

## Former tax office transformed into glamorous apartments at Biba House



The compact yet chic living and dining area in a one-bed apartment at Biba House



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From Sixties eyesore to lap-of-luxury apartments, Biba House offers boutique living in the historic heart of York. MAXINE GORDON peers through the keyhole.

IN the Sixties, Biba was a byword for opulence, style and high fashion. The brand was the toast of London and helped get the capital and the decade swinging.

Today, the name is still being associated with style and the Sixties, in the shape of an ambitious property development within the city walls.

Biba House is the result of a glamorous makeover of Hilary House, the former tax office on St Saviour's Place, a rather uninspiring Sixties building with all the hallmarks of that era, including flat roof, concrete stairs and rectangular windows.

The Sixties' essence of the building has been retained, under strict instruction from the planners, but inside is another story. Here, the focus is firmly on the 21st century with each of the 24 apartments kitted out with enough gadgetry to rival a space station.

Underfloor heating and double-glazing and premium sound proofing are a given, but there is also surround-sound technology, programmable lighting and a touch-screen, full-colour door-entry system.

The windowpanes are tinted, allowing dwellers to see outside while obscuring the view to passers-by. A "passive-vent circulation" system keeps the air feeling fresh whether you are home or away, and the kitchens boast all mod cons including three forms of cooking (conventional, steam or microwave), induction hob, wine coolers, LED lighting, instant hot water on tap (no need for a kettle) and a whole-house extraction system preventing the need for a cooker hood.

Oh, and did I mention the flat-screen TVs in the bathrooms?

Each of the 24 apartments have a different lay-out and range in size from a compact studio priced around £100,000, to the penthouse suite with Minster views that fetched over a million.

There are a mix of one, two and three bedroom choices too, including several duplex apartments where the living is split over two levels.

The interiors have been finished to a very high spec, marble bathroom floors, stone worktops in the kitchen and chrome fittings throughout complete the luxurious and stylish look. Much of the style echoes the Art Deco feel of the original Biba fashion brand.

Yorkshire property developer Christine Yorath has been responsible for translating the Biba vibe into the bricks and mortar.

Christine, the ex-wife of former footballer Terry Yorath and mum of TV sports presenter Gabby Logan, remembers at first hand shopping at Biba in the Sixties. "I was a young footballer's wife and to go to Biba was the thing. It was very aspirational. The store had chaise longues in velvet and felt sumptuous."

Surprisingly, when Christine suggested using the name for the York development, she discovered it was not registered and so Biba House was born.

The building will have a concierge seven days a week, able to attend to visitors, collect parcels and provide additional support and security for occupants. There will be a basement garage offering car parking for residents.

Christine says the YO1 postcode covering a location in the heart of historic York (the back of the site overlooks Aldwark) is highly desirable on account of the quietness of its central spot. "There are no nightclubs or restaurants below you, yet you can walk to them in a few minutes if you want to."

• Find out more at [bibahouse.com](http://bibahouse.com) There will be an open day on February 28.