



RETRO  
AWARDS  
2012



JAMES BRITTAN

## WINNER

Project: **Feering Bury Farm Barn**

Cost: **£850,000**

Architect: **Hudson Architects**

Client: **Confidential**

Date: **April 2011**

**T**his Grade II-listed barn on an isolated working farm in Essex has been converted into a large home and artist studios, representing a radical departure from traditional barn conversions. The original building was a large timber-framed aisled barn with a central structure dating to c.1560. Although it would have been thatched, the original roof materials were lost and had been replaced by corrugated material. The philosophy behind the repair and conservation was to retain as much of the original fabric as possible, and local-authority conservation officers were keen to retain the barn's semi-industrial appearance. This posed no aesthetic difficulties for the owners but had proved problematic for previous designers who had been unable to overcome conservation officers' insistence that the roof contain no

visible rooflights. Hudson Architects produced a design that not only retained the barn's stark aesthetic and almost all the original structure, but also met conservation officers' demands.

The main technical feature of the barn is its unique roof. To overcome the prescription against visible rooflights, a method was devised to bring daylight into the 525m<sup>2</sup> space. The existing corrugated roofing was removed and the timber structure used to support a new roof containing large polycarbonate rooflights covered with an expanded steel mesh. The openings in the mesh are oriented skywards, allowing diffuse light to flood the building; from ground level, however, these are invisible and look like a solid, uninterrupted roof surface. This not only satisfied conservation officers and retained the barn's semi-industrial exterior, but its slightly uneven appearance echoed the industrial nature of the building and the texture of the long-disappeared thatch.

The existing masonry walls of the adjoining artist studios have been retained but as the timber cladding was no longer usable, it was replaced with black weatherboard to match the original materials; a large glass door replaces the original doors to the farmyard.



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Inside, almost all the original timber-framed structure has been retained.

The open-plan interior reflects the owners' preference and conservation officers' requirements to avoid unnecessary subdivision. To create private spaces, two large 20th-century concrete silos were re-used: one holds an oak spiral staircase to a mezzanine bedroom, the other two small bathrooms.

A woodchip boiler uses local fuel, saving an estimated 56 tonnes of carbon per year.