

# The Old Byre

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## Northwood Isle of Wight

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Design Statement

# Executive Summary

The Old Byre is an innovative barn conversion project in Cowes, Isle of Wight, United Kingdom. Designed by award-winning architect Gianni Botsford and developed by designer and architectural historian Joseph Kohlmaier, the project is unique in its approach to local history, heritage and site, materials, and concept of use as a domestic setting. Its ambition is to become a lasting example of excellent design and as a case study in how domestic buildings can respond to emerging trends in the way we live and work, and the role architecture can play in this context.



## Heritage and Conservation

Conceived as an inside-out barn conversion, the design approach for The Old Byre brings the heritage and historic fabric of two old two old farm buildings in harmony with high-tech, sustainable materials, arranging them as independent, yet connected units of activity around a central courtyard.



# The Old Byre

Surrounded by open fields, The Old Byre forms part of a rural complex previously owned by several generations of a prominent local farming family. The property consists of two farm buildings – a 19th century and a late 20c barn – arranged around a central courtyard. The atmosphere of the ensemble is unique due to its context with the surrounding landscape and the specific fabric and material quality of the existing buildings. All these qualities are retained in some form in the design of the conversion – directly or as a reference.

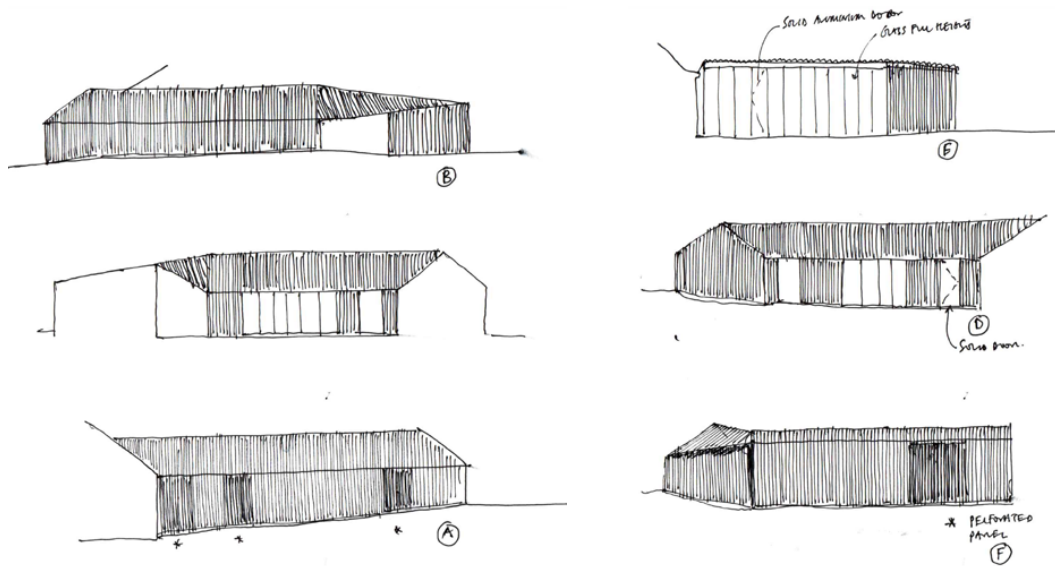


The Old Byre prior to construction, showing the tall 20c barn on left and the 19c barn on the right.



Interior of the 19c barn prior to construction.

# Design Concept



## The Inverted Barn

A key feature of the design concept for the Old Byre is to retain and **expose the historic structure of the old barns on the interior**, and to wrap the buildings in high-standard insulation and corrugated cement board on the outside.

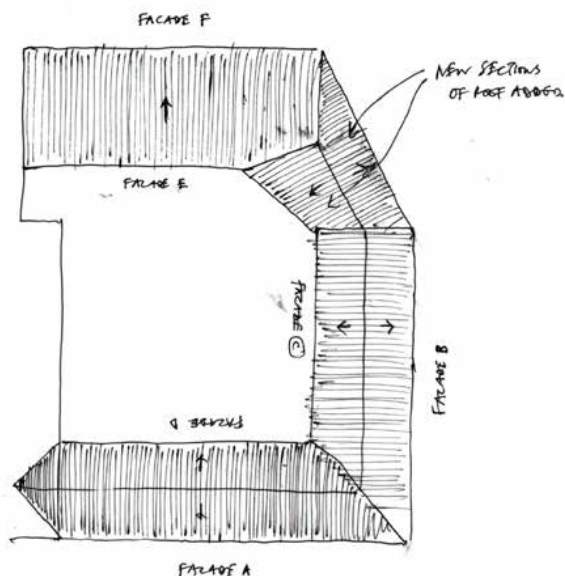
Contrary to conventional barn conversions, this inverted approach creates a unique atmosphere. It sets the old, patinated surfaces of the extant walls and roof structure against the new, modern materials. Light enters through a translucent polycarbonate facade – a transparent ‘fourth wall’ punctuated by full ceiling-height aluminium doors – illuminating the interior.

**Old materials are left untouched for their beauty, and new materials chosen for their unique qualities.** Both are left purposefully on view, exposing the structure and mechanics of the building truthfully and providing a heterogeneous and varied context for furniture, social and private activity amongst objects of everyday life.



## A Courtyard House

The two extant structures of the Old Byre remain disconnected, separating the world of sleep and quiet work from the space of cooking and social encounter. In this way, the courtyard that unites the ensemble becomes charged with the ritual of everyday crossings. It extends the living spaces in the summer, doubling the footprint. But beyond this pragmatism, it is an integral part of life in the barns, setting the Old Byre apart from similar properties on the Island.



## Design Concept – Materiality, External



### Exterior Façade

Seen from the street, the Old Byre will appear like a traditional farm building in the typical industrial/agrarian setting of Northwood and the structures nearby. Over time, ivy, lichen, trees and shrubs will make the buildings blend with the ground and landscape.

## Design Concept – Materiality, Courtyard



### Courtyard

In the courtyard, a translucent polycarbonate façade punctuated by glazed aluminium doors creates a bright and open atmosphere, contrasting the old brick of neighbouring buildings. By day, flooding the interior with light. By night, illuminating the courtyard.



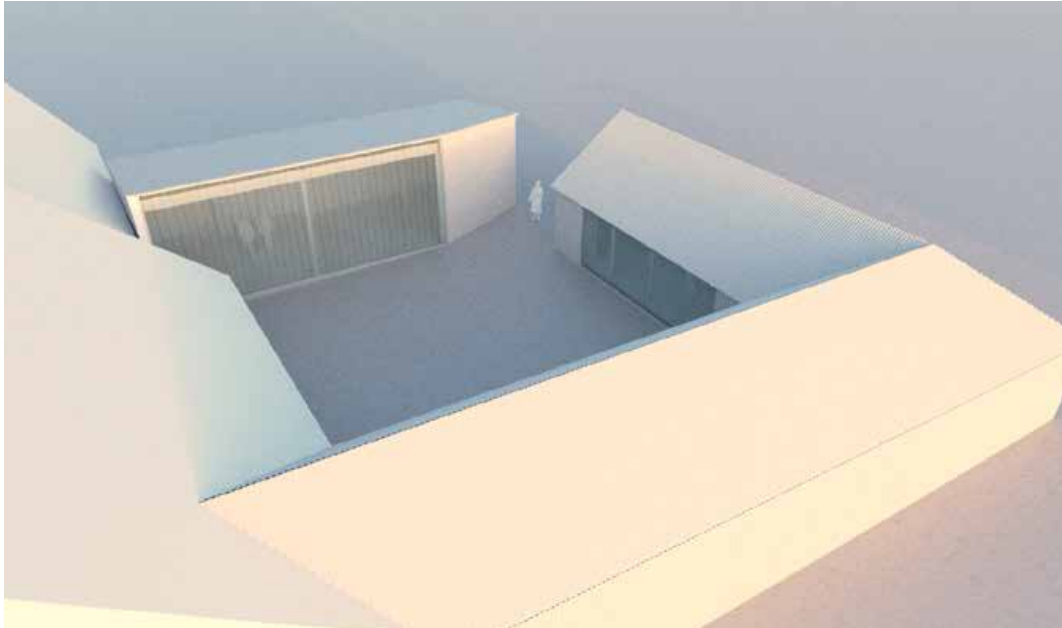
## Design Concept – Interior



### Interior

The interior of the Old Byre sets this project apart from conventional barn conversions, leaving the existing walls and roof structure intact and visible under a transparent wash of white paint (represented in the mood image, bottom left).

## Design Concept – Model



### **A courtyard building**

The two buildings remain separate, framing a space of transition and rest, saturated with the rhythms of everyday life – rising, working, cooking, being social, sleeping, experiencing outdoors.

# Developer

**Joseph Kohlmaier** is a designer and architectural historian with 21 years experience in the creative sector. He is the sole owner of the Old Byre and the lead project manager of its development. Joseph is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Art, Architecture and Design, London Metropolitan University. He is one of the founding directors of graphic design studio Polimekanos, which he lead for more than 20 years; and founding and creative director of avant-garde choral collective Musarc.

Joseph has refurbished and converted a number of properties in London prior to moving to the Isle of Wight in 2011 where he built The Sett – an award-winning residential scheme in Totland Bay – with architects Dow Jones Architects and a local construction and engineering team. The Sett was completed in 2014, on time and on budget, for a construction cost of £300,000. The property acted as the primary residence of Joseph’s family. It was let on average for 50–60 days a year, realising profits from holiday rentals in excess of £10–12,000 per annum. In 2019, the property was sold at £790,000, generating a return of £350,000 over five years.

In 2022, property's estimated value is estimated to be in the region of £900–950,000.



## Developer (cont'd)



Dow Jones Architects, The Sett. Developer: Joseph Kohlmaier. Winner, RIBA Award

# Gianni Botsford Architects



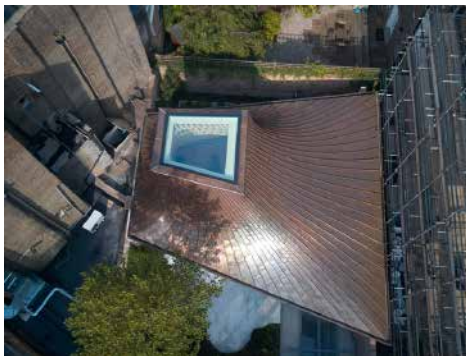
Gianni Botsford Architects, Lighthouse, Notting Hill. RIBA Award winner 2006. Shortlisted for the Manser Medal 2006. Winner, AIA (UK) Excellence in Design Award 2007

**Gianni Botsford Architects** is a multi-award-winning architectural practice base in London. What makes GBA's buildings and projects both original and notable is the absence of a statement, the way they fit into their culture, the economy and attention to detail of their design. The practice's success is built on its individuality. It is a small, private firm with a high degree of flexibility, able to design and supervise construction anywhere in the world: from the prize-winning Light House in Notting Hill to the Lubetkin Prize winner for Casa KiKé in Costa Rica; from a whole village in the hills of Taiwan to ingenious solutions for a New York skyscraper, a museum in Estonia, or a telephone centre in Haiti. All of GBA's projects are original solutions to particular problems of the surroundings, materials, and local traditions. They are based on a thorough thinking-through of available light, the weather, the disposition of their elements, context, of how to make the most out of any site, and for any purpose.

## Gianni Botsford Architects (cnt'd)



Gianni Botsford Architects, Casa Kike, Costa Rica. Winner, Chicago Atheneum International Architecture Award. Shortlisted, World Architecture Festival. Winner, IstructE Structural Award Community and Residential Structure. Winner, Lubetkin Prize Winner, RIBA International Award. Winner, Architectural Record Design Vanguard



Gianni Botsford Architects, House in a Garden. Shortlisted, AR House Award. Longlisted, RIBA House of the Year Shortlisted, Professional Lighting Design Recognition Award. Shortlisted, Structural Timber Awards. Commendation, AIA (UK) Excellence in Design Award. Winner, ArchDaily Building of The Year Award. Winner, AZ Awards Best Single Family Houses. Winner, RIBA Award