

The Telegraph LUXURY



An interior view of a Manhattan Loft Garden apartment

PROPERTY & ARCHITECTURE

Buy a home at Harrods

The world's most famous department store also sells property; and not just Knightsbridge mansions. Zoe Dare Hall visits Harrods Estates



BY ZOE DARE HALL
JANUARY 27, 2015 11:21

You know what they say about Harrods, that there is nothing this store cannot procure – for a price. Rare foods, strange pets, flats in Stratford.... Whoah, what?

Yes, indeed, the world's most famous department store is also the world's only department store to sell property. And should you wander past its windows before the 31st January, rather than some priceless display of haute couture you will see its pop-up property shop run by the store's dedicated property arm. [Harrods Estates](#).

pound lateral apartments – precisely what you would expect Harrods' clientele to consider adding to their collection of homes – there is a model of the [Manhattan Loft Company's](#) latest scheme, Manhattan Loft Gardens, whose double

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Visual of the Manhattan Loft Gardens tower

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cantilevered terracotta tower will sit in the heart of E15's emerging east London cultural hub that Boris is calling "Olympicopolis".

Apartments start at £615,000 and residents will benefit from glamorous sky gardens and London-wide vistas. The interiors, too, are as trendy as you would expect from the company that brought loft-living to London. You can see from yourself from the comfort of a sofa in Harrods' window by taking a virtual walk around a flat. You simply don some oversized goggles and steer a remote control. This virtual reality gaming handset called an Oculus Rift is a sales tool that every developer should get their hands on.

There is no doubting the impeccable development and design credentials of the Stratford scheme (these are the people behind St Pancras Chambers and Chiltern Firehouse), nor probably its investment potential, with neighbours to include Westfield and new outposts of the V&A and Sadlers' Wells. But it is very weird to hear a bright young salesman in Harrods, not far from the £200,000 diamond necklaces, talking exuberantly about Hackney Wick.

In fact, the east London scheme is proving a hit among the Harrods set. The apartments – though by far the most expensive in Stratford, with some one-beds costing over £1m – are an ideal starter pad for the twentysomething offspring of people who use the store as their corner shop. These are people who can buy property on a whim.



Hans Place, Knightsbridge, £14.5m with Harrods Estates

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"We did once have a lady who came in to buy some tights and went away with an apartment," says Shirley Humphrey, Harrods Estates' elegant director. She recalls another occasion, pre-Lehman, where "three Middle Eastern guys saw the shop's flags, stopped their taxi, grabbed some brochures and the next day bought eight apartments in Dubai".

There are no overseas properties on sale currently, but this week has seen similar shows of spontaneity. "One man was shopping with his three daughters and he sat down on our sofa in the window simply for a rest. We chatted, it emerged he has a number of investment properties and now he is considering buying three apartments in Manhattan Loft Gardens. We only take on

one new development every couple of years and this one is just right for our clients."

Many more customers will be venturing into the shop this week to look for something closer to home. And even after 15 years in the job, Humphrey admits even she can be left speechless by their budgets. "Many have £5m or £10m and we are helping a lady at present with £20m."

Naturally, they expect rather more of their estate agent than the average high street buyer. Shirley and her team travel regularly to Moscow and Shanghai to meet clients. She routinely gets calls from the store's personal shoppers to say they have a particularly rich and/or famous person in their private client suite who wants to buy a house (and certainly not be



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Queensberry Place, seven-bedroom stucco-fronted townhouse, £12.5m Harrods Estates

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seen to be doing so in public). And through Harrods Estates'concierge service, they will stock clients' fridges, find sushi chefs at a moment's notice, even source – and decorate – a real Christmas tree in July for a client whose entire family happened to be visiting that month.

The name is worth its weight in gold. Developers estimate that having a Harrods Estates concierge service adds about 30 per cent to the value of their properties. And vendors think that whatever their local agent tells them their property is worth, Shirley's team will be able to sell it for a couple of million more. "That's not true of course," she says. "But despite being a very small, niche operation compared with agencies such as Savills or Knight Frank, we have the global brand of Harrods which

means people trust us implicitly and we offer them a very personalised service."

Just a word of warning. If you happen to be shopping for something small in Harrods in the next week, don't loiter by the property pop-up. You may leave with something more than you bargained for.

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www.harrodsestates.com

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