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£500m flats will overlook Buckingham Palace gardens

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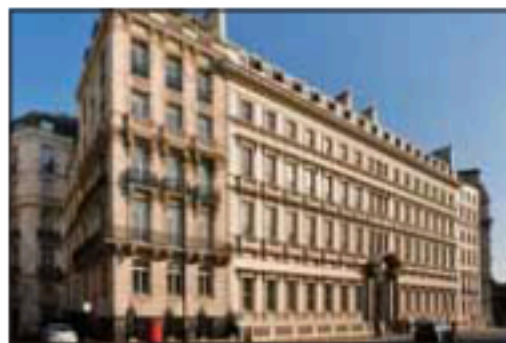
NOT many people can claim the Queen as one of their nearest neighbours.

But the owners of 72 planned apartments will be just a stone's throw from the gardens of Buckingham Palace – and close enough to hear the Changing The Guard ceremony.

Abu Dhabi-backed developer **Northacre** has secured planning permission from Westminster council to convert the former HQ of the Department for International Development.

The 300,000 sq ft triangular site is bounded by Palace Street, Stafford Place and Buckingham Gate and is in the Birdcage Walk Conservation Area.

The block was built as a grand hotel in the 19th century, and a Grade II-listed facade will be restored with a small restaurant at the corner of Palace Street. There will be a new vehicle drop-off



Grand views: the Palace Street facade.
Top, the site, circled, next to the Palace

point and two lifts to basement parking in Palace Street where the unlisted building will be replaced.

Northacre will provide £9 million towards affordable housing. Under the council's policies this could have been as much as £22 million.

By the time the project is complete at the end of 2017, it should be worth at least £500 million. **Northacre** bought the site for £176 million in January.