

Why a 'home office' has become the make-or-break feature of a house sale

Far from the cluttered desk of Prince Charles, these home offices offer peak luxury

By Zoe Dare Hall
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A study in Chelsea Barracks | CREDIT: Alexander James

From the bookish clutter of Robert Peston's North London eyrie, to Prince Charles's reassuringly chaotic desk at Clarence House, lockdown has afforded us a strangely intimate insight into the working-from-home ways of many household names.

But with 77% of us having no intention of returning to an office when this madness is all over, according to Workplace Insight, it's a sight we will all become far more used to. The old-fashioned study is taking on a new prominence in our homes – and whether a house already comes equipped with an office, or there's the space to create one, a home workspace is becoming a make or break feature for buyers.

"It's the hottest topic among buyers, sellers, developers and house builders," says Marc Schneiderman from the prime Hampstead-based estate agency Arlington Residential. "The majority of buyers expect a workspace of some kind." And it needn't be big. "I have one client who runs his multi-million-pound business from a laptop and mobile phone in his home study that's no more than 10 square feet," he adds.

The potential for a home office has almost become a source of obsession for some buyers. "Pretty much every room I enter in house searches with one client – who has an all-consuming job but works mainly from home – sparks a conversation about whether it would work as a home study," says Charlie Wells from Prime Purchase buying agency.



Prince Charles' cluttered desk | CREDIT: Twitter/chrisshipp

But one home office is no longer enough for many couples; they want his and hers. "These are people with high-powered jobs and young children. Working off the kitchen table won't cut it, particularly with the onset of video conferencing," says Wells.

No longer relegated to the worst room in the house – the one that's too small to become a value-adding extra bedroom – a good quality home office can add 5-15% to a property's value, "especially if it's separate from the main house, or at least separate from the main family areas," says Mark Lawson, partner at The Buying Solution.

Buyers also have in mind the substantial savings that comes with cutting out the daily commute and cost of central London office space – which means spare cash to create a home office that stimulates the senses. "Someone who's working regularly in the home should put in a strong bid for a room with plenty of space, lots of light, good windows and an attractive view. Know yourself – if staring at sheep all day is likely to drive you round the bend, pick a room that overlooks more action," comments James Law of Stacks Property Search.



A Rokszanda Ilincic-designed study in Gasholders Building

The challenge for designers is how to turn a functional, techy space into an aesthetic and inspiring sanctuary – or a statement study, such as the one in the £7.5m, three-bed penthouse designed by fashion designer Rokszanda Ilincic in the [Gasholders Building in King's Cross](#), with its lone desk taking centre stage.

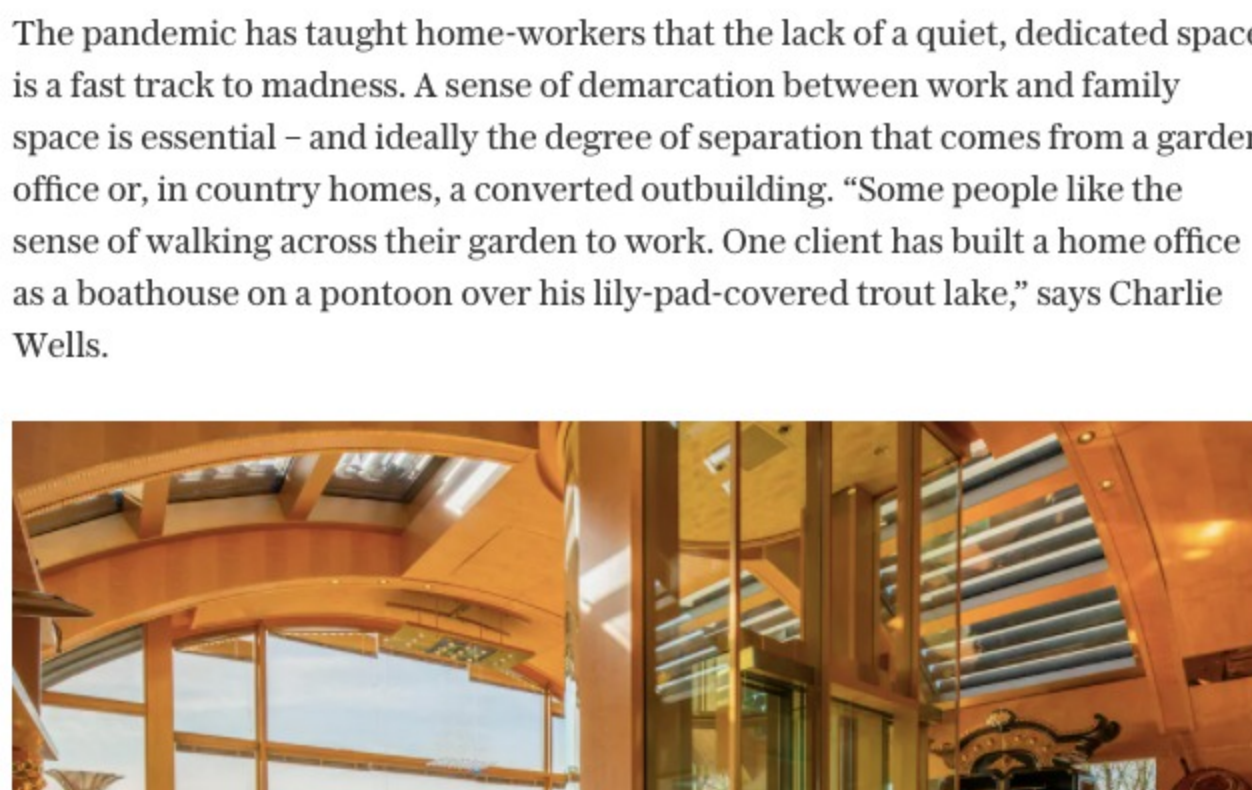
A more sumptuous solution is a "spillover space" in the study, with a chair longue or small seating arrangement for reading or resting, says Charu Gandhi, founder of the design house Elicyon. There's a similar chill-out feel in the "working from home space" in the two-bed show flat, priced at £2.995m through [Strutt & Parker](#) at Television Centre, White City. The sofa and Papa Bear chair by Hans J Wegne provide "the perfect set-up for an afternoon coffee and email station," says the apartment's designer Suzy Hoodless.



A relaxed working space at The Television Centre | CREDIT: GG Archard

Charu Gandhi also ensures all office inspiration killers – the printers, paperwork and cables – are tucked out of sight. "Many clients now want an antique desk, or one that has some history associated with their family, and we create a discreet cable channel on one side to hide the wires," she says. "We also use interesting textures to the back of units, such as parchment or eglomise mirror. I like using heavy wool fabrics for curtains that fall well, and adding personality with meaningful objects d'art or pieces collected from the client's travels."

The pandemic has taught home-workers that the lack of a quiet, dedicated space is a fast track to madness. A sense of demarcation between work and family space is essential – and ideally the degree of separation that comes from a garden office or, in country homes, a converted outbuilding. "Some people like the sense of walking across their garden to work. One client has built a home office as a boathouse on a pontoon over his lily-pod-covered trout lake," says Charlie Wells.



The home office inside Heathfield House in Highgate, priced at £40m through Sotheby's Realty

In Pembrokeshire, the property market has "gone mad" since it partially reopened in late June, with home-working Londoners snapping up £1m+ properties sight unseen or zipping there and back in a day to make instant offers. Their priority? Home offices with a sea view, says Carol Peett from West Wales Property Finders.

"Some run small businesses. Others run multi-nationals and gravitate here as they can helicopter back to London quickly if required. After a stressful day's work, they can stroll along the beach, sail or play golf," says Peett. "One client is buying an extremely high-end property we found off market, purely based on the incredible sea view from the office."



A home office building designed by Peter Yiangou at Avonside - the six-bed house in Warwickshire is priced at £2.35m by Knight Frank

Because of local regulations, viewings in Wales can currently only take place in empty properties, so there is a queue building to see Upper Treleddyn, a Grade II-listed six-bed Georgian house on the St Davids peninsula, priced at over £1.1m through [Savills](#). "It has a self-contained office building with a kitchen and shower room, and a beautiful stone barn that could be converted into further office space," says Peett. In this new world order for home-workers, it's hard to see how city-centre offices can possibly compete.

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