



LONDON LIFE



## ANNE ASHWORTH

A dedication to greenery is flourishing, as developers realise that the pandemic has changed our lifestyle preferences

**T**he RHS Chelsea, that key event in the London calendar, is the world's most famous flower show. This celebration of gardening artistry and science could scarcely have a more fitting location, since London is a world city passionate about horticulture in every form, from window boxes to parks. Close to half of Greater London is made up of green space, with 14 per cent of this being private gardens.

The garden squares, built in the 18th and 19th centuries are some of the smartest addresses, founded on the belief that architecture is enhanced by an expanse of lawn and flower beds. These squares are to be found in Chelsea, Kensington, Mayfair and Notting Hill, but also in Kennington: hip Cleaver Square was laid out in 1789.

In this decade of the 21st century, the dedication to greenery is flourishing, quite literally. The Chelsea Barracks development, opposite the Royal Hospital where the Chelsea Flower Show takes place, has no fewer than seven garden squares stretching over five acres. Two are open to the public. What better place to pause after a visit to RHS Chelsea and recover from the sensory overload of the show gardens, the chic shed-offices and the scents of the David Austin rose exhibit.

Other developers are also putting greenery at the centre of their schemes, recognising that the pandemic has permanently changed lifestyle preferences. Buyers of luxury apartments used to focus on decor. They now aspire to live within an eco-system (yes, this term is being used) where the outdoor areas are as perfectly executed as the interiors and there is a

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feeling of community. Lancer Square, the Bellworth development off Kensington Church Street, is built around a sunken garden. The exterior is a homage to the neighbourhood: installations, devised by Based Upon, the London studio, are inspired by *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan*, stories that have roots in Kensington Gardens next door.

In the early years of this century, there was much rhetoric about 'placemaking' around new homes. This, or so it was claimed, would deliver places of respite,

filled with trees and flowers that would bring together residents and locals and foster community spirit. Some of the results have been far from satisfactory. Finally, however, more effective projects are underway, that aim to integrate new housing into neighbourhoods with the aid of well-thought and welcoming green spaces. These placemaking efforts will be declared a success if they meet their objective, but also breathe new life into lacklustre neighbourhoods blighted by 20th century planning decisions.

Victoria Street in Westminster was such a spot, but thanks to British Land's regeneration drive, anonymity is being supplanted with buzz. Soon you will be able to walk in the direction of Westminster Abbey and slip into Orchard Place, a key element of Northacre's Broadway apartment and office scheme. This carefully-devised mix of landscaping, seating, retail and cafes is named for the orchards that once thrived in Westminster, a pastoral past commemorated in street names like Abbey Orchard Street.

The White City area of Shepherd's Bush takes its name from the white pavilions of the vibrant visitor exhibitions held there in the early 20th century. In subsequent decades, energy was distinctly lacking until the arrival of the Westfield mall, the conversion of Television Centre into flats, restaurants and studios and the opening of the park that surrounds Berkeley Group's White City Living development. These gardens cover eight acres and feature a David Harber sculpture in mirror-polished steel that reflects the shrubs and trees. An inspiration for generations to come. ■



NEW BLOOMS The Chelsea Barracks development features seven garden squares