

Bronze and beautiful

London Design Festival

Page 10



Wednesday 19 September 2012

Homes & Property

FITZROVIA'S RELAUNCH: NEW HOMES **P4** ST JOHN'S WOOD FIRST-TIMERS **P6** 100% NORWAY **P22** SPOTLIGHT ON ACTON **P26**



A lesson in design

Open House weekend **PAGE 20** >

London's best property search website: homesandproperty.co.uk

Homes & Property New homes

homesandproperty.co.uk with Zoopla

£2.695 million: three new homes in a gated mews in Crabtree Place, Whitfield Street, Fitzrovia. Through LDG on 020 7580 1010



After a big no to Noho, a new Fitzrovia finds its own identity

CANDY and Candy infuriated Fitzrovians when they bought the old Middlesex Hospital site in Mortimer Street and christened it "Noho Square" North of Soho. The developers proceeded to push through a plan for glitzy apartments in the heart of defiantly unpushy Fitzrovia. So locals cheered when the credit crunch sent the brothers' big ideas crashing to the ground. Hoardings went up and all went silent for two years. This week the curtain goes up on homes and offices designed in an architectural style more in tune with the area's roots, and priced to attract the neighbourhood's creative community.

Noho, the name that gave long-term Fitzrovia resident, actor, broadcaster and comedian Griff Rhys Jones an instant humour bypass, has been ditched and its new owners – Exemplar, Aviva Investors, part of the giant insurance group, and Kaupthing Bank – have settled for the discrete **Fitzroy Place**, with architectural reference to the area's Edwardian mansion blocks.

The project is impressive. On a scale not seen in decades in Fitzrovia, it has 291 apartments in blocks rising to 10 storeys high, grouped around a new public square, which creates 30 per cent more open space than the earlier scheme. Only the original listed chapel remains. Parking is golden, so there are two levels at £95,000 a space, plus extra storage and a private members' club with gym, cinema, library and business lounge for residents and guests.

Interior design is not blingy but more a blend of classic-contemporary and "smart" technology guaranteed to impress local fashionistas and global brands such as Saatchi & Saatchi advertising agency executives.

Fitzrovia established its credentials as media territory when the BBC opened Broadcasting House in 1932. It remains a favourite with media companies, which have pushed its rising fortunes skywards in recent years. Former rag-trade premises have been converted

Fitzrovia is a classic European-style quarter. This week a square with 291 homes opens in this prime location, says **David Spittles**

into boutique apartments, ad-land loft offices and highly praised restaurants, some of which are booked up until February next year. And mid-market hotels have given way to the smarter Sanderson, where cocktail hour is popular.

Not much of its legendary bohemian character endures today but the area has a distinct identity, and an eclectic mix who mingle well and are in sympathy with the community die-hards railing against the invasion of corporations with their disingenuous attempts to "regenerate" the area. Locals are hugely suspicious of a recent attempt – an idea for a private-sector-led Business Improve-

ment District that would stifle small independents.

"Fitzrovia is not Margate," says Rhys Jones, president of national charity Civic Voice. "It does not need 'regenerating', it is not a derelict high street. It is a classic European-style city 'quartier' – a village in central London."

Enclosed by Tottenham Court Road, Oxford Street, Great Portland Street and Euston Road, Fitzrovia has a little bit of Soho, a little bit of Marylebone and a little bit of Bloomsbury, all of which it borders.

Yet it struggles with its residential identity as a place in its own right at

the very centre of London. Despite the W1 postcode it is surprisingly good value – half the Chelsea average at £1,000-1,200 a square foot. One reason is the lack of grand period architecture. The area was developed mainly by individual landowners, which led to a predominance of small and irregular streets instead of grid patterns and squares, as in Belgravia and Kensington, where single-estate landlords held sway.

"Clearly, Fitzrovia is a prime address – just look at its location – but it's not recognised as such," says Charles Leigh of CBRE, joint selling agent for Fitzroy Place. Savills calls it a "pocket of hidden value", while Knight Frank makes it one of the capital's hotspots, suggesting that values will jump 66 per cent over the next four years.

Fitzroy Place prices start at £750,000 for above-average-size apartments, and

'Fitzrovia is a prime address - just look at its location - but it is not recognised as such'



Colville Place: one of the many charming nooks and crannies in Fitzrovia

FAMOUS FITZROVIANS



BBC calling: Broadcasting House and George Orwell

FITZROVIA is named in part after Charles Fitzroy, Baron of Southampton, who developed a parcel of land there in the 18th century.

William Blake lived in Fitzroy Square but the Fitzrovia tag was coined by a later generation of artists, writers and actors – among them Victor Passmore, Augustus John, Dylan Thomas and Virginia Woolf – who met at the Fitzroy Tavern during the 1920s.

The BBC set up at Broadcasting House in 1932, and Fitzrovia has been a media hub ever since. During the Second World War, author George Orwell broadcast for the BBC from studios at 200 Oxford Street, where he also wrote *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying*.

The project is impressive, on a scale not seen in decades in Fitzrovia

homesandproperty.co.uk with Zoopla

New homes **Homes & Property**



SUTTON-HIBBERT / REX FEATURES



ALAMY

the range extends from one-bedroom flats to double-height duplexes. Across the scheme, homes cost about £1,700 a square foot, which is a step up for the area. Completion is scheduled for late 2014. Call 020 7323 1077.

Fitzrovia has charm peppered with shabby nooks and crannies. University and hospital departments and a huge Royal Mail depot have held back the much sought-after air of continental high-street chic that has made Marylebone High Street such a winner.

Georgian Fitzroy Square, upgraded by public realm improvements, is the best address, yet remains a mixed bag of offices, houses and flats. An original five-storey house with a modern three-storey rear extension is for sale or rent through Fugler Estates. Price on application, call 020 3376 3391.

About £420,000 is the entry price if you want to buy in the area. The bulk

of sales are in the £750,000 to £1.5 million bracket and buyers are mostly from the media, banking and creative sectors.

Laurence Glynne of LDG, a well-rooted Fitzrovia estate agent, says modern-design townhouses at **Crabtree Place**, in Whitfield Street, are demanding the highest prices. These are selling for £2.695 million, or £1,400 a square foot. Call 020 7580 1010.

GREAT Titchfield Street, Langham Street, Riding House Street and Foley Street, where there are mainly mansion flats, above-shop accommodation and lots of neighbourhood restaurants are popular with renters and home-buyers.

Derwent London, which owns more than 20 buildings clustered around Whitfield Street in the quieter, less

residential, northern part of Fitzrovia, has plans for a new part-pedestrianised zone with galleries, boutiques, brasseries and designer homes alongside a park. The scheme includes 57 new homes, a proposal that Camden Council had initially rejected. Derwent is keen to improve links between Fitzrovia and the Heal's and Habitat "homewares hub" in Tottenham Court Road.

Fitzrovia Now is an initiative celebrating the area's burgeoning number of design showrooms and workshops – Minotti, Ligne Roset and Skandia among them – and a "design trail" forms part of this week's London Design Festival.

Duchess House in Warren Street has 13 apartments including a wow-factor penthouse with a bird's-eye view of the BT Tower. Call Hudsons on 020 7323 2277.

Civic spirit: writer and broadcaster Griff Rhys Jones is a vocal resident in Fitzrovia (above and above right)



From £750,000: apartments at Fitzroy Place. Call 020 7323 1077

ExCeL London... 11th-13th October ... 10.00am – 6.00pm

Looking for **REAL** property bargains? ... then talk to the **RIGHT** people

... and the good news is that many of the **RIGHT** people will be present at The Property Investor Show (11th-13th October 2012).

If you are a serious property investor (or would like to be) and would like to learn from the experts about how to access the best deals around and profit from the best buying conditions seen in over a decade you must attend the UK's premier property investment event.

Featuring...

- Exhibitors from the UK and around the world
- Information-packed seminars and debates
- A live property auction - 100+ lots on offer
- UK & International property bargains
- Experts on hand to answer YOUR questions

THE PROPERTY INVESTOR SHOW

£

EXCEL LONDON 11-13 OCTOBER 2012

REGISTER ONLINE NOW FOR FREE ENTRY

www.propertyinvestor.co.uk/london (register and type in promo code E51909)

Smartphone users... to be directed to the FREE entry reg page scan the QR barcode. (To download a QR Code reader application for your smartphone check your App Store)

A Gateway to India!

Are you a Non Resident Indian? Do you want your own property in India? Then do not miss...

India Invest 2012

India Invest 2012 is a section of The Property Investor Show that is dedicated to Indian property. It has been created specifically to enable NRI-PIO buyers based in the UK to meet, face-to-face, with some of India's leading real estate developers & agents and view a broad range of properties available across the country.

Participating companies will include:

Partners:

Live Auction Friday 12th October

USA Invest

'Unadvertised' UK & International Bargains