

METRO Property

THE stretch of land that runs from Kew Bridge along the north side of the Thames towards Brentford has been the centre of a developers' gold rush over the past decade.

Berkeley Homes is one of a number of construction firms who have moved in to exploit the potential of this area – building a number of luxury dwellings with views over the river and within easy reach of commuter routes into central London.

Now, a small development is coming to fruition on the eastern end of Brentford High Street – and it certainly stands out amid the surrounding new-builds.

IDM's St Georges Church will offer 20 apartments – 14 of which will have two bedrooms, with the remainder having three. What makes the development unique is that the homes are being built within the shell of a 250-year-old, disused church.

The beautiful church dates back to the 1760s, when a chapel was built on the site. The original structure was constructed in a shape pointing from east to west – parallel to the stretch of the Thames it stands besides. In 1963, the church, which

A RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

Saved from demolition, this 250-year-old church in Kew will boast 20 heavenly apartments, says **Oliver Wadeson**

had closed its doors five years earlier, was reinvented as a music museum, housing one of the world's foremost

collections of self-playing musical instruments and musical rolls.

The future of the building, which was then owned by the Church of England's Diocese of London, was thrown into jeopardy seven years before the museum moved to a purpose-built site in 2007.

Incredibly, despite its heritage, it's not listed and developers began queuing up to knock it down and use the site for residential and commercial purposes around the turn of the millennium. In 2000, a major construction firm submitted an

application to demolish all but the church's tower and build a restaurant and leisure complex on the site.

These plans were eventually withdrawn and modified, but the revised scheme would still have seen the demolition of the church to make way for 19 homes. Hounslow Council was ready to approve this scheme in 2003, but a campaign by local residents and conservation groups successfully thwarted the project when it went to appeal two years later.

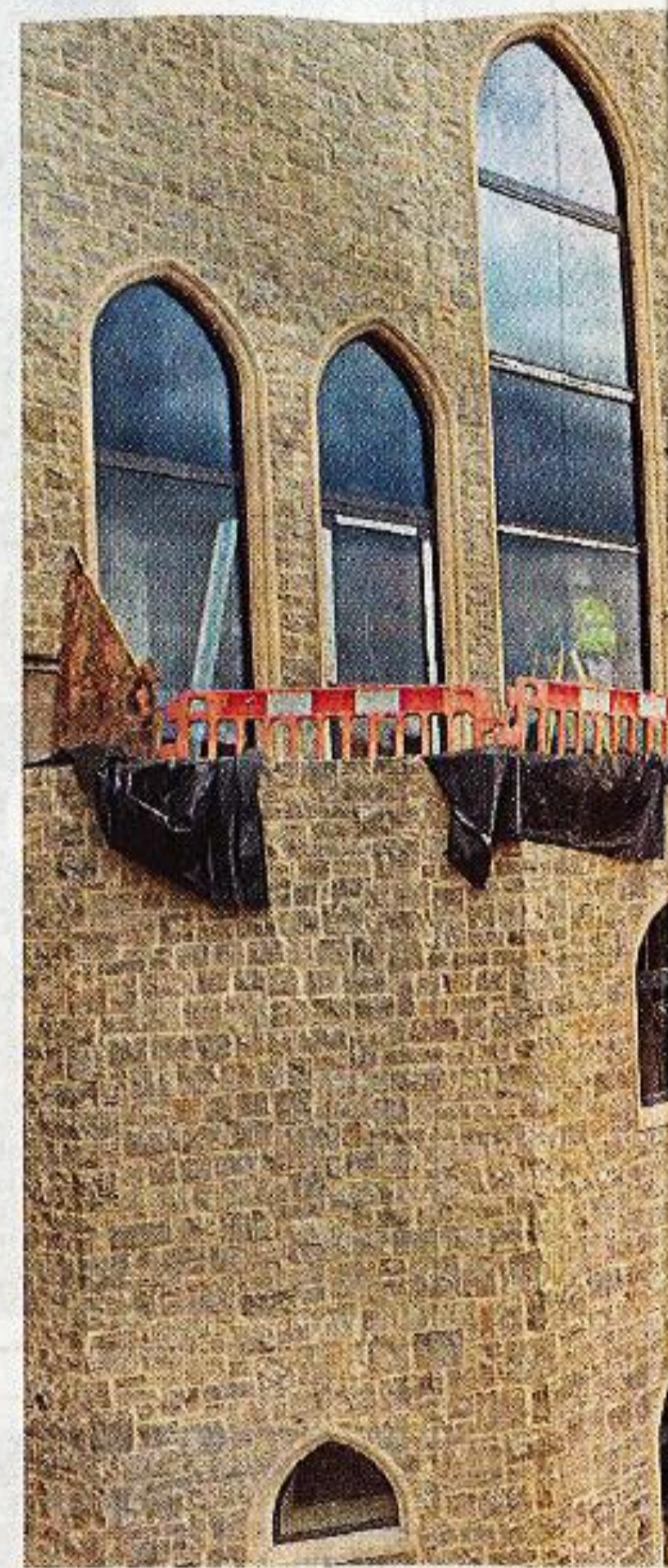
In 2008, a new developer came up with a plan to retain most of the church building. This was backed by the residents association of Holland Gardens, a development next door, which had led the fight against the original development scheme.

Permission for this was granted in 2009, but the plan was shelved owing to the world economic downturn. With a five-year deadline ticking by

on the plan being turned into reality, developer IDM came onto the scene in May 2014 to rescue it.

Now, after a slew of modifications, the exciting scheme is becoming a reality. Much of the original masonry, facades, archways, stained glass and, most notably, the bell tower, have all been retained. Although the church isn't listed by English Heritage, the developers are taking great care.

'We've built a reinforced concrete frame on the ground floor to level three, a steel frame on levels three to five and a timber one above – for an outdoor terrace – around the original structure and have had to do a lot of reinforcing work,' says IDM sales and marketing manager Jonathan Waring. 'This has involved a lot of new, as well as the old, original stone. We used a specialist firm called RBR Construction for much of this and they have done an excellent job.'



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NODS TO HERITAGE

THE apartments at St Georges range from £725,000 to £1.495million, with an estimated service charge of around £3 per sq ft per year (there's no parking, but there will be a cycle storage space). Each apartment comes with a 150-year lease.

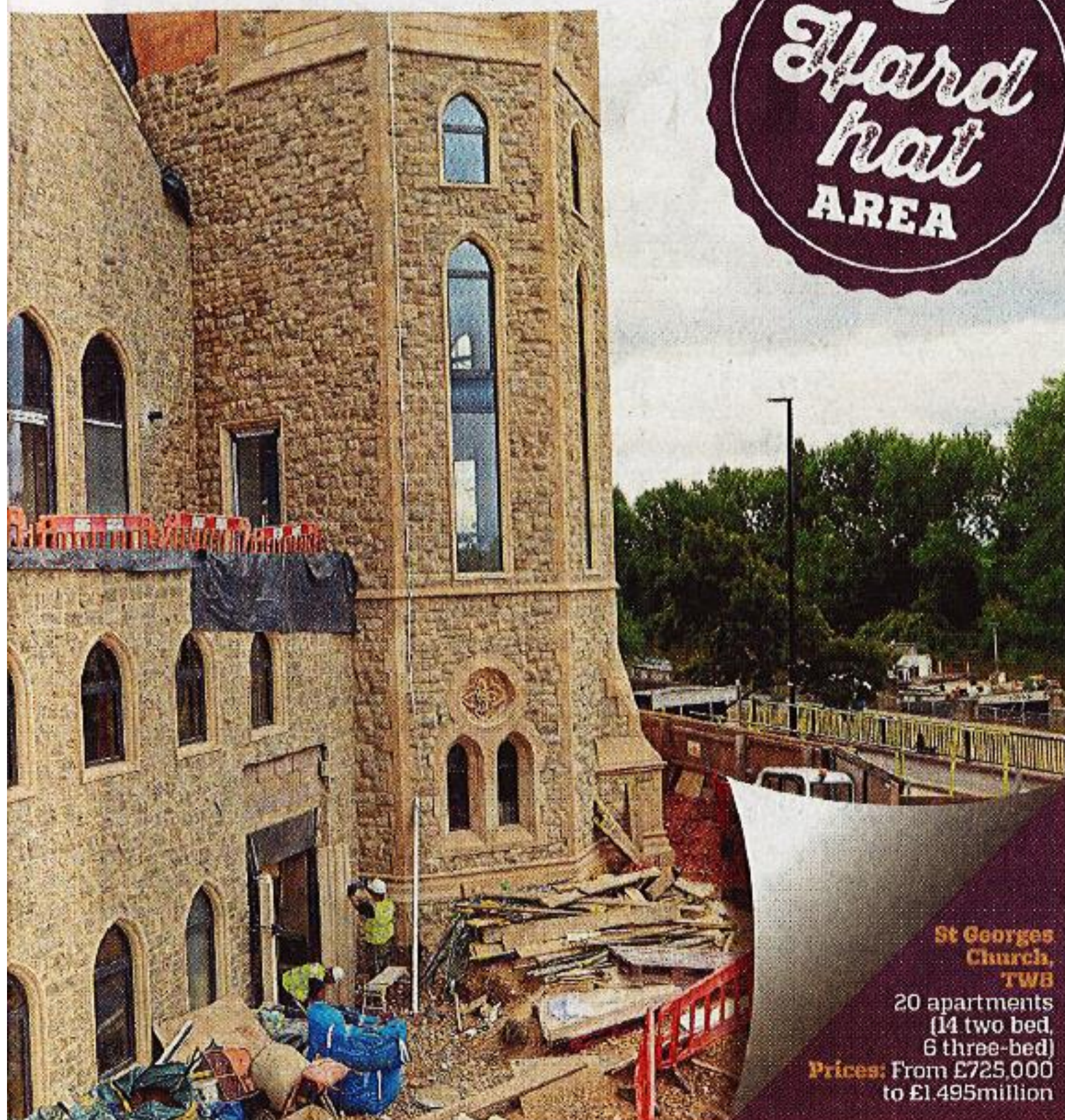
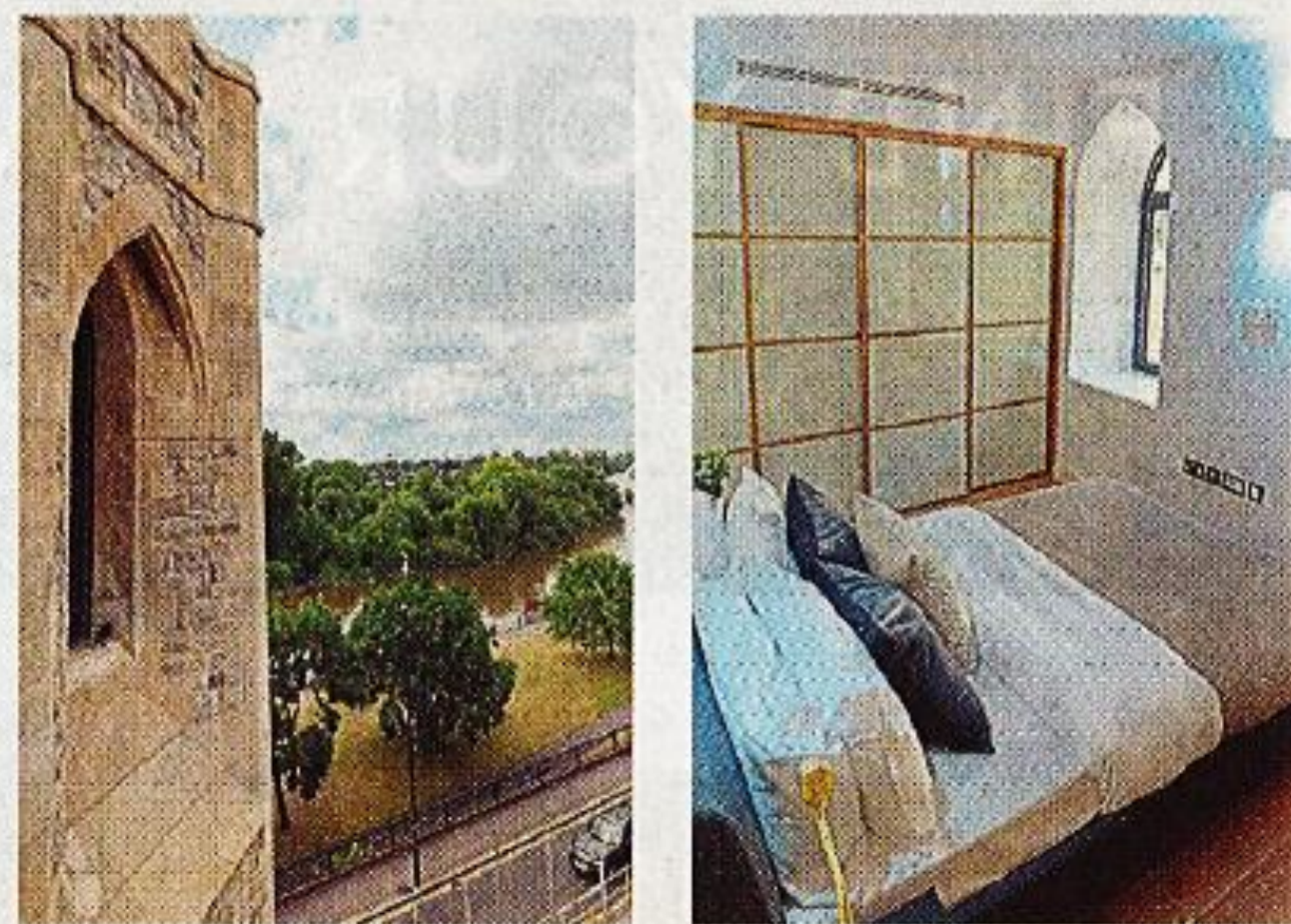
The star of the show is the three bedroom luxury apartment, which incorporates a vast roof terrace overlooking the Thames. This is accessed via a spiral staircase from the fifth floor into the bell tower's turret.

But all of the flats feature various nods to the building's heritage, be it stained glass windows, original archways or stone detailing. The future residents – unlike their neighbours in the gleaming new-build towers surrounding them – can take satisfaction from the fact they have contributed to the salvation of one of the area's few remaining historic monuments.

stgeorgeschurch-tw8.com



Holy light: The contemporary interiors include quirky spaces and river views



St Georges Church, TW8

20 apartments (14 two bed, 6 three bed)

Prices: From £725,000 to £1.495million

PHOTOS: DANIEL LYNCH