

Luxury living in Surrey suburbs



The luxurious Surbiton Plaza development, with its five star concierge service and underground parking, comprises a mix of sumptuous homes including 22 apartments and 11 penthouses in its main building, with seven mews cottages designed as functional live/work units and six stylish one-bedroom duplex apartments in a separate, tree-lined mews building.

Charles Rosling, sales manager for Knight Frank South East, says: "Surbiton Plaza is raising the benchmark of deluxe residential living in Surbiton, incorporating a wonderful choice of properties, all with top-of-the-range interiors and a 24 hour concierge service. It is much more affordable than comparable developments in London, yet it is only 15 minutes away from Waterloo. It really does have the ideal mix of chic city living in the outer London suburbs."

Externally, Surbiton Plaza has been designed using light-coloured brick work, natural stone facades and elegant full height glazing, giving a contemporary feel on the outside and a bright spacious feel on the inside.

Interiors have been carefully designed to include a variety of styles and layouts to suit a range of tastes. In the main building, apartments feature either open plan kitchen and living/dining areas or separate kitchen and living/dining areas, most of which lead out to a balcony or terrace. One bedroom apartments all

have fitted wardrobes and a separate bathroom, while in the two bedroom apartments, the master bedrooms all incorporate an en suite bathroom and fitted wardrobes, with a separate bathroom serving bedroom two.

In the mews building, the cottages feature a separate kitchen, living and dining area, cloakroom and separate office/studio on the ground floor creating ideal live/work space, with two/three bedrooms – one with en suite bathroom and fitted wardrobes – and a master bathroom upstairs. On the second floor, one bedroom duplex apartments feature living accommodation on one level with the bedroom and en suite bathroom on an upper level.

Each property has been finished to an extremely high quality, incorporating low-maintenance features and state-of-the-art technology, including a touch-screen interactive cyber concierge known as the "Tablet". Kitchens feature sleek designer units with granite work tops and integrated appliances, as well as Porcelanosa ceramic floor tiling. Bathrooms all feature Villeroy & Boch suites, with ceramic floor and wall tiling.

Prices at Surbiton Plaza are from £265,000 for a one bedroom apartment, which includes secure underground parking. For further information, contact agents Knight Frank on 01483 564660 or visit knightfrank.com.



The way to a greener future

A recent report published by Knight Frank LLP and EC Harris LLP, reveals an optimistic assessment of attitudes towards eco-home development in the UK, writes **Rebecca Barnes**.

Recognising that although the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) is voluntary* at present, it is already having a positive impact on attitudes towards property development and purchase. However, the report also identifies concern among developers about both cost and

current availability of technological solutions aimed at achieving the government's zero carbon targets by 2016.

This attitudinal change in favour of eco-measures was more accentuated for future property purchase, with 76 per cent claiming energy efficiency to be an important factor. In fact, 96 per cent of respondents considered low running costs a significant factor for their property, with 58 per cent recognising the cost saving benefits of renewable energy sources as important.

The report also shows that households who presently install energy efficient mechanisms in their homes tend to opt for more traditional methods such as double glazing and roof insulation over more technological solutions.

This focus on 'strongly designed products combined with energy efficiency have led to pricing premiums in some schemes', the report says. It adds that once eco-homes become the norm, as required by the CSH, developers will face the challenge of how to maintain the bold architecture, design and build quality in future projects. However, with the survey showing 59 per cent of respondents 'would be willing to pay a premium for an eco-home', the rewards are there.

Paul Hogarth, Partner and head of new homes sales and marketing for Knight Frank in the south-east, says: "With a growing concern for the environment and the surge in utility bills, buyers are much more conscious about energy efficiency and reducing the running cost of their homes.

"As a result, new homes developers are applying more energy efficient building methods and techniques, for example, using sustainable building materials, energy efficient lighting and heating systems.

"Imber Place, a Shanly Homes development of apartments in Thames Ditton, includes a number of environmentally friendly measures, such as superior insulation materials and thermal glass, which earned the scheme an EcoHomes 'very good' rating (the environmental assessment for new homes at the time of assessment). Coupled with the overall design quality and location, purchasers see the energy efficient measures as a real bonus."

For further information on Imber Place, call Knight Frank on 01483 564660 or visit knightfrank.com.

*The Code for Sustainable Homes was voluntary when the report was conducted and at the time of going to print.



Make the most of stamp duty break

The recent announcement that for a period of 12 months stamp duty on properties worth up to £175,000 will be exempt from the much talked about tax, may be welcome news to some first-time buyers and homeowners, and is predicted to cost the Exchequer around half a million pounds over the year.

But it's not just buyers that stand to benefit from the temporary extension - it could also make sense financially for people who own leasehold properties to consider making claims for lease extensions or freehold acquisitions.

Due to recent Court of Appeal decisions, the acquisition costs for a lease with less than 80 years left to run are considerably higher than those with more than 80 years. This is something that not all people are aware of and is applicable to many people in greater London, where a majority of properties are leasehold.

"When a lease falls below 80 years an additional sum known as the marriage value is payable to the landlord, and so it is therefore beneficial to extend your lease prior to this point," confirms David Ambrose MRICS Chartered Surveyor, Bramptons Chartered Surveyors in Chessington (07890 996895).

"Many properties in London and the surrounds are leasehold properties, and some leaseholders may not be aware that they are entitled under the Leasehold Reform Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 to acquire a lease extension once they have owned the property for a period of two or more years," comments Dawn Lawson LLB Solicitor, Colemans-CTTS Solicitors in Kingston-Upon-Thames (020 8298 7984; colemans-ctts.co.uk).

"Alternatively, for those who are selling their lease, the right to extend can be claimed prior to

the completion of the sale and assigned to the buyer on completion. A professional valuation as to the value of the extension is required. However, as the current values of properties are lower than they have been for several years, this naturally impacts on the figures used to calculate the premium payable for the lease extension in the leaseholders favour.

"Now is the perfect opportunity for leasehold owners to make such claims and use the market to their advantage, paying less for their lease extension and adding value and marketability to their property in the process," Lawson concludes.

