

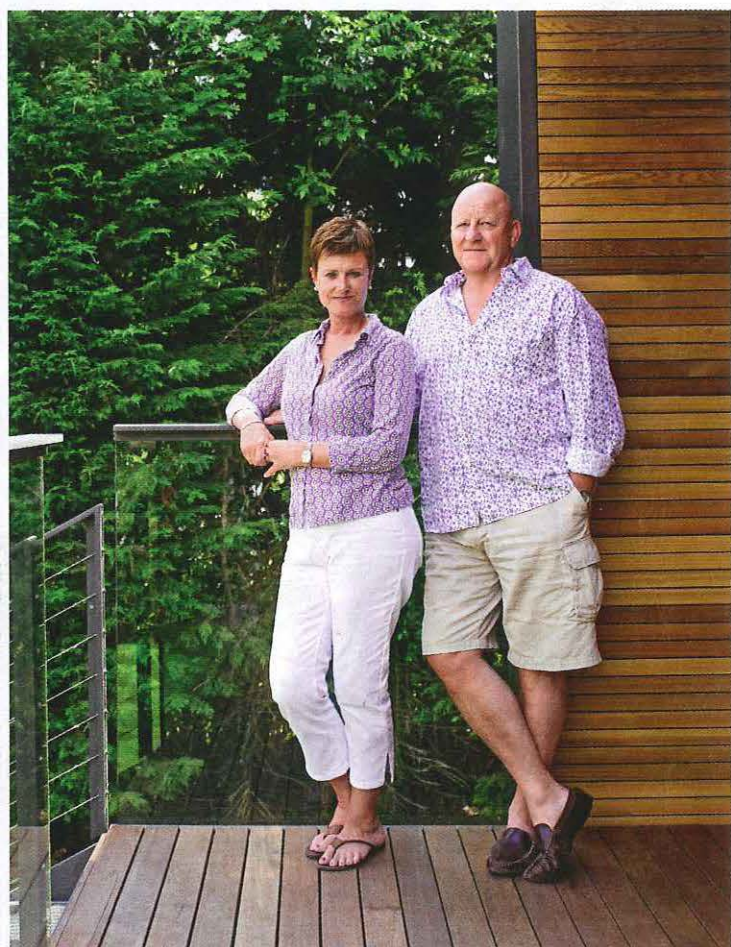
# TALES FROM THE RIVERBANK

BUILDING ON A FLOOD PLAIN IS A RISKY BUSINESS, BUT STEVE AND DEE HIND'S OPEN-PLAN HOME DEALS WITH IT ADMIRABLY. FLOATING ON STILTS NEXT TO THE RIVER LODDON, THIS FLOOD-PROOF NEW-BUILD IS INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO ITS SURROUNDINGS

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PHOTOGRAPHY **RICHARD POWERS**



**this picture** The Hinds' contemporary new home is raised on stilts to protect it from flooding **far left** Steve's love of boats and fishing played a part in his desire to live by the river **left** Sturdy metal stairs rise up to the lower level



**left** Steve and Dee Hind swapped a traditional sixteenth-century farmhouse for their open-plan new-build **this picture** The red cedar cladding helps

the house to blend with its tree-lined surroundings **right** The open-plan kitchen is exactly what Dee wanted; the walnut dining table, which is also a

pool table, is from Fusion ([fusiontables.com](http://fusiontables.com)); the sofa is from DFS ([dfs.co.uk](http://dfs.co.uk)); the pendant lights are Poul Henningsen for Louis Poulsen ([louispoulsen.com](http://louispoulsen.com))

Moving from a sixteenth-century farmhouse to a tailored contemporary home – with open-plan living spaces, bathed in natural light – has been quite a change for Steve and Dee Hind. For 19 years they lived with low ceilings, small windows and a view from the kitchen of the side of a barn. Now they are raised up above the landscape in their stilted Berkshire home, looking out across the River Loddon and relishing indoor/outdoor living as they make the most of their balconies and elevated terraces.

‘It has been a quantum leap,’ says Steve, who used to have his own office equipment company before selling up and moving into the property business. ‘We wanted something very contemporary and Dee really wanted an open-plan kitchen, dining and living area, which is what we have now. Before, in the farmhouse, we would be stuck in the kitchen when friends came over for dinner because everything was so compartmentalized. Now we are open plan with great views of the river and the wildlife.’

It was Steve’s love of the river – especially boats and fishing – that really prompted the move. Dee needed a little gentle persuading to give up the farmhouse, which they had spent years restoring and perfecting, but soon came round to the idea. Then a friend bought a plot of land along a quiet lane, looking across the Loddon – a tributary of the Thames – and took them along the river on his boat.

‘The beautiful thing about it, apart from the kingfishers and other wildlife, is that the river isn’t busy like the Thames,’ Steve says. ‘So we started looking around. I went into the local estate agent and said that I was looking for a property on the river – something that needed restoring or perhaps knocking down and rebuilding. She looked at me and said “isn’t everybody, sir?”’

‘But then she looked in an old filing cabinet and blew the dust off a file. It was the details for a bungalow on this site. So we went round and saw it half an hour later and then half an hour after that we bought the property.’

The Hinds – who have two grown-up children – bought the house in 2005 thinking they would rebuild, but spent two years living in the house before they got to work. Over those years they met their neighbours and got to know their site inside out. They looked at the possibility of a prefabricated Huf Haus or a Pagano prefab from Italy, but decided that these wouldn’t give them enough flexibility to alter standard designs to suit their needs.

Then a neighbour introduced them to architect John Pardey, who had already reinvented a Sixties house just down the lane. Pardey and the Hinds clicked at the first meeting.

‘We explained the way we wanted to live and showed John the vista and he just couldn’t wait to get going on a design,’ Steve says. ‘He was drawing\_\_



WHEREVER WE ARE IN THE MAIN LIVING AREA WE HAVE THE VIEW OF THE RIVER'

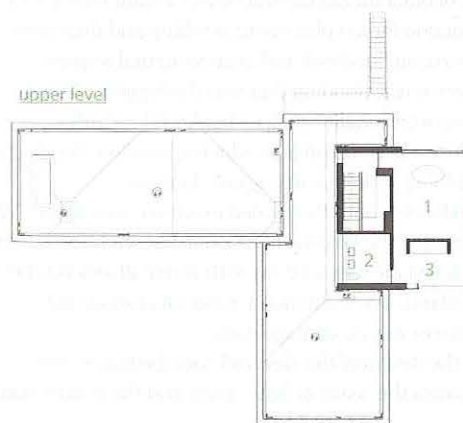
**lower level**

- 1 river deck
- 2 balcony/deck
- 3 study
- 4 living/dining
- 5 kitchen
- 6 en suite
- 7 bedroom
- 8 en suite
- 9 bedroom
- 10 entrance landing
- 11 utility
- 12 en suite
- 13 guest suite/gym



**upper level**

- 1 master bedroom
- 2 en suite
- 3 dressing area



**this picture and right** The master bedroom with en-suite washroom occupies the upper level; the bespoke stone sinks are hand-cut travertine from Mandarin Stone (mandarinstone.

com); the lights are from Italy – try dwell.co.uk for similar **opposite** The huge windows complete the connection with the outdoors, while vents in the cedar cladding open up for natural ventilation



ideas at that first meeting and then phoned back and said he hadn't slept for a week thinking about it. We had another meeting and he brought in this model of the new house which was just inspirational and that was our house. The only thing we really changed was adding one window to my study. We thrashed out a deal and that was it.'

Apart from a rather long planning process, of course. Being on the waterfront and in an area of outstanding natural beauty meant that it took a year to get planning permission for a replacement dwelling and then only after a whole series of reports on flood risk and environmental impact.

Being so close to the river, it was flooding that was the biggest concern, given that the Loddon does occasionally break its banks. John Pardey designed a flood-proof house, raised up on legs, which allows any floodwater to pass right under the building without causing any damage.

'Usually the river just spills over onto the garden in winter,' says Steve. 'We are built for floods and we call it the floating house, but last winter was very dramatic and really took the whole idea a bit far with water all around the house, turning us into an island.' Even with flood water all around and underneath the building, there was no damage done.

For the rest of the year, the design of the elevated, four-bedroom, 260 square metre home maximises the sense of light, space and the connection

## BUILDING ON A FLOOD PLAIN

It took just over a year for the Hinds' house to get planning permission because it's on a flood plain. Government planning policy for houses in flood-prone areas is set out in the document PPS25 (available at [planningportal.gov.uk](http://planningportal.gov.uk), which also has a useful guide, *Preparing For Floods*). Among other things, the policy lists the types of areas that require an initial Flood Risk Assessment (as the Hinds' house did). You can see detailed maps on the Environment Agency's website (0870 850 6506; [environment-agency.gov.uk](http://environment-agency.gov.uk)) to assess how at risk an area is. But protection is not just about keeping water out – it's also about minimising the damage if it gets in. The Construction Industry Research and Information Association (020 7549 3300; [ciria.org/flooding](http://ciria.org/flooding)) has advice sheets on flood-resilient materials; the National Flood Forum (01299 403 055; [floodforum.org.uk](http://floodforum.org.uk)), which was set up by those with experience of flooding, has a wealth of information on preparing for and reacting to floods; the RICS (0870 333 1600; [rics.org](http://rics.org)) also has guides on what to do before, during and after floods; English Heritage (0870 333 1181; [english-heritage.org.uk](http://english-heritage.org.uk)) has advice on how best to protect listed properties; and the Association of British Insurers (020 7600 3333; [abi.org.uk](http://abi.org.uk)) has information on insuring homes in flood-prone areas.



'WE ARE BUILT FOR  
FLOODS - WE CALL  
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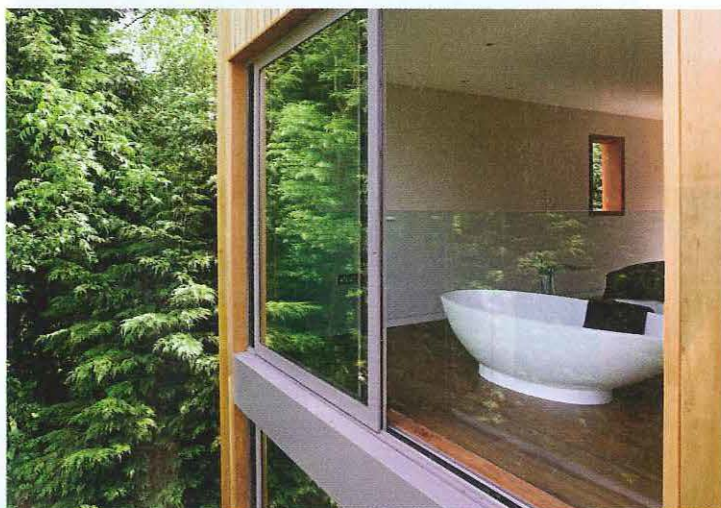
**this picture** The couple's Land Rover was a godsend last winter when the house was completely surrounded by floodwater

**right** The egg-shaped bath, from Victoria and Albert, in the master suite is perfectly positioned to make the most of the view

## MONEY MATTERS

A CONTEMPORARY NEW-BUILD, FLOOD-PROOF HOME ON THE BANKS OF A RIVER

|                                |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| DEMOLITION/PIILING/FOUNDATIONS | £32,000      |
| STRUCTURAL                     | £146,700     |
| GLAZING                        | £68,800      |
| KITCHEN                        | £42,000      |
| SANITARYWARE                   | £11,500      |
| JOINERY                        | £73,500      |
| PLUMBING/HEATING/ELECTRICAL    | £79,250      |
| FINISHES                       | £53,000      |
| SUNDRIES                       | £48,500      |
| LANDSCAPING                    | £32,000      |
| PROFESSIONAL FEES              | £60,000      |
| LAND/BUNGALOW COST             | £500,000     |
| BUILD COST                     | £647,250     |
| BUILD COST PER SQM             | £2,489       |
| CURRENT VALUE                  | APPROX £1.5M |



to the outdoors. Most windows slide back to open up the house to the terraces and balconies, while extra panels in the red cedar cladding open up to help with natural cross-ventilation in summer.

'I wanted the open kitchen, which is wonderful,' says Dee. 'But I also had a notion that guests would be in a separate wing from our own bedroom. John Pardey translated that into the idea of putting us up on the top floor in an area of our own.' This modest upper level – with some of the feeling of a sophisticated treehouse – contains the master bedroom and bathroom, with windows opening up to the river view.

Steve co-project managed the build himself, sourcing all the materials directly, so keeping a close eye on costs and quality. The detailing and finishes are close to perfection. 'One of the most successful aspects for me is that it's so beautifully built,' John Pardey says, 'and that Steve and Dee seem to love it. The house does fit them like a glove. My hope was that it would have something of a timeless quality that really endures and I hope that we have achieved that. My favourite moment is rising up the entrance stairway into this canopy over the balcony by the front door. My ideal is to make contemporary houses that work with the local surroundings and provide a platform for different lifestyles. They are houses that remain in touch with nature.'★

## SUPPLIERS

### ARCHITECT

**JOHN PARDEY ARCHITECTS**  
(01590 626 465;  
johnpardeyarchitects.com)

### CO-PROJECT MANAGEMENT

**RIDGETREE PROJECTS**  
(01189 406 895)

### LIGHTING DESIGN

**DPA LIGHTING** (020 7960 2808;  
dpalighting.com)

### BALCONY/STAIR STEELWORK

**DUNCAN LYNCH** (0118 973 4845;  
duncan-lynch.co.uk)

### GLAZING

**SCHUCO** (01908 282 111; schuco.co.uk)

### KITCHEN

**BOFORM** (boform.dk)

### BATHROOM STONE

**MANDARIN STONE**  
(01628 485 015; mandarinstone.com)

### BATHROOM FITTINGS

**DURAVIT** (0845 500 7787;  
duravit.co.uk)

### VICTORIA AND ALBERT

(01952 221 100; vandabaths.com)  
**VOLA** (taps) (01525 841 155; vola.co.uk)