

BENCH ARCHITECTS

CONSERVING THE PAST, DESIGNING THE FUTURE





OUR EXPERTISE

We offer a rare combination of decades of experience conserving historic building to the highest standards, alongside the ability to create award-winning contemporary designs for alterations and extensions. Our work encompasses historic structures across a broad spectrum of types, uses and ages, including listed buildings at all grades and scheduled ancient monuments. We also produce proposals for both conservation works and new build projects within sensitive contexts such as historic parks and gardens, national parks, conservation areas, and sites of special scientific interest.

Our approach is driven by the importance of understanding these buildings, their development, and their context. Many of our projects demand detailed building, landscape and site analysis combined with meticulous archive research, in order to properly inform and justify proposals for creative re-use, alterations and extensions. This approach, combined with the excellent working relationships we have fostered with local planning authorities and Historic England has contributed to our enviable track record for obtaining planning and listed building consents.

We bring to our projects an understanding of the judicious economic balance which is integral to the affordable and sustainable delivery of historic building works, in terms of both capital costs and ongoing repair and maintenance. We have extensive experience of administering building works contracts, incorporating strict controls on cost, quality and programme. We are closely involved in the implementation of our proposals, regularly working alongside contractors, conservators and other specialists on site. We have extensive experience of tendering and administering construction works contracts, incorporating strict controls on cost, quality and programme.



OUR PRACTICE

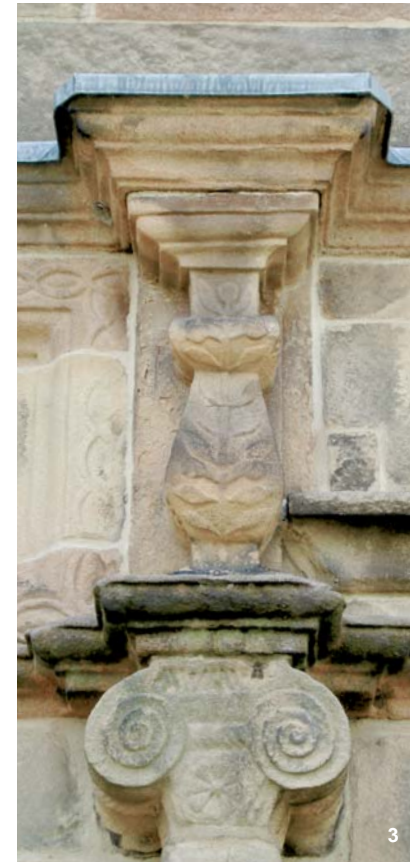
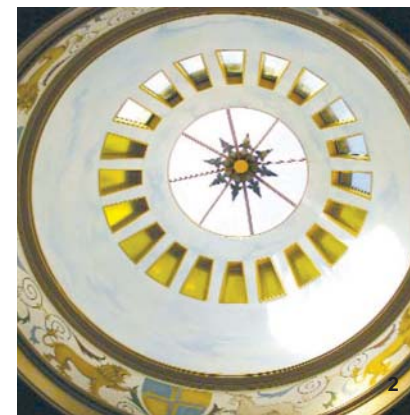
We have been trading for more than 20 years, and in that time have built up an extensive network of contractors, craftspeople and consultants, whose specialist skills complement our own. Based in Buxton, at the heart of the Peak District, we work in a former 16th Century stable block which we converted into our office in 2013.

Our small team of qualified architects brings together a diverse set of the specific skills, knowledge and experience required to successfully design and deliver projects ranging from the smallest artisan repairs and interventions up to complex multi-million pound contracts.

The scope of our involvement in projects can be as limited as carrying out a condition survey or conducting initial pre-planning application discussions, or as extensive as a full architectural service including project management through to completion.

Whilst much of our work is located in and around the Peak District National Park, we regularly work on projects throughout the Midlands, North-West, and further afield. Our work is carried out on behalf of private clients, companies, charitable trusts, local authorities and other public sector organisations.

We are an RIBA Chartered Practice. Founding director Adam Bench is an Architect Accredited in Building Conservation (AABC) and is on the registers of professional advisers approved to carry out Quinquennial Inspections in the Dioceses of Derby and Chester.



OUR SERVICES

ARCHITECTURE

We are renowned for our bold yet considered adaptations of historic buildings, including reordering, extensions, and articulate modern interventions. Our design approach is project-specific and may involve drawing on appropriate local vernacular or precedent for design and detailing, incorporating a palette of carefully judged materials which are sympathetic to their context.

CONSERVATION

We have established an enviable reputation for delivering high calibre repairs to historic buildings, from targeted repairs right through to complete restoration. Our forensic analysis of the building's archaeology and history generates invaluable heritage statements, conservation plans and statements of significance. Our extensive database of traditional materials, historic archive sources and traditional construction detailing is a valuable resource used to inform our proposals.

NEW BUILD

Alongside our conservation work, we also design new or replacement buildings in historic and sensitive contexts, which demand the same rigorous approach to contextual analysis and judicious selection of materials as employed for our conservation work.

CONSULTANCY

We provide a variety of specialist consultancy services which can be commissioned either independently or as part of a wider architectural brief. These include fabric condition surveys, quinquennial inspections, feasibility studies, conservation management plans, masterplanning, long-term repair strategies, and heritage at risk procedures.

SUSTAINABILITY & ENVIRONMENT

Consideration of economic and environmental sustainability is a core principle of our projects. We promote the use of high quality, durable materials, locally sourced where possible, and we can undertake lifecycle assessment in order to properly inform the selection of design or material options. Many of our projects incorporate thermal upgrades, alternative technologies or on-site micro-generation, and we are well versed in their sensitive integration into historic buildings and sites. Previous projects have featured green roofs, rainwater harvesting, solar panels (both thermal and photovoltaic), air-source and ground-source heat pumps, and water-driven turbines. Our projects often demand consideration of ecological, arboricultural or environmental constraints including protected species, trees and radon gas. We understand the complexities which these can cause, and are experienced in managing them.

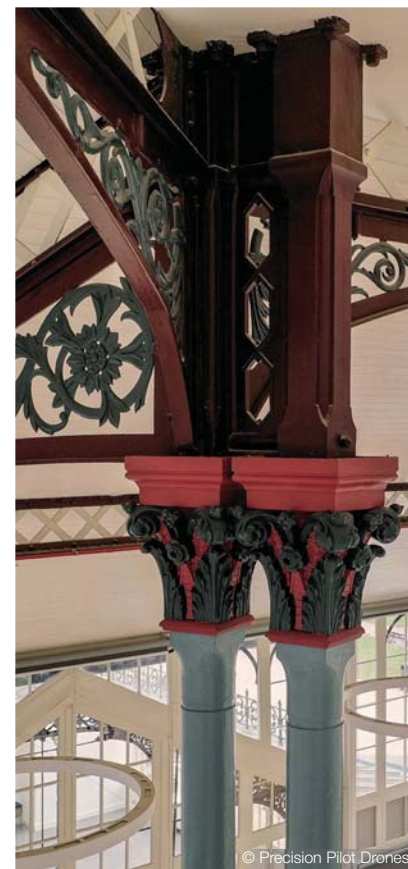
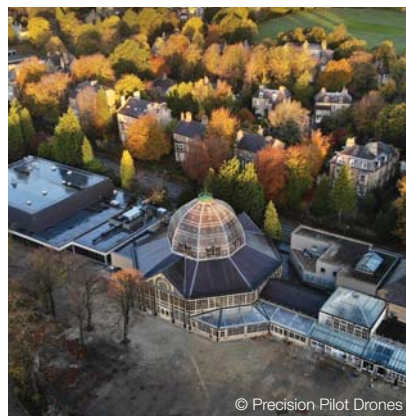
PAVILION GARDENS

BUXTON

The Winter Gardens and Octagon are located within the grade II* listed Pavilion Gardens, comprising four grade II listed buildings. The buildings are generally of cast iron framed construction, with the earliest elements having been constructed in 1871 to the designs of Edward Milner.

Bench Architects were commissioned by High Peak Borough Council in 2014 to undertake a feasibility study aimed at increasing visitor numbers and events revenue. Condition surveys carried out during the study revealed severe deterioration of the cast and wrought iron structure, resulting in a subsequent full service appointment to design and oversee a complete restoration of the Octagon and associated areas. Alongside the necessary structural repairs, the works also encompassed repairs to historic joinery, renewal of floors and roofs, and the installation of new heating, lighting and ventilation systems.

The project received a commendation in the East Midlands Celebrating Construction Awards 2019, and was shortlisted for other awards including the RIBA East Midlands Awards, the LABC Building Excellence Awards, and the Architects Journal Retrofit Awards.





CHANTRY HOUSE

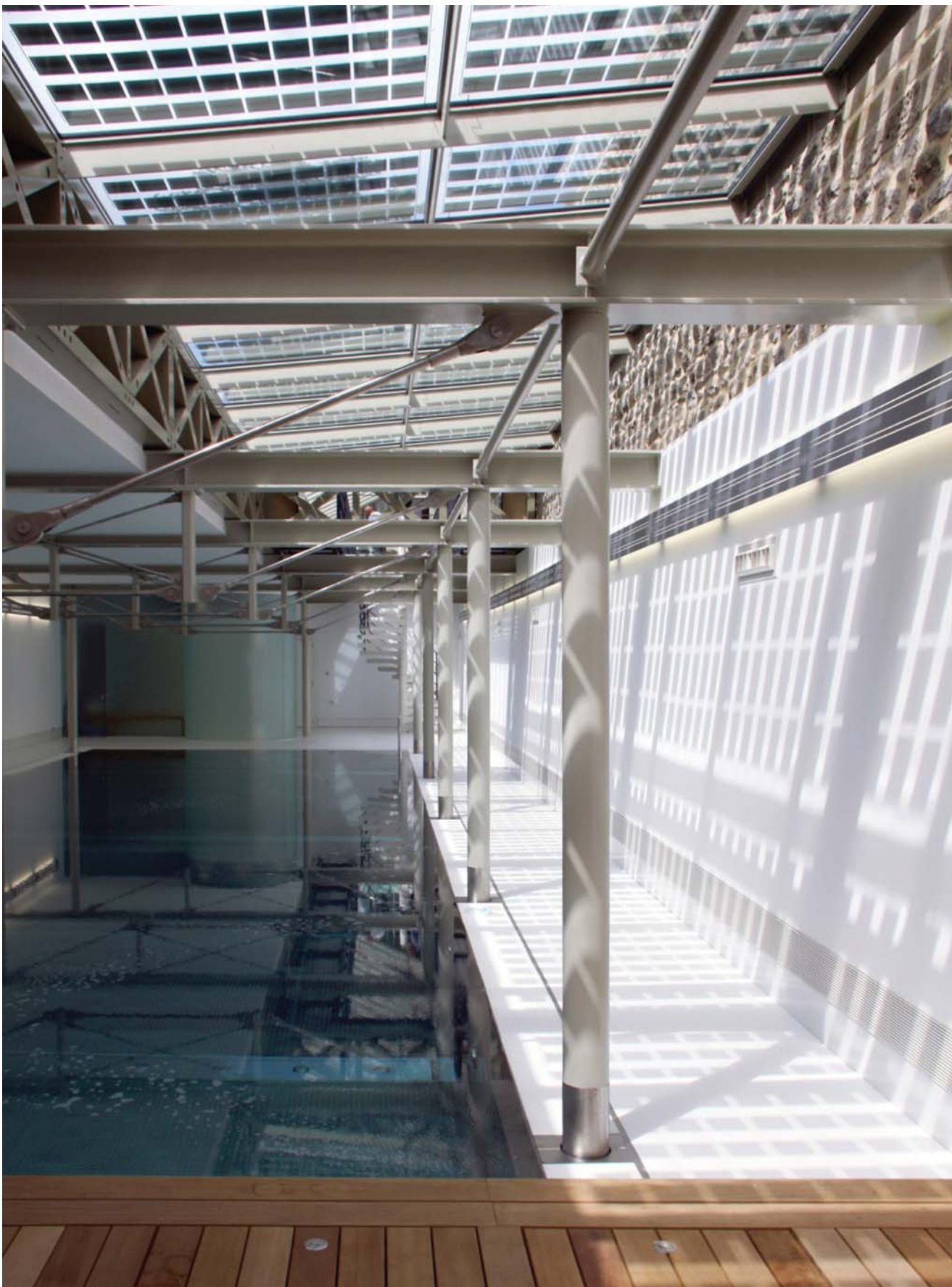
BAKEWELL

Reputedly the oldest house in Bakewell, the Grade II listed Chantry House is of medieval origin. Bench Architects were appointed to provide full architectural services for a complete restoration and reordering, including full re-roofing, re-pointing, and masonry repairs. Alongside detailed condition surveys, extensive archive research was carried out to inform the proposed changes.

A surviving Tudor oak floor in one room was meticulously repaired using carefully sourced new brown oak. Inappropriate 20th Century works were carefully reversed, and the external walls were replastered using lime based water-resisting and insulating plaster. A bespoke heating system was installed, incorporating original stone flags re-laid on underfloor heating, with individual touchscreen thermostats for every room.

Contemporary interventions were introduced in the form of a bespoke stainless steel framed conservatory, and a new zinc-roofed garage built around existing stone boundary walls. Both are expressly modern, yet sensitive to their historic context, and constructed using a palette of high quality and durable materials.





“A GEM OF AN
ELIZABETHAN
MANOR HOUSE”

SIR NIKOLAUS
PEVSNER



SNITTERTON HALL

MATLOCK

From a state of near dereliction in 1997, the Grade I listed Snitterton Hall has been meticulously and immaculately restored.

Bench Architects were appointed to provide a full architectural service including comprehensive works to the hall itself, alongside restoration of the garden pavilions, former stables, cottage, boundary and garden walling and gates, implemented in phases over a fifteen year period.

A significant addition has also been made to the estate in the form of a twenty metre long subterranean swimming pool, concealed under a reconstructed glass house and growing frame combined with an intensive green roof. This major intervention has therefore been implemented with absolutely minimal impact on the setting of the hall. The pool house uses a palette of high quality materials combined with carefully executed details to provide an interior of the highest calibre, and incorporates glass-integrated photovoltaic solar panels and air source heat pumps.

The project was shortlisted for the RIBA East Midlands Awards 2013.



HALL FARM

WARDLOW

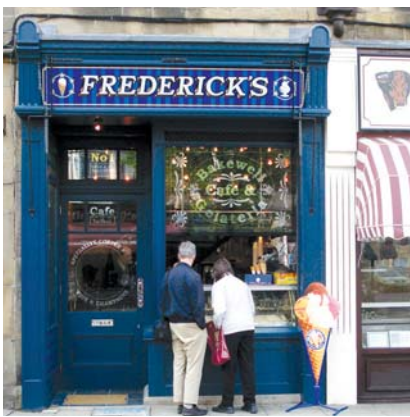
Through a combination of traditional craftsmanship and modern technology, the Grade II listed 17th century Hall Farm has been transformed from a dilapidated farmhouse into a beautiful and inviting family home.

Alongside extensive repairs to the historic fabric, the original plan form and staircase were reinstated along with the lost attic accommodation. A carefully sited frameless glass extension was introduced to provide additional natural light and space, and improve the flow between the ground floor rooms.

A holistic sustainability strategy was developed, incorporating rainwater harvesting, passive solar gain, integrated photovoltaic solar panels, and ground source heat pumps. Stone excavated from the grounds during the installation of the heat pump coils was re-used on site to rebuild the dry stone walls around the farmhouse.

The project was a finalist in the Grand Designs Awards 2010 'Best Eco Home' category.





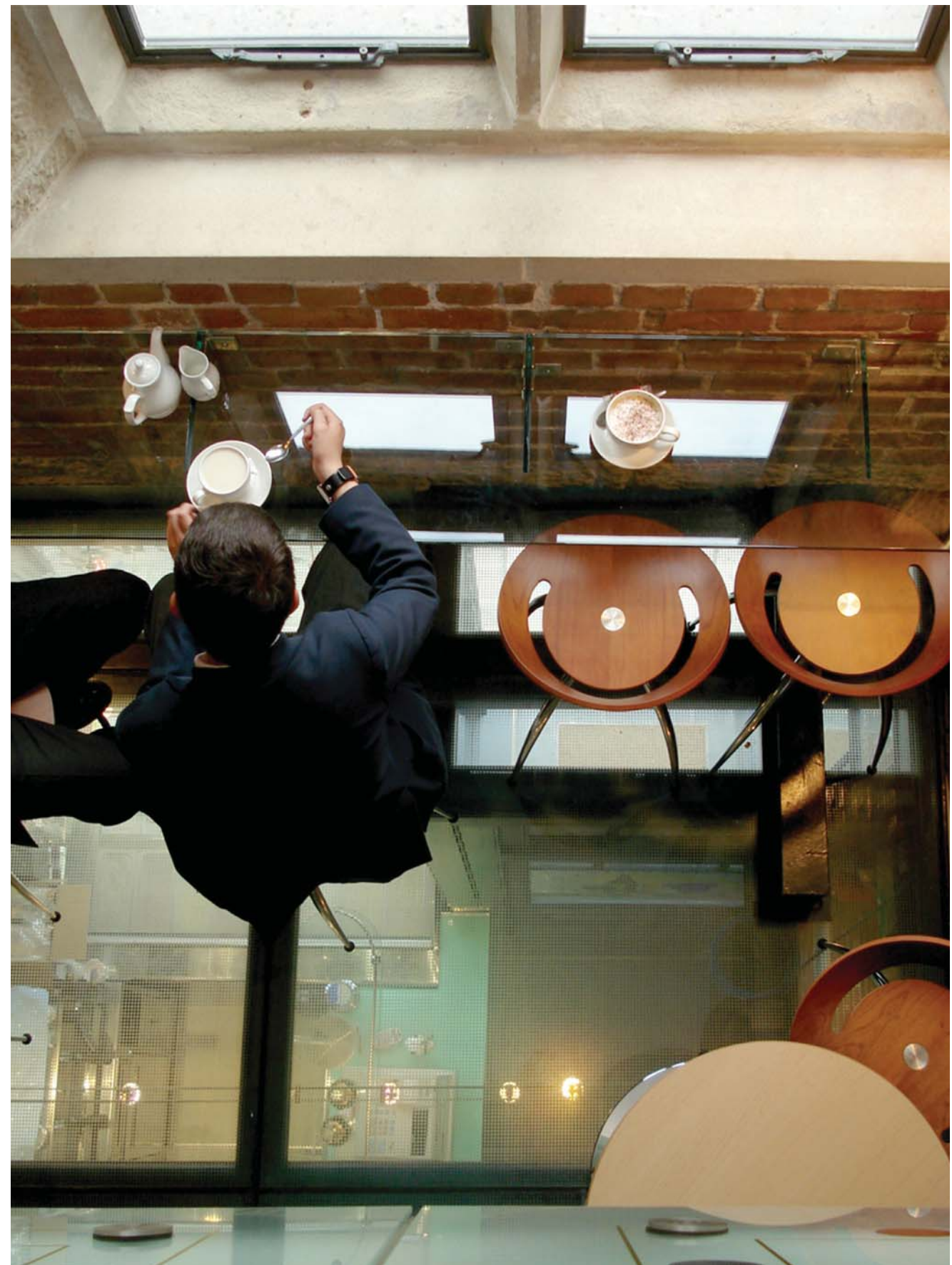
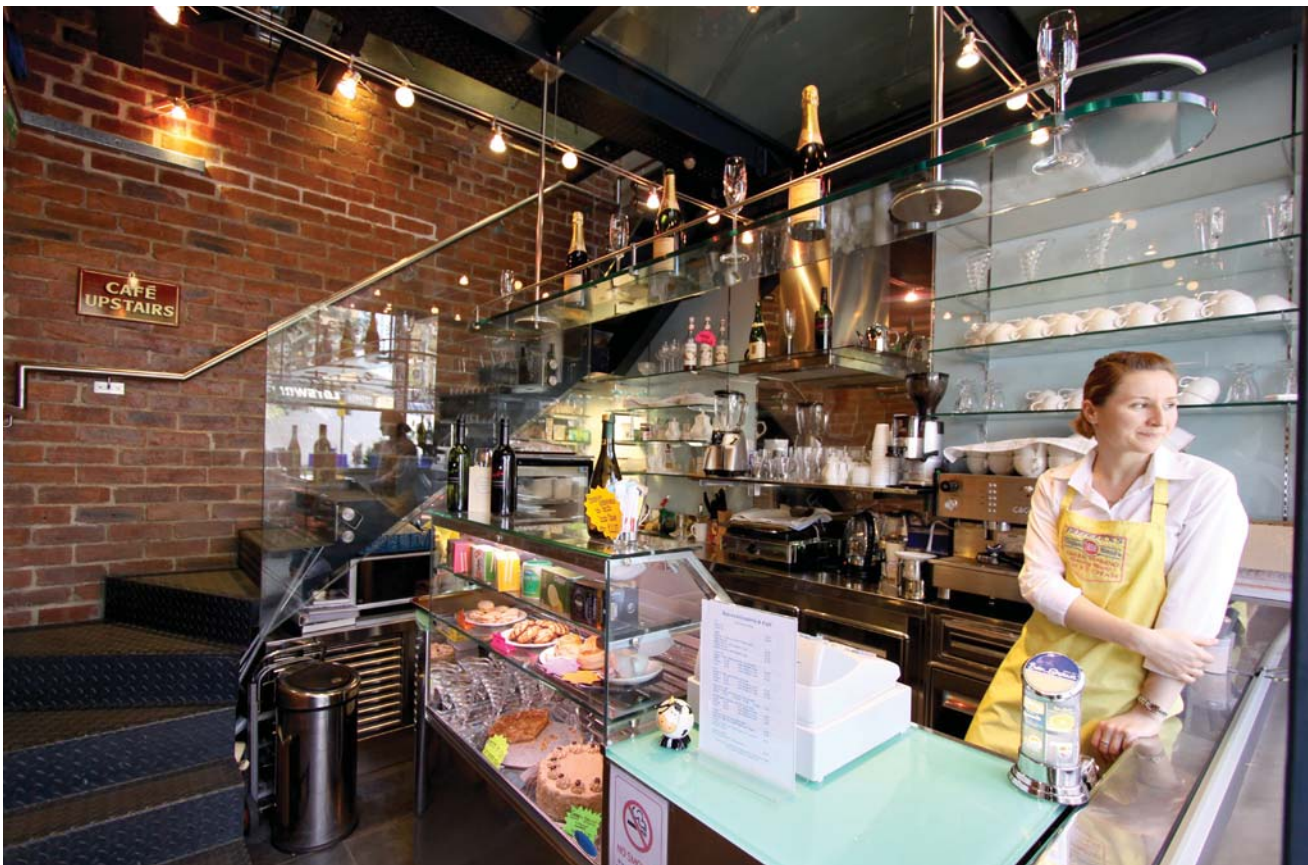
FREDERICK'S GELATERIA

BAKEWELL

Bench Architects were approached by John Frederick, who had purchased a tiny former sweet shop in Bakewell with the intention of turning it into a high quality gelateria. A firm believer in 'small is beautiful', Frederick was determined to make the most of the limited space available.

The bold answer was to strip the entire interior of the building back to an empty shell, and insert two carefully detailed glass floors, providing a seated café and kitchen on the 'floating' upper levels while allowing light to flood right down to the ground level servery from new rooflights. This dramatic interior is concealed behind an entirely new shopfront, which was completely renewed to a traditional and historically appropriate design. The shopfront incorporates a discreetly integrated vertically sliding window, providing counter service directly to the pavement outside.

The completed project won an RIBA East Midlands Award in 2008, was shortlisted for the Architects' Journal Small Projects Award 2008, and received commendations in the Peak District National Park Design Awards 2007 and the Countryside Awards 2007.





PARSLEY HAY VISITOR CENTRE

HARTINGTON

This competition-winning design for a new visitor and cycle hire centre was commissioned by the Peak District National Park Authority, to provide enhanced facilities serving the Tissington and High Peak trails running along the former trackbed of the Cromford and High Peak Railway.

The visitor centre was constructed using durable, traditional and locally sourced materials including natural stone, slate and Western Red Cedar cladding, alongside carefully selected contemporary elements such as pre-patinated Cor-Ten steel, in order to blend into the surrounding landscape. A bespoke system of sliding timber-clad screens along the principal elevation feature neatly integrated bench seating, providing security for the glazed entrance doors when the centre is closed.

The building has been designed with a strong sustainability agenda, being designed to maximise the benefits of internal daylight and solar gain. The design incorporates a rainwater harvesting system and ground source heat pumps for heating and hot water provision.





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