

Buy into elegant architecture

David Spittles finds handsome new builds and clever conversions that won't break the bank around coveted Richmond and Kew

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FLY into Heathrow and you see why people like to live in the leafy outer reaches of south-west London – the majestic Thames, Kew Gardens, the commons and the great green tract of Richmond Park. Despite road congestion, it's an ideal location for many.

Homes here can be pricey, especially the best addresses in Richmond and its affluent satellites Ham and Petersham. But there are more affordable postcodes offering safe neighbourhoods, open space, good schools and amenities.

Isleworth, a quirky mix of old riverside village, modern office blocks and stand-ard-issue suburbia, is one such place. Georgian grandees built country mansions here, and a rare one survives at **Fitzroy Gate**, a seven-acre walled estate with private parkland running down to the banks of the Thames.

GET THEE TO A NUNNERY

Having been a convent for the Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth for the last 100 years, the site is a splendid new address with more than 60 private homes, including grand apartments in the listed white stucco mansion and a crescent of new family houses.

An Edwardian chapel has been turned into triplex houses with open galleries and vaulted ceilings, while an original stable block is now mews cottages. The



From £1,195,000: The Longfords in Teddington mixes traditional and contemporary design homes

various architectural elements hang together well. New four-storey townhouses by developer StJames are priced from £1.25 million, each with up to six bedrooms, a ground-floor "super-room", first- and top-floor terraces plus

a garden facing the landscaped grounds. It feels like a sanctuary. An ornamental lake with swans is part of new flood defences, and residents have fob access through gates to the upgraded Thames Path. This part of the river also sports a large, wooded island and a working boatyard. Heritage specialist Beechcroft has undertaken refurbishment of the old buildings and added tasteful contemporary interior design. Apartments start at £650,000. Secure parking has been created within the development. Call 020 3326 1233.



From £650,000: for flats at Fitzroy Gate in Isleworth, right, a former convent, with townhouses, left, from £1.25 million

SAY HI TO THE DUKE

Isleworth also has historic Syon House, home to the Duke of Northumberland, and its lovely 200-acre park. Opposite the park is **The Syon**, a new flats scheme with prices from £390,000. Call Savills on 020 3430 6920.

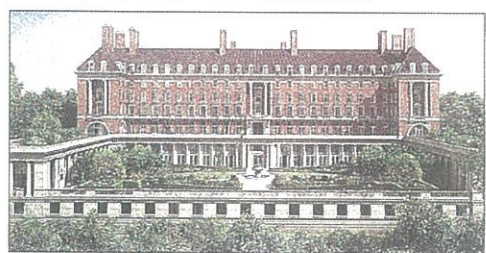
London Square Isleworth is another new development, offering 162 flats



From £425,000: London Square Isleworth flats, left, are set around a communal garden square



From £390,000: apartments at The Syon, right, opposite Syon Park, location of historic Syon House



From £2.95 million: penthouses at the landmark Star and Garter, Richmond Hill



with rectangular bay windows set around a communal garden square. Prices from £425,000. Call 0333 660 0105. The same developer has unveiled homes in neighbouring Teddington, which stretches inland from the Thames to wonderful Royal Bushy Park. The town itself has a long high street reaching down to the river and the famous television studios.

Called **Noel Square**, after renowned playwright and composer Noel Coward who grew up in the same street, the scheme has 18 townhouses that open directly on to a private square, with parking underground, making it a safe haven for children and a relaxing place for residents to socialise. Each four-storey house has an open-plan ground-floor kitchen/diner/lounge opening to a rear garden. At the top of the house is the master suite with terrace. From £1.25 million. Call 0333 6662434.

The Longfords, also in Teddington, is a small scheme of eight family houses, three of which are traditional-looking with front bay windows and dormers in the roofspace, while alongside, a gatehouse provides access to four contemporary design homes in a private courtyard at the rear, all with smart open-plan interiors plus terraces and a planted garden. There's off-street parking, too. From £1,195,000 through Foxtons (020 7973 2020).

GLAMOUR AT THE GARTER

For sheer glamour and wow factor, new penthouses at **The Star and Garter** in Richmond Hill are hard to beat. The historic listed building, being split into 86 grand apartments, occupies a spectacular position amid terraced gardens and grounds overlooking the Thames and Petersham Meadows.

Double-height penthouses have sweeping views and contemporary interior design set against the building's heritage architecture, including original parquet flooring, ornate mouldings, coffered ceilings and fireplaces.

A marble hall with grand staircase is the entrance lobby, while the restored King's Room will be a spa. Prices from £2.95 million. Call 0333 666 0102.

Langdale House is a one-off modern mansion at Roehampton Gate, an entrance to Richmond Park. The property has an impressive double-height entrance hall plus seven bedrooms, five bathrooms and a ground-floor super-room opening on to a lavishly landscaped garden. The price is £7.75 million. Call Knight Frank on 020 8939 2800.

Roehampton itself is a cheaper south-west London area. The vast Alton Estate, built in brutalist style by the old London County Council in the late Fifties, is in the spotlight, with developer St James and Wandsworth council working up plans to build private homes on vacant land and provide better links from the estate to Richmond Park.

There are no plans to demolish the estate's listed blocks, regarded by some architects as the crowning glory of post-war social housing.