

VELUX®

FIVE ACRES OF HAPPINESS

A Bed & Breakfast in Aldingham, Great Britain



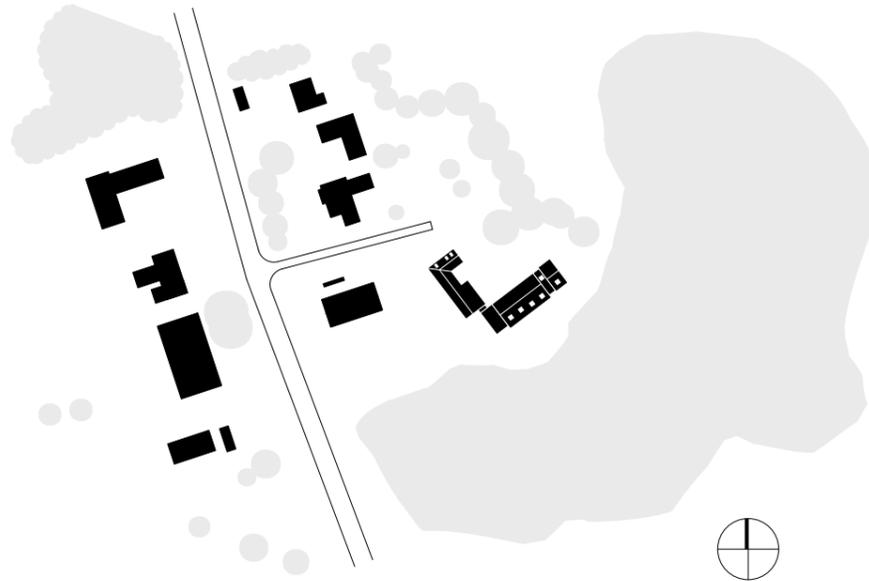


A NEW CHAPTER IN LIFE

Five Acre Barn is a hotel located in Aldringham, Leiston, Suffolk, located on a large piece of land, between the trees, yet just off the main road. The name of the place describes the site perfectly – after years of living and working in London, the owners, Bruce Badrock and David Woodbine bought an old barn with five acres of land to start a new chapter of their lives in the countryside. Their choice fell on the Suffolk county, a picturesque, vibrant area just two hours drive from London, a popular weekend escape.

Blee Halligan, a rather young, but already very successful and awarded architecture office, converted the old dwelling to a contemporary ensemble consisting of a new building, replacing a ran-down east wing, and a refurbished barn. The owners did a lot of work themselves: they cast the concrete floor, furnished the interiors and do all the gardening on their vast compound.

The barn became a social space, with generous shared living and dining rooms, as well as the owners' apartment. The new wing contains six bedrooms are placed along a well-lit corridor with little tables and cosy niches.



"We believe that framing the view is a more differentiated approach to the landscape. Our motto is to "minimize the glazing and maximize the experience."

Greg Blee, Blee Halligan





CONTRAST AND CONTINUITY

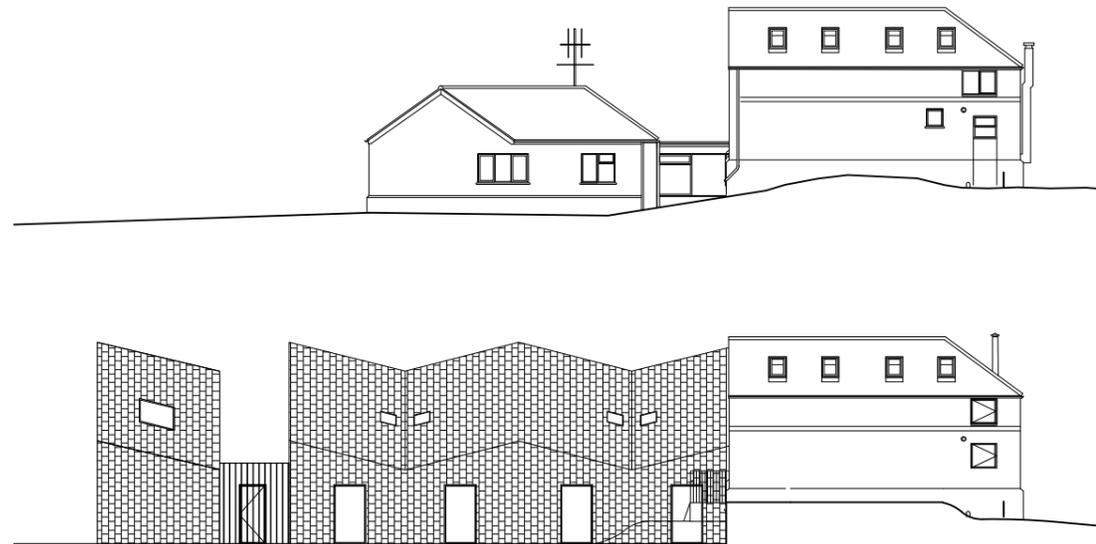
The new volume is a complex variation on the theme of a gable roof. A cost-efficient timber frame construction, clad in raw shingles, is slightly lower than the barn. The connection between the old and new part, called by Greg Blee "a bridge" – as opposed to a building – thanks to its dark colour melts with the surroundings.

It does not stand out as a third part of the ensemble. The same windows in dark grey are used both in the new and the old wing. Wooden shingles on the facades and the roof accentuate the modern and sculptural appearance of the extension. Gutter pipes are hidden thanks to sophisticated, yet low-cost detailing solution.

Raw wood of the shingles ages differently on each facade, depending on the sun and rain exposure, in harmony with the garden around the building.

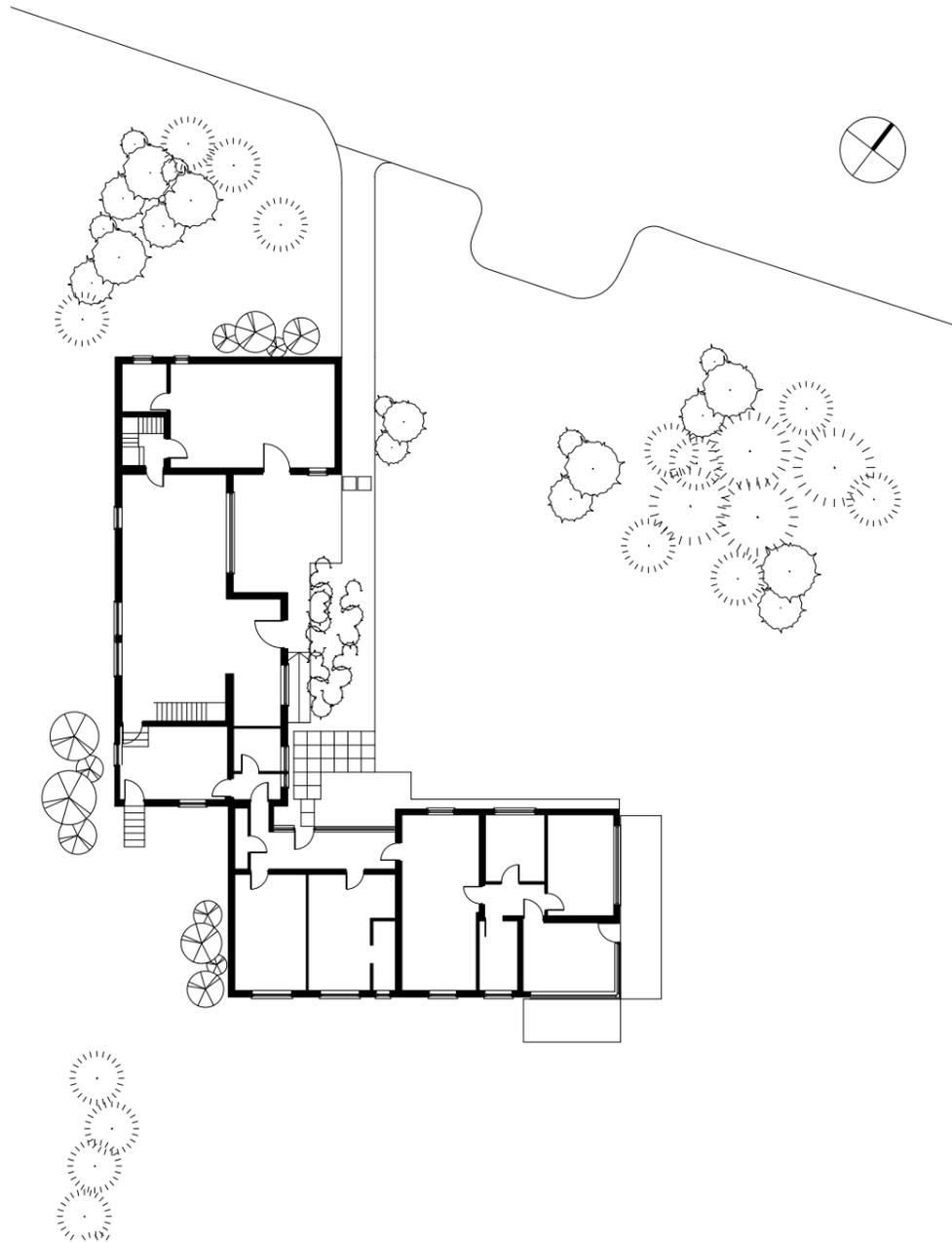
"A lot of the conversations during the design process was on strategies on how to deal with the contrast between the old and new part."

Greg Blee, Blee Halligan



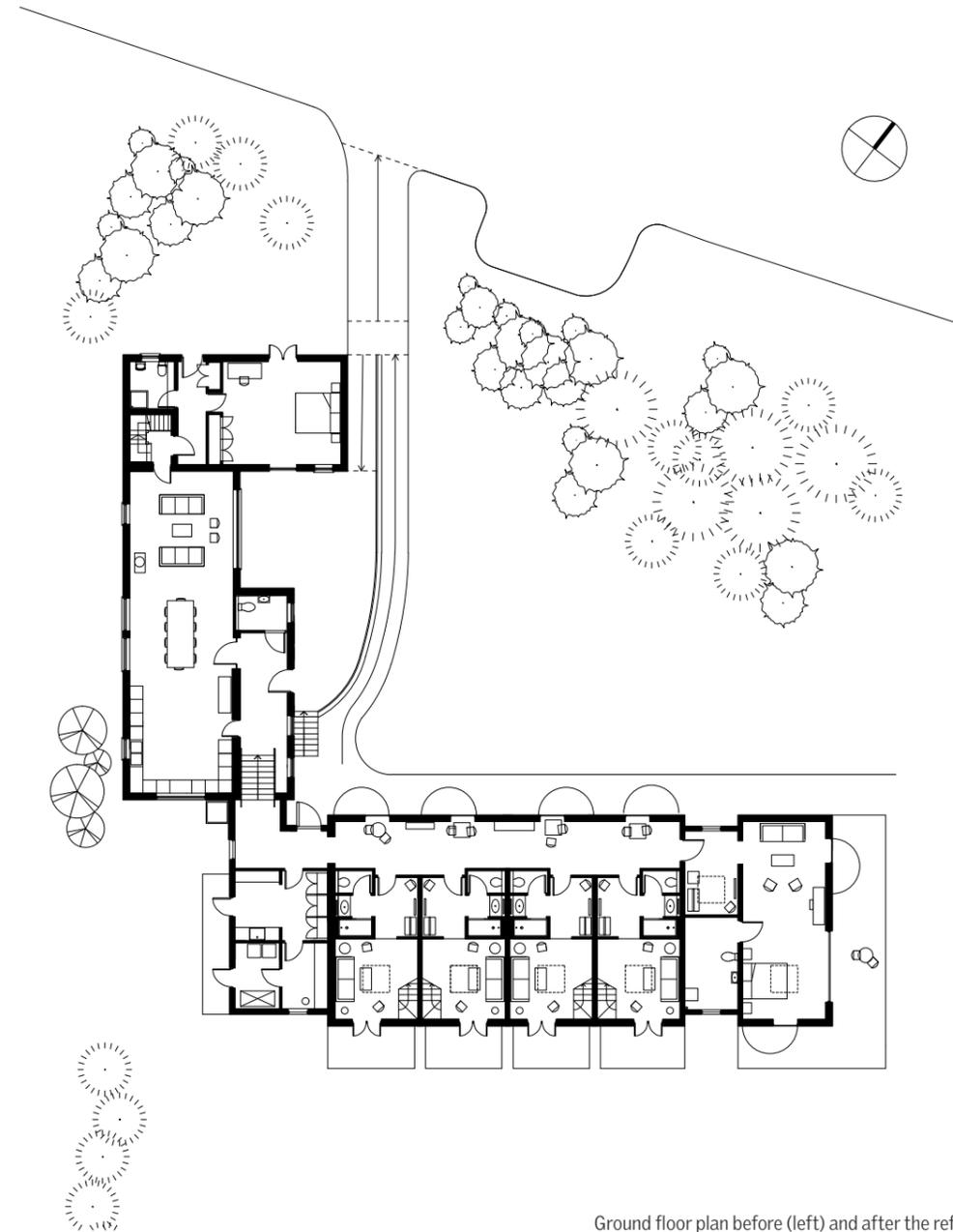
Facade before and after refurbishment. The old building has been torn down and replaced by a new wing with bedrooms. The old barn has been refurbished in a very gentle manner, with minimal alterations of the facade. Broken roof tiles were replaced with ones with patina.





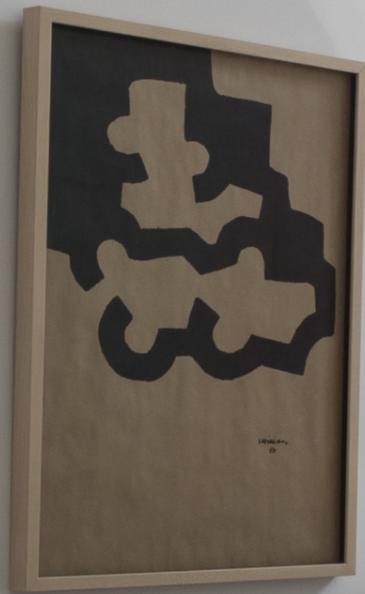
"We kept the barn as it was, repairing only the necessary bits. The project is all about the contrast between the patina, the vernacular beauty of the old barn and our new, sculptural wing."

Greg Blee, Blee Halligan



Ground floor plan before (left) and after the refurbishment. Old barn and bedroom wing are connected with a one-storey high volume with stairs leading up to the living area. The corridor with shelves and cosy reading corners at the facade opens with a full-height window towards the garden. The last unit, larger than the others, is separated by a low, black-painted element to break the length of the building.

Also, the interiors are build upon the contrast between new and old: simple, minimalistic plywood walls are a perfect backdrop for upcycled design classics and art. The owners are experts on Scandinavian mid-century furniture, for which they expertly hunt online to upcycle by themselves.



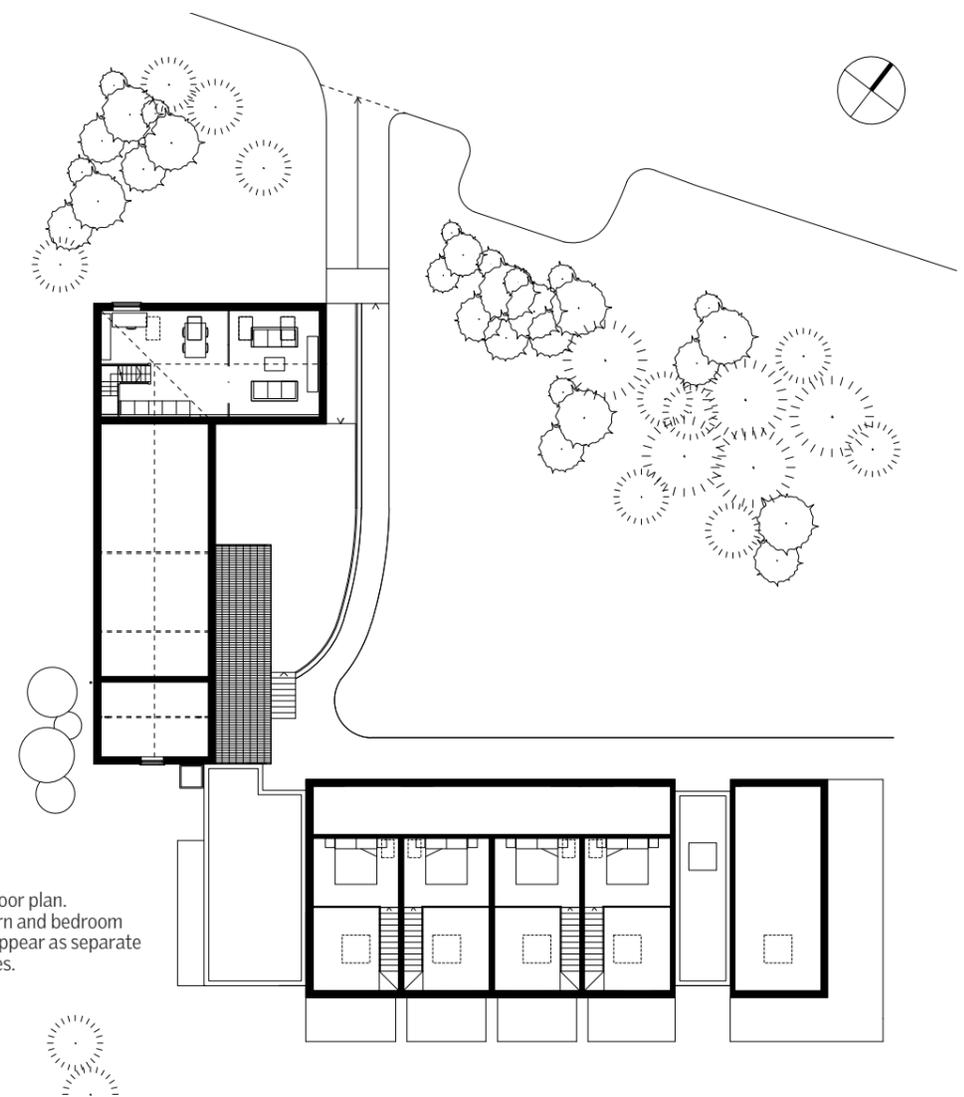


VIEW ON THE TREETOPS

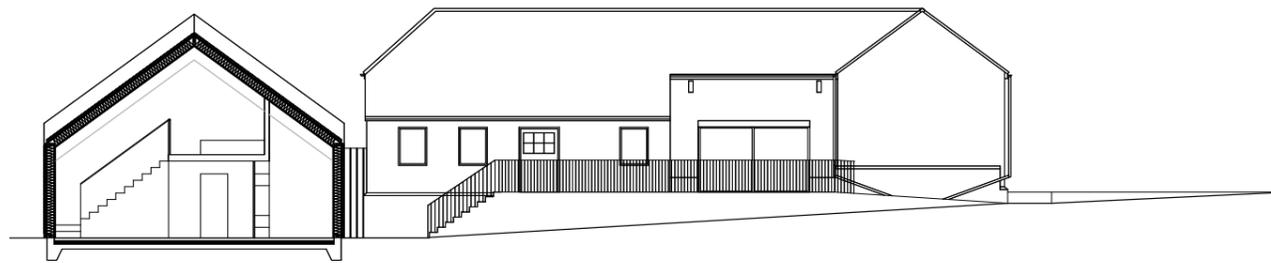
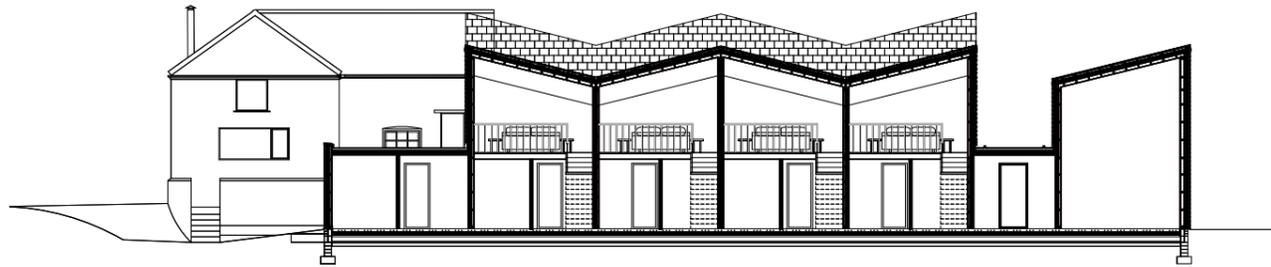
The section of the extension had to be as low as possible. Architects' aim was to respect the height of the neighbourhood, as well as remain cost-efficient. The goal was to stack as many rooms as possible inside the compact volume – the answer was creating a mezzanine floor above the corridor. Each unit consists of a day area and a bathroom on the ground floor and a bed in a cosy corner under the roof, all lit up by large roof windows. Without them, it would not have been possible to create this kind of layout. Every room is different, all of them decorated with great taste and love to the smallest details. Balcony doors lead from sun-bathed rooms, lit from the slanted ceiling, directly to a wild, fragrant garden.

"Roof windows allow for optimal cross-ventilation, as well as provide a romantic view over the treetops, towards the sky, directly from the bed."

Greg Blee, Blee Halligan



First floor plan. Old barn and bedroom wing appear as separate volumes.



Longitudinal and cross sections, showing sleeping areas on the upper level. Shelves, displaying an array of beautiful design objects are placed between the entrance doors to the rooms.

"Our clients wanted the new part to be contemporary, sculptural, and at the same time matching the old barn. Because of this, as well as financial restraints, we had to stack as much accommodation as possible into a very compact volume. This is how we came up with the sleeping areas upstairs."

Greg Blee, Blee Halligan





BLESSINGS AND CHALLENGES OF THE SUN

Blee Halligan runs two offices, one in Shoreditch, East London and the British West Indies. The studio grew rapidly since 2014, when they have begun working together: only six years later their work consists of over thirty projects and has received some notable awards, among them RIBA National Award in 2018, for the Five Acre Barn project.

"Our studios in East London and The British West Indies connect through a common goal of designing buildings that are connected to place, connected to function and connected to the people that use them."

Blee Halligan, quote from their official website

Working in two completely different climate zones taught the architects a lot about dealing with the sun. Regardless of the location, the architects noticed a lot of similarities in clients' vision of what is contemporary architecture.

"There is a consistency in clients wanting as much light as possible. Our "northern" clients consider a maximum of façade glazing to be the ultimate characteristic of modern architecture. Many people wish for a glass box, unaware of the problems it brings, first of all, the overheating of the rooms."

Greg Blee, Blee Halligan

During the design process, Blee Halligan works closely with their clients, to fully understand their needs but also raise awareness on climate issues in buildings. The use of VELUX windows enabled creating not only optimal natural ventilation of the room but also enriched the interiors with light coming from different angles.

While the garden view, with all its dense plants, provides intimacy, the roof window opens towards the sky. The guests looking in the morning from their beds at the moving treetops and the play of clouds above the Five Acre Barn garden would undoubtedly agree.





PROJECT DATA

Project: Bed & Breakfast, new-build and conversion
Location: Aldingham, Great Britain
Design: Blee Halligan, London & British West Indies
Time: 2018
Cost: 500.000 £
Area: 400 m²
Photos: Sarah Blee



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