

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Houses

RIBA Award-Winning Homes



RIBA 

Dominic  
Bradbury

## THE QUEST

Ström Architects

RIBA South West Award 2017

RIBA South West Project Architect of the Year 2017

**Location:** Dorset

**Gross Internal Floor Area:** 205 m<sup>2</sup>

**Construction Cost:** £750,000

**Construction Cost Per M<sup>2</sup>:** £3,650



The Quest sits gently within its established garden setting, while a strong inside-outside relationship is central to the architectural design.

Lifestyle priorities begin to shift and change in retirement, which shapes the kinds of homes that we choose to live in. Some downsize, others look for a readily available support network, and many seek ways to reduce the responsibilities involved in running and maintaining their home. While such factors may have been considerations for architect Magnus Ström's retired clients, they also decided to embrace the challenge of building a new and bespoke house fully tailored to their requirements and reflective of their deep-rooted love of Modernist architecture, art and design.

'In The Quest we have tried to achieve a practical but striking retirement home,' says Ström. 'Retirees generally spend longer at home than other people, so the house has to continue to engage and delight them, rather than create cabin fever. It makes sense that the older generation, who grew up with cutting-edge Modernism, should want to create something more unique and forward-thinking than many of the "cut-and-paste" retirement homes we see today.'

Ström's clients wanted to build a replacement dwelling on the site of a bungalow, which was around 100 years old. The hillside site, near Durlston Country Park, is delightful in itself and bordered by mature trees, which were protected and preserved. The house needed to accommodate the couple themselves and also be easily accessible for their disabled daughter, who visits the house regularly.

Ström's elegant design places the house on one level, adopting a neat floor plan that places a spacious, open-plan living area – with the kitchen, dining area and lounge – at the centre of the layout with bedrooms and bathrooms situated at the two opposite ends of the building. The central living space opens to the gardens and a veranda via a sliding wall of glass, while an integrated fireplace, surround and chimney marks the point of transition that takes you around this partial partition towards the two guest bedrooms.

The master suite, at the other end of the house, sits within a portion of the building that cantilevers outwards over a sunken carport and entry point, with a Purbeck stone retaining wall stretching out from underneath the house and into the grounds, defining the line between the garden and the driveway. The house itself is clad in larch, which adds natural warmth and texture.

Sustainability was a key concern for the architect and his clients. Passive design measures – including high levels of insulation and managed solar gain – combine with renewable energy provision,

with an air source heat pump for heating working in combination with a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery (MVHR) system. Photovoltaic panels on the roof generate electricity while harvested rainwater is stored in an underground tank and used to irrigate the gardens. Importantly, the house was designed to be as low maintenance and robust as possible.

The crisp and elegant outline of The Quest is reminiscent of masterful mid-century residences by architects such as Craig Ellwood, Pierre Koenig and Richard Neutra. Yet this is also clearly a 21<sup>st</sup>-century building designed in response to the requirements of Ström's clients and an engaging setting. 'The design has surpassed the aspirations of the client, providing flexible, deep, open-plan living in a warm and comfortable environment,' said the RIBA judges, 'with a fantastic view out to the southwest of their old farmhouse and the surrounding hills.'

**Below**  
One end of the house cantilevers over the driveway, providing a sheltered car port and entry point to the building.

**Opposite top**  
The spacious, open-plan living area is at the centre of the building, facing the garden. It features a kitchen, dining area and seating area arranged around the fireplace.

**Opposite bottom**  
Seen from a distance, the hillside setting of The Quest can be fully appreciated, and the way it sits within a clearing among the mature trees.

