

## Designing for Lifestyles: The Effortless Living Model

Sam McNally of Echlin explains why he doesn't believe in a 'tick box' approach to prime resi development...



It can be easy for people to fall in love with the trends that we see in the pages of leading design publications and world-renowned hotels. However, translating this look into the design of a luxury home to work practically for individual modern lifestyles is a challenge we regularly face in high-end residential design.

We all have different visions of a perfect lifestyle dependent on our circumstances, personalities and interests. Primarily we choose our homes based on these motives.

As a firm, we focus on designing for lifestyles. We consider the property in question and think about how the resident will live in that space, how they will function in their daily life and how we can enhance their lifestyle experience through our design. Homes in different locations, of varying size, architectural character and local demographic will attract different buyer profiles, all of whom will have a unique idealistic lifestyle. This lays the foundation for the design brief.

For us, high-end residential development is about creating something unique and liveable, tailored to a specific person or people. It is not just about kitting out a home with every advanced system and material available, or working with the same template on every project. We believe in intelligent and thoughtful investment, not just a tick box approach.



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Wealthy individuals not only want the best, they also want practicality and functionality. An example of this is with home automation systems. These are so sophisticated now that it is extremely easy to over complicate, resulting in nothing but frustration for the user. When specifying and designing these systems, we need to imagine being in these spaces living day to day lives, thinking how we would be controlling the house 24/7 and how this can be done intuitively. Being conscious of this, we believe it to be imperative to work closely our AV contractor from concept design to end programming on site. If we are talking about pied-a-terres, then owners do not want to have to relearn the system every time they return to the house. Intuition and simplicity is key here.



As a design team we are all notably “particular” individuals and we carry this trait throughout the design process. We imagine living in and using the space at all times to ensure everything is considered for the ultimate home. I call it the “Effortless Living Model”. It’s like you’re designing a home or environment for “lazy” residents, as that typically translates to convenience and greatly contributes to comfort. This can be in ergonomic design details, such as the positioning of light switches and other home controls, right through to the height of an arm on a chair versus height and positioning of a coffee or side table, to ensure an easy reach of a wine glass.

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Busy hectic lifestyles spent mostly in offices, on planes, or looking at computer screens enhances the reason for people wanting to live in calm, comfortable and light spaces. In prime central London, quality private outdoor space is a hard to come by, so even where properties have no obvious outdoor space in the first place, we find a way to incorporate this through central courtyards or terraces, even if it takes away from floor space. We meticulously consider how light flows through the home with light wells and ceiling voids. Ultimately light gives us a greater feeling of space, which is the utmost “luxury” in London. Within these lightwells and internal courtyards, we soften brickwork with planted living walls, providing a softness to a building’s hard materiality. To ensure ease of living and practicality, these planted solutions are installed with self-management systems to keep the plants in

their optimum condition throughout the seasons.

For the interiors, we select the finest materials, but we also give very careful thought to practicality. We use state of the art silk-soft carpet that isn't ruined as soon as you spill water on it and is designed to function more effectively with underfloor heating. Where specifying natural stones and marbles, we ensure all surfaces are protected using the latest nano-technological sealant treatment to avoid unwanted marks and staining. Such protection methods mitigate the need for costly repairs, which would be hugely disruptive to the resident.

Thought should also be given to features like electric underfloor heating for the bathrooms, rather than a water based system. In milder months, for example, the central heating system may not be on, but you would still enjoy stepping out of the shower on to a warm floor.

It can take a while to settle into a brand new home, particularly with the inclusion of advanced equipment such as state of the art kitchen appliances, heating and cooling systems and motorised glazed openings, to name but a few. Understanding this, to help our clients settle into their new home as quickly and as comfortably as possible, we include a complimentary assist service for the new owner's first year of residence. We recognise that our clients do not want to spend hours reading through operation manuals and service guides, so we ensure we are on hand to help should maintenance or operations queries come up. Given that these homes are designed and specified by us, we are ideally placed to advise on functionality, operations and maintenance and, ultimately, how to get the best out of their new home.



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