

THE MODERN HOUSE



Cratfield Road, Huntingfield, Suffolk
Sold

Sliding House

Designed in response to the client's brief for a bold auspicious home, Sliding House is an award-winning three-bedroom house in Suffolk designed by Alex de Rijke of dRMM architects. Three distinct buildings form this house, their simple architectural profiles belying their ability to alter dynamically in character, openness and light. Depending on position, the larch-clad casing slides back and forth, creating delightful opportunities for both open-air living and sheltered enclosure. Positioned in the heart of the rolling East Anglian countryside, it is set in three and a half acres of bucolic gardens, orchards and meadows. The house has high-specification eco-credentials at its core, creating a radical and responsive modern way of living.

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The Architect

Alex de Rijke is a founding partner of dRMM, a London-based international studio of architects and designers founded in 1995. This renowned practice delivers versatile, functional and colourful projects that are always innovative, high quality and socially considered. Its lightness of touch is admired for its joyfulness, flamboyance and uniqueness. Alex is a pioneer and authority on engineered timber design and construction; his plans are underpinned by thorough research and an eye for detail.

Sliding House has been the recipient of and shortlisted for several awards, including the 2009 RIBA East Award, 2009 Winner Grand Designs Awards 'Best New Build' and 'Home of The Year', 2009 Highly Commended World Architecture Festival Awards 'House' Category and in 2009 it was shortlisted for The Wood Awards 'Private' Category.

The Tour

The enclosed driveway is approached via a quiet country road. The building is both radically different from anything seen before while managing to blend into its surroundings by referencing the local agricultural vernacular. A long linear form, simple and conventional in silhouette, stretches into the garden and is sliced into three distinct sections; house, garage and annexe. The garage is set-back, off-axis, creating a sheltered courtyard between the three.

Coloured a striking monopoly hotel red, the garage stands in contrast, at first, to the adjacent larch-clad house and annexe, natural and black-stained, respectively. Yet, within ten minutes, a transformation occurs; the autonomous outer wooden casing, as if a glove to the house, can slide along recessed railway tracks to unveil the glassy metal framework that lies beneath, altering the home's character. During the warmer months, the structure can slide over the terrace to give shade to alfresco diners, while in winter, it provides extra insulation. The adaptable rooms inside the house are designed to either be sheltered or open to the sky, depending on the weather.

The entrance leads to a hallway and the beautifully bright galley kitchen and double-height dining space on the left. Orientated in a south-westerly direction, the gabled end wall is fully glazed and overlooks an enticing entertaining terrace and towards meadows and fields. In one corner is a sitting area, a lovely place to gather around the woodburning stove in chillier months. At the opposite end of the ground floor is a double bedroom, replete with a wall of storage and a handy dressing room, currently used as a study.

Centrally the rooms are more intimate. Influenced by Charles Rennie Mackintosh's 'House for an Art Lover', they offer contrasting spaces and atmospheres. The snug is a cosy retreat, a perfect place to read and watch movies. There is also a back kitchen, utility room and shower room. These are housed in bespoke joinery, which forms a service-like core and completes the ground floor layout.

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Stairs ascend to the first floor, where on top of the kitchen lies a generous mezzanine living area. A bank of customised open cabinetry doubles as a balustrade and ceilings rise with the roof line. Views of the open countryside are far-reaching through low windows and skylights, and when the casing is slid back, big ever-changing East Anglian skies dominate the room, seen through the glass roof. Lying at the north-eastern end of the plan is the primary suite. Further low-set windows give framed garden glimpses, and overhead roof lights illuminate the space and have leafy and sky-filled views. Buffering this private sanctuary are generous walk-in wardrobes.

Between the living area and the private primary suite is the arresting bathroom. A large and lofty space, its vaulted ceilings form part of the sliding casing. On warm summer evenings, the room can be unmasked to the surrounding natural elements, with the opportunity to bathe in the open air, watching the sun descend, and starry skies emerge.

The second building in the triptych composition is an independent annexe. Open-plan in layout, this is a light, bright space with places to cook, dine, work, bathe and sleep. Double-height in places, a large office space has been carved within the first floor, and there is lots of bespoke storage.

The design takes an exacting approach to sustainability, focusing on high-specification eco-credentials. The house has an EPC 'A' rating and was conceived to maximise energy efficiency.

Outdoor Space

Bordered by rolling agricultural countryside, the gardens are made up of green lawns and gently sloping wildflower meadows. Cut paths meander through long grasses, interspersed with 'crop circles' of vine, tree, and bulb planting. There is an orchard, an ornamental jacquemontii birch plantation and a large area with fruit cages. There are productive raised beds of, amongst other, artichokes and rhubarb, a greenhouse, and a garden shed. There are many spots to enjoy an alfresco morning coffee or an evening sundowner and sheltered terraces for long, lazy lunches.

Sitting apart, on the western fringe, is a large studio and workshop clad in complementary vertical timber boarding. The garage sits just to the north of the house and annexe. This arrangement creates a further flexible terrace for socialising, sheltered by the casing during more inclement weather.

Sliding House's exemplary eco-credentials extend into the garden. There is a domestic wind turbine, a ground-mounted solar array and a charging point for electric cars. Heating is by a geothermal heat pump.

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The Area

The house is between the pretty hamlets of Cratfield and Huntingfield, home to the well-regarded pub, The Huntingfield Arms. The market town of Halesworth is a short drive away for a broader array of amenities. It has a number of cafes and restaurants, together with a traditional high street dotted with independent shops.

There is a tremendous amount of footpaths and bridle paths on the doorstep and, slightly further afield, are the ever-popular highlights of the Suffolk Coastline and Heaths AONB. Southwold and Walberswick, both within 15 miles, offer access to beautiful beaches.

The much-loved towns of Aldeburgh and Orford are also easily reached; the latter is a pretty medieval village on the River Alde. Orford attracts visitors for its daily drops of fresh lobster and crabs, renowned oyster and smokehouse and the excellent Pump Street Bakery. Aldeburgh is famed for ice cream, fish and chips and having once been home to Benjamin Britten.

For transport links to London, there is easy access to the A12. The house is around five miles from Halesworth Station, where trains run to London Liverpool Street via Ipswich and connect to Cambridge and Norwich. Diss station is a 30-minute drive from the house, with direct links to London Liverpool Street in one hour and 32 minutes.

Council Tax Band: House: E | Annexe: A

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About

The Modern House is an estate agency that helps people live in more thoughtful and beautiful ways. We believe in design as a powerful force for good. Inspired by the principles of modernism, we represent design-led homes across the UK which celebrate light, space and a truth to materials. Esquire credits The Modern House with “rewriting the rulebook on estate agency” and GQ voted us “one of the best things in the world”.