



Working on a small and tricky plot, Saltykov and Lacey created a stepped design with successive storeys set back

HIGHLY COMMENDED Wimbledon Houses, Wimbledon Park

This awkward triangular plot, wedged between a cul-de-sac and a business park in southwest London, had been attracting the attention of developers since the 1980s, but despite several schemes getting as far as planning approval, the site remained an overgrown wasteland that was used as a rubbish dump.

Enter Tom Lacey and Andrei Saltykov, who teamed up in 2009 after working together under the renowned architect Richard Rogers. They have created a pair of semi-detached houses, one on three storeys, the other on two. Taking on board residents' concerns about overshadowing and loss of privacy, the duo came up with a stepped design in which each storey is set back from the one below, while all the main living rooms face away from the neighbours,

with a view towards open playing fields.

The project, which cost £750,000 for a combined living space of 3,500 sq ft, was inspired by the layout of a ship, with the main living areas "above deck", making the most of the views, while the bedrooms are below — as are parking spaces, tucked beneath the overhanging upper section.

Each house has three bedrooms on the lower floor, which is partially hidden below

the sloping ground, and an open-plan kitchen/living area that takes up the whole of the storey above; the larger of the pair adds a grand master suite and office (which could be used as a fifth bedroom) on the top floor. Externally, dark grey Trespa cladding — a composite of resin and wood fibres — creates a bold silhouette and accentuates the gridlike glazing pattern.

Both houses have underfloor heating throughout, with ventilation systems that recover warmth from the air before expelling it outside. Green credentials are bolstered by engineered bamboo flooring (more sustainable than wood) and sedum roofs. The latter also give the impression of more outside space when viewed from the upper storeys — planning restrictions meant roof terraces weren't an option.

Saltykov, 38, who lives in the larger of the two houses with his wife, Siwan, 37, and their daughters, Gina, 5, and Inessa, 2, has added more of his ingenious ideas to the interior. The highlight is a giant shelving unit in the shape of a map of America, with Christmas tree lights marking the cities. Each of the lower 48 states forms a compartment for books and knick-knacks; Alaska hangs above the bathtub in the master suite; and Hawaii is represented by a series of hooks in Gina's bedroom.



Saltykov, pictured, and Lacey spent £750,000 on the project, creating two semi-detached houses with a combined living space of 3,500 sq ft

Judges' verdict Excellent use of a landlocked site, squeezing two light-filled homes onto a small footprint. Striking interiors and unique storage systems also scored points for

the project. Brave, bold and statement-making. laceysaltykov.com