

STRAWDUST

We love this quirky small sustainable house with its design inspired by our client Jan's character, a mix of her own ideas and influenced by time spent living abroad in Africa. Her brief was to create a low energy straw bale house with inside-outside spaces using locally sourced sustainable materials and second-hand or local materials for finishes internally.

Straw bale building has many characteristics. One needs to ensure that you have a good hat and boots, to prevent damp rising up into the straw and that the walls are screened from driving rain. The original concept showed large sailing overhangs in a clever play with the footprint of the house itself, larger over sailing to the south-west and southern side doubling up as solar shading, whilst the rear and more sheltered side are reduced. This is aided by the slope the house is dug into, creating sheltered spaces around the building. The whole is designed to hunker into the site and be at one with the earth.

Natural materials are key to the longevity and sustainability of the house, and the construction sequence key. A local carpenter constructed the frame and used timber from his own woods to construct the cross braces, the hazel spikes which held the straw bales in place and produced the beautiful bathroom flooring.

Architect
Ecotecture Ecological Design Ltd

Engineer
Ings Engineering Ltd

Contractor
Nigel Last

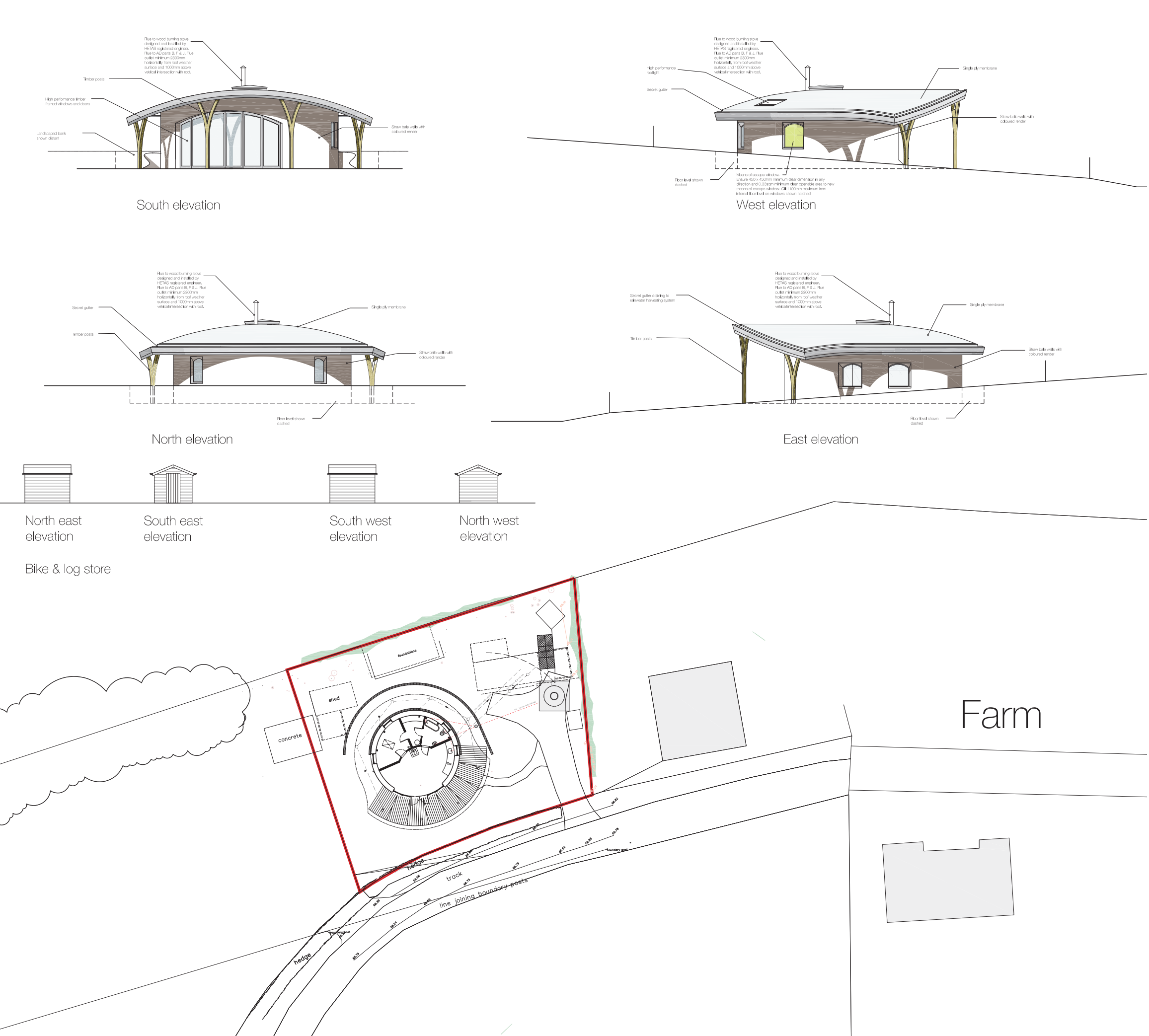
The internally exposed timber frame radiates from the centre of the circle whilst the wall construction consisted of the straw bale, which sits on a curved soul plate created from plywood, which was curved in situ on site. The wall plate was similarly constructed. The walls were then sealed with lime plaster inside and out. The lime is key to allow the construction to breathe.

Building in the round is deceptively complicated. The division of space took some time to ensure spaces were useable and yet related to the external form. The clients' desire for storage, enables the internal space to be divided up to allow access from bedroom to the bathroom through a smaller space, allowing one large living/kitchen/dining to occupy the southern half of the building.

A variety of reclaimed materials were used for the interior finish with the living room flooring salvaged after the demolition of the local village hall, an art installation from Glastonbury which made up part of her kitchen, scaffolding planks for window sills and bathroom fittings rescued from a local skip.

Other features included in the build were rainwater harvesting from the roof into water butts which help water the garden, and a log burner located centrally in the home for heating and to warm the water.

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Above top
Side elevation view

Above
Roof
Right
Reclaimed floor

