

Flexstead

Designed by: McMullan Studio

Location: Yorkshire

<https://mcmullanstudio.com/>



@McMullanStudio

Main Challenges



Long-term & affordable housing



Sustainable building materials



Creating a flexible living and working space

“To design well and understand our communities, we place ourselves into the shoes of others.”

- Andrew McMullan



Image: McMullan Studio

Background

Taking on the affordable housing crisis with a fresh set of eyes, architect Andrew McMullan and his team have created the future way of living for rural youth.

For over 15 years, Andrew has held senior-level positions leading projects, which include working on the 2012 Olympic Games masterplan. His passion for innovative design has shaped award-winning work in New York, Singapore, London, and Shanghai.

His recent cutting-edge project has been named the ‘rural home of the future’ after winning an architecture competition focused on creating affordable homes which encourage young people to stay in the rural Lakes and Dales in Yorkshire.

The competition, run by Great Place: Lakes and Dales in partnership with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), wanted innovative designs for flexible, affordable housing which would attract under 35s to the area.

“The studio was inspired by the challenge. We are very passionate about how we can provide exceptional and affordable homes for young people” said Andrew.

“The Flexstead will create homes that will enable residents to add their own very specific personality to their spaces - creating homes which can evolve and adapt over their lifetime - true sustainable architecture.”

“With the Flexstead it was about creating something that is affordable but enables people to add their own personality and create something specific to their needs which can evolve over a lifetime.”

The studio conducted an examination of rural communities to help understand the context in which they were designing, but also what a young person choosing to live there would want and need.

Check out the Rural Youth Project website for more cases studies:

www.ruralityouthproject.com



Image: McMullan Studio

“We were interested in this challenge because generally we are very curious about affordable housing problems for young people that exist everywhere.”

- Andrew McMullan

Background

Due to be built in the village of Horton in Ribblesdale, the design includes a large volume of space with very few walls. By doing so, there is no prescribed layout and no extra expense of knocking walls down if a person dislikes the original set up.

“The Flexstead creates an open and flexible space which allows internal walls to be constructed easily, rather than inheriting a layout which becomes a frustrating obstacle to enjoying and using the home efficiently. This avoids the added financial cost of removing or changing walls to achieve specific living requirements.”

The two-storey stone shell has high ceilings providing an airy, light feeling with open plan layout throughout. Its striking roof creates a local landmark and is divided in two by a roof light to connect residents to their rural surroundings.

The studio worked with a talented team of engineers to develop a design that will use minimal concrete, which will reduce the buildings carbon footprint. Using a ground floor structural timber floor means that the Flexstead will be built faster and lighter, with reduced excavation and foundations.

“By working with an amazing world class team, we were able use very little concrete, which is one of the most energy intensive processes to manufacture, so the construction itself was sustainable. Using timber flooring meant the building could be built faster as we were digging less holes and pouring less concrete,” explained Andrew.

Constructing the Flexstead from local natural stone will be a positive way of supporting traditional skills like stone walling.

The Flexstead is similar to the humble hiking boot - simple and robust from the outside, whilst being sophisticated and flexible inside - responsive to the specific comfort of the people who live there.

The Flexstead is easily replicated and adapted for other sites - so it has the potential to be rolled out in huge numbers.”

Solutions

1. To control the quality of construction, the project was mainly pre-fabricated in a factory.
2. Working alongside Chelsea Flower Show gold medal winners, the design incorporates a natural landscape with allotments and spaces to grow food. As Andrew explained, the idea behind this was that “food pulls people together” and by getting to know and share ideas with your neighbour will help build stronger communities.
3. “It will be important to engage with local suppliers and support the local rural economy throughout the project.” said Andrew.
4. Collaborating with Great Places: Lakes and Dales to create a dynamic new generation of rural communities.



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