



ABOVE A 1970s-build has been updated with a front door painted in a modern neutral. BELOW A trio of townhouses by Squire & Partners echoes the symmetry and scale found in surrounding Victorian properties.

Encompassing a wide variety of architectural styles, new builds range from post-war homes, which were among the first to eschew decorative detailing, through to 1970s townhouses featuring traditional hanging tiles and weatherboarding, symmetrical 1990s properties, and the minimalist structures of the early 21st century.

The best examples of each of these types of property tend to use honest materials that stand the test of time while avoiding pastiche or clinging to familiar building styles. "There is sometimes a tendency to shirk modern architecture because classic homes including Georgian, Edwardian and Victorian are often considered more popular," reflects interior designer Henry Prideaux. "However, bear in mind that those buildings were also new at one stage. Any build that respects correct proportion and is inspired by fine architecture of the past without being a slave to it wins my vote, alongside innovative buildings that champion unusual materials and inventive architectural ideas."



THE *New Build* HOME

In this edition of our series on familiar British housing styles, we explore the many options among 'new build' housing, from post-war builds to contemporary homes, each with their own take on modern living

FEATURE EMMA J PAGE

THE FUTURE IS NOW

While some new builds may be more architecturally appealing than others, all of them will benefit from a pared-back approach, whether they are built from scratch or are being re-worked retrospectively. "If a new build – be it in the city or in a rural location – uses local materials, responds to the site, context or landscape, addresses local architectural style without being pastiche, and has a strong narrative, then integrity and character will naturally ensue," says architect Henry Squire of Squire & Partners. "All architectural styles can provide aesthetically pleasing buildings as long as they are honest and executed with rigour and joy."

The advantage of more modern architecture is that it is built for contemporary life. Unlike the original configurations of many period properties, there is no sense of division or an 'upstairs-downstairs' lifestyle; instead, largely open rooms and zones bring cooking, dining, relaxing and socialising into one space. "Newer buildings are better suited to the way we live now because they easily cater to our everyday requirements," says Kelling Designs' Emma Deterding. "From an architectural perspective, they can also create a sense of scale, light and drama. If you are building from scratch, then timber, glass, metal and stone will always be timeless. Now, more than ever, we are looking to bring natural materials into our homes and this is something that will forever be in style as we try to reconnect with the great outdoors."

Sustainability and a reduced carbon footprint remain key areas of concern, so we can perhaps also expect to see a return to a combination of



traditional, resilient materials as well as new, low-carbon options. "The key is cohesion," says Squire. "For me, there isn't a division between architecture and interiors. A good building is conceived without separating external and internal. Therefore, one should aim to approach a new-build as an entire project."

FORM & FUNCTION

Newer buildings, especially post-war architecture, tend to be less generous in scale, with fewer internal decorative details. Builds like these have often been tampered with over time, and it is common to find elements like fire surrounds, cornicing or coving as later additions, which can confuse the vernacular of the original design. One approach is to strip back and remove extraneous detailing, reconnecting with the simplicity of the building. "I like to revert to the language of the architecture," says interior designer Sidika Owen. "I tend to remove inauthentic 'period' detailing, before remodelling the layout in order to make the space feel airier. Underfloor heating keeps the walls as undisturbed as possible, while investing in bespoke joinery maximises storage. Mirrored doors also give the illusion of space, while bringing in light."

Combating a lack of internal features is key with some newer builds and there are plenty of clever ways to do this. "Often, the main drawback is low ceilings," says interior designer Roby Baldan. "Considered use of multi-layered lighting is therefore important to manipulate the perception of the space, as is opting for simple window treatments. But having a blank canvas can also be a great springboard. Most new builds are of solid construction – floors and walls are levelled, often made of solid concrete, allowing for the use of heavier floor coverings, such as marble. Simple architecture means that decorative schemes can be richer and bolder."

Brand new homes offer the opportunity to design freely for modern living, incorporating rooms such as pantries, utilities, cloakrooms and additional storage ▶



TOP LEFT Parquet flooring and a chimney breast riff on period detailing in this contemporary expression of a classic townhouse sitting room by Squire & Partners.

LEFT This 1990s property has been given a classic treatment by Otta Design, via antique furniture and timeless accessories.

that can be harder to extract from period properties. "Personally, I love new builds whose form instantly tells you something about their function," says architect Michael Schienke. "Glass, open space and efficient use of materials all contribute to this effect. A well-considered new build will use internal space intuitively but also consider a site's inherent logic: the views, orientation, natural topography and how the entrance should appear from a distance - whether contrasting with the landscape or melting into it."

FRESH APPROACH

Buils from the post-war years onwards and brand new homes are some of the most flexible interiors when it comes to decoration. A good approach is to nod to the building's origins while developing an individual, cohesive style. For example, in the recent renovation of a 1970s townhouse, interior designer Sidika Owen retained its original finger parquet flooring, complementing it with rattan pendants, raw linen window treatments, terrazzo bathrooms and mid-century shapes for softly retro appeal. Marbled paper and bold red tapware add a contemporary touch.

Mixing furniture styles and creating a focal point in every room is a good way to add personality to a new build. "It's important not to shy away from colour and pattern," advises Emma Deterding, whose recent motifs include vibrant wall murals and statement headboards to add playfulness to otherwise feature-free spaces. "There's also no reason a modern building can't house antiques. The key is to avoid dressing schemes in one period style, opting instead for interesting 'pause points' here and there."

Introducing texture and pattern is a good way to soften the 'newness' of a modern building. "I like to add unexpected design features such as wall panelling made from grosgrain ribbon, highlighting architectural detail with passementerie, or using interesting paint effects to add some originality," says ▶



TOP RIGHT Aqua elements, including a pair of upholstered headboards, help anchor an otherwise feature-free space in this scheme by Otta Design.

RIGHT Rich walnut flooring and finishes enhance an otherwise simple space with floor-to-ceiling windows in this new townhouse by Squire & Partners.

structural detailing, but it presented no constraints when it came to creative reinvention. I used the simplicity of its structure as a canvas for a curated selection of furniture and decorative pieces. Where applicable, replacing window frames, repainting an exterior and opening up outdated closed porches also has a transformative effect.”

NEW STYLE

Brand new homes are sometimes polarising because their contemporary nature can feel stark or even overly imposing. But a well-built new home that speaks to its landscape can rival the beauty of many older homes. “I think it’s important that we challenge tradition, allowing for exciting and well-designed homes that open up debate,” reflects Otta Designs’ Alex Keith. “However, context is vital. For example, I enjoy the beach and fishing huts in Walberswick in Suffolk. Their black facades contrast with their surroundings, whether it be green vegetation or a sandy seascape. Currently, I’m drawn to a combination ▶