

METRO Property New Builds

ROOMS WITH A VIEW...

Alison Tyler explores a new luxury development with some of the best panoramas in the capital

WHAT I think will be most exciting is just to wake up in the morning and be looking out on to a Grade I-listed UNESCO World Heritage site – and one of London’s most iconic views,’ says Paul Harrison of architects Squire and Partners, talking about his latest baby, One Tower Bridge. He’s referring to the enormous picture windows –



picture walls would be a more appropriate term, as this one fills the entire north-facing wall of the bedroom – in the super-luxe new apartments which overlook Potters Field, the river, Tower Bridge and the Tower of London. Designing a new residential development to sit in such a historic setting is a daunting task, and the site itself had nothing to offer as a starting point, in fact it was the opposite, a former coach park and dropping off point for hordes of tourists.

‘It’s an intriguing site: to the east is Shad Thames, which has a historic, warehouse feel to it, but immediately west is the Mayor of London’s futuristic egg building and the very contemporary More London complex – and then you’ve got Tower Bridge thrown in. It’s full of contrasts,’ explains Douglas Acton, development manager at Berkeley, the developer.

The solution was to create a series of buildings on the deceptively large site, with the ones to the east more in keeping with Shad Thames – think brick buildings and the protruding wooden balconies that epitomise Butler’s Wharf – while the buildings to the back are more contemporary and tucked away from the riverfront. The most contemporary buildings are hidden behind Cambridge House, a sleek grey limestone brick-clad structure that is just five storeys high, and which blends unobtrusively into its setting.

‘We’ve borrowed from the skyline of the South Bank and sought to extend it here,’ says Harrison. ‘We’ve created walkways through and around the residential buildings, where there will be shops, restaurants and a 900-seat riverside theatre that will be the home of the London Theatre Company, a new independent production company founded by Nicholas Hytner and Nick Starr who have left the National Theatre after 12 years.’

Wide passageways intersect the front building, Cambridge House, framing



PHOTOS: JAMES ROBERTS



Towering high: Some of the apartments will offer unrivalled views of Tower Bridge, such as the triplex penthouse in The Tower, which has a glass-walled roof terrace (above), while others will look out over The Shard (left)

views of the Bridge and the Tower, or of the London Assembly and The Shard, depending which way you look.

But the most impressive views can be found in the campanile – the Italian name for a bell tower. This one rises to 21 storeys – the same height as Tower Bridge – and each flat in the tower occupies an entire floor. The triplex at the top (£8.5million) also comes with a roof terrace, protected from the elements by five-metre-high glass walls, edged with bronze.

It’s a brave and daring move to put a tower here, but as Harrison explains, it mimics the skyline of the South Bank. ‘There are other bell towers that punctuate the sky here – the Oxo Tower, the Tate Modern – so it felt appropriate. It also creates a

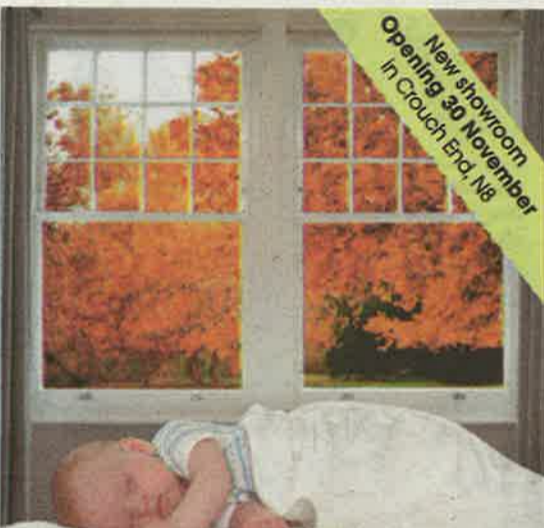
landmark.’ The building uses a lavish mix of natural materials, making it luxurious without looking conspicuous or brash. There’s bronze, Catalan Gris (a grey limestone with a brown filigree rippled through it), Smeed Dean brick from Kent – which contains Victorian ash to create the exact style of brick used in Tower Bridge – wood and stone.

It’s this mix of materials and types of building that is the success of the development. London is not a homogenous place – there are so many different styles of architecture. By embracing the city’s diversity, the old and the new, Squire and Partners have created a place that you will think has been here for years. Surely that’s what every good building should do?

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