cornish hedges.

The house makes the most of the views and the light with huge sliding glass doors that frame views out to the coast and the countryside. An 18-metre sliding door opens out on to the pool, decking and hot tub.

The interiors have been designed to be elegant and timeless with dramatic and playful volumes. The careful use of natural materials, lighting and subtle features for storage and decoration with stimulating long vistas through the building and out to the landscape beyond focus back to this.

Inside is where style and fun playfully collide. The

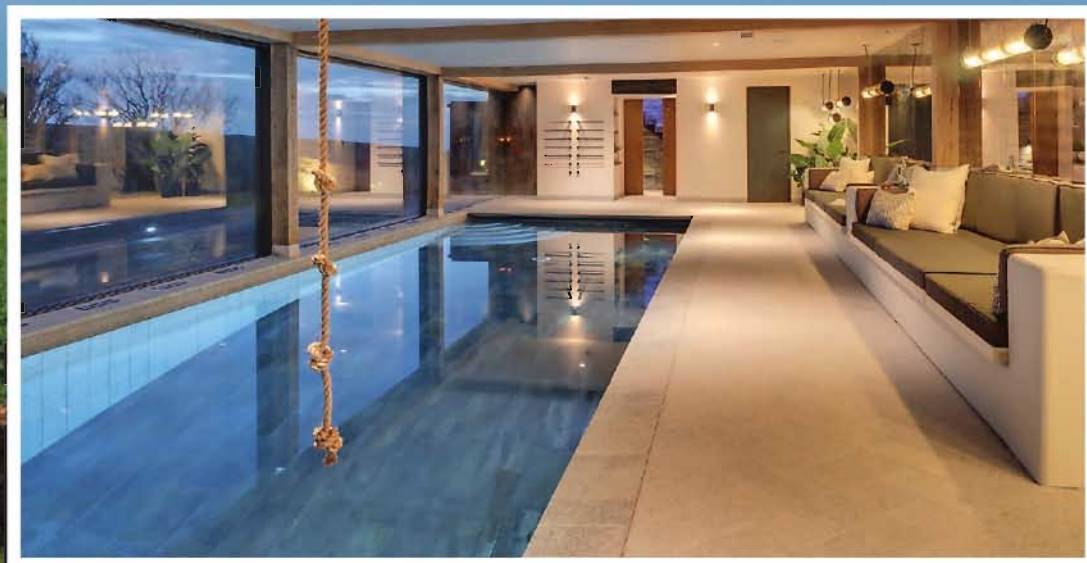
children's bedroom incorporates a mezzanine den and play net that allow its inhabitants to be suspended over the room. The games and movie room utilises space over a secret study to create a gaming for older children and a bookcase doorway conceals the secret study entrance.

Each of the bedrooms and their en suite bathrooms have their own interior concept: global chic, Scandi, eclectic and rough luxe.

Outside a former chickenshed ruin has been transformed in to The Lookout which sits above the house offering panoramic views of the coastline.

"One of the challenges was trying to develop a fairly sizable house that respected and responded to its position in the ANOB and proximity close to the South West Coast

**MAIN:** The house sits in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty near Port Isaac  
**BELOW:** Among the retreat's features is an indoor swimming pool and games and movie room











Path and visibility from public viewpoints,” explains architect Gavin Woodford from Devon-based Woodford Architecture and Interior Design.

“Our solution was to design a new building of much higher quality and environmental performance to replace the dilapidated farmhouse and outbuildings that were on the site and provide landscape and ecology improvements.”

The entire development has been designed to enhance the area and the AONB. The two wings to the house, includes one that uses locally sourced walling stone from a neighbouring quarry and the other clad with Shou Sugi Ban timber (an ancient Japanese technique for waterproofing and preserving wood), to replicate a farmhouse and an agricultural unit.

“Another challenge was to connect the architecture and the interiors to the landscape. We have used minimal frame glass sliding doors and this let daylight spill into the house and allows views out to the coastal and countryside views beyond,” says Gavin. “We designed timber brise soleil [a type of solar shading system] and used these together with the Shou Sugi Ban cladding to play with views and daylight and shadow from inside the house. We sourced locally a collection of huge granite boulders and set them in to the landscape and the decking and this helps to ground the house and connect it with its surroundings.”

The Woodford designers sought a palette of materials that would give the house a rustic and gentle character. “We have used tumbled grey/white granite setts laid in a herringbone pattern throughout the ground floor of the house and this extends out to the west facing terrace of the house,” adds Gavin. The same granite in larger slabs has been used to create an impressive stepped entrance way. “We have used Corten steel with its rustic rust finish for the main entrance doors, the barn style doors to the swimming pool and to the roof of the sun room and the glass link.” The house is dotted with vintage furniture - including a timber workbench and a sewing





*'Inside is where style and fun playfully collide... The children's bedroom incorporates a mezzanine den and play net that allow its inhabitants to be suspended over the room'*

machine table which have been repurposed as bathroom vanity units.

"We used a variety of timbers, laid in different patterns to clad walls and provide headboards to the bedrooms and in their associated en suite bathrooms we have used large format tiles in a variety of finishes to respond to the individual style of each room.

A highlight of the interiors is the children's bedroom where the mezzanine play den is accessed by a set of steps between the bunk beds, from this den you can climb onto a play net (if you are brave enough) and will be suspended over the room.

"A secret door can be a fantastic device to add drama and charm and has an almost ethereal quality," adds Gavin of the bookcase doorway which conceals a secret entrance to the study. "We have incorporated a rope swing so you can launch yourself into your own indoor rock pool. We have used neon lighting to give the house a sense of humour and witty character."

The environmental credentials of the building were a vital ingredient to the overall design

**LEFT (TOP):** The kitchen provides a stunning focal point

**LEFT (MIDDLE):** The open plan living space is partially split by a fireplace

**LEFT (BOTTOM):** Each bedroom and en suite has been given its own style

**TOP:** Large frameless windows make the most of the views in every room

for both owners and the architects. "The house structure has been built into the hillside with a high thermal mass and superinsulation," explains Gavin. "There is a simple solar control strategy which incorporates brise soleil, which together minimises the house's overall energy demand. This, alongside modern energy supply, ground source heating, photovoltaics, heat recovery and control systems minimise energy use.

The ecology and biodiversity approach is equally impressive. The Cornish hedges have been rebuilt, restored and rewilded with native shrubs species. Roosting sites for crevice-dwelling bats such as common pipistrelle have been incorporated within the 'pool wing' beneath the Shou Sui Ban cladding, which now provides numerous roosting opportunities for bats and small songbirds such as the house sparrow and wrens. A barn owl nest box has been also been built into the Lookout. Old telegraph poles that once obscured view have been removed and cabling buried below ground to reveal the views

and open up the landscape.

The fields surrounding the house will continue to be farmed but with a conservation bias, by not using fertilisers or spreading farmyard manure. The hay cut will be delayed until July to allow skylarks to nest and young to have fledged. The field around the house has a mosaic of short and long grasses and log, brash and rock piles have been scattered to provide potential hibernation sites for reptiles.

Below the house lies woodland and bluebell woods complete with a stream and a forager's field which have been cleared of debris and the waste used as the foundation of a new ecologically aware landscape. The broadleaved woodland has now been managed and enlarged by planting a new woodland strip and the foragers field has been planted with fruit bearing trees and shrubs, oak steps now link the remodelled field to the stream and bluebell woods.

After the extensive work to offer seamless living, all the inhabitants of and around Coastal Retreat should be very happy. ♦ [woodfordarchitecture.com](http://woodfordarchitecture.com)