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## Architecture: House 19 by Jestico+Whiles

This sustainably designed home is shortlisted for the RIBA House of the Year award. Jestico+Whiles has carefully designed a very modern home that sits comfortably in the conservation area of an old English market town

**HOUSE 19** represents a very careful blend of old and new: the latest in sustainable thinking, materials and technology designed with a conscious consideration of the building's historical context and the importance of its location. Traditional forms and local materials have been integrated into the design alongside key elements of modern sustainable design: photovoltaic panels, earth-tube ventilation systems and ground-source heat pumps.

While the plan for House 19 seems simple, it sets the scene for a range of sophisticated design details that are vital if not always visible.

Jestico+Whiles' intention was "to create a house of exceptional quality while bringing together the most comprehensive range of passive and active energy-saving features in a well considered, thoughtful assembly of light-filled spaces". Low running and maintenance costs and a significantly reduced carbon footprint were a given and the house aims to be carbon neutral.

The windows use passive solar design to provide light and warmth as well as framing the beautiful views of the Chiltern Hills. The glazing, which exceeds current building regulation U-values, delivers generous levels of daylight in the internal areas, which helps save energy.

At the heart of the house is a double-height atrium that acts as a vent during the summer to allow for night-time cooling. This is combined with high-level vents that purge warm air and even out temperature fluctuations.

The choice of construction materials combined with high levels of fabric insulation minimise heat loss. However, specifying sustainable materials did not mean sacrificing character. The house is firmly rooted in the history of the area through the use of dark-stained vertical-board cedar cladding, luminescent flint, dark zinc roofing and accents of corten steel.

House 19 will make a minimal impact on the environment while providing easy and efficient living thanks to an intelligent design that respects and complements its location. [jesticowhiles.com](http://jesticowhiles.com)

## Furniture:

### First impressions

Richard de Melim assesses how the vote to leave the EU is so far affecting the UK furniture sector

**AS A POLITICAL** commentator sat next to David Dimbleby and produced a chart showing sterling falling sharply against the dollar and euro, it seemed clear. Britain's furniture industry was likely feeling the impact of the Brexit vote even before it knew we were heading out of the European Union.

Weaker sterling is generally considered positive for exporters but that conveniently forgets the long and often international supply chain that exists at all ends of the price spectrum for British makers. We manufactured more than £900m worth of upholstery in 2015 and all but £50m ended up being sold to British-based consumers and businesses.

A significant proportion of high-end sofas and beds might be designed and put together in places like Long Eaton and Dewsbury, but the parts that go into them often have their origins in more exotic locations. Weaker sterling means foam, steel springs, timber and fabric – much of which is bought in from overseas – is likely to increase in price. BFM, the British Furniture Manufacturers Association, believes prices could rise by as much as 12%, reflecting the swing in currency in the weeks since the Brexit vote.

No-one wants to be the first to put up prices but currency movements will be just as equally felt by those producers outside the UK, whose finished goods end up being sold to British consumers. Sticking with our upholstery example, last year we imported approaching £700m worth of kit. Whether that was from Italy, Poland or China, the price of these goods is only heading in one direction and that's before we consider the rising cost of trucking or shipping those goods to the UK.

Perhaps the single biggest factor driving furniture sales demand – along with house moves – is consumer confidence and that has taken a knock in the weeks since 23 June.

According to GfK, the research consultancy behind the Consumer Confidence Index, British consumers have become much more cautious over the past couple of months. In July, its overall index experienced its largest monthly fall in more than 26 years, while its Major Purchases Index – which measures the propensity to splash out on expensive items such as home furnishings, cars or white goods – fell 11 points to -2; 13 points lower than in July 2015.

But if consumer confidence is still only theoretical, hard data came in the form of official retail sales figures for July 2016, which confirmed the negative short-term impact the referendum vote had on the industry. Until July, the value of furniture retail sales in the UK had risen for 25 consecutive months on a year-on-year basis, including 12 months in which the figure had been more than 10% higher than its year-earlier comparative. All that came to an end with a 0.8% year-on-year decline reported for July by the Office for National Statistics.

Currency, confidence and actual retail sales have all demonstrably suffered in the weeks following the Brexit decision. The hope has to be that, in the medium to long term, the Brexit vote proves just a short-term shock and that normal order, or better, will resume.

Richard de Melim has reported on interiors and property for national newspapers and the trade press for nearly 20 years. Since 2008, he has been the editor of business website The Furnishing Report

