

The jacket has such a good idea

Four neighbours became self-builders to develop an Islington market yard with homes and offices for themselves and to let. By **Philippa Stockley**

HOW a few neighbours turned a dreary, brick-walled yard into five slick, minimalist, five stylish offices and a sexy three-storey house is a tale of collaboration, ingenuity and patience that not only proves what you can achieve if you have guts and a good idea, but shows what London is so great at – and needs to do much more of.

Built on the former storage area of Islington's famous Chapel Street market, the eye-catching site had development called Goodson Street has justly won a Royal Institute of British Architects London award.

This once-ignored industrial hinterland north of Angel is changing fast. Architect Jake Edgley, 44, was living in a small house he had built, which bordered the brick wall to the north of the yard. Every day he watched market traders wheel loaded trolleys to and fro, and dreamed about what he could do with the site.

Then in 2009, Islington council relocated the market square and put the yard up for sale. Jake spotted the sign.

The yard's north wall gave him an unexpected advantage. The house of another architect, James Engel, also bordered it, as did two little houses built designed for local brothers Chris and Steve Joannous. These locally born City lads were everyone in the market they had seen for the "safe" sale, too, and immediately suggested to Jake and

James that they get together to develop the site between them.

The group put in an offer, only to be pipped by someone else. However, that did not faze them, so Jake then quickly bought the site and divided it with the others. He bought it without planning consent. Because of the huge risk, that is always much cheaper. "I only ever buy land without planning," he says. That's a very confident attitude. You have to buy for cash, too – because no bank will lend against it.

MODERN NEOCLASSICAL

The business brothers were happy to let the others design what went in the space. Once, there had been seven narrow old terrace houses, demolished in the Seventies. James, the other architect, suggested a Georgian terrace format, though in a modern way – narrow, four-storey houses with semi-basements, and a stair hugging one side wall.

At first, the council only wanted offices, but as Jake explains, councils like occupied buildings, so the planners then agreed to some flats, too. Jake designed terraces of double 100sq ft maisonettes: offices below, apartments above. The council liked that, but wanted the end property to have a lower roofline, so he changed this flat to a three-storey townhouse. The council agreed. With 80 neighbours round the plot, rights to light issues created a headache, but also



brought opportunity for ingenuity. The solution was angled window placement, plus a five steel mesh over some windows, to blur the view.

RESISTING THE BLING

At one point, Jake did a model that gives the houses slaty gold cladding, which all the residents loved, but that proved to be subtly tinted zinc instead. In 2012, planning was granted. It had taken two

and-a-half years. Meanwhile, the gang's Joannous brothers got a digger and started excavating the site. They put up the retaining wall, and steel work to support the houses.

By doing it at their own pace they saved a lot of money. "We found all sorts of things, such as kitchen ranges, down there – all squashed," Jake says. The main build began in 2012. The lower levels are cast concrete, with stairs down and lightwells front and back that

A terrace for our times subtly tinted zinc cladding sets the block apart

lines are interesting, dipping up and down like traditional buttermilk roofs. Inside the maisonette flats, exposed fair-faced concrete, polished concrete floors, attractive birch ply detail and sliding doors create clean, modern, desirable canopies, with loads of light at all levels. Fittings are sleek, fitted-looking brass. Jake has his practice in one property, with James's next door. The street/capex mix is a creative, connected community with everyone getting to know one another.

TAKEN all together, the best word for this... exciting. It's no surprise that all five flats rented almost immediately, and by now, the house is probably sold. This is exactly the type of innovative, well-designed and economical project that we need all over the capital, using our brilliant design skills. And planners and councils need to actively get involved in helping to make it happen.



Super-light the flats, with big picture windows, are cantilevered in wood and the roofline is eye-catching



A nod to 17th-century London: fronts of the homes overhang

What it cost
Price of plot in 2009: £400,000
Building costs (excluding architects' fees and digging out): approximately £1.9 million
Value of three-storey house: £1,295,000

Get the look
Principal architects: Jake Edgley at edgleydesign.co.uk and James Engel at Spaced Out Architecture Studio at spacedout.co.uk
Builder: Cape Construction at capexconstruction.net (including polished concrete)
Glasses: Saper Glass at saperglass.co.uk
Concrete consultant: David Bennett at concretepoint.com
Zinc cladding and roofing by: All Metal Roofing at allmetalroofing.co.uk and VM Zinc at vmzinc.co.uk
Sliding doors: Wilfacc at wilfacc.co.uk
Brass door handles: Tragen at tragen.com
Paints: from lakelandpaints.co.uk

BASE17

BASE17 BOUTIQUE AT THE HEART OF LONDON

SPECTACULAR 2 BEDROOM APARTMENTS AND 2 & 3 BEDROOM DUPLEX APARTMENTS

LAST FEW REMAINING

Housebuilder of the Year

These beautifully spacious apartments are located in the heart of Elephant & Castle and benefit from a high quality, contemporary specification.

- Private outdoor space to all apartments
- Right at the heart of Elephant & Castle
- Underfloor heating throughout
- En-suite to master bedroom
- Just a 10 minute walk to Elephant & Castle station
- 10 minutes tube journey to the West End
- Landscaped parks to enjoy

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO VIEW OUR STUNNING DUPLEX SHOW HOME

80% SOLD

Prices from **£680,000***

For further information please call **020 3301 0800**

or email **base17@hill.co.uk**

www.base17.co.uk

Bring it to you by partnering with

EE Hill

guinness

FORBES

Living Legend

Images are one of the Dublin show home. Prices are for the duplex only and are subject to change to meet and are based on a 2 bedroom apartment.

80% SOLD



Clean lines: the six maisonettes boast smart, minimalist style



Sleeks: polished concrete and birch ply detail in the living room



Light-flooded: rental basement offices benefit from lightwells



Happy: Johan Lantz and Jonna Klow live Gordon Street. "It's the best flat I've ever seen"

MANAGEMENT consultant Jonna Klow and her boyfriend, Johan Lantz, both Swedens, moved into Gordon Street in March from a flat in Notting Hill. "We spotted it by accident online," says Jonna.

"The pictures didn't do it justice but we missed it and came to view anyway, and the flat was just amazing. We've seen more than 30, and, honestly, this is the best flat I have ever seen."

"We really liked the modern design, the feel, and the light. I tell my friends about living in London, and that since we moved here, it has improved our quality of life 100 per cent."

"We aren't bothered by the offers – they're there during the day, we're there in the evening."

Photographs: Jack Hobhouse
Portrait: Charles Klose