

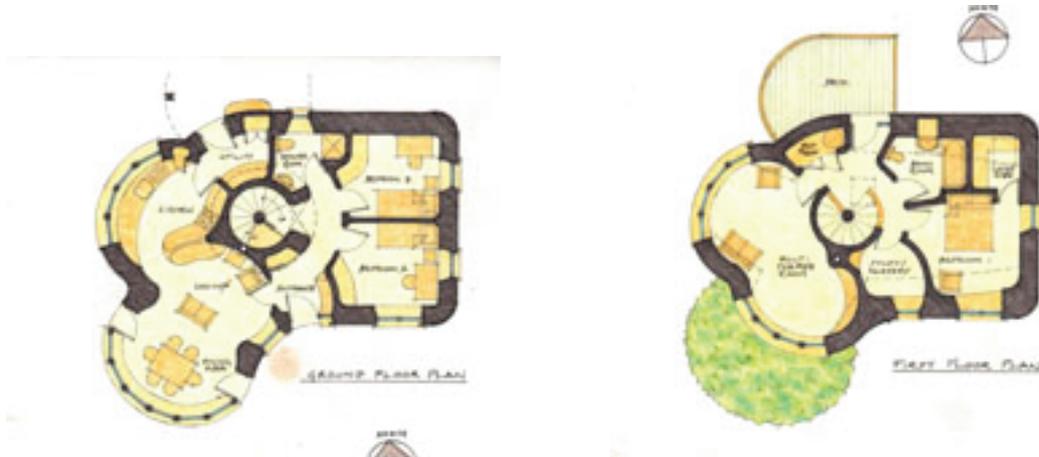


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Sketch Plans and Elevations for the Mud and Wood House

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Of critical importance to the Mud and Wood House was access to the sun. We looked at how we lived our lives, what we liked to do at different times of the day and how these activities could follow the path of the sun.

We started with waking. We like to be woken by the sun (curtains are optional if you want a lie in). Nothing beats waking up and having sunshine streaming through our windows. All of our bedrooms have east facing windows. Where possible, it is good design to have windows on two sides of a room. It allows for even light in a room and for longer access to the sun. So two of our bedrooms also have big south-facing windows.

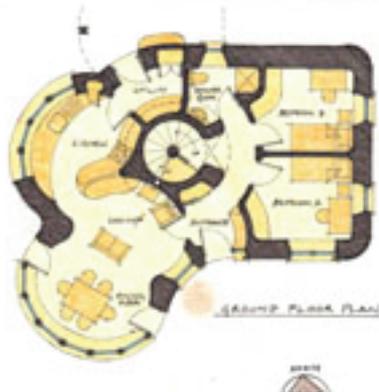


As our house is built with cob (mud) it has great thermal storage properties and lots of windows to the south make excellent sense. Even on a bitterly cold day, if the sun is shining, all of our south-facing rooms are very pleasant to sit in. We can feel the heat of the sun on our backs. Our dark mud floor and thick earth walls soak up this free heat and release it slowly back into the house as the sunshine fades.

Now that we had all our main living/doing rooms facing the sun, we needed to think a bit more about how we lived our life. A good example is the kitchen.

As a family, we try to eat breakfast together, but the morning can be rushed and a bit disjointed. We both like to cook. So while the idea of having the morning sun in the kitchen was very appealing, we recognised we spent more time in the kitchen in the evening. The evening meal takes longer to prepare, dishes may have stacked up during the day.

So rather than placing the kitchen on the east side of the house, we placed it facing northwest. We have views of the sea in this direction. We also get the best sunsets. We still have our morning east light, looking across the lounge.



We are pretty messy in the kitchen. We have a habit of inviting people to dinner and being nowhere near ready when they arrive. So we wanted the kitchen to be connected to our 'entertaining' area, so we could carry on conversations while carrying on cooking. But we also wanted the mess to be tucked around the corner a little bit. It works really well.

The kitchen is designed so that it bulges out in the middle, but is pinched as it connects to the family area. While I appreciate some help in the kitchen, for me - too many cooks definitely spoil the broth. The kitchen is comfortable for two people to work side by side. It gets awkward after that. That is exactly how I want it.

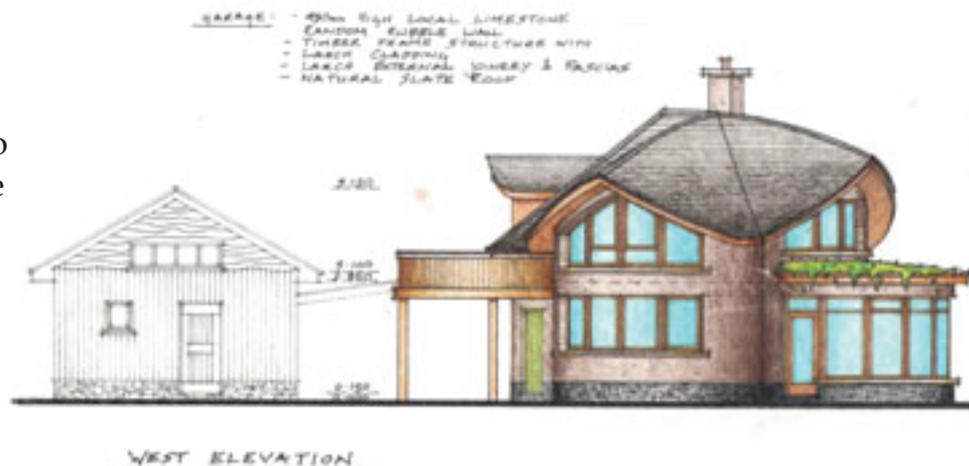
Another interesting feature in the kitchen and the utility room are the "fridges". We don't have electric fridges. Instead we have stone-lined cold larders built into the north walls. Again, this demonstrates locating things logically in relation to the path of the sun.

The kitchen window and the upstairs living room window look to headlands marching away in the distance. The point where the sea meets the land provides a more interesting view

than if we directed our view exactly north at the sea. Because the upstairs living room and the kitchen also have major solar gain thanks to the large southwest-facing windows in both rooms, we were comfortable with having large windows for our most dramatic views, even though they are to the north. All north and northwest-facing windows are triple glazed.



The upstairs living room allows us to make the most of our views. We are lucky to have mountains to the south and the sea to the north. In this room, we really get to appreciate both aspects simultaneously.



Many people love the idea of an open plan house. I would always advise to be a bit careful of that. Do you really want to listen to that programme they are watching while you try to read your book? Do you really want to be stuck in the middle of all your kids and their friends playing knights and dragons or Star Wars?

There is huge value in providing spaces where the family can come together - smaller open plan areas. But it can be good idea to also have a separate place where the minority can find peace and refuge while the majority noisily enjoy themselves. When we have families around, we find the parents stay downstairs, enjoying the fire, lounging at the dining table after a good meal. The kids run riot upstairs. Nobody gets in anybody else's way. It works perfectly.



One of Colin's main requirements was to feel like he was outdoors even when he was inside. He also wanted to be able to access outdoors easily. The dining area windows form one large curved window seat. Two of the windows extend to the floor and are used as doors. In a country that can feel very grey for long periods of time, this is a bright and airy place to be.

Our parking is to the north of the house. People don't enjoy hanging out in shady places. The car port is roofed. We can bring groceries into the fridge and kitchen quickly through the back door. The cars are parked out of view and the rest of outdoors gets sun.

Check out Mud and Wood's design courses for more tips on the best ways to lay out your home, www.mudandwood.com.