

30 Grosvenor Square

London, UK 2015–

The iconic purpose-built US Embassy, designed by Eero Saarinen, is situated in the heart of Mayfair. Built in 1960, it is Grade II listed and is Saarinen's only UK project. As the US Embassy moves to a new site in Battersea, the building is to be converted into a world-class hotel.

Reconfirming the building as part of Grosvenor Square Garden forms the basic premise of the design. Over the years, the building had accrued various defensive structures and security barriers that disconnected it from its urban context. The removal of these structures and of the original perimeter glacis was vital to reinforce the connection of the building to the surroundings. Retail and restaurant/bar units are now located around the perimeter of the ground floor, and connect to a newly landscaped public realm, creating an active street front.

Internally, several additions and modifications had compromised Saarinen's original intentions. The new design is the result of a series of historical investigations as well as a response to the ambitions and brief of the project. Central to enhancing Saarinen's vision is the treatment of the first floor. All partitions, which were added to create separate office spaces, have been removed allowing a continuous reading of the exposed concrete diagrid ceiling and re-establishing grand open spaces. As an open piano nobile, it reinforces a dialogue and affirms the building as a 'palace on the park'. The restaurants, lobby lounge and members rooms occupying the entire front of this floor overlook the square, while the rear section is reserved for reception and ballroom areas.

The 137 guest rooms are distributed around the central atrium in the six floors above. A vertically extended storey topped with a pavilion forms a new crown for the building. It follows the established language of the floors below with a new rhythm and increased floor-to-ceiling height. The landmark gilded aluminium eagle remains on the façade. Following the materiality of the existing building, the new interventions are faced with Portland stone and the penthouse is accentuated with gold anodised aluminium.

Competition	2015
Project start	2015
Gross floor area	45,000m ²
Client	Qatari Diar
Architect	David Chipperfield Architects London



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