



This page, clockwise from left, the kitchen side of the integral storage unit/room divider; an original Span light switch; glassware neatly stored; the original Royal Doulton bathroom, with replacement black toilet seat. Opposite page, the master bedroom looks out on to the garden

London Council (GLC) had signed up to take a quarter of the houses for council tenants but a Tory election victory led to a political change within the GLC and the plug was pulled. Span lost £1 million. The rest of the village was finished by Bovis, but the ethos was lost. They increased the density of houses, skimped on landscaping and played with the designs. The result is a pale imitation.

This ethos extended beyond the houses to the gardens, to the communal spaces and the whole village. The fact that your garden was bathed in sunlight wasn't an accident. The splitting of car and pedestrian access was also planned – cars have their own roads, while villagers have their own narrow paths, deliberately small so as to encourage interaction between residents. 'You've got to say hello to people coming towards you,' says Patrick. Even the kitchens were put at the front of houses so that you could wave to people passing by. None of this was accidental. The fact that Span built on only 190 acres of a 430-acre site says it all. The rest is given over to communal space, which was the pull for Alison. 'It was the landscaping that impressed me most,' she says. Span was about creating a bloody nice place to live. 'An architect must offer something to society,' Lyons was known for saying.

People loved it. New Ash Green was trendy. 'New Ash Green. New Village. New Way of Life', trumpeted the impressed *Ideal Home* magazine. 'People had different priorities then. It was the height of the Swinging Sixties and they wanted to embrace something new. Span was sold as new, as a utopian vision of the future,' says Patrick. 'It attracted people with a shared outlook, many from the architectural profession, who wanted to make it work.' But while it attracted designery types, it certainly had a broad base of residents. Its choice of materials helped. 'People like natural materials,' says Patrick. Span clad the houses at New Ash Green in wood and left brick exposed. 'It's softened modernism,' he continues. 'Although it's something very modern, there's a Britishness. It was accessible to everyone.'

Patrick's proud of his pad. So proud that he's scared of messing it up. Although they've got posters to hang on the walls and brightly coloured CD racks stashed under the bed for his huge collection, he and Alison are still mulling over where to put them. 'It took so long to get these bloody walls flat that I don't want to start drilling into them yet! I think it was the minimalist architect John Pawson that said most people like to see works of art on the walls but I see a wall as a work of art. I'll go along with that for the moment!' Patrick sees Span as perfection. It's easy to see why. ■

For further information on Span and New Ash Green, see the website created by Patrick and Alison: [span-kent.co.uk](http://span-kent.co.uk)



FLOOR PLAN



- 1 Entrance hall
- 2 Bedroom 2
- 3 Bedroom 1
- 4 Lobby
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Living room
- 7 Bathroom



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