

THE MODERN HOUSE



Duddenhoe End, Essex
Sold

Woodmans Lane

Embracing its bucolic position amid the rolling North Essex countryside, this exceptional seven-bedroom house was completed in 2013. It follows a striking aesthetic where traditional forms, construction and craftsmanship meld with contemporary façades and materials. Designed by the current owners, renewable technologies and sustainability were fundamental to its plan, meaning the house is incredibly energy efficient, particularly important given its generous 4,800 sq ft plan. A symbiosis of formal planting, meadowland, orchards and woodland form approximately three acres of beautifully landscaped gardens. There is a swimming pool, outdoor kitchen, several dining terraces, a four-car garage and further outbuildings. Saffron Walden, Bishops Stortford, Cambridge and Stansted Airport are all within 15 miles.

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The Architect

Robert Wilson, renowned for his ambitious architectural projects primarily in the east of England, has spent the past four decades crafting residential designs that celebrate materials, textures, precision detailing, and bespoke craftsmanship. This particular house, where he himself lives, encapsulates his visionary approach, resembling a sketch that encapsulates his passion for diverse architectural styles and his unwavering love of the craft.

Environmental Performance

Integral to this home's conception and construction was a desire to maximise energy efficiency and environmental friendliness, allowing for an excellent quality of sustainable living. Heavily insulated and airtight, doors and windows are predominantly triple-glazed. A whole-house HVAC system ensures the air is regularly filtered, conserving heat and fresh air. Solar and PV panels boost electricity generation for hot water, while a ground source heat pump serves the ground-floor underfloor heating; there is a pellet-fuelled biomass boiler for additional needs—a south-facing conservatory acts as a solar heat collector.

The Tour

The sweeping driveway, lined with broad-leaved trees, edges verdant lawn and an expansive ornamental lake. It then crosses a humpbacked bridge, which leads to a shingled forecourt. Beyond, stone paths stretch to the primary entrance, recessed in the covered porch; further doorways open directly into the kitchen and ante-hall.

Set on the county's highest point, the house occupies a commanding position with spectacular views from every vantage point. This is a house of two distinct sides, where a Mediterranean atmosphere melds with bucolic Essex countryside. The red brick elevations present classical forms and detailing, which combine boldly with zinc-fronted modernist additions and traditional straw bale construction.

A focus on thoughtful design and quality craftsmanship runs throughout. The interiors are cleverly conceived to exploit space in an uplifting manner, with bespoke handcrafted details artfully woven into lofty volumes, awash with natural light. The material palette is meticulously considered and confidently used, creating an inspiring contemporary home that delights while supporting the practicalities of everyday life.

An impressively oversized doorway marks the entrance and opens to a large, bright hall, which leads to the flowing layout of sociable living spaces. On the left is a spacious triple-aspect living room, a wonderful spot to gather and relax. An excellent quality of natural light is drawn through the many glazed doors and windows, which frame far-reaching views across the more formal parts of the wrapping gardens. A choice of dining terraces sits beyond, serviced by a beautifully equipped outdoor kitchen.

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The lovely garden room lies centrally in the plan, overlooking long garden views, providing a wonderful space to congregate and dine. A glazed roof sits atop, and the panelled walls have jib and glazed doors. Beyond is the sociable kitchen, replete with generous runs of painted wooden cabinetry topped by marble worktops. A large island unit is a lovely spot for a morning coffee or reading the paper. A generous sitting area lies to one side, perfect for coming together and socialising.

In addition, on the ground floor are three double bedrooms – one en suite – each distinct in character and outlook. To complete the plan on this level are two WCs and many cupboards, handy for storing everyday accoutrement.

A bespoke metal spiral staircase, bound by crisp balustrading and curvaceous handrails, ascends to the first floor, where four further double bedrooms are set. These immaculate rooms are defined by carefully considered picture windows which frame long views of the surrounding countryside, celebrating the ever-changing seasonal colours. The configuration and character of each bedroom vary, but all four echo the established architectural and material palettes.

Outdoor Space

The beautifully landscaped gardens stretch to around three acres, designed with great attention to detail, lovingly cultivated and tendered. A triangulation pillar, marking the highest point of Essex, sits centrally within grounds where formal and relaxed planting configurations merge.

Alfresco dining spots dot the house's periphery, with abundant gathering places for lazy lunches and evening sundowners. Flanked by a knotted tapestry maze and rows of neatly manicured hedging, the enticing swimming pool is perfectly positioned for early morning and afternoon dips. Entertaining lies at the heart of the garden – the outdoor kitchen, replete with traditional charcoal barbecue and an Aga, sits adjacent to the living room and affords a beautiful resting position to watch the big East Anglian sunsets.

Vegetable, herb and fruit beds create great opportunities to cultivate and grow, while other beds are full of carefully curated flowering perennials and mature shrubs. Expanses of lawn, bounded by traditional red brick garden walls and a ha-ha, have an array of specimen trees. Biodiversity and wildlife are embraced, with red kites soaring overhead and deer seen in the distance.

The grounds include garaging for four cars, a large workshop, several storage sheds and studio space.

The Area

Surrounded by the beautiful rolling countryside and productive arable fields of northwest Essex, Duddenhoe End is a small hamlet with a village hall and thatched church, converted from a barn in the 19th century.

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Quiet lanes, perfect for cycling and running, lead to many country pubs, including The Cricketers at Clavering, a social hub for a Friday night pint and tasty seasonal menus.

The historic town of Saffron Walden lies around eight miles to the east, close to the borders of Hertfordshire, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. The town has a broad range of independent and chain shops, including a Waitrose, an award-winning concert hall and a twice-weekly market.

Nearby is the Jacobean Audley End House, where extensive grounds designed by Capability Brown host regular events throughout the year. A lovely spot for a day out, picnics, dog walks, strolls around the woodlands and a walled kitchen garden. There is also a terrific adventure playground.

Saffron Grange Vineyard, by Little Walden, is ideally located for making some of England's finest sparkling wines and offers tours and tastings, and on Fridays, delicious cream teas.

The closest city is Cambridge (15 miles away), whilst London is approximately 50 miles to the south. There is good access via the M11 to the A1 and A14 to northern and eastern locations and the M25 for southern destinations. Twelve miles south, Bishops Stortford runs services to London in approximately 40 minutes, while Royston and Audley End stations are less than ten miles away, with trains into London in around 40 and 90 minutes.

Council Tax Band: E

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About

The Modern House is an estate agency that helps people live in more thoughtful and beautiful ways. We believe in design as a powerful force for good. Inspired by the principles of modernism, we represent design-led homes across the UK which celebrate light, space and a truth to materials. Esquire credits The Modern House with “rewriting the rulebook on estate agency” and GQ voted us “one of the best things in the world”.