

FEATURE PROPERTY >with ROSS NORMAN-CLARKE

Restored to its



A rear view of the house

Fri 29th May - Sun 31st May 10am to 4pm

Open Weekend Essex
New Homes To View
From £94,000 to £173,000

Berkeleyparks
www.berkeleyparks.co.uk



Berkeleyparks are Britain's largest park home operator and have been developing park home living since 1955.

- 50 parks in England and Wales
- Excellent value show homes/purpose built luxury homes
- Quality enjoyable lifestyle

TEMPLE GROVE PARK, BAKERS LANE, WEST HANNINGFIELD,
CHELMSFORD, ESSEX, CM2 8LQ TEL 01277 840241

In the heart of Essex countryside within easy reach
of Chelmsford. Retirement Park (50+)

When Grade I-listed Fyfield Hall lay empty for a year after being repossessed in 2013, there was widespread concern for the future of one of the most important houses in Essex – until it was rescued and brought back to its former glory by John Paul (“JP”) Ledwidge and his highly skilled team at Silvertown Properties, who specialise in refurbishing listed buildings.

“Although most of our work is in London,” JP says, “I happen to live in Fyfield, and so I was concerned about the house, which is situated right in the heart of the village opposite the church.”

Eventually, after a year, Silvertown Properties stepped into the breach, bought the property and set about bringing it back from the brink – much to the relief, he says, of English Heritage, Essex County Council, the parish council, and the rest of the village!

Originally a medieval aisled hall house, Fyfield Hall dates in part from the latter half of the 12th century, making it one of the earliest surviving timber-framed houses in Essex. During the 16th and 17th centuries it was extended with the addition of cross-wings. Interestingly, before Silvertown Properties purchased it, it had only been formally conveyed twice in all its 900 years.

“In the past, Fyfield Hall tended to change hands depending on whether particular noblemen were in favour with the king or not!” says JP.

Silvertown Properties bought the house in 2014.

“Although it has only been empty for a year, a large section of the roof was missing, and as a

result there was extensive water damage. All the windows needed refurbishing, the drainage was in a sorry state, the plumbing had been vandalised, and there was a serious fire risk from water getting into the electrics.

“In spite of all that, however, the basic structure of the house was fundamentally sound,” JP adds.

Under the expert eye of Project Director Olivia Hutchinson, the work of restoration and refurbishment began. The first priority was to agree a schedule of emergency works with English Heritage. This included completely overhauling the roof (using the original tiles wherever possible, plus appropriate reclaimed materials), taking out all the old plumbing and electrics, and removing all loose plaster to eliminate the risk of ceiling collapses.

Once this essential remedial work had been completed, a further highly-detailed schedule of works, covering every aspect of the refurbishment, also had to be agreed with English Heritage and Essex County Council’s Conservation Department. This included just about everything: new electrics, new plumbing, new heating, new rainwater goods and below-ground drainage, new bathrooms, and a new kitchen.

All the work had to be carried out with sensitivity and respect for the original character of the house. Completely inappropriate partitioning and other alleged “improvements,” mainly carried out between the 1950s and 1980s, were removed to reinstate the original internal configuration – as a result of which, the accommodation was opened up and now actually flows much better. All the windows were

refurbished by skilled local craftsmen, while where the original plaster and render could not be saved, specialist techniques were used to replace them. Needless to say, all new fixtures and fittings were of the very highest quality to match the standards of workmanship. For example, new hand-made oak panelling – carefully aged to blend in – was installed in the snug, while an oak-shelved library was created where one might have existed in centuries past.

Outside, meanwhile, time and money was also lavished on completely re-landscaping the sadly overgrown gardens. A run of dilapidated outbuildings, including a garage and workshop, were fully refurbished, as was a small self-contained one-bedroom cottage attached to the main house.

Remarkably, as a result of all this care and attention to detail, Fyfield Hall feels, says JP, “like a 900 year-old house in pristine condition.” Approached via electric oak gates, and sitting amid more than three-and-a-half acres of attractive grounds in the middle of the village, the property offers well proportioned and beautifully presented accommodation including an impressive great hall incorporating an inglenook fireplace with log burner, and around which the key reception rooms of the house, comprising the drawing room, sitting room, dining room, library and snug, are arranged. Arguably the true heart of the house, however is the stunning hand-built Chalon kitchen/breakfast room with its four-oven electric Aga and full-height ceiling (courtesy of the removal of an upper floor). Upstairs are five good-sized double bedrooms: the master

former glory

PROPERTY OF THE WEEK



Some 900 years old, Fyfield Hall is one of the most important houses in the county



The cosy snug has new hand-made oak panelling and a remote controlled gas flame fire



The stunning hand-built Chalon kitchen



Authentic furnishings like this four-poster bed can also be purchased

suite comprises a 20'11 x 17' feet bedroom with a beautifully appointed en suite bathroom. Three beautifully appointed bathrooms are approached over two separate staircases. The finish throughout is exemplary, with the use of Heritage colours complementing the high quality bespoke craftsmanship.

JP and his team are understandably proud of the job they have done – a project which took a year and cost

approximately a million pounds. "We have only been custodians of this wonderful old house for a very short time, but now it is ready for the next chapter in its long life," he says. It represents, he adds, a unique opportunity for someone to buy an historically important house in tip top condition – and with the option of purchasing all the authentic furnishings as well.

Intriguingly, the new owners will also have two mysteries to

solve, JP says. "There is a secret door enabling you to move between two of the reception rooms without crossing the hall.

"And there is rumoured to be a tunnel leading from the cellar across to the church. We didn't really look for it – but it may still be there waiting to be discovered!"

Fyfield Hall is for sale through Savills, with a guide price of £2.65million.

Y M C K

Freehold For Sale with Development Potential

FOR SALE



14 CREFFIELD ROAD, COLCHESTER, ESSEX CO3 3JA

- Formerly used as a day unit for mental illness patients
- Residential development potential subject to planning
- Circa 0.12 acre unconsented development opportunity in the centre of Colchester
- Period property with large garden to the rear

For further information, please contact:

James Burke TEL 020 7344 6964 james.burke@colliers.com
 Will Agnew TEL 020 7344 6713 will.agnew@colliers.com



www.colliers.com/uk