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### Grosvenor Square's return to glory



No.1 Grosvenor Square

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**I**n the heart of Mayfair, Grosvenor Square is seeing its biggest transformation in a century. London's second largest garden square, after Lincoln's Inn Fields, was the place to be for lords and ladies, dukes and knights, since it was first developed in the early 18th century.

“Until the Second World War, up to half the square’s residents at any given moment could have been relied on to be members of the titled aristocracy,” comments Andrew Dunn, founder of the luxury design and development company Finchatton.

But like much of Mayfair, its Georgian townhouses were given a new use after the war, becoming offices, blocks of flats and embassies. If Grosvenor Square had become widely known for anything in recent years, it’s the stark, stone expanses of the 1950s-designed – and now listed – US Embassy, complete with its huge, bald-headed eagle and tons of heightened security.

Now, however, Grosvenor Square is poised to be London’s number one residential address again. Its central garden is back in the hands of the Grosvenor Estate, which has plans to make it a hub for all sorts of events. The big old stone embassy, now owned by Qatari Diar, is being turned into an ultra-luxury hotel designed by David Chipperfield. And other prominent buildings will soon be home to some of the city’s highest-end new residences – something the square has lacked in several decades.



20 Grosvenor Square with gardens

Among them is Twenty Grosvenor Square – formerly the American navy’s HQ and soon to be the first ever standalone Four Seasons residences, developed by Finchatton, with prices from £17.5m for the three-bedroom residences and from £35m for five bedrooms, available through Knight Frank.

For residents, it means you get the first-class amenities (including cinema room, wine room, spa and 25-metre pool) and service you would expect from the five-star global hotel and resort brand, without the endless stream of strangers that come with having a hotel on site. “You’ll have a round-the-clock concierge team of expertly-trained Four Seasons staff, in-residence dining delivered to you in the comfort of your home and a whole range of services including housekeeping, laundry, babysitting and pet care. There’s no other scheme in London offering this level of world-class residential servicing,” says Dunn.



Master bedroom at 20 Grosvenor Square

Buyers also like the fact they enjoy their jet-setting lives between their global homes without needing staff permanently in situ. “The need for staff to manage things while you’re not at home is the downside of having this type of lifestyle. People love the idea of an apartment where they don’t have to worry about any additional resourcing as it’s all taken care of through Four Seasons,” says Dunn.

Interest in the Finchatton scheme has come from 19 nationalities so far, but like other buildings in Grosvenor Square, No. 20's old US links may provide a special pull for American buyers. Behind the preserved brick façade, everything is new – but there is one special feature that is being restored: a large tiled floor mosaic bearing the emblem of the US Naval forces in Europe.



20 Grosvenor Square reception

“This could well have been the very room where General Eisenhower strategised during the Second World War” says Dunn, referring to the era when the square was nicknamed Eisenhowerplatz after the US president set up his military headquarters at No. 20.

Shoot across the other side of square and you arrive at One Grosvenor Square, which also comes with an American connection. This was the original US embassy, before it was given its purpose-built home on the square's west side in 1960. When the Americans left, the Canadians made it their High Commission. Now, Lodha UK – part of India's biggest property developers – are turning it into 44 residences, with prices from £8m for two bedrooms. One residence, The Ambassador's House, comes with one of only two private front doors on Grosvenor Square, according to Lodha UK's director Charlie Walsh.



Library at No.1 Grosvenor Square

The original façade at One Grosvenor Square has been dismantled brick by brick, “stored in Surrey, with every piece numbered so it can be rebuilt like a jigsaw puzzle,” says Walsh. And a feature of the original US embassy will be restored – the Oval Room, a replica of the one in the White House, which residents will walk through en route to their sumptuous homes.

Walsh see this address as “the absolute pinnacle of prime pieces of land” and he describes homes in Grosvenor Square as “Patek Philippe properties”, adding: “They are a legacy, almost a collector’s item. There is very little churn of properties in the square.”



Reception at No.1 Grosvenor Square by Lodha

It's not a "blingy, shiny" address, though, Walsh adds – unlike Knightsbridge, say, with its boy racers in their fast cars. "Mayfair is about discreet wealth and we've tried to interpret that in our design and build. We've taken the look and feel of the original building and combined contemporary interiors with a classic English house," he comments.

The amenities are more world-class hotel, however, with 10,000 sq ft dedicated to leisure and pleasure, including a pool, spa, club room and cinema, plus a further 4,000 sq ft will be a "world renowned, timeless, probably Michelin-starred" restaurant. "Something with a British old school feel," says Walsh.



Proposal for the Lodha-designed lounge at Frieze art fair

Also at residents' disposal is a Bentley – and driver, naturally – a homage to the Bentley Boys, the 1920s Le Mans racers who lived on the corner of Grosvenor Square. And residents will have Sotheby's experts at their disposal to advise on their art collections.

“We are partnering with brands that share a common love of something rare and beautiful,” Walsh explains, adding that visitors to the Frieze art fair in Regent's Park next month will be able to take stock in the first ever VIP lounge at the event, designed by Lodha.

The Finchatton and Lodha schemes could mark a return to glory for the Mayfair square that had fallen out of fashion. As Finchatton's Andrew Dunn comments, “We are providing the certainty of life well managed.” All those titled aristocrats of 200 years ago would have expected nothing less.