

THE MODERN HOUSE



London W11
£1,750,000 Share of Freehold

Walmer Yard IV

A conquest of exquisite beauty and poetic inspiration, this two-bedroom home is one of four sublime interlocking houses discreetly situated around an open courtyard by the greenery of Avondale Park, between Notting Hill and Holland Park. The four houses are the first residential buildings in Britain by the architectural educator and designer Peter Salter and the project was the winner of the RIBA London Award in 2017. It is a manipulation of light and dark, of clay and concrete among myriad other materials, formed together by master builders and craftsmen from the wonderful organic drawings of Salter. Spanning almost 1,280 sq ft over two storeys, with a private courtyard garden and secure underground parking, the house offers a captivating series of versatile, lateral living spaces and the rare opportunity to acquire a revered landmark of recent architectural history.

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The Buildings

Walmer Yard replaces a Victorian warehouse built on the brickfields between the 1840s Norland Estate and the Regency terraces of Ladbrooke Grove. Nodding to the patchworks of lock-ups and stable yards and the functional mewses of postwar decades, while uniting the spectrum between modest facades and those grander compositions of Portland Road, the development offers a subtle, stealthy elevation, barely hinting at the architectural brilliance within.

Cast from in situ poured concrete, structured around rectangular and elliptical stairwells, each house fits within an interlocking plan arranged around an intimate central courtyard, oriented to receive sun from the south. The grouping evokes a proximity and communalism reminiscent of 17th-century planning, or its inspiration in part: the Lombardian commune of Sabionetta.

The layering of the shutters also provides privacy for each residence, and a changeable *brise soleil*, allowing shadow and soft light to be regulated internally as desired.

The Tour

Entry from the subtle façade on Walmer Road is through a series of steps enclosed on three sides by projecting elements from the two houses with street frontages. The approach through bronze entry gates provides a perspective that straddles defined eras of design, from neo-medieval through to modernist, postmodernist and expressionist.

The external courtyard has been designed as if it were a finely panelled internal room and was inspired by the timber-lined council chamber of Scuola Grande di San Rocco in Venice. End-grain oak blocks run underfoot, their natural grain a visual delight and their materiality a great absorber of footfall. Shutters too act as deflectors of sound and work with the acoustic render to degrade airborne noise. Low-level light fittings avoid light pollution at higher points of the façade and concrete benches are incorporated for a variety of purposes, be that the somewhere to place shopping as one fumbles for keys, a spot to adorn with plant pots, or simply a place to sit and converse with neighbours or friends.

Beyond the oak blocks and glass-brick-infused steel bridge that leads to the house, the complex transition of materials continues in an ode to London's architecture; a smooth roach-bed Portland stone inset becomes an internal threshold of rough granite setts.

Inside, the structure, volumes and materials are employed to create a series of rooms and circulation spaces that are precisely tuned to domestic use, private peace and sensory experience.

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From the cobbled entry, the hall becomes a terrazzo-like surface of Thames-river gravels, with transition to cork flooring in the kitchen and a beautiful pattern of oak boards in the reception and bedrooms. This open expanse is entered through an oak pivot door, beneath an internal clerestory of wired windows. In one of the near corners, steel steel-clad wall of the hallways guest WC protrudes into the room. In the other corner, oak shutters look across a lightwell to the lower level, the only internal double-height space with Walmer Yard. Its walls are a combination of concrete, clay and timber framed glazing onto the rear lightwell. A log-burning stove rests atop a raised concrete hearth and a lightwell pours light from the centre of a brilliant vaulted ceiling structure, a device repeated in the kitchen. In the far corner, a doorway leads outside and down concrete steps to the rear lightwell courtyard.

To the right is the dining room, also accessible from the entrance kitchen, which is in turn accessible from the hall. A sliding partition, bridged by an enormous length of red-painted steel between the reception and dining room, and a doorway between the kitchen and dining room, allows for degrees of separation or a completely open circuit.

The structural cast concrete is left bare to the walls through much of the house as just one of the many evidences of exceptional craftsmanship throughout, achieving a monolithic sense of permanence and a surprising warmth. The operational elements of the kitchen and integrated appliances are constructed in oak, forming the cabinetry and partition, through which a serving hatch links to the dining space. Worktops are cast concrete.

A carbonised steel staircase, with leather handrails, descends in an ellipsis to the lower level, arriving in a wonderful double-height space with walls of board-marked concrete lit by towering light shafts and an opening roof light at the ceiling's summit. Two large bedrooms occupy the first floor, both with steel-encased en suite shower or bathrooms. Both have access to the rear courtyard. The master bedroom has a bank of bespoke wardrobes, fluted in form and with black lacquered faces.

The underground parking is reached via the front courtyard, through a secondary entrance, and offers each house generous space for parking and a degree of storage. A turning circle maximises the space and increases the ease of manoeuvre.

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The Area

Walmer Yard is situated off Walmer Road at the north-east corner of Avondale Park. Access to the park is moments from the front gates. It's made up of formal gardens, sporting greens, a café and what is considered Britain's first floral lawn, designed to provide biodiversity for the immediate area. Green spaces are aplenty in the area; Holland Park, one of London's finest, is a short walk to the south with tennis courts and a Japanese garden. Kensington Gardens is a slightly longer walk west and is home to the Serpentine Galleries and the James Pennethorne-designed Italian Gardens of Hyde Park.

The house is also brilliantly positioned for easy reach of the shops, restaurants and markets of Portobello Road, Golborne Road and Westbourne Grove. There are plenty of cafés and restaurants in nearby Notting Hill, including the two Michelin-starred Ledbury, the three Michelin-starred Core by Clare Smyth, and Ottolenghi. The Electric Cinema, The Gate Theatre and Electric House are all within walking distance.

Just around the corner from Walmer Yard, Portland Road meets Clarendon Cross and transforms into a pedestrianised street. Here, a parade of shops and restaurants is clustered around mature olive trees. Florists, interior designers, cafes, galleries, clothing shops and ceramicists populate this villagey corner of the neighbourhood, as well as the newly revamped Julie's Restaurant and Champagne Bar. Six Portland Road is of particular note, a local restaurant specialising in low-intervention wines and modern European cuisine.

The conveniences of Westfield London are also close at hand, and Soho House members' club, White House City, is a short walk away from the house.

Holland Park Underground Station is nearby for fast links to central London. There is excellent access to the M4, the A4 and A40, providing quick access to Heathrow Airport by car. Paddington Station is also nearby for the Heathrow Express, services to the west of England, and the now-operational Crossrail (Elizabeth Line).

Council Tax Band: G

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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”.