

THE MODERN HOUSE



Harpenden, Hertfordshire
Sold

Ferrum House

The exceptional Grade II-listed Ferrum House was designed by the architect John S. “Jack” Bonnington (1929–2020) for himself and his family. Inspired by the work of the great Bauhaus architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, it was completed in 1964 and was among the first examples of a steel-framed house in England. It extends to over 3,200 sq ft across two foliage-filled glazed levels, with a substantial garage and generous private garden, and is on the market for the first time in its history.

The Architect

According to Bonnington, it took more than six years of weekends combing southern England in his car to find the perfect plot on which to build his family home. Finally, in 1962, he found himself on a tranquil, wooded patch in the grounds of a country manor in Harpenden: the perfect spot for Ferrum House.

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*South-East England
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In a 2018 interview with Wallpaper*, Bonnington described the design of Ferrum as a nod to “the workmanship and simplicity of Greek temples” while acknowledging the enormous influence of Mies van der Rohe, explaining that “his architecture taught me about the elimination of superfluous detail.” For more information, please see the History section below.

The Tour

The house is set back behind an enchanting ivy-strewn lawn and mature trees, from a private, unmade road near the centre of Harpenden; a short, bucolic walk along the golf course and across the Common. The design is largely rectangular and based on a strict three-foot module. The fair-coloured bricks, chosen to contrast with the darkness of the surrounding trees, are nine inches in length and the steel members are all measured to a multiple of three.

A brick-paved driveway approaches the house, with the garage to the right. The first glimpse of the main house lies behind a canopy of majestic California redwoods, where the lower brick portion extends from the towering Leilandi cypress of the rear garden to support the steel-framed, cedar-clad upper section. This cantilevers above the Portland stone walkway, with an underside of Colombian pine, past two large sections of glazing. The second glazed section provides entry to the ground-floor hall which is dual aspect to the garden and contains a steel and timber open-tread staircase.

The upper level is predominantly open-plan. Swedish mosaic glass lines the floor and remains in near perfect condition. The ceilings and walls are clad in Sitka spruce, with sliding doors of teak providing occasional moments of seclusion. The kitchen, breakfast bar and dining room occupy the landing space with a sweeping wall of glazing that extends into the expansive living room beyond. The original recessed HiFi is retained here, with speakers built into the panelling.

There are four bedrooms in total, with a study on the first floor and a further garden room on the ground level. The three first-floor bedrooms enjoy a rare intimacy with the surrounding trees and the ground-floor bedroom and its living space benefit from the same with the garden. Plenty of storage is provided in the long linking corridors and built-in wardrobes throughout.

Outdoor Space

As with Ferrum House itself, the garden is designed to be low maintenance. A Portland stone terrace surrounds the house and lawns are found front and back, dotted with mature trees, including the two redwoods. At the south-facing rear, the garden is enclosed and has a pool feature to one side.

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The Area

Grange Court Road is a peaceful, private, residential road made up mainly of large detached houses. It is on the outskirts of Harpenden, an attractive and affluent town that offers a thriving high street, proximity to beautiful countryside and excellent transport links. Harpenden is also renowned for its large areas of park and common. Well-regarded schools in the area include Aldwickbury, Beechwood, St. Albans High School for Girls, St. Albans Boys School, Haileybury and Haberdashers Askes.

Trains run from Harpenden station to London Kings Cross Thameslink in approximately 25 minutes, and the M1, A1M and M25 are all within a five to 20-minute drive. Luton Airport is a short drive away.

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About

The Modern House is an estate agency that helps people live in more thoughtful and beautiful ways. We believe in design as a powerful force for good. Inspired by the principles of modernism, we represent design-led homes across the UK which celebrate light, space and a truth to materials. Esquire credits The Modern House with “rewriting the rulebook on estate agency” and GQ voted us “one of the best things in the world”.