



VILLAGE PEOPLE

Why London's most luxe
property developers are
transforming tired streets
into fashionable enclaves

Words: Cheryl Markosky



“PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO LIVE BESIDE GENERIC CHAINS. THEY WANT GOOD COFFEE, WINE AND LOCAL THEATRE”

– CASPAR HARVARD-WALLS

Just as an art curator coordinates a range of works for an exhibition, the capital's elite private estates are selecting an impeccable mix of shops, restaurants and art venues to create “neighbourhood villages” attracting affluent homeowners.

Caspar Harvard-Walls of home-search firm Black Brick says landed estates are focusing on “local artisan shops and services, giving residents a sense of ownership in their community.

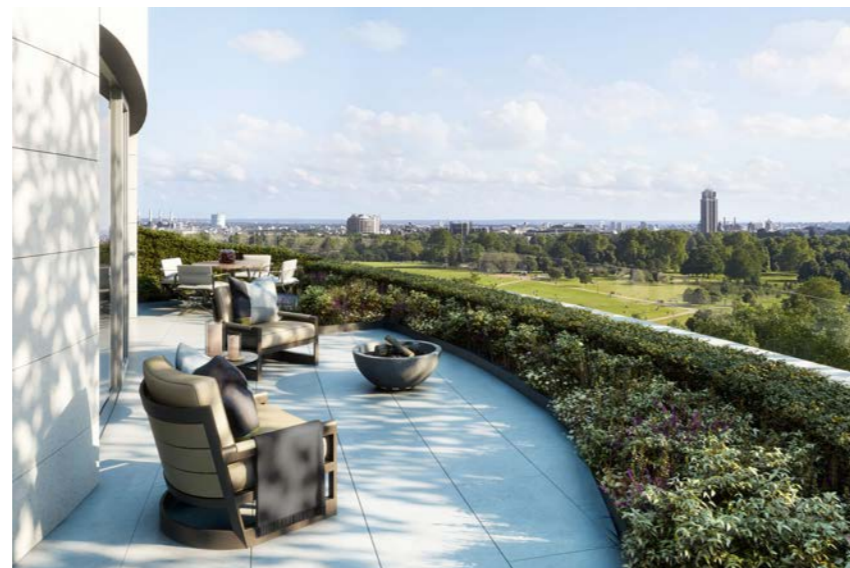
“As a result, the value of residential property rises,” he says. “It’s a win-win situation.”

This charming trend all kicked off with the Howard de Walden Estate’s trailblazing reinterpretation of Marylebone High Street, which introduced a successful mix of independents, such as La Fromagerie, Orrery restaurant, Daunt Books and the Ginger Pig butcher, on its canvas. “People don’t want to live beside generic chains. They want to know where to go for good coffee, wine and local theatre,” Harvard-Walls says.

Compared to individual landlords, these great estates have a great deal of control. They can take risks and install what residents really want – and even entice new residents.

“A strong eye on pop-up and boutique shops, for instance, has brought younger buyers with eclectic tastes to the Marylebone market,” says Alex Bourne of Beauchamp Estates.

Prime examples of city villages are the Portman Estate’s Chiltern and New Quebec Streets; Mount, North Audley and Albemarle Streets on the Grosvenor Estate; and Cadogan Estate’s Pavilion Road. Here, Tempus finds out the secret behind their success.



PORTMAN ESTATE

Buying head leases back has enabled Portman’s close management of shops, restaurants and hotels – think boutiques such as Casely-Hayford, Thompson’s Gallery, The Grazing Goat gastro pub, The Monocle Café, Chiltern Firehouse and The Zetter Townhouse. New openings include Mexican restaurant KOL and Nobu Hotel Portman Square.

Lurot Brand’s Marlon Lloyd Malcolm explains that once somewhere becomes an appealing spot to eat, shop and drink, it becomes a desirable place to live.

A good example is The Bryanston by Almacantar (left), in partnership with the Portman Estate. Architect Rafael Viñoly is creating 54 apartments, from £2.6m, in an 18-storey block, with a new public realm linking it to a commercial building with an Odeon cinema.

Sales manager Lottie Greaves says there’s huge emphasis on wellbeing at The Bryanston, with an AirRated indoor filtration system plus private wellness facility incorporating a 25-metre pool and gym. “It’s the perfect mix for residents who can walk in Hyde Park and be near Mayfair.”

Another notable venture straddling the Portman and Howard de Walden Estates is Concord London’s Marylebone Square, consisting of 52 apartments plus boutique restaurants and a community hall.

Streetscaping – widening pavements, limiting traffic and planting trees – is creating a pedestrian vibe and village atmosphere on this city block, says Christopher Murray, managing director of Concord London. »



Village vibes: The Bryanston by Almacantar (left); Portman Estate’s Moxon Apartments (top left and above)



MAYFAIR REVIVAL

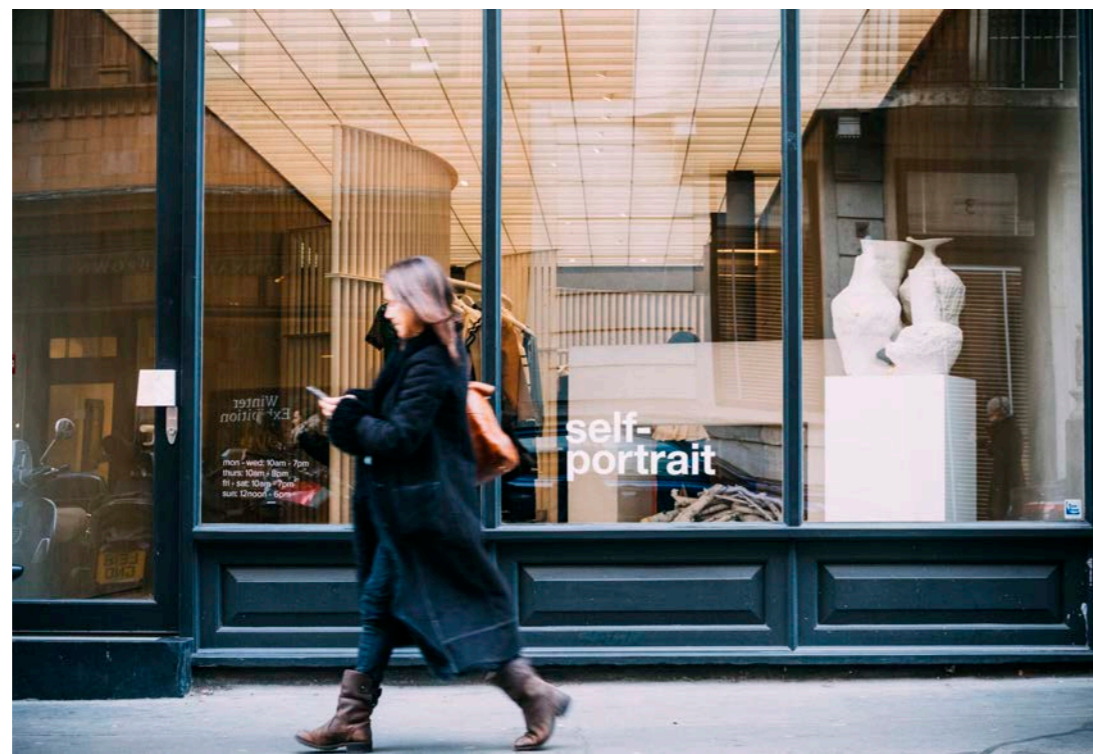
Grosvenor's reinvention of Mount Street has made living above a shop sexy, with the arrival of luxe brands such as Marc Jacobs, Balenciaga and Solange Azagury-Partridge. In addition, iconic seafood restaurant Scott's has been relaunched and the Connaught Hotel revamped.

The 7th Duke of Westminster and his family, the richest of central London's landowners, have also dusted off North Audley Street. A highlight is Grosvenor's £5m restoration of former St Mark's Church into retail space and Mercato Mayfair – a sustainable community market for food lovers.

Nearby, Trophaeum Asset Management is behind a transformation of Albemarle Street after slowly purchasing more than 70% of its property. "We're the cool younger brother of the big estates. They inherited their buildings, but we had to buy ours," says Matt Farrell.

Farrell uses the three pillars of fashion, art and food to appeal to sophisticated, younger consumers that want to shop, have lunch and go to a gallery. He lured in the likes of Robin Birley's Oswald's Club, Italian shoe emporium Aquazzura, US fashion designer Thom Browne and South American-meets-Mediterranean restaurant, Isabel.

"To stop the street turning into a Disneyland, we're very focused on retaining old architecture, externally and internally, wherever possible," he adds.



Albemarle Street: Trophaeum's renovation focused on preserving architecture (©JSP)



CADOGAN ESTATE

Over the past two years, the Cadogan Estate has totally transformed Pavilion Road in Chelsea (this page), turning former Victorian stable blocks into spaces for independent artisans. Carefully chosen vendors include The Sea, The Sea – a modern fishmonger and deli by day, and seafood and champagne bar by night.

Hugh Seaborn, CEO of Cadogan Estate, is encouraging merchants to complement one another. "You can buy a bottle of wine from Pavilion Wine and cheese from London Cheesemongers to take home for supper," he says. "Low-cost transactions entice people more frequently to the area, creating a buzz in this bustling quarter."

Seaborn's 'no chains, no handbag shops, no supermarkets' policy is paying off. People are proud of their proximity to Pavilion Road. "If you can create a place, you can create an emotional connection, something that's becoming increasingly important to visitors and residents alike," he says.

Other projects currently underway are a £40million public realm investment in Sloane Street and a makeover for the King's Road "to enrich the area's character while safeguarding its future vitality".



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