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JOHN PARDEY/
ATTWOOD HOUSE**



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PARDEY HAS REPAYED THEM WITH A HOUSE IN SYMPATHY WITH THEIR ASPIRATIONS

By Ruth Slavid

It is unlikely Jane Tranter and David Attwood, clients for John Pardey's Attwood House (Building Study, pages 31–39) picked up all the architect's references to Richard Neutra, let alone worried about an affront to Mies in the demolition of one of the original columns. These are among the issues Niall McLaughlin raises in his review of the building, in which he discusses the different sensibilities of Pardey and of Victor Hutchings, the architect of the original house, which Pardey has incorporated in his design.

The clients' interests, though informed, are different again. McLaughlin describes their view of 'the narrative of the site as having equal importance to the physical environment'. They knew the architect they wanted and also had the determination to see his designs through planning battles. Pardey has repaid them with a house that is in sympathy with their aspirations. Although he uses each successive project as the next step on his journey of ideas, he does not disregard his clients'

wishes in the process. Indeed, here he made the huge compromise of retaining a building that he would have preferred to demolish.

Does it matter what his ideas were, or how McLaughlin interprets or criticises them? They certainly make for interesting reading but, more than that, they give a depth to the building. If the current clients do not grasp them all and future owners are likely to remain entirely ignorant of them, that is not the point.

The current issue of the Royal Academy's magazine discusses the significance of items in its new show on China. To many visitors they will simply be beautiful objects but the deeper thinking that informed their creation makes them more than mere decoration. At Attwood House, Pardey's physical and theoretical additions to 'the narrative of the site' will result in a level of pleasure for future residents and visitors that will not be diminished if they are unaware of the background story.

CONTRIBUTORS



Bernard Dobson, who writes about new modelling software MaxonForm on pages 46–47, is a sole practitioner based in St Neots, Cambridgeshire



Niall McLaughlin, who writes the building study on pages 31–39, is the founder of Niall McLaughlin Architects and has also worked as an assessor for the RIBA



Murray Fraser, who writes the review on pages 52–53, is a professor and course leader in the department of architecture at the University of Westminster



JOHN PARDEY/ ATTWOOD HOUSE



WITH MY MIESIAN TRAINING, I REBELLED WHEN I NOTICED THAT PARDEY HAD TAKEN ONE OF VICTOR HUTCHINGS' STEEL COLUMNS AWAY

By Niall McLaughlin. Photography by Tim Soar

John Pardey Architects is based in Lymington in the New Forest. Attwood House, featured here, is the latest in a long line of rural stand-alone houses that includes Sellars House on the Isle of Wight (AJ 28.08.03), Duckett House in the New Forest (AJ 22.07.04) and Klee House in Buckinghamshire (AJ 20.01.05). The practice is also involved in education projects, including extensive additions to Sir Basil Spence's campus at the University of Sussex (AJ 17.07.03) and a primary school for the diocese of Salisbury that is currently on site.

In 1965 Victor Hutchings built a small weekend house for a Mr Wilks on a flood meadow by the side of the River Loddon, near Wargrave, in Berkshire. This was the time when Craig Ellwood and Edward Killingworth, through the Case Study programme, were seeing out their 15-year fascination with the structural frame of the Farnsworth House. It is clear that Hutchings shared their enthusiasm for the primacy of structural articulation. In some ways, there is an uncanny resemblance between Mies van der Rohe's riverside house at Plano and its British ancestor in Wargrave. In both buildings, a long, single volume is held above the flood level by a steel frame, composed of four simply supported bays with a cantilevered section at each end. Also, in both cases the cantilever is one quarter of the simply supported span. Furthermore, both houses see the stanchions mastering the floor and roof planes. In one heroic moment during the construction at Wargrave, Hutchings had himself photographed, clasping a cigarette, in front of the silhouetted, bare structural frame. This image,

as much as the building, tells us that his heart lay somewhere between Illinois and California.

Somehow, it all became a little bit English after that. The sublime manifestation of structural type collapsed into a kind of gentle pragmatism. Floors popped up and down, the cladding became chunky. Windows couldn't quite bring themselves to look like each other. The finished building was intelligent and careful, if a little awkward, but the simplicity of the frame glimmered through and I'm sure Wilks was far happier than poor Edith Farnsworth.

Thirty-five years later Jane Tranter and David Attwood found Hutchings' house and the site for sale on the Internet. The unprepossessing state of the building – now extended – did not put them off. They had found an unrivalled river frontage on a secluded site within commuting distance of London. In any case, they already had an architect in mind. They had been following the career of John Pardey – cutting out clippings of his work and keeping them for seven years. It is not often that a client rings you up to tell you that they have a perfect site for a new house with a modern precedent, it is even rarer that they tell you that they are not interviewing any other architects but have already decided to use you. Lucky John.

Pardey feels a strong natural affinity with the Case Study House tradition. In this sense, he was a natural person to take over where Hutchings left off. However, Pardey's interest is not really in the expression of the structural frame. His affinity is with another branch of the same tradition, typified by the work of Neutra, that



1. The elevated sitting-room wing extends the house towards the river

deals with positioning the parts of the building so that interior spaces open into particular parts of the landscape. Pardey wanted to knock everything down and start again. He produced a rather lovely scheme for a new house on the site, with asymmetrical wings extending out towards the river.

Jane and David didn't exactly admire the architecture of the old house but they decided that they wanted to keep it all the same. I think that they have a particularly contemporary sensibility that sees the narrative of the site as having equal importance to the physical environment. So this – slightly debased – remnant of a heroic tradition induced a kind of affection, in which the house's half-baked quality was perceived almost as a virtue. The decision to retain the old house was probably a bit of a blow to Pardey, but he produced a revised arrangement that conflated his own stand-alone scheme with the Hutchings house. It is almost as though the two designs pass straight through each other.

The original design had a simple linear plan arranged north/south, with bedrooms to one end; kitchen, bathrooms and an entrance in the middle and a large living space at a lower level at the southern end. It had wide views of the river as it meandered around the edge of the site. Pardey added two, slightly offset, elevated wings on each side, one containing bedrooms, the other holding a single sitting room high up above the river. The bedroom wing is clad in cedar and seems to open a dialogue with the first house. The sitting-room wing is pure Pardey. It is an elegant homage to his hero Richard Neutra. Overall, Pardey has imagined

the new plan as a kind of pinwheel, remembering the arrangement of the Kaufmann Desert House.

When you arrive at the site, the building presents itself as an elevated cruciform on slender stilts, with certain portions dropped down to ground level. An external staircase, launched elegantly from a flood-proof concrete platform, leads you up to the entrance at first-floor level in the crook of the cross. The front door is contained in an open loggia that could be an outside room. This leads you straight into the centre of the plan. Two living spaces stretch out in front of you. One – the new space – extends at your level past a kitchen and fireplace towards a big sitting room over the water. The other is arranged at a half level below and looks out over the lawn towards another part of the river. Other doorways open into quiet bedroom and office wings. This is a sweet moment in the arrangement of the plan, where everything seems clear and close at hand.

The kitchen is at the heart of the house. We sat at the counter on a sunny morning and had the satisfying sense of open rooms stretching away in different directions towards trees, lawns and water. The rooms feel intuitively comfortable and when Pardey chats about 'prospect and refuge' in this place it is clear that he has a deep intuition for the concept of feeling at home in a house. Jane and David spoke happily about pragmatic decisions, daily use and design compromises negotiated and settled. It was a pleasure to feel the trust between the client and the architect and their shared pride in the outcome.



2.



3.

2. The smaller living space is a half level below the main living area and opens onto a terrace
3. The large kitchen/dining/sitting room

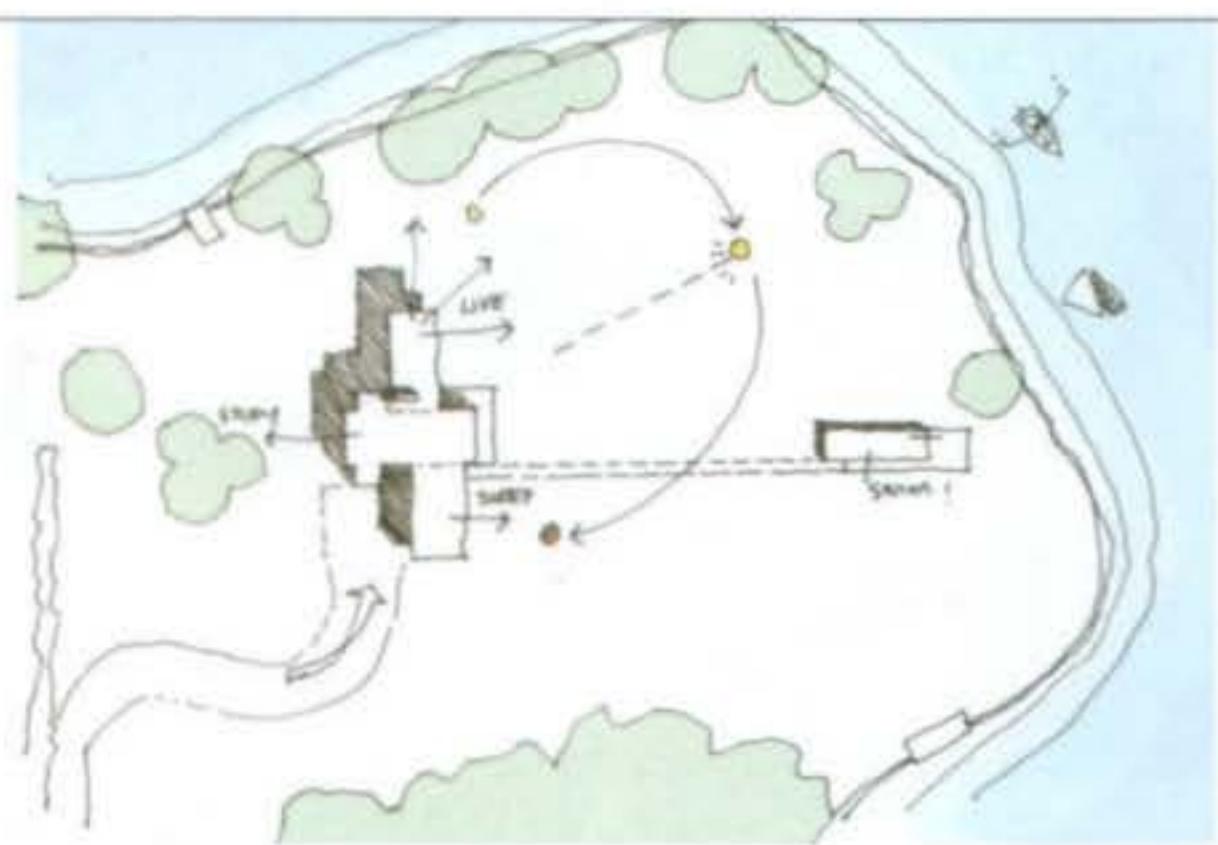
It is depressing, reading the report of the local planning committee, to see what little understanding they demonstrated of the nature of this design conversation. Here, a responsible, sensitive client had appointed a highly suitable and talented architect to construct a beautiful house on a secluded site. The new building respected the existing building on the site. The new house was larger, but it did not dominate the surroundings and sat easily in the land. I simply cannot comprehend why the planners chose to refuse consent. This is a prime example of where the heavy hand of a bureaucratic local authority can be ruinous to a finely balanced design process.

We can be thankful that the architect and client chose to proceed to appeal, where they encountered some common sense and the appeal was granted. Many clients would not have had the tenacity and sense of purpose demonstrated by Jane and David. For the private residential client, trying to achieve authentic design quality with limited personal finance, the planning process has become a nightmare of uncertainty, delay and obfuscation. It is now probably the single largest disincentive to achieving good original residential design in this country. It is barely an acceptable risk for most private clients.

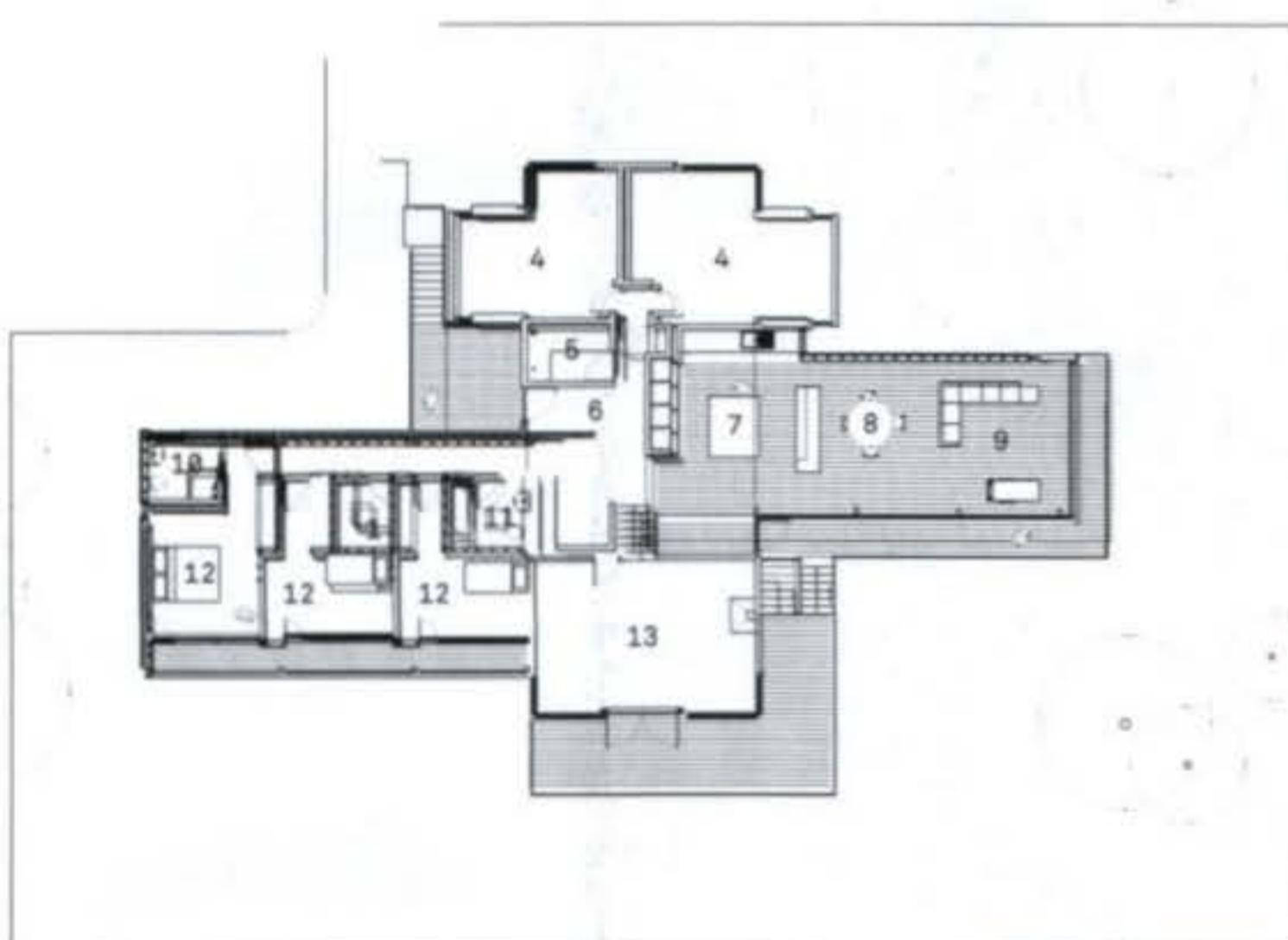
The house was built in a two-phase construction contract. It was completed by a local builder who was working on a modern house for the first time. Despite the occasional glitches, he did a fine job and achieved many of the demanding details required to make the building sing.

Pardey is a romantic. He believes Modernism reached a high-water mark sometime between the Kaufmann Desert House and the Louisiana Museum. These benchmarks represent to Pardey the apotheosis of the idea of living in nature. He recognises in them a gentleness of spirit and tries to recreate it in his own work. It is clear that he has no truck with the fashionable posturing of the metropolitan scene. He dislikes any overt formal elaboration. Nature, for Pardey, is literal, out there, just beyond the glass. This fascination with a moment in Modernism defines the scope of his practice. It sets out his virtues and his horizons.

What is enjoyable about this house is that a number of very different sensibilities co-exist in a single place. They are not entirely absorbed together. On one hand there is Hutchings, who sought the crystalline elaboration of structural truth through the manifestation of the frame, and on the other hand there are David and Jane, for whom the site was a developing narrative of half-absorbed fragments and episodes. Pardey tried to bring these together through a simple story about living in nature. He has largely over-clad the original house in order to absorb it into the larger composition. As a visiting architect, I wanted to pick the two phases apart, to recover the building's origins. For Mies, nature was truth, embodied in the structural type. For Neutra, it was the real landscape beyond the window. With my Miesian training, I rebelled when I noticed that Pardey had taken one of Victor Hutchings' steel columns away. To Pardey this was nothing, as long as it brought us all a little closer to the water.



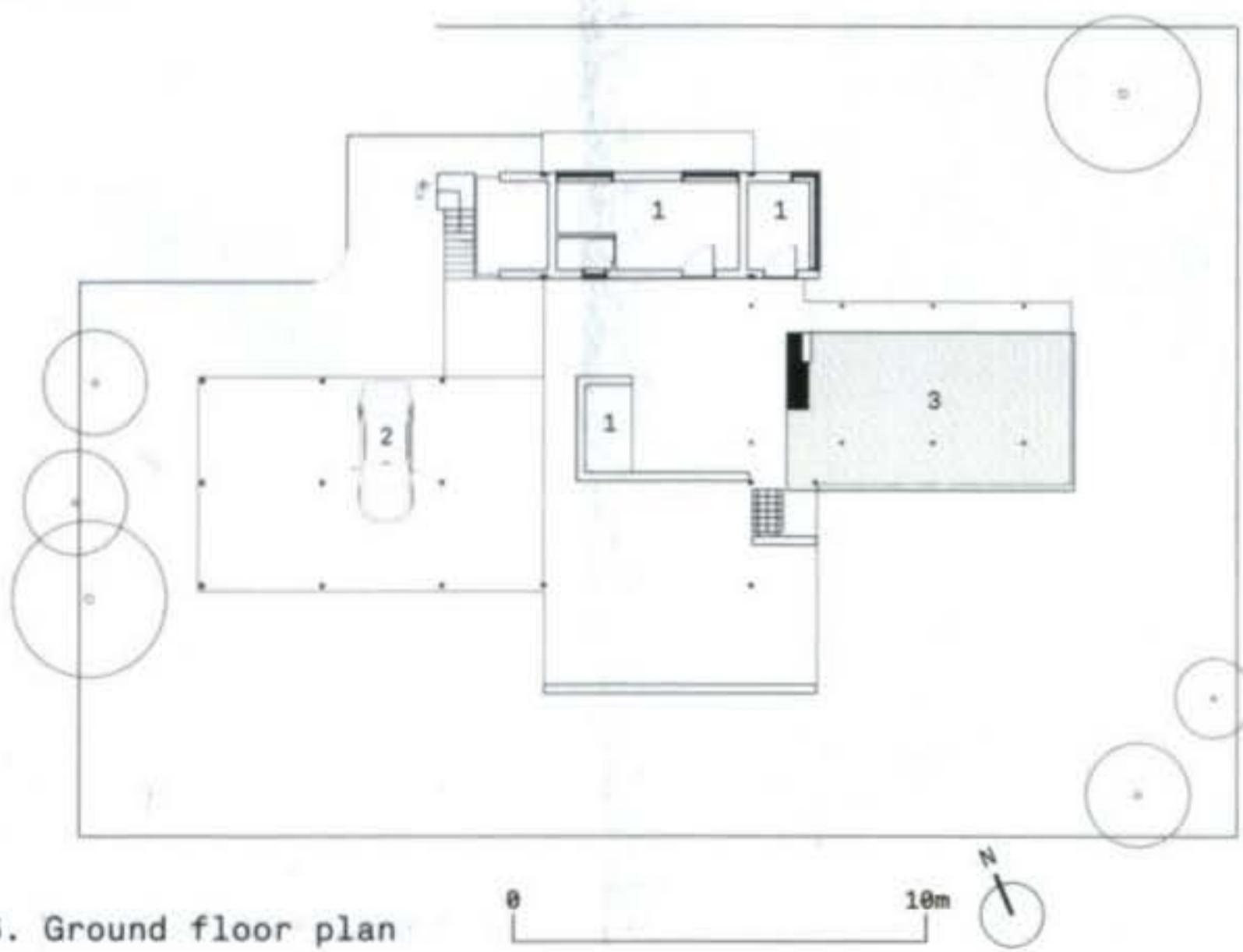
4. Site plan



5. First floor plan

KEY

- 1 STORE
- 2 CARPORT
- 3 CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA
- 4 BEDROOM/STUDY
- 5 BOILER/UTILITY
- 6 ENTRANCE HALL
- 7 KITCHEN
- 8 DINING
- 9 NEW LIVING SPACE
- 10 EN SUITE
- 11 BATHROOM
- 12 BEDROOM
- 13 LIVING



6. Ground floor plan



7.



8.

7. The house as built by Victor Hutchings in 1965

8. Pardey has largely over-clad the original house in order to absorb it into the larger composition



Costs

Cost analysis based on gross internal area, including first-floor balconies.
Costs based on final account. Cost data provided by John Pardsey Architects

SUBSTRUCTURE

Foundations/slabs	£35.73/m ²
Mass concrete pad foundations below steel columns/chimney	

DEMOLITIONS/ASBESTOS REMOVAL

DEMOLITIONS/ASBESTOS REMOVAL	£23.59/m ²
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SUPERSTRUCTURE

Frame	£103.39/m ²
Steel	
Upper floors	£62.56/m ²
Timber joists/insulation	
Roof	£70.59/m ²
Timber rafters/ply sheathing/single-ply membrane on to tapered insulation	
Rooflights	£7.90/m ²
Staircases	£18.67/m ²
Steel carriage/hw treads/rc lower base steps	
External walls	£87.81/m ²
Vapour barrier/timber stud/Celotex insulation/ply sheathing/battens/western red cedar horizontal t+g boarding	
Windows	£79.84/m ²
Monarch monoframe ppc thermally broken frames	
External doors	£5.77/m ²
Cedar-clad external-quality flush door	
External decking	£12.10/m ²
Narrow-strip balau, plugged ss/screw fixed	
Balustrading	£31.43/m ²
Galvanised mild steel/toughened structural glass	
Internal walls and partitions	£77.67/m ²
Stud-framed, plasterboard and skim coat	
Internal doors	£6.39/m ²
Firecheck-quality painted ply-face	

INTERNAL FINISHES

Wall finishes	£36.95/m ²
Paint/ceramic tile	
Floor finishes	£41.70/m ²
Engineered oak flooring/sisal carpet/rubber flooring	
Ceiling finishes	£25.70/m ²
Plasterboard and skim	

FITTINGS AND FURNISHINGS

Furniture	£27.99/m ²
Kitchen joinery	

SERVICES

Sanitary appliances	£25.38/m ²
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9.



10.

9. David Attwood and Jane Tranter in their kitchen
10. The clients talk to John Pardsey and Niall McLaughlin (far right)

Kitchen appliances	£27.99/m ²
Disposal installations	£11.63/m ²
Water installations	£35.44/m ²
Cold water pump from well/Megaflow pressurised system	
Space heating/air treatment	£57.66/m ²
Underfloor heating/trench heaters/radiators	
Electrical services	£58.10/m ²
Builders' work in connection	£22.53/m ²

EXTERNAL WORKS

Landscaping/ancillary buildings	£37.52/m ²
New auto gates/fencing to children's play area/new driveway/decking to BBQ area	

PRELIMINARIES AND INSURANCES

Preliminaries	£138.46/m ²
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Cost summary

	Cost per m ²	Percentage of total
SUBSTRUCTURE AND DEMOLITIONS	59.32	5.10
SUPERSTRUCTURE		
Frame	103.39	8.90
Upper floors	62.56	5.30
Roofs	70.59	6.00
Rooflights	7.90	0.70
Staircases	18.67	1.60
External walls	87.81	7.50
Windows	79.84	6.80
External doors	5.77	0.50
External decking	12.10	1.00
Balustrading	31.43	2.70
Internal walls and partitions	77.67	6.60
Internal doors	6.39	0.50
GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL	582.79	48.10
INTERNAL FINISHES		
Wall finishes	36.95	3.20
Floor finishes	41.70	3.60
Ceiling finishes	25.70	2.20
GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL	104.35	9.00
FITTINGS AND FURNISHINGS	27.99	2.40
SERVICES		
Sanitary appliances	25.38	2.20
Kitchen appliances	27.99	2.30
Disposal installations	11.63	1.00
Water installations	35.44	3.00
Space heating and air treatment	57.66	5.00
Electrical services	58.10	5.00
Builders' work in connection	22.53	1.90
GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL	237.78	20.40
EXTERNAL WORKS	37.52	3.20
PRELIMINARIES AND INSURANCES	138.46	11.80
TOTAL	1,169.54	100

Credits

Tender date	November 2003
Start on site date	April 2004
Contract duration	12 months
Gross internal floor area	284m ²
Form of contract	JCT MW
Total cost	£332,158
Architect	John Pardey Architects
Structural engineer	Barton Engineers
Main contractor	Oak Services (Alton) – first fix contract
Ridge tree Construction (Wargrave) – second fix contract	
Subcontractors and suppliers	
Steelwork	Hirst Steel; windows Kindlelight; asbestos removal
Advanced Environmental; metalwork	Purdy Gates; joinery
Howdens; roof insulation	Kingspan; roof covering Trocal Sika;
carpentry	Carpenters; tiling Versatile; electrical installation Budgie & Co; plumbing and heating NJ Talboys; sanitaryware Ideal Standard/Matki/Aston Matthews; taps Borma; radiators Zehnder; trench heaters Jaga; underfloor heating Osma; slate worktop Kirkstone; kitchen cabinet laminate Warerite; cooker/hob Gaggenau; ceramic tiles Waxman Ceramics; chimney flue Flue Systems; micaceous paint Leighs Paints

WORKING DETAILS / ATTWOOD HOUSE

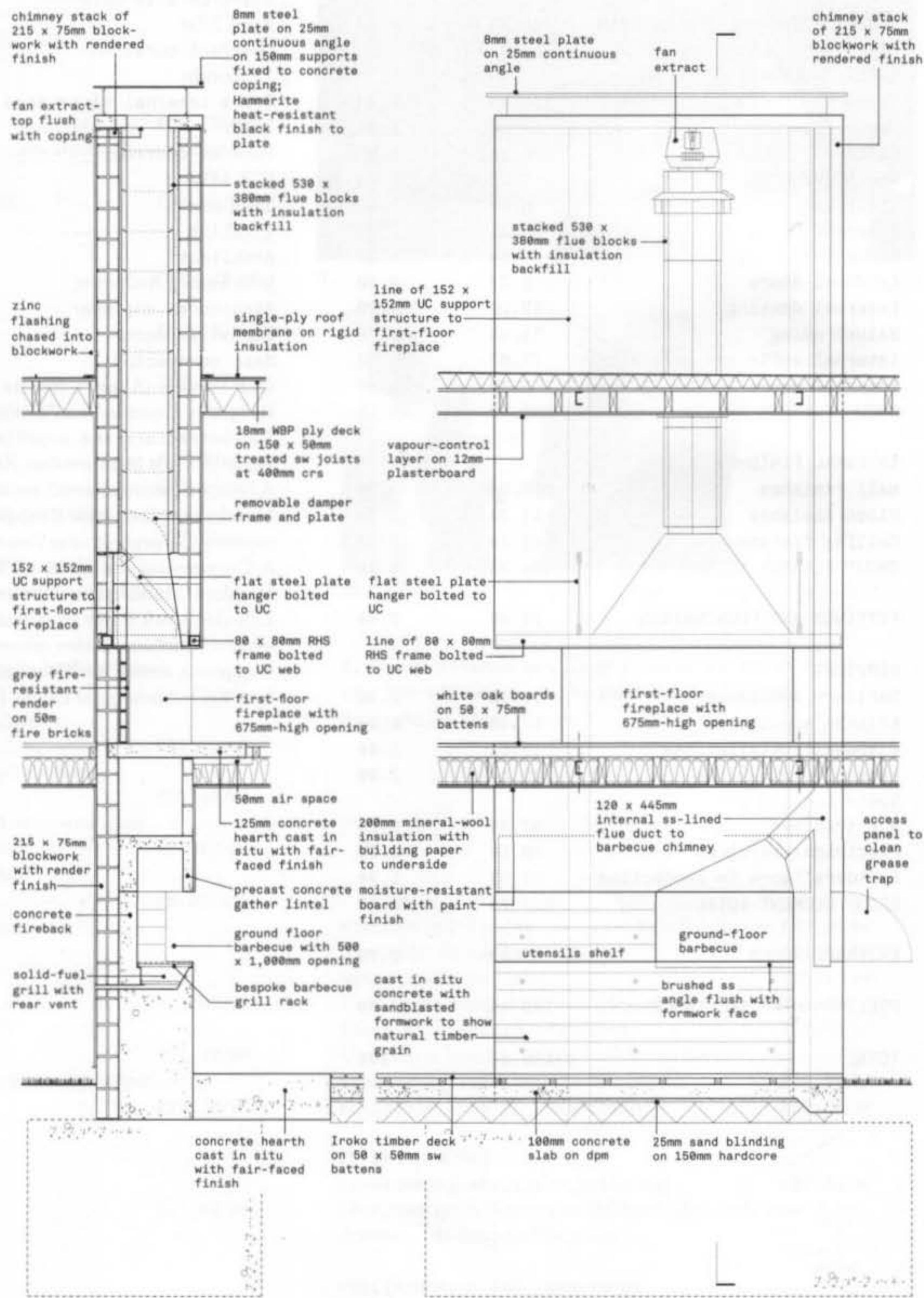
A FIREPLACE, BARBECUE AND CHIMNEY

A 1960s house with living accommodation at first-floor level has been refurbished and extended. The large, open-plan living room/kitchen is 'anchored' by a free-standing fireplace and chimney. The chimney also serves a barbecue below at ground-floor level.

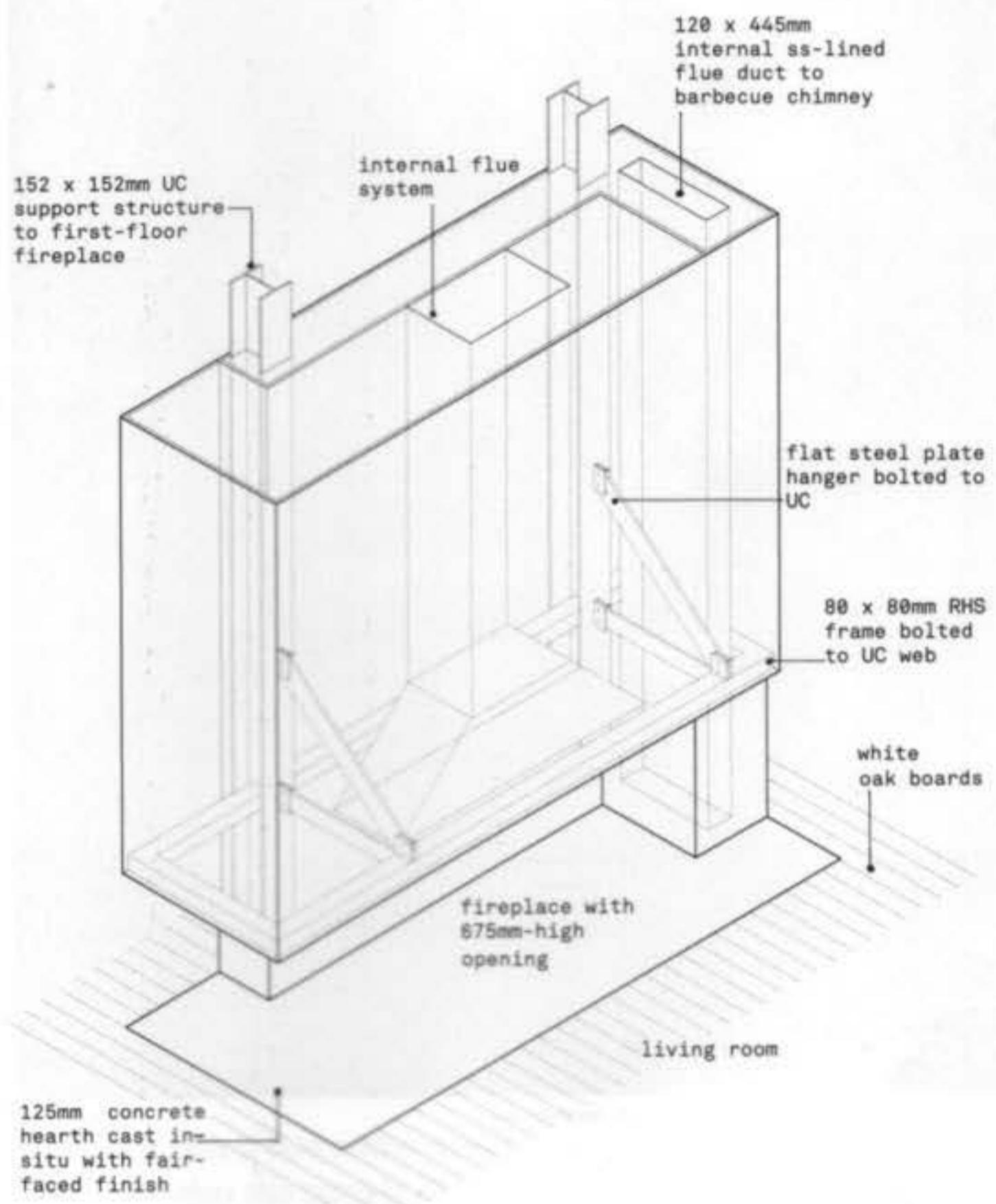
The chimney stack is formed of double-skin blockwork that rises from the ground-floor slab to the coping, tied into a pair of 152 x 152mm UCs. The ground-floor barbecue has a solid cast in-situ concrete upstand as its base; the formwork, of 125mm-thick softwood boards, was sandblasted to expose the natural grain. The combustion zone is a trough in the concrete upstand, with a ventilation slot at the back and a bespoke grill rack above, resting in stainless-steel angles. Fireback and throat were cast as a single concrete element, with the flue void tapering to a pipe and a 120 x 445mm stainless-steel flue rising to one side of the stack. A hinged panel gives access to the grease trap.

The concrete hearth of the first-floor fireplace is flush with the timber floor and the chimney cantilevers over the 675mm-high opening, supported by a 80 x 80mm RHS frame bolted to the UCs. The stainless-steel throat leads to an insulated flue pipe. At the top, the flue openings are protected from weather by an 8mm-thick black-painted steel plate, raised above the concrete coping on 150mm angle supports.

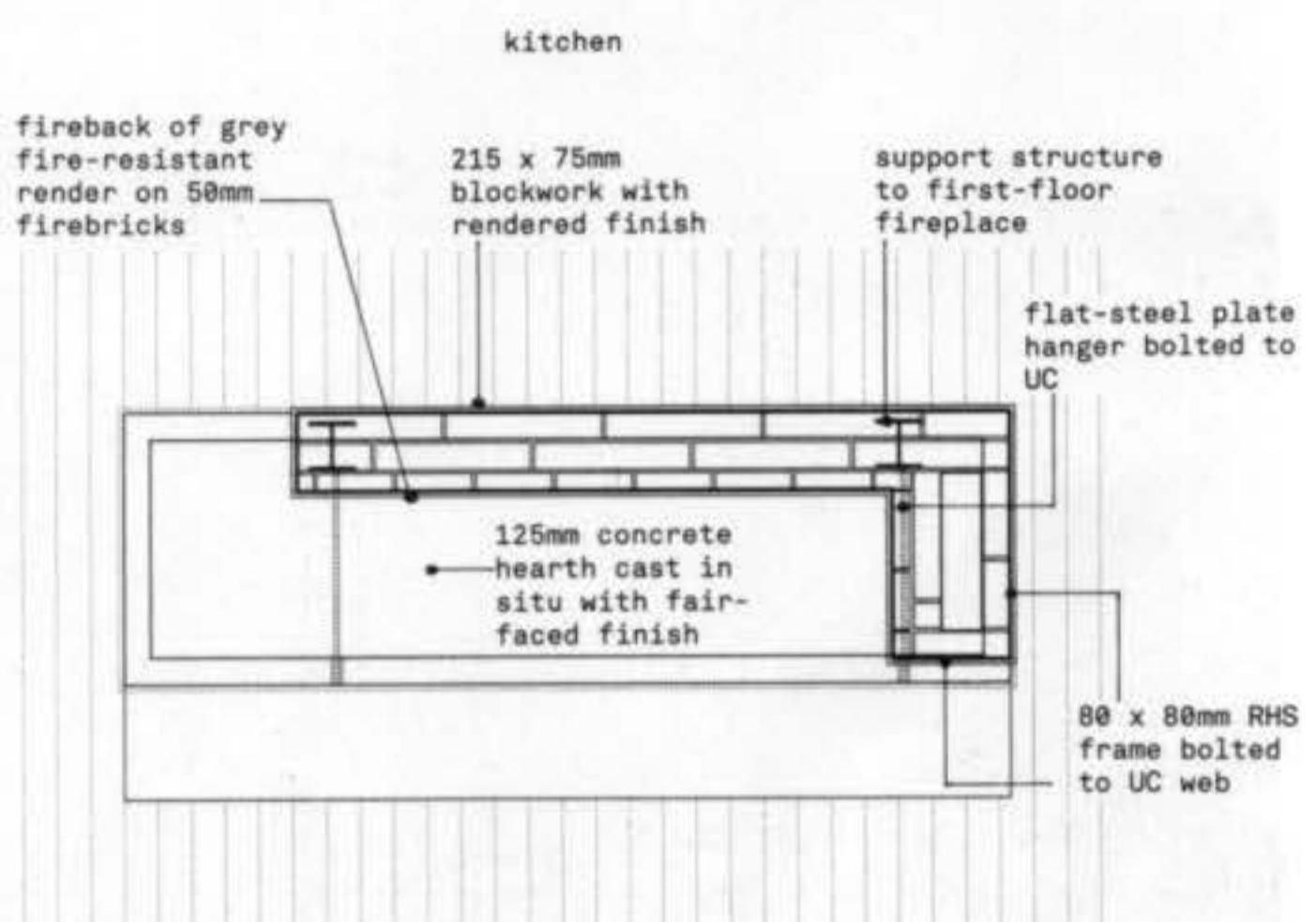
Susan Dawson



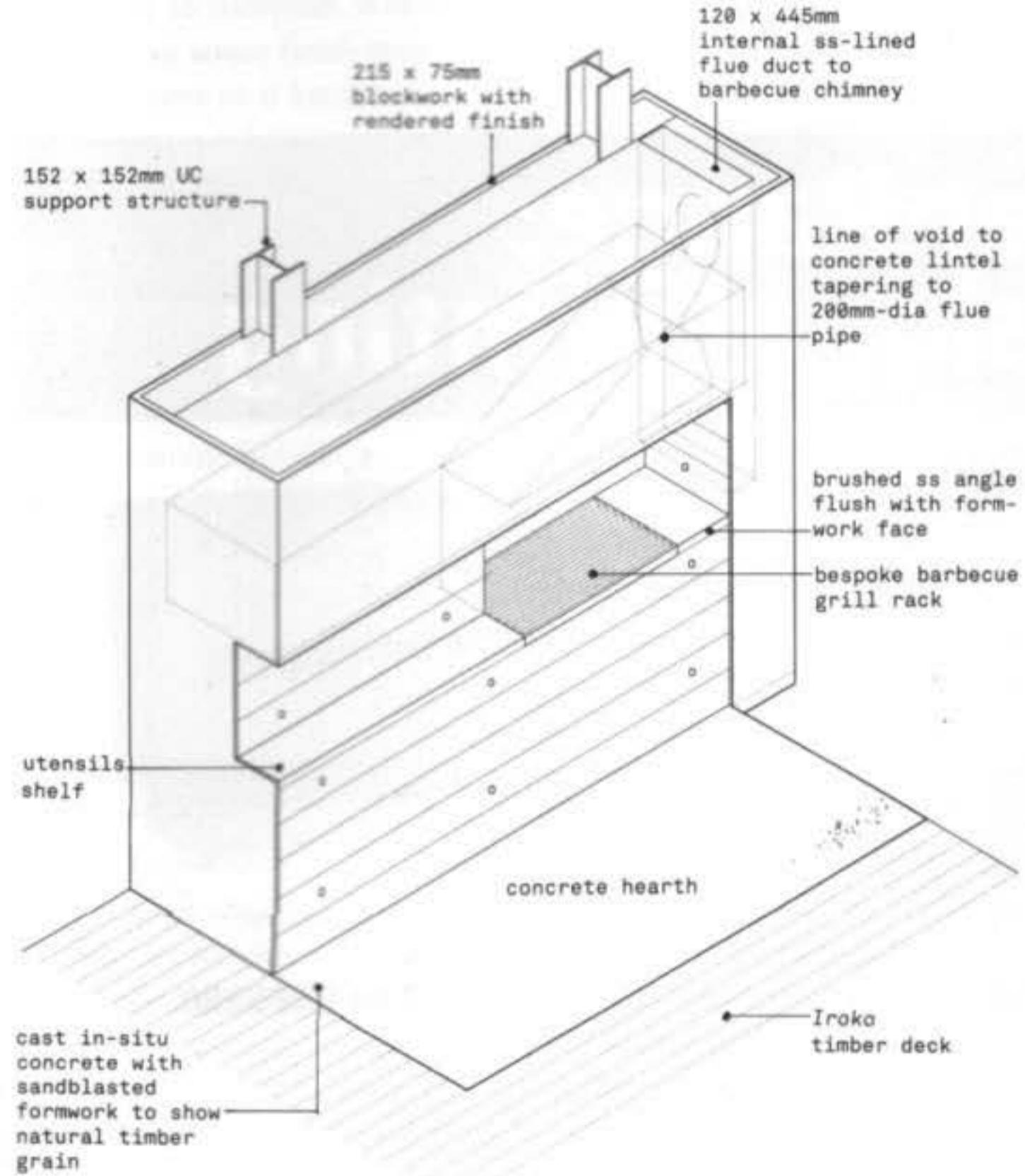
CROSS-SECTION THROUGH BARBECUE, FIREPLACE AND CHIMNEY ELEVATION OF BARBECUE, FIREPLACE AND CHIMNEY



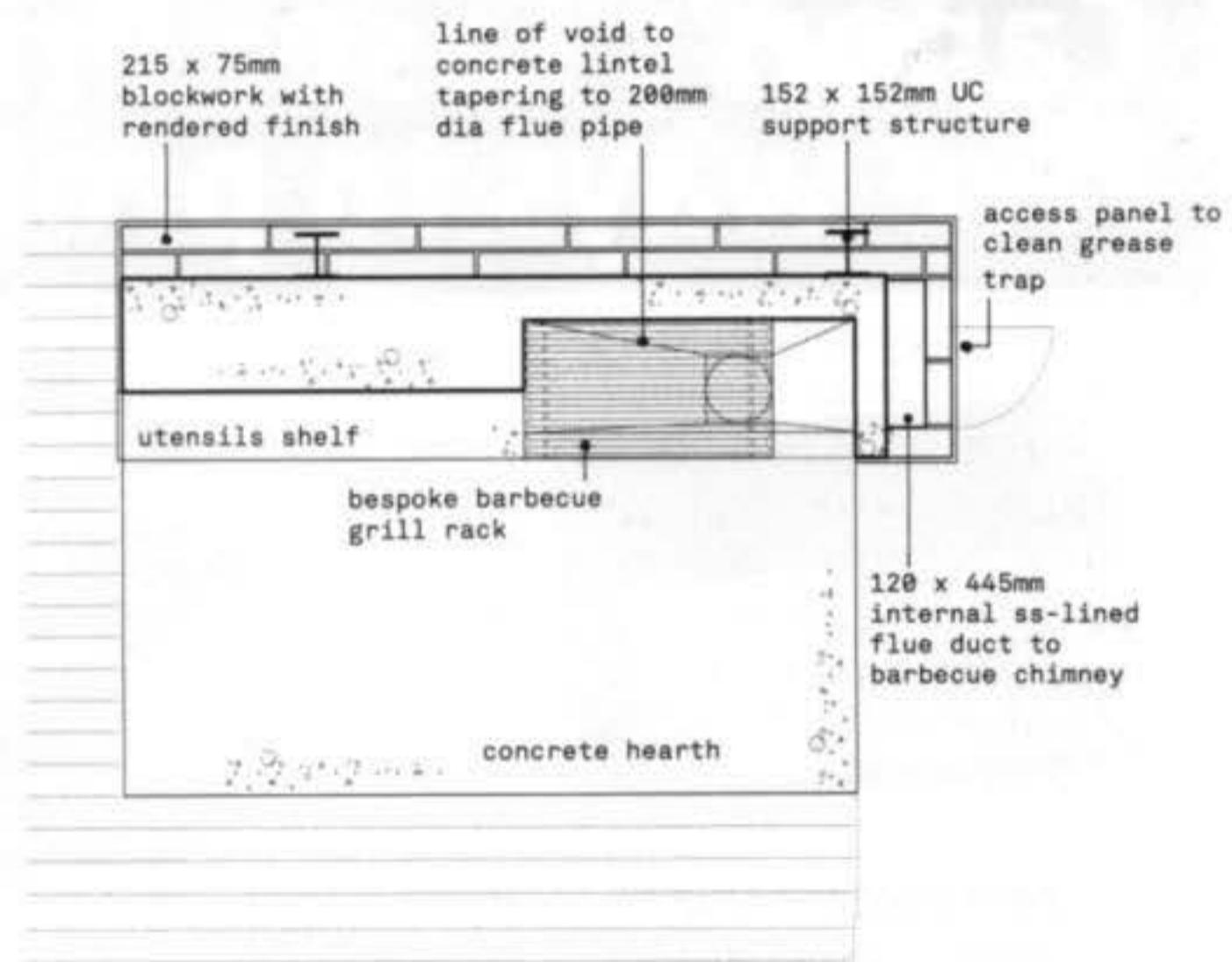
ISOMETRIC OF FIREPLACE AT FIRST FLOOR



PLAN OF FIREPLACE AT FIRST FLOOR



ISOMETRIC OF BARBECUE AT GROUND FLOOR



PLAN OF BARBECUE AT GROUND FLOOR