



# A GUIDE TO BUILDING A DREAM HOME

HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT ARCHITECT AND HOW THEY CAN HELP YOU  
BY AWARD WINNING ARCHITECT, JOHN DYER GRIMES



“The architect’s job is not to give clients what they thought they wanted, but what they never dreamed they could have.”

SIR DENYS LASDUN

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BY  
JOHN DYER GRIMES



John Dyer Grimes – age 2

## ARCHITECTURE IS IN MY BLOOD

My father was a celebrated architect, and I followed in his footsteps around construction sites as a child until working in his studio as a man. I started in the days of pen and tracing paper and learned practical experience laying bricks and digging holes on site. At 24, I opened my own practice, and 18 years later I have the great pleasure of leading a world class team at Dyer Grimes Architects.

From our Putney practice on the banks of the Thames, we produce creative, practical designs to transform ordinary places into amazing spaces. Everyone in our team of ten has their own specialist skills, united in a design ethos dedicated to deliver beautiful homes. We keep our scale small, intimate and personal so we can provide the best possible client experience. It's not about ego, it's not about showing off. It's about listening to the client and building everything around their dreams and aspirations.

In my lifetime I've seen my discipline transform as new technologies, materials and methods help us create better, more beautiful, more sustainable homes. I'm learning every day, but I feel it's time to start sharing the knowledge I've built up over my career. There are certain questions and concerns that have kept popping up over the hundreds of projects I've completed, so I've prepared this guide as a convenient and comprehensive means of answering those queries.

I hope this guide helps you to take your first step in creating a space fitted perfectly around you.

**John Dyer Grimes**

Managing Director, Dyer Grimes Architects

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## 10 THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE CONTACTING AN ARCHITECT

Converting your home, or building a new one, is one of the most exciting events you can experience. It can also be one of the most stressful. When things go wrong, differently to how we expected or we find demands outweigh our capacity to meet them, cracks form in our plans and our wellbeing. To ensure your build is a time you'll never want to forget, rather than a time you can't wait to, here are 10 easy to remember considerations which will have you better prepared for what to expect and what is expected of you.

### 1 WHAT ARE YOUR NEEDS?

Whether you want to be practical or extravagant, the first step to planning your build is to honestly and thoroughly consider your needs. It could simply be a matter of needing more space, or you want a home built around your personality from the ground up. Think about how you use the house and how long you're likely to live there. Do you enjoy holding social events, or is it a space just for you? Will it be designed to satisfy the single life or do you want to fill it with a family? By determining your needs early, both current and future, you'll be able to plan every aspect of the design specifically for you.

### 2 HOW CAN THOSE NEEDS BE ADDRESSED?

Every problem comes with a range of solutions, and those that seem obvious at the start are often not the most ideal. Space, for example, is a commonly misunderstood concept. More is not always better, and clients are often surprised at how comparatively simple conversions to their existing homes can create a more open, welcoming environment. It's fun to think big, but it isn't always practical. Whether you're extending your current home or building a new one, consider the methods of maximising space while minimising scale.

### 3 WHERE DO YOU WANT TO LIVE?

It's common knowledge that location is an essential factor in choosing a home, but where you live needs to be considered even more closely when you're building a new one. Cities have many conveniences, amenities and lifestyle options, but all this comes with a hefty price tag on the land. Land in the countryside is cheaper and there'll be less planning to negotiate, but facilities and schools may not be readily available. No matter where you choose to build, will you still want to live there in ten or twenty years?

#### **4 WILL PLANNING PERMISSION BE REQUIRED?**

Whether you're modifying your current home or building a new one, the first step is finding out from the relevant authorities whether planning permission is required. This is especially pertinent in areas with a lot of old buildings or a certain local character. There are specific conservation areas where significant deviations from the traditional style are all but impossible. An architect with local experience will be able to work with local councils to increase the chances of having your plans approved.

#### **5 HOW MUCH CAN YOU INVEST IN THE PROJECT?**

Where you live, what you build and what you build it out of is determined by how much you can afford to spend on the project. An extension is usually funded by savings, while a brand new house typically follows from the sale of an old one. Very, very few houses are a no-compromise construction, so setting out a firm, realistic budget will allow you to figure out what features are most important to you. Costs also change throughout the project, so make sure you have enough to cover every stage. Remember that a smart design can significantly increase the resale value of your house, so an investment now may make you a return in the future.

#### **6 WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE FOR THE DESIGN?**

How hands on you want to get with the design process varies from person to person, but if you enjoy sketching out ideas then putting pen to paper – or mouse to software – can help you to develop a sense of your spatial and functional requirements. You may find you need to widen some walls to fit your prized furniture, or that the layout of rooms doesn't flow as well as you expected. No matter how vague or precise your ideas are, the right architect will translate your imagination into reality.

#### **7 WHAT WILL THE INTERIOR OF THE BUILDING LOOK LIKE?**

Leading on from the layout of the house is the interior design. Much of this will be determined by the design of the structure itself: the height of the walls, the amount of natural light, whether it's open plan or separate rooms. But people don't move into empty boxes. Think about how your furniture, fittings, carpets or tiles will complement the design of the house. Certain colours can create entirely different moods and transform from day to evening. Some features, like the paint, can be changed easily, while others, like floorboards, require more judicious selection. If you're planning entirely new furniture for your new house or extension, make sure to consider these costs in your budget.

#### **8 WHAT WILL THE EXTERIOR OF THE BUILDING LOOK LIKE?**

We all want to make a good first impression, and the same applies to our homes. Do you want to have a striking design which stands out or one which fits elegantly into its surroundings? Do you want a modern or a period look, or perhaps a combination of the two? Remember when choosing exterior materials to consider how they will age, especially exposed wood or stone, as well as how they react to extreme temperatures. Present your architect with some examples resembling what you want to achieve, but remember that planning permission will determine much of what is possible. An architect with local experience can negotiate the design with the authorities and can navigate local constraints without significantly compromising on your vision or your needs.

## **9 WHO IS REQUIRED FOR THE PROJECT?**

Some architects will be involved in the entirety of the build and will supply project managers to oversee the construction and find contractors and suppliers, while others will provide only the design. You may also not need the architect to be involved entirely, either because you can oversee aspects of the project yourself or you have separate professionals helping at different stages. Make sure you've found the right people for every stage, including service engineers, CAD and party wall surveyors.

## **10 HOW LONG WILL THE PROJECT TAKE?**

It's much easier to deal with the long wait and disruption of building work if you know exactly how long it will take. While you may want to oversee the process yourself to save money, an experienced project manager will deliver a project on time, saving you a great deal of stress in the process. If you're building a new home, make sure you've secured alternative accommodation for the duration of the construction period and that you've counted the costs of this accommodation into your budget.



John Dyer Grimes – Period Architecture – Hemmingford Road

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## 10 STEPS TO CHOOSING AN ARCHITECT

Your home should be the most precious place in the world. We all need a space where no matter how many stresses and worries there are in the outside world, you can shut the door and enjoy comfort and relaxation. Creating such a haven requires delicate planning and close attention to detail, so if you're leaving your home in the hands of an architect, you need to make sure you find the right one. You need an architect you can trust implicitly, with whom you can form a bond of understanding and creative vigour.

To help you narrow down your selection, I've prepared 10 steps to finding the ideal architect.

### **1 ARE THEY A REGISTERED ARCHITECT?**

As with any professional from whom you require services, you want to make sure your architect has official, accredited evidence of their skill. A registered architect is fully trained and professionally qualified, covered by indemnity insurance and bound by the Architects Act of 2003 and the Architects Code of Conduct and Practice. Choosing a registered architect is absolutely essential. It means that not only is your build likely to be completed to a high standard, but if anything goes wrong during construction then your significant investment will be protected and the architect will be held accountable for any breach of their promise.

### **2 DO YOU KNOW THEIR SPECIALITY?**

Everyone works best within their area of expertise. As much as an architect may enjoy the challenge of the new, you don't want your project to be their very first home build. An architect who specialises in offices, shops or tower blocks may be able to bring over much of their knowledge, but designing and building a house requires a unique set of skills and disciplines. After all, a home has a very specific function for you, and you probably don't want to live somewhere that reminds you of an office. Seek an architect who intimately understands the comfort, versatility and flow that goes into the design of a perfect house.

### **3 HAVE YOU SEEN THEIR WORK?**

Once you've found an architect who specialises in homes, you need to look into whether they build the kind of home you want to live in. There are as many variations in house design as there are people to live in them, and you no doubt have some very specific and personal requirements and tastes. Any decent architect will be proud to show you examples of their work, so feel free to request examples and don't hesitate to ask to see the little details which can make all the difference. While a style you find attractive is a good place to start, also look for evidence of versatility in their work, as an architect who only builds in a single style may not be willing or able to adapt to your vision.

### **4 DO THEY HAVE REFERENCES?**

Ask your prospective architect for a shortlist of their previous clients with contact numbers so you can ask directly about the quality of work and personality of the architect. Most people are more than happy to share their experiences, so find a time when they can give you a detailed account of the whole process. If the clients are of a similar taste or lifestyle to you, then you'll be able to ask more personally relevant questions. Ask if they would personally recommend the architect to you, and arrange a home visit if possible so you can see their work first hand.

### **5 IS YOUR PROJECT TO THEIR SCALE?**

An architect who primarily works on alterations to an existing house which cost around £100,000, won't be ideal or even capable of a brand new build with a budget of £1 million plus. The opposite can be just as true, as a large scale architect may put your project on hold or not dedicate their full attention to it, if a more expensive project is available. Remember a bigger budget doesn't just mean a different design, it also balloons the management costs and responsibilities as the volume of moving parts, the type of work and the number of contractors increases. An architect used to your scale won't just produce a more suitable design, they'll have the experience to plan and manage your project correctly.

### **6 ARE THEY KEEN AND AVAILABLE?**

When you describe your desired project to the architect, do they seem genuinely interested in taking it up? Are they happy with your budget and do they think that what you want to achieve is realistic? Are they confident that the build can be completed within your required timescale and are they able to fulfil your brief right up until the end of the job? If an architect is excited by your project, that excitement will be evident in every aspect of the build, from design to dedication.

### **7 ARE THEY PERSONALLY SUITABLE?**

Your home is the most personal space in your life, so it's only right that you have a personal bond with your architect. You need to be able to communicate clearly and candidly what you want from your home, what lifestyle you lead, what your future plans are. Talk with your potential architect and develop a sense of whether they empathise and understand you. Ideally you will have a friendly rapport with them, and they will listen to your needs and explain how they can meet them with patience and without pushing their ideas on you. Remember that the role of an architect is to transfer your vision into reality, not make their vision your reality.

## **8 DO THEY HAVE LOCAL KNOWLEDGE?**

An architect with recent local experience and contacts in your area, along with a thorough knowledge of council permissions and other particular controls, will have a far better chance of having your designs and planning permission approved. They will also know the best contractors and suppliers, as well as the general character of the area to maximise the value of your house. Local knowledge does not necessarily require being based locally, as many experienced architects are widely travelled. Many clients make the mistake of overrating an architect because they're based round the corner. More important than whether an architect is based near your planned area, is whether they've worked there before.

## **9 CAN THEY OFFER THE WHOLE SERVICE?**

Aim to find an architect who is willing and experienced to provide the full service, from consultation to design and project management. Some architects won't do work on site, others are not geared for providing interior design or producing technical drawings. Make sure you're aware of every service they offer so you can plan around any additional professionals that need to be brought on to the project. If there's a particular service your architect doesn't provide, then they will likely have trusted recommendations for someone who can fill the gap.

## **10 HAVE YOU COMPARED THEIR QUOTES?**

Every architect offers a different level of service with a different fee attached to it. You need to balance what you're willing to pay with the services you prioritise, as you would when choosing an airline. One may be a budget airline with no frills, no luggage space or food and drink, subject to delays and inconveniences. In contrast, there is a business class flight with luxury seats and service, a VIP car collection to and from the airport together with an exclusive lounge to relax in while you wait. Of course, there's a whole spectrum of options in between, and the same is true with architects. Additional services like a thoroughly tailored design, out of office hours meetings, 24/7 support and guaranteed turnaround times may be important to you, or perhaps you just want a standard, off the shelf design which offers value by sacrificing bespoke service. Compare your selection of architects based upon the level of service and price that you feel comfortable with.



# 10

## 10 COMMON MISTAKES

After a lifetime of building homes I've had the pleasure of witnessing hundreds of projects fulfil their owner's wildest dreams. I've also witnessed people fall foul of mistakes which cause their dreams to crumble before them. Some are seemingly insignificant, some should be common sense – either way these are the 10 common mistakes which can undermine the foundations of a project and waste time, money and effort.

### **1 STARTING WITHOUT A MASTER PLAN.**

Many people start on small-scale renovations without considering the full implications for the house as a whole and the budget required. It's easy to contract a partial repair, such as a having a door mended, but when the builder comes on site the project may start to expand. Rarely can significant work be done in one area without affecting another, or the change you make may no longer sit well with the rest of the house, causing you to want to pursue further alterations. Before you know it, you're working without a plan and things start going wrong.

Failure to plan may also result in failure to research and notify the relevant local authorities. Over the years I've met many clients who have started work on a project only to find out half way through that planning permission is denied, or they never bothered requesting it in the first place. Working with an experienced architect can help you avoid any nasty surprises down the line.

### **2 UNDERVALUING YOUR PROPERTY.**

Whenever undergoing any property related endeavour, it's wise to understand the property market. You may want to disregard the world around you and build a house only suitable for yourself, but considering how to make your property saleable in the future is essential in protecting your investment. Life changes no matter how certain our plans. If a few years pass and you find yourself needing to sell, you don't want to find you've inadvertently decreased the value of your investment. Those two bedrooms you converted into a living room may have granted you extra space, but at the cost of making your house unavailable to families. It's a delicate balance between enjoying your daily life while maximising resale value, so seek advice from your architect on how to design your perfect home without compromising its future potential.

### **3 ONLY THINKING SHORT TERM.**

It's tempting to build or modify a house to satisfy our immediate needs, but if you haven't considered how the space will be used in the future you may find yourself torn between your dream home and your dream life. You want to keep the two united for as long as you can, so think ahead to make the design adaptable to the changes you expect. Can your home accommodate any children you may want? Will it be able to cope with the strain of them growing inside its walls? Are there disabled or elderly relatives or friends you want to be able to visit in comfort and safety? People are living longer than ever, so if you plan on staying in your house through your golden years, consider where you place your bedrooms and showers and whether you may need lifts installed. Share your dreams and lifestyle with your architect so they can advise on how to future proof your home.

### **4 SKIMPING ON THE DESIGN TO SAVE MONEY.**

You may consider design fees an unnecessary cost and feel capable of working with builders directly to save money. This is particularly common with those operating on a limited budget. However, the truth is, the best advice is more valuable when you have less to spend. Someone with deep pockets can afford to make mistakes, while if you have only one shot you need to make that first attempt the last. You want to achieve exactly what you want the first time and to the highest level possible within your budget. It means you can plan the whole project and reduce the costs of hiring suppliers and contractors. Using an expert to design and source the myriad of options available will ultimately save you time, money and from potentially disastrous errors. Remember that a registered architect provides the necessary insurance to protect your property.

### **5 NOT ASKING THE ARCHITECT TO SAVE YOU MONEY.**

I don't need to tell you that it's an architect's job to be skilled at planning and design. What you may not have considered is how those skills can be applied to your project to cut costs over both the short and long term. You may be low in space and determined to have a costly extension added to your house, while an experienced architect will look at space differently. They may see that your existing structure is poorly planned and they can provide you with additional space without having to add to the property. Most people don't need more space, they need more intelligent use of space.

You should also ask how money can be saved for you long term. There have been great advances in sustainable design, materials and technology over the past years, which mean that new builds have ongoing maintenance and running costs simply unachievable by older structures. Many people forget to include the long term costs in their budget, so plan carefully with your architect how your design today could save you money tomorrow.

### **6 TRYING TO ESTIMATE PRICES FROM PLANNING DESIGNS.**

The designs you submit to the council to be granted planning permission are primarily concerned with the exterior of the building and only provide a basic sense of the entire structure. These documents should not be submitted to builders in order to estimate prices, as incomplete information will inform only vague estimates. This will lead to the incorrect items and materials being delivered and onsite changes to the design, making you vulnerable to ballooning prices and delays. Make sure you're working from thoroughly prepared designs from your architect, detailing every material from the foundations up to the roof and everything in between, from tiles to tap fittings.

## **7 IMPATIENCE.**

Every client I meet is eager to have their project completed, and every architect understands that the wait for moving into your new home can be agonising, but patience is essential in making your home exactly what you want it to be. Take your time at every stage and give yourself room to change your mind. A project needs to be able to adapt to your desires, which can often evolve through the process. Changes are far easier to implement before the concrete hardens. By giving the project the space it needs to grow, the end result will be a home you can love for a lifetime.

## **8 NOT HIRING SUITABLE SPECIALISTS.**

As covered in this guide, there are many factors to choosing the right architect for your project. After whether or not they are registered, the most important consideration is whether they specialise in the type of build you require. This extends to everyone who is working on your project. Specialists will cost more, but if you want to cut costs by hiring Jack-of-all-trades then expect lower quality results after multiple delays, as they try and familiarise themselves with the work on the go or force incompatible methods onto your build. An architect who specialises in homes will also know the relevant specialists for all aspects of the project, so hiring the right person from the start is the first step in ensuring you have the best minds in charge at every stage.

## **9 NOT STATING BUDGET ACCURATELY.**

Most people understate their building budgets. If your budget is not clearly stated then there will be difficulties and delays for you and your architect. An architect designs precisely to the budget you've given them down to the decimal. If you understate the amount you're willing to invest in a project, you may end up with a design you're not satisfied with. Adding more funds halfway through a project may seem like a good idea, but as the design is so thoroughly intertwined with the budget, more money to play with just means more work and delays. Plan a concrete budget with your architect and make sure it is set before the design phase is complete.

## **10 NOT UNDERSTANDING QUALITY AND VALUE.**

Only an elite few can simply ask for what they want regardless of cost but even the wealthiest client still wants to maximise their value. Spend time with your architect to determine what level of quality and finishing detail you can afford and make sure to avoid any disappointments. Prices can vary hugely on relatively minor details. Prioritise your spending on the aspects of the design most important to you, where you want only the best materials and where function is more valuable than form. Would you rather invest extra funds into the bathroom or the kitchen? Are there alternative materials which can provide the same look and feel for a fraction of the cost? Is something that seems expensive now actually cost effective in the long run? It is very important that you know exactly the right level of quality and value you're going to achieve.



## THE DYER GRIMES DIFFERENCE

We're an award winning architectural practice who have proven our skill and dedication on over 500 homes. Most recently we were honoured to receive the Best Family Home Award from the Sunday Times British Homes Awards 2013. As gratifying as it is to be officially recognised, we thrive on the pleasure of turning a client's dream into reality, and we approach every project with the same attention, care and high standards of craftsmanship. It's not about ego, it's not about showing off. It's about listening to the client and building everything around their dreams and aspirations.

Through such experience we recommend only the highest quality and most reliable contractors, and our local knowledge means we have contacts in council planning offices, estate agents, local suppliers and builders. With our own interior design and planning teams, you get the full package built from the inside out.

Your project will be overseen by our specialist project managers who possess exacting attention to detail and vast experience managing and liaising with builders. They'll ensure your house is delivered on time, on budget and at the standards which will meet or exceed your expectations. Along with project managers we can recommend a vast array of trusted specialists, from structural and service engineers to CAD checks and party wall surveyors.

**Our projects are guided by a three step plan we call Concept, Plan, Build.**

*"We found John to be a true professional. He listened and took on board exactly what we were looking to create and worked very closely with us. We found him to be highly motivated, very communicative, flexible and very easy to deal with. He assembled a great team around him and delivered on everything. I cannot recommend him highly enough."*

Tony Maude, White Lodge client  
Winner of Sunday Times and Design Et Al Best Family Home Award 2013

## 1 CONCEPT

So you've had this brilliant idea which you've gone over and over in your head until it aches. But will it work and what's it going to cost? Rather than plunging headlong into the more costly stages of getting detailed plans drawn up, why not get your idea road tested by our team of architectural designers here in London?

Based on your ideas, we'll sketch out some initial design concepts and tell you what's involved to take it to the next stage and fulfil your dream. This service is stage one of the journey and can be provided in isolation or as part of a full "clicks to bricks" service.

## 2 PLAN

To take your idea to the critical planning phase, we develop more detailed design concepts and scale plans, together with full design and build budget estimates. Our team of in-house experts in our offices in London are able to provide clients with an accurate 3D 'walk through' of their new home to help them make those last minute, but crucial, design decisions.

Detailed planning application documents are developed, using our extensive experience and negotiating power with local councils to ensure the process runs as smoothly and quickly as possible. Our 90 per cent success rate in client planning approvals across London and Surrey reflects our skill and determination in this field.

## 3 BUILD

Once a project has the go ahead of planners and clients, we will provide detailed technical plans which meet all legal obligations and allow for accurate construction costs to be submitted. We will obtain fixed prices from selected contractors and organise contracts on behalf of clients.

Whilst some of our clients choose to manage the construction of works themselves, many have opted to use us to co-ordinate every aspect of the build, from managing builders and consultants, to monitoring the progress of building works through to successful delivery. We have a great track record in keeping projects on course and on budget with an unfaltering attention to quality and detail.

## TESTIMONIALS

“After falling in love with a rather ramshackle Victorian house we were then left with the daunting task of refurbishing it to transform it into our family home. Having never done anything like this before the job turned out to be much bigger than we had anticipated and after considerable delays and problems we lost confidence in the project and ourselves.

Our first meeting with John restored our confidence and got us excited about the house again and what could be done. John and the whole team at Dyer Grimes Architecture are very personable and professional. They listened to us and took on board what we wanted to achieve. Immediately they presented us with ideas and suggestions about how we could fulfill our goals, explaining that by thinking about the house as a whole would be better than just limiting our alterations to one area as we had previously envisaged.

It’s a testament to the design that when you look at the house everything works perfectly as a family home while retaining the charm of the original house. It’s been brilliantly modernised and is exactly what we wanted. Working with the team at Dyer Grimes Architecture has been great fun and we couldn’t be happier with our beautifully finished home”.

Mr. & Mrs. D Luxton, Surrey

“Having found our dream plot of land, we started the daunting task of choosing the right architect to work with us on building our family home. What struck us about JDG was the passion for immaculate design as well as an obsessive focus on the detail. Given we were attempting to build a contemporary modern sustainable home on a tight budget this gave us comfort that it could be done.

Having taken our design brief the JDG team came up with a design that we both fell in love with, and addressed the primary challenge of designing a house that could be both modern / contemporary and yet a family home.

We received planning at the first attempt which given the history of the site (5 years of applications and still no build) was a credit to the strategy employed by the JDG team. Throughout the detailed design stage the team continually came up with great detailed ideas on all aspects of the design ranging from lighting, colours, through to our beautiful cantilevered staircase”.

Mr. A Aman, Sussex

**“When we bought our house in 2013 we realised after a previous renovation that we would require the use of an architect. After talking to a substantial list of firms we fortunately came across Dyer Grimes Architecture, who instantly gave us confidence that they had the skill and experience to unlock an awkward 1930’s layout and turn it into our dream family home.**

**Straight from our first conversation John understood exactly what we wanted and how we could achieve it. Both John and Olly made the design process an enjoyable and stimulating one, ending with a design fully thought out for aesthetic and practical points. Since starting our project we have recommended Dyer Grimes Architecture to two other people who’ve also been as happy with the outcome as we have been.**

**We wouldn’t hesitate to recommend Dyer-Grimes Architecture and wouldn’t think twice using them if doing another project”.**

**Mr. & Mrs. T Guest, Richmond upon Thames, Surrey**

**“Faced with an uphill planning battle to turn our near derelict house in a conservation area in Kingston upon Thames into a vibrant family home, we met with several architects.**

**John Dyer Grimes stood head and shoulders above the rest and was the obvious choice given his reputation for winning difficult planning approvals. He worked closely with us to come up with a daring and innovative scheme and turned around the plans and surveys required very quickly and to exceptional quality. His attention to detail and professional, calm manner made him a pleasure to work with, and he provided excellent advice and support during the entire planning process.**

**John was responsible for overturning near impossible planning odds to get our design approved, without any changes to the original designs, or additional conditions imposed – all in less than four months from the date we completed on the purchase.**

**We are truly delighted with the end result and have no hesitation in recommending John and his team at Dyer Grimes Architects”.**

**Mrs. C Chang, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey**

“We initially stumbled over Dyer Grimes while searching the Internet looking for architects to look after the conversion of four flats into one. After interviewing several architects it became immediately clear that we wanted to appoint Dyer Grimes. So what made the difference?

Besides from the fact that we love their work, John Dyer Grimes, Michael Gwynn (Associate Architect), Leila Latchin (Interior Designer) and John Rookyard (Project Manager) showed their ability to listen carefully to what we wanted and come back with great solutions to how to achieve it and make it even better.

John Dyer Grimes rightfully prides himself as someone who really understands what he’s doing. The team was always very responsive and available to discuss issues and changes that were inevitable for any project of this nature.

An Architect is only as good as the builder who delivers the goods. Kevin Gale, from Gallowers Builders, was instrumental in delivering the project to the highest standard. We all had really good fun as well. Would we work with the team again – absolutely”!

Mr. A Schwager, South Kensington,  
London

“Finding a good architect is never easy. John Dyer Grimes and his team were presented with a difficult task that they approached with sympathetic understanding and a freshness of ideas that were exciting and innovative.

Every detail was well thought out and discussed beforehand and the final design surpassed our expectations. John possesses an ability to combine imaginative ideas with a sound knowledge of materials that he is then capable of communicating to his clients.

The use of 3-D graphics allowed us to envisage the final outcome and any alterations were easily accommodated during the planning process. We were more than pleased with the results and would have no hesitation in recommending Dyer Grimes Architects to anyone who believes in quality”.

Mrs. P O’Rooke, Richmond upon  
Thames, Surrey

“In our experience, John has an approach that I believe people will find very rare and refreshing these days. He is extremely accommodating and friendly throughout the entire process.

Not only he is extremely knowledgeable about both the architectural and contractual aspects of the business, but he also has a great natural sense for what the client is looking to do.

Whether it’s layout design or material selection, he’s got an opinion, and has the right approach in sharing it. He is a pleasure to work with and I would strongly recommend him and Dyer Grimes Architects to anyone looking for architectural design or construction management”.

Mrs. S Duquette, Putney, London

“Having lived in a listed manor house for decades, the decision to buy and knock down an existing bungalow and build an ultra-modern new home was not an easy one. John worked with us through the purchase process and thanks to his original feasibility study; we had the vision and the courage to embark on our dream house.

John proved to have great conceptual ability with our brief and demonstrated meticulous attention to detail. Throughout the project John and his team worked closely with us, and our builders, meeting regularly to ensure that our home evolved at each stage and any necessary adaptations progressed into satisfying solutions without compromising our vision.

John’s expertise, flexibility and empathy led us to the beautiful home we have today – our collaboration was invaluable and we would highly recommend Dyer Grimes Architects to anyone who is after a home that is unique to them as individuals”.

Mr. & Mrs. T Maude, Oxted, Surrey



My father was a celebrated architect, and I followed in his footsteps around construction sites as a child until I could work in his studio as a man. I started in the days of pen and tracing paper and picked up practical experience laying bricks and digging holes on site.

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This book shares the results of our journey and our principles. In the coming pages, you won't find any commercial developments, any reproductions or any by-the-numbers design. What you will find are one of a kind homes, all extensions of our clients' lives and personalities – as individual as they are. I hope it plants a seed in your imagination to inspire your own perfect home.

**John Dyer Grimes**

## SELECTED CLIENT LIST

Rob Brydon, *Actor, Comedian and TV Presenter*

Mark Baker, *Director Astley Baker Davies, co writer Peppa Pig animation series*

Olly Murs, *Singer and TV Presenter*

Jermaine Jenas, *Professional Footballer*

Kate Silverton, *Journalist at the BBC*

Tom Guest, *Professional Rugby Union Player*

Ron Kalifa, *Deputy Chairman at WorldPay*

Nathan Davison, *Head of Prime Services Distribution at Barclays*

Akshaya Bhargava, *CEO Barclays Wealth & Investment Management*

Dr Halit Cingillioglu, *Turkish Ambassador to Holland*

Rob Calcraft, *Founder of REN Skincare*

Andrew Schwager, *Western Europe Sales & Marketing Director for British American Tobacco*

Holly Tucker MBE, *Founder & President of NotOnTheHighStreet.com*

Mark Cardwell, *Chairman at Echo House*

Ulrica Ludqvist, *Director at Tech21 Impactology*

Graham Boshier, *Co-Founder & Non-Executive Chairman of Graze.com*

Andrew Morgan, *CEO of Diageo Drinks*

Anthony Cockett, *Director at Citi*

Simon Peachey, *CIO British Telecom*

Douglas McCallum, *Chairman at Photobox and Trainline, CEO eBay*

Colin Banfield, *Managing Director at Citi*

Chris Boehringer, *Senior Vice President at Oaktree Capital Management*

James Mahoney, *Senior Managing Director at CVC Capital Partners*

Julian Schiller, *Senior Vice President at Brookfield Asset Management*

Dominic Luxton, *Co-Founder of Gamesys*

Ben Latreuille, *Partner at Wilton & Bain*

Tim Field, *Partner at Addleshaw Goddard LLP*





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## WHITE LODGE

Tony and Nicky Maude dreamed of building an ultra-modernist villa in stark contrast to the Listed manor house they had recently sold. The goal was to retain all the luxuries of country living but to de-clutter their lifestyle, both in terms of space and monthly outgoings.

They found a site in the heart of the leafy Surrey on which to build their dream house, without even knowing whether they would obtain planning permission. And so the journey began...

The site was originally home to a 1960's detached bungalow surrounded by tall trees and hedging with far reaching views to the Surrey Downs beyond. The area is populated by traditional pitched roof architecture typical of its green belt credentials.

The proposed designs were unprecedented in the immediate area and subject to Tanbridge Council's strict planning requirements.

The site sloped sharply away to one side which would greatly limit the overall footprint of the building and the desired surrounding landscape.

Following a rigorous planning process, Dyer Grimes Architects achieved consent to infill and level the site and build a highly contemporary house of 480m<sup>2</sup>.

Modern building technologies were combined with the highest quality materials including hardwood cladding and white render with an abundance of glass throughout.

The glazed ground floor living space is surrounded by beautifully landscaped grounds, while the first floor appears to 'hover' over the kitchen dining area as well as project over the swimming pool.

Great emphasis was placed on constructing White Lodge in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way. An impressive sustainability target was set; to generate 20 percent of the energy required by using renewable energy sources.

Energy efficiency has been maximised through the incorporation of Solar hot water collectors on the roof, a highly sustainable drainage system and an air source heat pump which circulates heat around the entire house.

The result is a stunning modernist home which has won the admiration of the local community, the Council and the media alike.





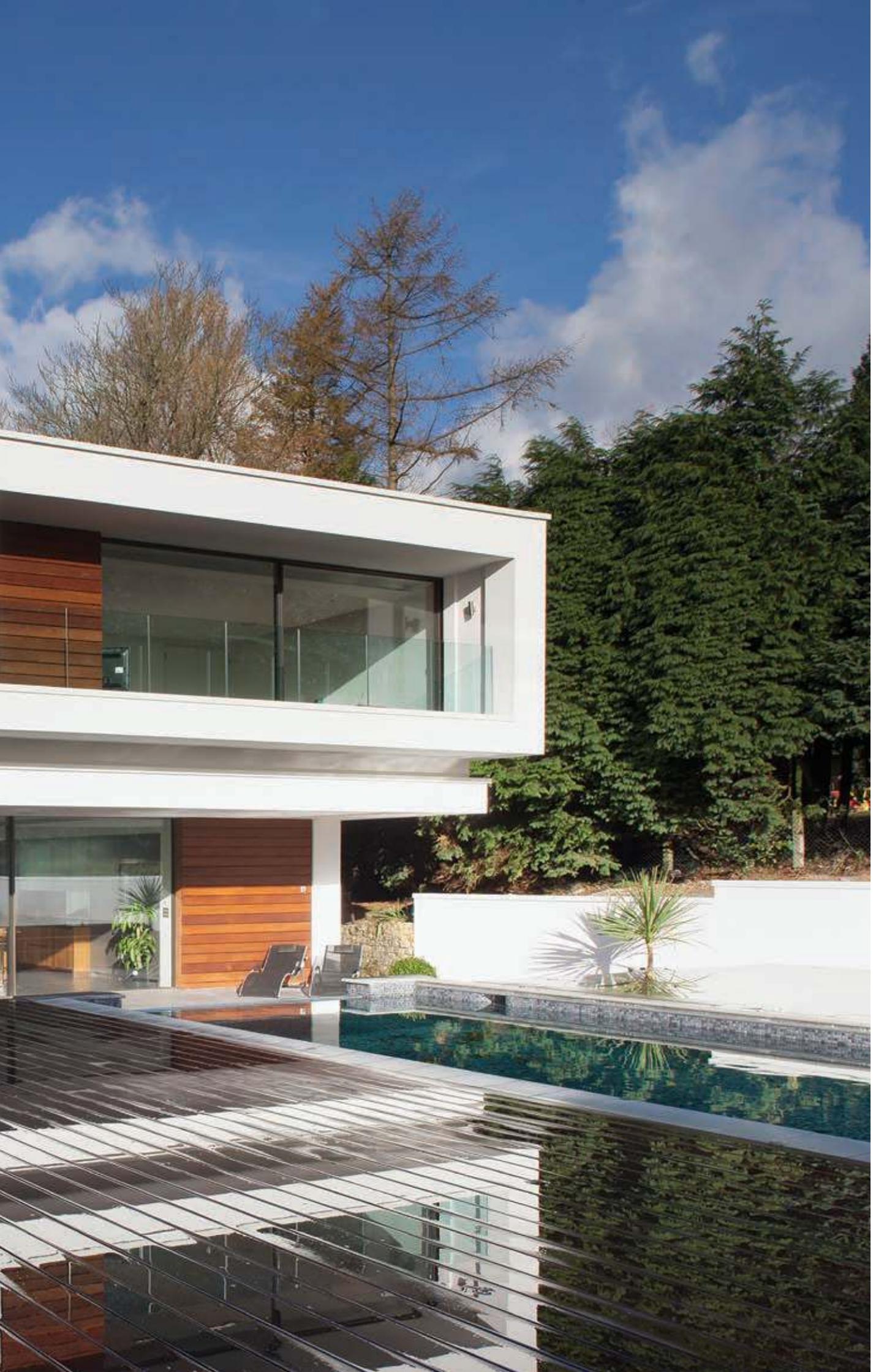












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## ST JAMES ROAD

Our clients' dream is to build a Victorian style double fronted family house, combining period features with highly contemporary interiors. The plan is to demolish an existing 1930s house which occupies the site and build a new house in its place to compliment the Victorian architecture of the area.

Dyer Grimes' designs combine the grandeur and proportions of Victorian architecture, off-set with striking contemporary detail throughout. The 6000 square foot house comprises a traditional facade of London stock brick and welsh slate roof, contrasted at the rear of the property with stunning glass walls that flood light into the house and maximise views of the garden beyond.

A vast basement room has been designed to evolve over time from a dream playground for the couples' two children – fitted with astro turf flooring – into a luxurious cinema room for all the family to enjoy.













## MERIMAC, SWIFE LANE

Like all our clients, Assad and Lisa wanted to create their perfect home – the only problem was that their ideas of a perfect home could not be more different. Assad craved countryside and contemporary architecture, whilst Lisa loved classic buildings and London living.

To convince Lisa of his vision, Assad needed a site of undeniable beauty complemented by a cutting edge design. It would also need to fit around family life – they had one child already with another on the way.

Assad's infectious enthusiasm and demand for the latest and greatest design and technology would fuel one of our most ambitious projects but could the peace of rural life really replace urban convenience?

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Assad found the ideal site. However, its greatest asset was also its greatest challenge: it was nestled in the middle of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Planning approval on an AONB is rarely granted for fear of having the landscape tarnished.

This was evident from the site's troubled past. A poorly designed and poorly located bungalow wasted the potential of the site, yet the numerous applications to replace it had either failed or never progressed past the construction stage.

The High Weald is characterised by firmly traditional rural architecture. The community and the planning officers had never encountered contemporary design in their area, so we would have to tread very delicately to avoid them putting their foot down on Assad's plans.









Luckily, Assad's insistence on green construction let us push the bar for sustainable, efficient design. Roof top solar panels, ground source heat pumps and ecological improvements to the site pushed the build to Level 5 of the Code for Sustainable Homes – more than meeting the council's demands.

But all of this would be for nothing if they thought the house was an eyesore. We moved the location of the site further back from the road than the existing bungalow and even achieved a reduced footprint and height despite increasing floor space by expanding subterraneanly.

The new build is less visible but far more worth seeing. A clean, asymmetrical white frame wraps around floor to ceiling glass on the ground floor, while the lower ground floor – partially concealed by the sloping terrain – is clad in local Tunbridge Wells stone.

Inside is just as striking. The ground floor boasts luxurious open plan spaces that can be adapted into more intimate rooms thanks to concealed pocket doors. Family life will be generously supported by a top-of-the-line kitchen and pantry, dining, living and play rooms, along with – essential for Assad – the wine cellar.

Nestled on the floor below are five bedrooms, allowing the family to grow and guests to feel at home. Despite being partially below ground, the design utilises the open side of the slope to provide every bedroom with plentiful natural light.

The local council and the surrounding community was convinced, but most importantly Lisa was too. The happy couple are now enjoying family life in one of the most sustainable, beautiful and advanced homes in the country.













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## STRAWBERRY VALE

Our clients had a dream: to live on the banks of the River Thames in one of London's most iconic contemporary houses.

Our brief was to make this dream a reality by demolishing an existing drab 1970s property on a rare and beautiful site in Strawberry Vale and build in its place a highly contemporary family home with uninterrupted river views. The house was to be designed to sit effortlessly within its site whilst achieving distinctive and iconic status.

There were a number of challenges along the way. First and foremost the site sits within Metropolitan Open Land as well as fronting the River Thames, both of which make it highly protected and subject to very strict planning laws. Richmond has a deep-rooted heritage and a strong leaning towards period and listed properties. Any new build is closely scrutinised with demolition of existing properties extremely hard to achieve.

Sitting so close to the banks of the river, the site includes large flood defences which naturally need to be incorporated into the overall design. Furthermore the area is of significant ecological importance and home to a number of protected species and wildlife. Dyer Grimes would need to work diligently to ensure these were protected and enhanced.









Dyer Grimes is seeking permission to demolish an existing cottage, garage and boathouse – in itself a major planning coup. Through skillful design, the footprint of the new house is nearly half the size of existing buildings, allowing for additional green spaces, planting and greater sensitivity between the property and the land around it.

The new house, whilst technically intricate in its design, achieves a vision of utter simplicity and elegance combining clean crisp lines, white render, hardwood cladding and vast expanses of glass. The house itself complements the natural habitat in which it sits, with the timber detailing mirroring the mature trees, whilst the glass walls reflect the river beyond. The result is a beautiful structure which seems to disappear into its natural surroundings. The simplicity and beauty of the building also greatly enhances views from Ham river walkway across the river.

Particular attention has been given to sustainability in the build and ongoing maintenance of the house. In addition to the reduction in ‘hard standing’ on the site by 274m<sup>2</sup>, a number of sustainable features will be included in the design. These include a large and discreet solar photovoltaic array on the lat roof of the house, supplying clean renewable energy all year round.





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## DENBRIDGE ROAD

Our client has always dreamed of owning an iconic modernist home with an indoor swimming pool that his young daughter could jump into from the kitchen table. Having found himself a leafy back garden surrounded by woodland, he has set about creating his dream. The vision is of a low built 'secret house', cutting edge in its design and wrapped around a landscaped courtyard.

The site is undeveloped and any building work will invariably overlook neighbouring properties. A previous application for a four-bedroom detached house was rejected in 1996, deemed to be cramped and undesirable by local planners. Dyer Grimes Architects' ingenious design team has developed a building which sits harmoniously within its plot and appears almost hidden from neighbouring sites.

Working closely with our arboriculturalist we have created a new access road which cuts through surrounding natural woodland without harm to existing trees. The new track creates a sweeping approach to the house, past a beautiful natural stone wall, and adds to the feeling of privacy and seclusion.

On arrival, a triple height entrance foyer and vast timber door make an instant impact. The house stands on a cantilever flooring deck which makes it appear to float above the ground. The inside of the house is awash with natural daylight with minimalistic profile glazing throughout the ground floor. The light brings an almost magical quality and highlights the quality of the interiors which include bespoke joinery, a bespoke staircase and beautiful handmade kitchen.













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## EDGE HILL

Pamela dreamed of giving her family the perfect home. Her daughter and son-in-law had three children who Pamela wanted to stay close to and support, but her cramped bungalow simply did not have the space.

She also did not want to leave the leafy Wimbledon street she knew and loved. Not one to compromise, Pamela's only option was to demolish her bungalow and build a brand new, state-of-the-art modern home.

Pamela's ambition faced a major stumbling block: her site was within the West Wimbledon Conservation Area, which meant strict guidelines, heavy scrutiny from planning officers and potential for local outrage.

The area's typical style was Victorian brick houses with steep pitched roofs – far from Pamela's taste for clean modern lines, white walls and generous glass. We would be breaking entirely new ground.

Beyond aesthetic concerns, Pamela needed a home that significantly increased her available space without expanding beyond the existing footprint or rising too high. Her ambition was matched by her eye for quality and we were firm believers in her dream.





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Planning permission was hard won. As expected, opinion was heavily divided but we argued tirelessly to prove the benefits of the build not just to Pamela but to the wider area. Despite the initial objections, our design has since received widespread praise.

The quality of the proposed build compared to the existing bungalow is staggering. Instead of one floor, Pamela will have three, giving her a total floor area of over 430m<sup>2</sup>, spread across generously-sized rooms and open-plan spaces.

Such a dramatic increase in space was, in part, thanks to an expansive basement, complete with lightwells to make it feel as open and organic as the surface floors. Contained within will be a cinema room, gym, sauna, bathroom and en-suite bedroom.

Expanding downwards meant we did not need to design too far upwards. Due to the odd, angular shape of the existing dwelling, the more practical shape of our first floor does not project significantly above the earlier roof line.

The luxurious open-plan kitchen and living room of the ground floor and the cosy bedrooms above will be filled with light through generous windows throughout. Instead of the dark, crowded and overcomplicated layout of her bungalow, Pamela and her family will enjoy a refreshingly light and open space.

Everything culminates with a beautiful finish of white render, timber and glass. And it is not just looks that count: we designed to achieve Level 5 of the Code for Sustainable Homes – an exceptional standard for sustainability and efficiency far beyond the existing build.

The result is a home that stands out from the crowd and boldly shows the value of contemporary design in conservation areas.













## EMPEROR'S GATE

Swiss clients Andrew and Frederike loved their period mansion flat so much that they bought the one above and the one below. The vision was to seamlessly join the three floors together with a beautiful sculptural staircase and to transform the new top floor into a luxurious bedroom suite with balconies overlooking the square. Japanese gardens in the basement were to act as light wells and allow their young children a space to play outdoors.

The ground floor apartment comprised a large beautifully appointed living room with 3.5m ceiling heights and a series of smaller cellular rooms including a cramped kitchen and long dark hallway in the centre. The basement apartments had suffered many adhoc alterations and additions. Dark and tired, they were in dire need of attention but did at least provide access to a side light well and rear courtyard. The challenge was to reconfigure the internal structure of all three floors and link them to create a comfortable three-storey family home.

Dyer Grimes Architects created a stunning centre point to the house, bringing the three floors together via a generous atrium and sculptural staircase. Our designs provided views and light to the centre of the plan, linking the large living room at ground floor with the open-plan kitchen and dining room, and courtyard spaces in the basement.

The first floor was transformed into a luxurious master bedroom with a bespoke dressing room, designer bathroom, sitting room and a roof terrace – true six-star luxury. Our interior design team made the most of the original Victorian features of the upper floor, whilst linking them seamlessly to the contemporary basement with its polished concrete floors, exposed brickwork and top-of-the-range Italian kitchen. Through our extensive network of the finest local craftsmen and suppliers, we were able to secure great value for money and the highest quality finishes for our clients.

























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## MONTAGUE ROAD

Work is well underway on this stunning period property on desirable Richmond Hill, a stone's throw from Richmond Park. Our client, who recently emigrated from New Zealand, has dreams of creating a stunning family house by restoring the property to its former glory whilst combining period features with highly contemporary interiors.

The house is in a conservation area, and is listed as a Building of Townscape Merit by Richmond Borough Council. The owner has tasked Dyer Grimes Architects with obtaining planning permission for a contemporary rear extension and a full refurbishment of the existing property.

Our brief was to retain the period façade of the building but to increase its footprint and open up the basement of the house with a large glass extension, creating a vast open-plan living space. This would need to be achieved without contravening local planning restrictions. As a Building of Townscape Merit the tightest design controls apply, with any contemporary adjustments closely scrutinised by the council.









Dyer Grimes Architects has been working to retain and restore period features within the upper floors of the property, whilst skilfully managing to incorporate highly contemporary features throughout. A Portuguese-inspired black and white tiling scheme in the entrance hall leads to distinctive glass and timber cantilever stairs that connect to the new contemporary extension to the rear.

The stunning new extension boasts a vast 3m x 3m structural glass roof-light to flood the new family room with natural light. Our client wanted to create a seamless glass structure without beams or visible supports. Despite its scale, Dyer Grimes Architects has succeeded in finding a supplier to produce a single sheet of glass to stunning effect. Elegant aluminium-framed, sliding glass doors provide views and access from the family room into a new light well which is adorned with a lush 'green wall' to create the feeling of a calm oasis.

At ground level, a new hardwood deck links the refurbished house with a dramatic rear garden, landscaped using mature planting and an Argentinian 'asado' or barbecue.



















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## SPRING TERRACE

Chantal had always dreamed of re-creating her childhood home so when a derelict Georgian house came up for sale in Richmond, the opportunity was too good to miss. The house was listed and, true to its period, comprised small dark rooms not suitable for modern family living. The goal was to restore the house to its former glory and increase its footprint by a third, creating a stunning new extension in contemporary glass below ground leading into the garden.

Richmond Society, together with the Listed Building Officers required that any extension to the property should match the existing style of the building. There was also the small matter of a ten-metre Scots pine tree with a preservation order which was growing right in the middle of the proposed extension works and would need to be removed. Dyer Grimes Architects also had to find the most effective way of keeping our client, who was 6000 miles away in Hong Kong, fully informed and up-dated with progress as well as consultatively evaluating the finishes, fixtures and fittings.

Through our long-standing relationship with Richmond Conservation Officers we were able to convince them to grant planning on a minimalist glass extension that complemented the original Georgian architecture. We worked closely with Richmond Archaeological Society to develop a structural solution that would allow us to excavate the basement and build the extension. Furthermore, our overseas client was involved every step of the way. Using our in-house virtual 3D modelling service, the family was able to 'walk around' their new home via their computer desktop in Hong Kong. The end result was a stunning restoration of a period property which accommodated the family's need for space, light and contemporary living.

































