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Noah's Ark Children's Hospice

OCTOBER 7, 2019

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The Ark launched in September 2019 as a new highly sustainable facility for Noah's Ark Children's Hospice, specifically designed to support children with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions and their families.

Situated within a 7.5-acre nature reserve in Barnet, North London, The Ark is the first new hospice building in London for ten years, and will allow the charity to increase the scale and quality of their work with children and families.

The building was designed and delivered by Squire & Partners, with landscape by Gensler, as part of a team of high profile built environment professionals working collaboratively to support the Build The Ark appeal.

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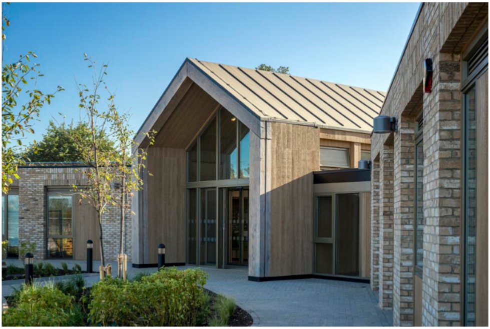

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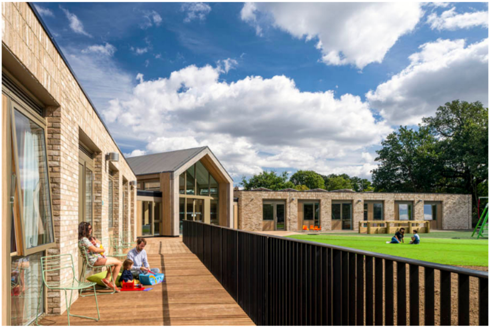
The brief from Noah's Ark sought an inspiring space for palliative care, relaxation and adventure within a 'home from home' environment – as an evolution of the approach taken with Maggie's Centres or Teenage Cancer Trust HUBs to design a centre specifically for the needs of children living life as a child.

The aim was to create an uplifting environment for children to be children, not just patients, and encourage young people and their families to connect with others facing similar challenges.



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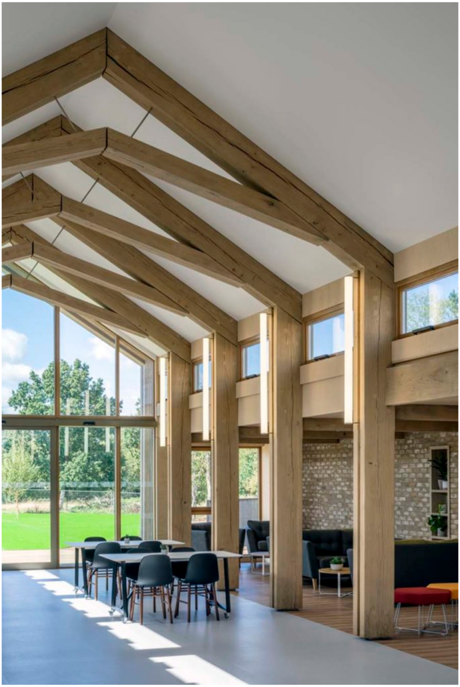

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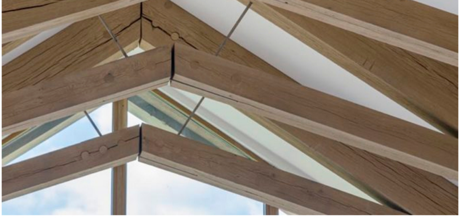
Establishing a relationship with the surrounding landscape was a priority, as well as providing a focal point for social interaction between the volunteers, community outreach workers and family visitors who use the facility.

The design was conceived as a welcoming space which acts as a peaceful sanctuary for children, as well as a place of joy and discovery where families are able to enjoy time together with support and encouragement from the Noah’s Ark team.

Set on the natural incline of its nature reserve setting, The Ark is discreetly carved into the hillside providing a single storey at the entrance, adding a lower level to the rear as the site slopes away.

Noahs Ark Childrens Hospice Squire & Partners. Photo ©Gareth Gardner

The building is designed to have a strong connection with its natural setting – seen as an important contributor to wellbeing and the healing process. Conceived from a broadly square shaped building with landscaped gardens eroding each of the four sides, the concept evolved to sculpt a butterfly shaped plan – the symbol of the children's hospice movement, depicting a brief but beautiful life.



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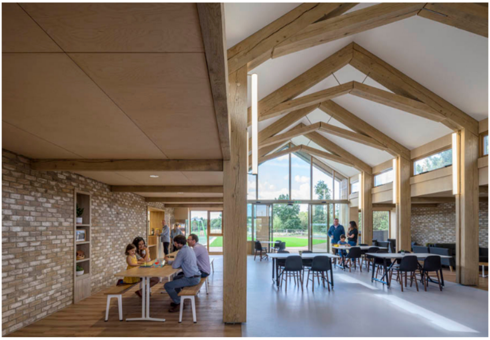

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A palette based around natural materials features textured brick and an exposed timber structure. The double height oak framed entrance hall, fully glazed at each end, creates a light and striking open volume as an uplifting space for families to come together and socialise. Colour is added with furniture, while downlighters and pendant lights create warm tones.

Four brick-clad wings run off the central hall, with a section each for therapies (including areas for soft play, sensory play, a music therapy room, an art room and a cinema room), children's bedrooms, families rooms and administration. At lower ground level more private functions include bereavement suites, a multi-faith room and staff facilities.

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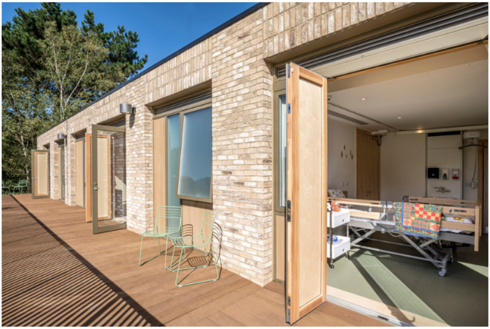

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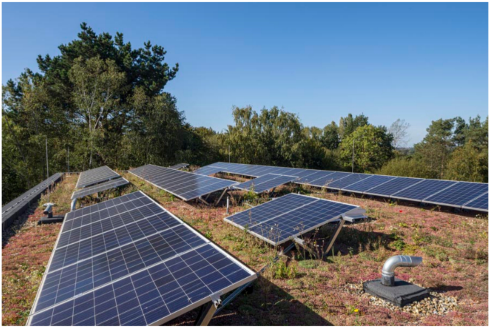
Each room within the facility has a link with the landscape via large windows/doors and openable timber panels, creating a domestic rather than medicalised environment. Bedrooms for children and families have poster boards and desk spaces to quickly and easily personalise spaces, and are designed to cater for the cultural diversity of families in the area – including adjoining rooms to allow for separation of genders, and PIR lighting for Jewish families during Sabbath.

The Ark is designed so that children's beds and mobility equipment can be moved throughout the building as well as onto large south facing external decks, encouraging them to engage in a variety of activities during their time at the centre.



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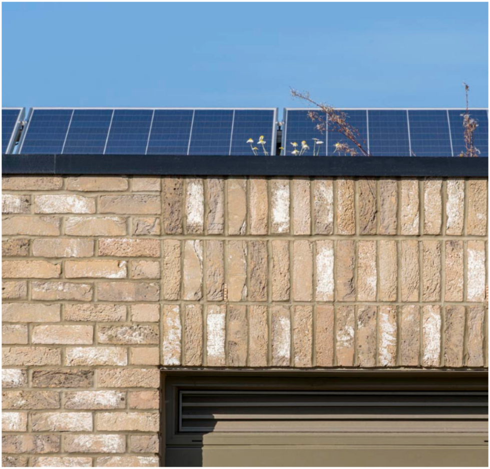

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The Ark will be the first time a bio-solar green roof with 185 photovoltaic panels has been used in the UK, generating significant amounts of electricity for the building.

Harvesting all rainfall via a surface draining system, the green roof mitigates flooding risk on the sloping site and reuses water within the landscape irrigation system.

Electric car points are provided in the entrance garden.

Noahs Ark Childrens Hospice Squire & Partners. Photo ©Gareth Gardner

The project has been achieved through a unique collaboration between the design, property and construction sectors, who have come together to support the charity in their Building the Ark appeal. The team includes Squire & Partners (architect), Gensler (landscape), JLL (planning/project management), Pears Property (client advisors), Ramboll (structure), 8Build (contractor) and Erith Demolition.

Collaborators have been involved in all stages of the development – from concept and fundraising through to planning and delivery – making the project possible by working on either a pro bono or non-profit basis. Countless suppliers have also donated either free or heavily discounted products for the build, including Jewson's (timber), Carpenter & Oak (oak frame), SAS (ceiling tiles, Ardmore (joinery) and Dreams (beds).

A huge personal commitment from the project team has also contributed to fundraising, including Squire & Partners Director Barnaby Johnston running the London marathon and Gensler Associate Alicia Gomez and Jessica Harding running the North London Half Marathon in support of The Ark.

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