

# JDDK ARCHITECTS: VISITOR CENTRES



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*RSPB Visitor Centre, Sherwood Forest*



*The Sill National Landscape Discovery Centre, Once Brewed*

## INTRODUCTION

JDDK Architects have a significant heritage of delivering highly successful, high quality development projects within the tourism sector, with wide ranging aspirations, sizes and budgets. We bring that experience and expertise to every one of our clients.

Having worked on a number of visitor centre, tourism and community projects over the past 15 years, we have built up an excellent knowledge of this development type. We have proven success of project delivery for a number of clients in this field such as RSPB and Northumberland National Park Authority.

We are experienced in sustainable building design and bring a design approach that embeds sustainable thinking into every part of the design process.

We are passionate about community involvement in the design process. Many of our projects have been designs developed in collaboration with the community including The Sill, Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre and Northern Roots.

# OUR PROJECTS: VISITOR CENTRES TIMELINE



## Saltholme Wildlife Reserve Visitor Centre, Teesside (2008)

Education, community and visitor centre for RSPB and Teesside Environmental Trust. Achieved BREEAM Excellent rating and won the Regional Construction Excellence Award for Sustainability and RIBA Regional Award  
**#BREEAM #Rammed Earth Wall #Photovoltaics #Natural Ventilation #Recycled Materials #Reed Beds #Rainwater Harvesting**

## Calvert Trust, Kielder (2012)

Design for Visitor Centre, Chalets and masterplan at Calvert Trust, Kielder  
**#BREEAM #Natural Ventilation #Recycled Materials #Reed Beds**



## Northumberlandia (2014)

A new Visitor Centre for The Land Trust to provide a focus for visitors to the landform sculpture of a reclining lady—The Lady of the North near Cramlington, which is now known as “Northumberlandia”.  
**#Timber Frame #Timber Cladding #Natural Ventilation**

## The Sill, Northumberland (2017)

The design for this landscape discovery centre and youth hostel was inspired by its Northumbrian setting and shaped by public consultation. The accessible roof is planted with native grasses and provides a viewpoint to Hadrian's Wall. Winner of Selwyn Goldsmith Award for Universal Design in 2019 and RIBA North East Award

**#BREEAM #Green Roof #Photovoltaics #Natural Ventilation #MVHR**





### RSPB Sherwood Forest (2018)

Visitor centre with a curved and twisted form inspired by the forest. Voted Sustainability Development of the Year at 2019 East Midlands Property Awards. [#Air Source Heat Pump](#) [#Timber Frame](#) [#Timber Cladding](#) [#Natural Ventilation](#) [#SUDS Ponds](#)

### Northern Roots (2022)

The Northern Roots project aims to create the UK's largest urban farm and eco-park on 160-acres of under-used green space, five minutes from Oldham town centre, Greater Manchester. Proposals include a Visitor Centre and Learning Centre and designs were developed with the community.

2022 Landscape Institute Award, Partnership and Collaboration Award for Northern Roots, Oldham

[#RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge](#) [#Green Roof](#) [#Photovoltaics](#) [#MVHR](#) [#Air Source Heat Pump](#) [#Timber Frame](#) [#Timber Cladding](#) [#SUDS Ponds](#)



### Kingsbrook Meadows (2024)

A Visitor Centre at Kingsbrook, east of Aylesbury (Bucks), where Barratt David Wilson Homes, the RSPB and Buckinghamshire Council are working together to raise the bar for wildlife-friendly new housing. The Visitor Centre is designed to use sustainable construction techniques and create habitats for wildlife.

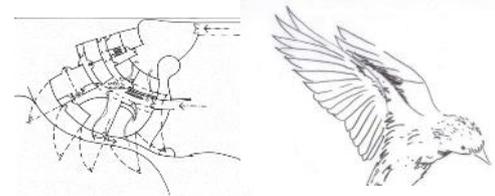
[#Living Walls](#) [#Photovoltaics](#) [#MVHR](#) [#Air Source Heat Pump](#) [#Timber Frame](#) [#SUDS](#) [#Biodiversity](#)

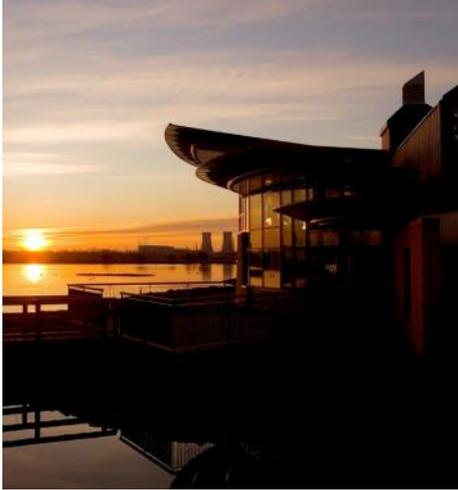
# CASE STUDY: RSPB SALTHOLME

**Client: RSPB and Teesside Environmental Trust**

JDDK Architects with Glen Kemp landscape architects were successful in winning a design competition for the provision of an education, community and visitor centre as well as viewing hides, as part of the development of the RSPB International Nature Reserve at Saltholme near Stockton on Tees.

The design of the visitor centre is based on wing-like roofs which gradually rise out of the landscape giving a sense of movement and creating a striking and dynamic building. The scheme also includes three bird hides set within the extensive wetland area surrounding the building.



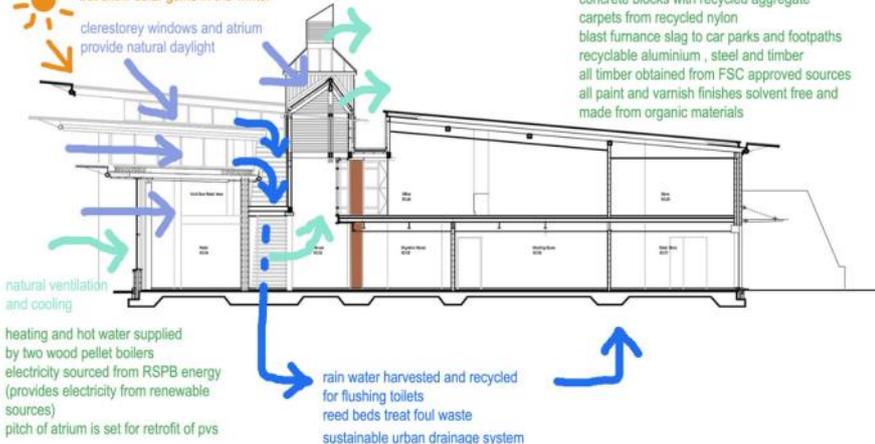


The basic principles of sustainable design guided the design development and the finished scheme was awarded a BREEAM rating of Excellent . The building is orientated to maximise solar gain, while the overhanging roofs provide shading in the summer months as well as collecting rainwater. The rammed earth wall in the atrium modifies the internal temperature, easing the thermal load, and high level windows ensure a natural flow of air for ventilation.



oversailing south facing roofs provide solar shading in the summer but allow solar gains in the winter

clerestory windows and atrium provide natural daylight



## Awards

2010 RICS North East Renaissance Project of the Year Award

2010 RICS North East Renaissance Award for Tourism and Leisure

2009 LABC Building Excellence Award Commendation for Best Technical Innovation

2009 RIBA North East Award

2009 Regional Constructing Excellence in the Built Environment, The Legacy Award – Sustainability

# CASE STUDY: THE SILL

**Client: Northumberland National Park Authority**

The Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre at Once Brewed in Northumberland, was the recipient of a £7.8million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, providing funding towards the project designed to transform how people connect with the landscape. Named after the adjacent Great Whin Sill, the volcanic crag on which Hadrian’s Wall is partly built, the building forms the heart of a seven-year investment plan to increase visitor numbers to the Northumberland National Park and Hadrian’s Wall World Heritage sites.

The facility has been designed as a showcase of local pride and passion, featuring an exhibition space, learning and event spaces, a local produce café, rural business hub, a world-class 86 bed Youth Hostel and a shop specialising in local crafts and produce. But, for many, it’s the actual building that is the main attraction.



*“Building a national centre in a National Park and a World Heritage Site, with the National Park Authority as the client, was always going to be a challenge. We needed a building which not only respected the landscape but enhanced it. In JDDK we could not have had a better architect, who engaged with us as the client, the local community and our many partners right from the outset and has delivered a building which we are all genuinely very proud of. ”*



# CASE STUDY: THE SILL: COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The result of a truly local enterprise, with more than 3,000 local residents taking part in the extensive community consultations during the design period. We hosted a series of open events and workshops where we discussed site layout, materials and architectural style. The participative design process gave the local community a chance to get involved, voice their opinions and feel some ownership of the project. It also allowed us to draw on a vast wealth of local knowledge and expertise.

The Sill is inspired by The Great Whin Sill, Northumberland's internationally-renowned geological feature, and grows from the landscape that surrounds it. An aerial view of the wider landscape shows these dramatic geological outcrops as diagonal ripples in the landscape. The building is developed as another ripple rising out of the landscape so that the diagonal flowing lines of the building echo the natural undulations and outcrops in the landscape

The Sill's fully accessible living roof sweeps gently upwards, giving visitors a bird's eye vantage point across one of the UK's most magnificent landscapes and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hadrian's Wall.



## CASE STUDY: THE SILL: SUSTAINABILITY

The building has also been designed on sustainable principles to target a BREEAM Very Good rating, including orientation to maximise on solar gains in some of the public spaces while offices are placed to the north to prevent overheating. A central atrium provides daylight in to the heart of the building while allowing a summer time natural ventilation strategy and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery in the winter.

The south facing entrance canopy provides solar shading to the glazed frontages of the classrooms and main entrance while also supporting photovoltaics for generating electricity. Solar panels are also incorporated on the Youth Hostel roof to provide hot water while the remaining whin sill vegetation roof increases biodiversity and reduces surface water runoff. The building also incorporates high levels of insulation and air tightness, low embodied energy materials and enhanced ecology including habitats for bats and birds.

The building harmoniously reflects the distinctiveness of the Northumbrian landscape in both its shape and the materials used in its construction, rising from the Northumberland landscape with little impact on the environment, perfectly mirroring its inspiration; the unique landscape of the Hadrian's Wall corridor. 80% of the external walls of the building are finished in local materials including whin stone, sandstone and native larch.



### Awards

2019 DEFRA International Recognition Landscape Award  
2019 Civic Trust Awards, Selwyn Goldsmith Award for Universal Design  
2018 RIBA North East Award  
2018 RICS Awards North East, Tourism & Leisure, Highly Commended  
2015 Planning Awards, Planning Permission of the Year



*"The unique concept and rural location of The Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre, located in a National Park and within the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site presented challenges which required experienced and high-quality architectural design services. JDDK took the building from a list of required uses through an extensive and detailed public engagement process, establishing a public desire for a modern design response in this key heritage location. This has ultimately led to a building in and of the landscape, with its very fabric drawn from the land within which its sits. I am incredibly proud of what has been achieved."*



# CASE STUDY: RSPB SHERWOOD FOREST

Client: RSPB

The clients for the Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre project were an RSPB-led consortium, which included the RSPB, the Sherwood Forest Trust, The Woodland Trust and Thoresby Estate working together with Nottinghamshire County Council.

The design of the development is inspired by the idea of the trees sheltering Robin Hood and the natural topography and character of the site and its environs.



## Awards

- 2019 LABC Awards National Winner, Best Small Commercial Project
- 2019 East Midlands Property Awards, Sustainability Development of the Year Award
- 2019 LABC East Midlands Building Excellence Awards, Best Small Commercial Project
- 2019 RICS East Midlands Award, Tourism & Leisure

*"We were tasked with providing a visitor centre which would be a modern gateway to the ancient forest, and feel that the completed building matches this brief perfectly. JDDK designed a centre befitting of this legendary forest, and produced a building which sits beautifully in this landscape, of which we are extremely proud."*



The linear format of the building pulls visitors through the initial welcoming area for visitors into the main building with retail and recreation facilities to wilderness zones to give visitors a real sense of the ancient forest environment. They then exit the Centre down through a 5m level change into the double height café space and out to the exterior amphitheatre sheltered by the overhanging canopy, an integral part of the roof. The design concept is for a twisting, undulating timber glulam structure which provides a focal point, gathering space and visual stop end to the village, curving with an over sailing canopy to provide a sheltered entrance to the visitor centre.

As the building drops towards the forest to the north, it curves in the opposite direction with a similar over sailing roof to form a sheltered outdoor seating area alongside an amphitheatre to the west.

A curved ramp defines the amphitheatre allowing access for all across the site. The building therefore provides the transition from the historic village of Edwinstowe to Sherwood Forest, forming a gateway to the National Nature Reserve through a truly inclusive design.



# CASE STUDY: NORTHERN ROOTS, OLDHAM

**Client:** Northern Roots

The Northern Roots project aims to create the UK's largest urban farm and eco-park on 160-acres of under-used green space, five minutes from Oldham town centre, Greater Manchester.

Developed for and with local communities, the vision for Northern Roots is to create sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits for those communities as well as enhancing the habitat, biodiversity and environmental value of the Northern Roots site .

JDDK Architects led the design team to develop outline proposals for the site as well as more detailed proposals for a Visitor Centre and Learning Centre. The site is within Green Belt so required a sensitive approach and the scheme has now received planning approval.

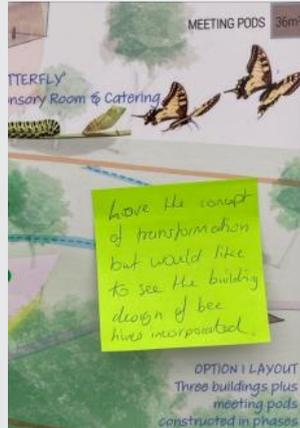


## Awards

2022 Landscape Institute Award for Partnership and Collaboration



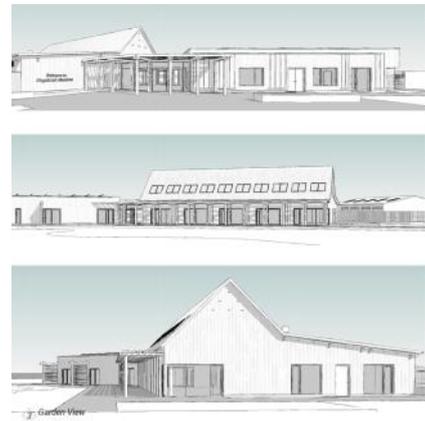
Community engagement has been at the core of the design development process with Oldham College, Mahdlo Youth zone and local residents all contributing to where the new buildings will be located, what they will look like and what activities will be undertaken there. The team received the Landscape Institute Award for Partnership and Collaboration.



# CASE STUDY: KINGSBROOK MEADOWS

**Client:** Barratt David Wilson Homes & RSPB

At Kingsbrook, east of Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire, Barratt David Wilson Homes, the RSPB and Buckinghamshire Council are working together to raise the bar for wildlife-friendly new housing. Three villages began construction in 2016 which, alongside the new homes, will feature 60% greenspace that houses wildlife, parks, orchards and wildflower meadows. The site demonstrates how new housing developments can be designed to offer homes for wildlife, to benefit nature and enhance the lives of the residents and visitors.



As part of the innovative new development, at JDDK we have been working on plans for a visitor destination called Kingsbrook Meadows.

The Visitor Centre has been designed to fit within the ethos of Kingsbrook, using sustainable construction techniques and creating habitats for wildlife.



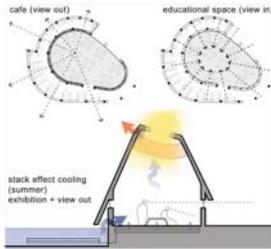
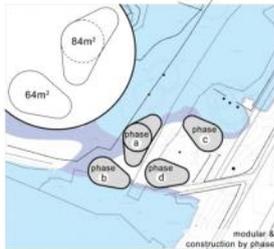
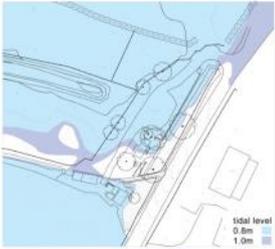
The Visitor Centre concept is based on two splayed wings with a connecting entrance foyer. The northern wing will be conceived as a barn, referencing the local vernacular while the southern wing has a flat roof supporting photovoltaics.

The building is designed with sustainability at its heart, with orientation to maximise on solar gains and views of the Chilterns in the café area, while the pergola provides solar shading. The pitched roof over 'the barn' will allow for an attractive café area while providing zones for bird and bat boxes.

Elsewhere climbing plants on pergolas and frames will be incorporated to create living walls and structures which extend out from the central barn structure into the landscape.

# VISITOR CENTRES COMPETITION DESIGNS





## SPACE FOR NATURE

Landscape has always played a key part in JDDK's work. Sometimes, our buildings are carefully positioned within a natural setting, such as our recent visitor centres at The Sill and Sherwood Forest. In other cases, we work closely with landscape architects to bring nature into the built environment.

Part of the challenge for architects in the years to come will be incorporating 'space for nature' within our developments. We must create opportunities for wildlife to flourish, through the careful integration of green infrastructure.

At this smallest scale, this could be the provision of bat slates and bird boxes, but the bigger and more connected the green spaces are the more they will support ecological network and a wider range of biodiversity.



*Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre*

## KEY JDDK STAFF FOR THE VISITOR CENTRE SECTOR



**Nicola Watson** RIBA  
Director | Architect

Nicky joined JDDK in 1993, becoming a Director in 2000. Her work in the practice as a hands-on architect has been diverse, often focusing on projects within the community, visitor centres, education fields where complex briefs required extensive interaction and consultation with the end-user clients and members of the public.



**Alison Thornton-Sykes** RIBA  
Principal Architect

Alison joined JDDK in 1991 and has worked across many sectors, often in environmentally sensitive locations. Community consultation has also been a key area in Alison's work, demonstrated in high profile developments such as The Sill Landscape Discovery Centre and Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre. Alison's designs for Visitor Centres have won many awards.



**Matthew Holmes** ACIAT  
Associate Director | Technologist

Matthew joined JDDK in 2004, becoming an Associate in 2012 and Associate Director in 2016 and is the practice's BIM Lead and Coordinator delivering BIM Level 2 projects alongside providing technical design and support on complex projects, most recently in the veterinary health and public sector including visitor centres.



**Adam Vaughan** RIBA  
Director | Architect

Adam joined JDDK in 2005, becoming a Director in 2016, where his work has been in a number of development sectors, whilst his particular interests in environmentally sustainable architecture has flourished. Adam is JDDK's sustainability lead and is a certified Passivhaus Designer. Adam is Co-Chair of RIBA North East Sustainability Forum.

