Replacing a derelict workshop on the banks of the River Ouse, 142 South Street by Sandy Rendel Architects occupies a prominent position at the entrance to Lewes in East Sussex. Sited on a long, narrow plot overlooking the Railway Land Nature Reserve, the five-bedroom, Corten steel-clad house is built over the existing concrete river wall. The main body of the building features a two-storey asymmetrical pitched-roof structure, whose ridge is carved away to break down its scale and reflect the imposing contours of the Cliffe Hill chalk face, located directly behind the site. The rectangular plan has been distorted at each end to frame key views, and to provide a covered terrace to the south and a sheltered courtyard for the entrance.

Upon entering the house, an enclosed hallway is lined with blackened sawn-oak beams. From here the interior opens out with walls of floor-to-ceiling frameless glass revealing expansive views of the river and nature reserve beyond. Developed in collaboration with Jeremy Pitts Design, the oak wall lining and joinery continue into the open-plan living space. The use of different surface treatments is intended to emphasise...
View from bedroom looking towards nature reserve.

Open-plan kitchen/dining/living space with timber-lined walls and terrace flooring.

d (clockwise from top left) Floor-to-ceiling glazing maximises daylighting and views out; ground- and first-floor plans; section; hallway lined with blackened sawn-oak boards; bathroom.
the material qualities and promote patina with use over time. Mid-grey coloured terrazzo tiling is employed throughout the ground floor, connecting through the glazing to the skirt of paving around the outside of the building.

Externally, a palette of self-finished materials was chosen for its robustness and ability to weather naturally. On the riverside frontage of the ground floor, the exposed frame is constructed of board-marked concrete, echoing the tone and texture of the in-situ concrete river wall below. The street elevation comprises handmade ash-glazed Sussex brickwork, which is traditional to Lewes, and expresses a softer texture and more intimate scale to the street.

Contrasting with the muted tones of the masonry base, and alluding to the industrial heritage of the site, the roof and first floor are wrapped in expanded Corten steel mesh. The homogenous appearance of the surface conceals gutters, eaves and other architectural elements, resulting in a clean aesthetic...