

LUCHFORD APM

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IN London

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What does London have to offer the design-conscious property buyer?
Kathryn Hanks investigates

THIS PAGE: WALPOLE MAYFAIR IMAGE © OLIVER BURNS
 NEXT PAGE: DAVID LINLEY-DESIGNED RECEPTION ROOM © DAVID GARCIA

Every September, Open House London throws open the doors of London's top landmark buildings and private homes to the public. It has become a unique opportunity to fully appreciate the capital's outstanding architecture and is a reminder that London is home to exquisitely designed properties, both old and new. Little wonder then that the city continues to attract investors keen to put their own mark on the capital.

Indeed, recent property sales indices have shown that London's super prime and prime property markets

are incredibly buoyant, with prices, according to Knight Frank, rising by 9.6% in the last 12 months alone. Noel Flint, head of London Residential at Knight Frank, believes that the main reason for this growing level of demand can be attributed to the increasing presence of overseas purchasers.

"In the last month, our offices have seen more interest from buyers from continental Europe, possibly due to the ongoing Euro-zone crisis as well as London providing a more cosmopolitan lifestyle. Middle Eastern buyers have, as

always, been key to the market, but with an early Ramadan their time spent in London has been shortened. However, we expect to see a second window in early September as they continue their search for a London property while enjoying the cooler climate," he says. So what will a property search throw up for individuals for whom money is no object?

LUXURY LIVING

Buyers could look at The Glebe development in Chelsea, which is bidding to overtake the Candy Brothers' One

Hyde Park edifice as London's most exclusive address. The one acre plot, less than a minute from the buzz of the famed King's Road, has planning permission for nine new residences, comprising six voluminous apartments, a penthouse with 360-degree wrap-around terrace and two detached villas, one with its own gatehouse. As you'd expect with prices of £25-£35 million being bandied about, residents will be able to enjoy access to their own gym, swimming pool, games room and private lift.

The largely contemporary building design is being masterminded by Foster and Partners, a company that has heavily influenced London's skyline in recent years. City Hall, home to the capital's Mayor, the Millennium Bridge and the Swiss Re building (colloquially known as The Gherkin) are all Lord Foster's work. On this particular project however, Foster and Partners is collaborating with high-end interior design firm Casa Forma to ensure the interiors reflect the luxurious living experience owners will expect. But what if you want a slice of history to go with those luxuries of modern living?

PROPERTY RENAISSANCE

History is not difficult to find in a city that is centuries old. However, finding a historical property in a prestigious location, with all the assets that today's super prime property buyer expects, is much more of a challenge. Mayfair, Belgravia and Knightsbridge remain perennially desirable districts, and while residential developments have been popping up all over central London, few have been in these prime spots and few have had historical credibility. Oliver Burns, an architectural interior design and development practice, is hoping to change all that with the launch of Walpole Mayfair, one of the most talked about developments in the capital.

Ideally located opposite The Ritz and Le Caprice, straddling Mayfair and St. James's, this listed Georgian

residence is currently undergoing a stunning transformation to become five luxury apartments. But it is the building's former occupiers that make this site particularly worthy of note. The property was once the home of Sir Robert Walpole, the man considered to be Britain's first and longest-serving Prime Minister, and his eccentric son Horace Walpole, an eminent patron of the arts. In the 18th century, both men ensured that their Arlington Street home played host to the high society of the day and, thanks to Oliver Burns, it looks as if that trend will be revived.

"Oliver Burns is immensely proud to be able to restore Walpole Mayfair to its original intended use. Period buildings are a particular interest and specialty of Oliver Burns, and to work on one of this stature is hugely rewarding," comments Joe Burns, the company's managing director. "As a team, we very much feel custodians of a piece of history, especially given its Grade II-listed status, so it has been very important to ensure that the design is carefully considered and sensitively restored. It's very sad that such a prestigious building – the 'number 10 Downing Street' of its day – was so badly preserved, but we hope to reverse the damage done to bring it back to its former glory – and purpose."

To this end, the attention to detail in the execution of every apartment is exceptional. The design scheme is individually tailored to each residence, with the style and feel getting more contemporary the higher you go up the building. Standout features include a spectacular bespoke chandelier in apartment number four made from 1,400 Swarovski crystal prisms, while in apartment number three you'll find a Nero Marquina polished marble fireplace set into a Burr Walnut-panelled mirrored wall. Plus, with a 1,300 square foot roof terrace to enjoy in the penthouse, those of discerning taste will find plenty to satisfy their exacting standards.

The reception room of the David Linley-designed apartment at The Lancasters





ROOMS WITH A VIEW

It takes a special property for many to consider investing outside the super prime hotspots of Mayfair, Belgravia and Knightsbridge. But, as with The Glebe in Chelsea, if a development is done right the buyers will come. That certainly seems to be the case at The Lancasters, where the 77 homes in this Bayswater-located development have been selling at a phenomenal rate. "An eclectic mix of buyers, both international and domestic, has contributed to over 70% sales in less than a year since launch, with a significant interest in the remaining units," reveals Nick Vaughan, head of residential development and investment at Hamptons International. "Its architectural beauty coupled with the rarity of super-prime stock in London has meant headline prices."

In what has been dubbed a 'classic revival' scheme by developers Minerva and Northacre, the stunning Grade II-listed stucco façade (the longest in Europe) has been retained, while the internal structure has been completely remodelled. This sees old and new working in perfect harmony and makes for a lavish living experience both inside and out. Entry is via a gated topiary-filled garden, where owners are greeted by a valet to take their car down to the underground garage. The grand hotel-style entrance is home to a team of concierge, able to cater to every whim of the residents, and there's also a swish swimming pool, gym and spa to enjoy.

Many properties are blessed with amazing views out to Hyde Park, including the two that have been designed by David Linley and Lawson Robb. David Linley took charge in a three-bedroom apartment with courtyard garden, using all his skill to bring about a beautifully elegant marriage between the classic architecture and demands of modern living. Art Deco influences are evident everywhere, with mirrored surfaces, silk wallpaper and a bespoke bookcase with library steps positively shrieking 1920s opulence. Up in the mezzanine bedroom, a Privilite glass screen has been installed which changes from transparent to opaque at the flick of



a switch – a contemporary nod, but one that is still in keeping with the desire for discreet luxury.

The feel is just as sumptuous in the Lawson Robb-designed property, where light floods the double height living room. Bespoke furniture features throughout and the rich colour palette – all golds, grey blues, creams and cocoas – complements the dark wood used. Alix Lawson, joint founder of Lawson Robb, says, "A fresh twist was added to the classical aspects of the architecture ensuring the contemporary interior married with the period style of the building, reflected in painted solid ash wood panelling with silk wallpaper insets. The panel insets are covered with taupe de Gournay silk wallpaper, the effect; a contemporary yet elegant backdrop to the furniture." Lawson Robb has called upon an arsenal of brand partners to ensure the scheme is dressed in such a way that the property is immediately covetable, with everything from furniture by Birgit Israel to artwork from the avant-garde October Gallery tastefully displayed. The end result is innovative, classic and utterly desirable. Time to call the agents, don't you think?



Top: The Grade II-listed façade of The Lancasters

Above: A bedroom at the Lawson Robb-designed apartment at The Lancasters

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