

Bricks & Mortar

Escape to the city

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LONDON HOMES

You could be the Queen's closest neighbour

Even if you are as monied as a monarch, there is one prime property in London that you are never likely to acquire — Buckingham Palace. You can, however, become one of the Queen's closest neighbours after the regeneration of the former Palace Hotel.

The building was a landmark in Victorian times and housed guests from Buckingham Palace functions and, rumour has it, royal mistresses. The partying ceased when the First World War broke out. The hotel was later owned by an explosives manufacturer before becoming government offices.

Number 1 Palace Street consists of five buildings arranged around a triangular court flanked by Buckingham Gate, Stafford Place and Palace Street itself. It is being transformed into 72 luxury apartments by Northacre, the London developer, and the work is expected to be completed in 2018.

New residents in the buildings, sited close to Buckingham Palace's security office, will be vetted. Northacre says: "We have worked with the Buckingham Palace security team to ensure

they are happy. All buyers will be subject to the appropriate checks."

The apartments span five architectural styles, from 1860s grade II listed Italianate to contemporary new-build, via 1880s Beaux Arts. The main façade will be retained in much the same way as Northacre's other notable restorations, such as the 130m-long frontage of the Lancasters, which overlooks Hyde Park.

Niccolò Barattieri di San Pietro, the chief executive of Northacre, says that the interiors of each of the five buildings will take their cue from the architecture. He says: "We have found like-for-like features or created our own

interpretation. When you go into the different apartments you should feel as if you are in the correct period."

The progression of styles from 1861 to the present will be reflected in the details. Cornicing will range from the ornate, to Arts

and Crafts, to contemporary picture-frame borders.

Floors will include herringbone, marquetry, and modern plank boards.

The proportions of the rooms also change, with apartments varying from 700 sq ft to 6,000 sq ft.

The prime apartments are those



fronting Buckingham Gate — the largest feature huge entertaining spaces with high ceilings and master suites that overlook Buckingham Palace's gardens (albeit through dense foliage for most of the year). There are two apartments per floor and each has nine front-facing windows.

One serendipitous discovery was that the Midlands-based company that made the original cornicing is still in business — and it had the moulds to create new versions. In the Buckingham Gate lobby the flooring has been reinstated, complete with a motif that suggests the footprint of Buckingham Palace.

Northacre has also used quality manufacturers "you don't usually see in London", including the Belgian kitchen supplier Obumex. Surprisingly, buyers may not request bespoke interiors, even though the least expensive apartment will cost £2.1 million. Barattieri di San



At Number 1 Palace Street, top right of main photograph, 72 luxury apartments are being created, some of which will overlook Buckingham Palace. The building was formerly the Palace Hotel, above



Pietro says: "We are not creating personal interiors but creating a canvas for personalisation. There will be no panelling, just beautiful white walls so they can express what they are about."

There will also be impressive communal facilities, including a library, private dining room, film theatre, gym, pool and treatment rooms. "We are not just selling the four walls but a club for like-minded people," Barattieri di San Pietro says. A dedicated residents' app will link them to the concierge and other facilities relaying information and news.

There appears to be no shortage of would-be neighbours of the Queen: 22 of the apartments were sold within three months of being marketed. numberonepalacestreet.com
Carol Lewis

