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GETTING STARTED GUIDE | Plot-finding | Hiring an architect | Design | Planning permission | Finance

# BRENDAN TRACEY

Brendan is co-director of Phillips Tracey Architects, based in south-west London

**T**ell us how the practice started.

'Phillips Tracey (020 8948 7776; phillipstracey.com) evolved in 2002

from another company that my co-director Michael Phillips and I were part of. We've been working together for around 18 years: I'm passionate about sustainability, and Michael has a special interest in historical buildings, so as a team we can take a considered and sensitive approach to projects.'

**What are you currently working on?**

'We're planning a private school in Wimbledon and a housing scheme in Tottenham, as well as extending and upgrading a convalescent home in East Sussex. We're also involved in a range of extensions and renovations, along with half a dozen new-build private homes.'

**Do you have any advice for working in a conservation area?**

'Get to know the conservation area designation to appreciate its significance. A review of local planning policy will determine the constraints that exist, including any trees that are protected. Buildings viewed by the planning authority as detrimental to the location could present an opportunity for innovative enhancement.'

**Any tricks for uniting old and new?**

'It is important to recognise the quality of the building and its immediate context. If major renovation and large extensions are proposed, seek early advice from a structural engineer. As a rule, we would always try to



**'Establishing what is permitted at an early stage can save money and heartache later'**



work with the existing building – a terraced house is not a New York loft and it's wrong to pretend it is. Extensions to existing buildings often present a challenge in regards to introducing natural light; this can be resolved with a glazed link between the old and new.'

**How could the process of building in conservation areas be improved?**

'Conservation officers are pretty stretched as things stand, and it's hard to have a meaningful dialogue to develop proposals. One solution might be the wider use of local design review panels. Design South East does a fantastic job in this respect, but it tends to be involved with larger projects. On a micro level I would argue for more constraints, especially against the introduction of uPVC windows and inappropriate replacement doors.'

**Are there any eco features that are frequently included in your projects?**

'Instead of individual features, we like to consider designs that offer whole solutions. We use sedum roofs for a number of reasons – they enhance local biodiversity and, due to their weight and structural build-up, add thermal mass to a building, which helps stabilise internal temperatures.'

**What's the best approach for an infill site or awkwardly shaped plot?**

'Establishing what is permitted at an early stage can save money and heartache later. Assess the site fully: identify any significant features, views and overlooking issues, and make a note of how the sun moves around the plot. Similar examples nearby will help to establish what will be acceptable. Employ a good architect who has experience with the local planning authority, and speak to the planners at the start. This used to be free but is now often a formal process called a pre-application consultation for which you pay a fee. This kind of plot may be the catalyst for a bespoke and exceptional building.' **GD**



1 This kitchen forms part of a new **TWO-STOREY EXTENSION** and a single-storey infill in Cleveland Road, London. 2 A **SEDUM ROOF** on the maisonette extension provides a pleasant outlook. 3 The facade of **VINE COTTAGE** was redesigned with a taller front wall and elegantly proportioned windows. 4 **LANSDOWNE GARDENS**, a new house in a conservation area, follows the form of the original single-storey doctor's surgery, and has three bedrooms at basement level.