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Green schemes

New developments with gorgeous gardens

Imaginative, contemporary green spaces are being added to the heady mix of new schemes in the capital, offering visitors lush gardens under glass canopies and vast roof terraces under open skies.

Developers are investing in cutting-edge designs influenced by such innovative concepts as New York City's High Line, a public park built in 2009 on an elevated historic freight railway, where nature fuses with art to offer a hybrid experience.

The competition is also on to build the biggest, highest garden in the sky. The 75-storey Landmark Pinnacle in Canary Wharf, Europe's tallest residential tower, seems to have the edge with its Panorama Garden Square covering 8,700 feet on the 27th floor, topped off with two double-height roof terraces, pictured top.

"The gardens are a really important aspect of what we're looking to achieve at Landmark Pinnacle," explains Rami Atallah, project coordinator. "We're striving to build an active community where every resident has somewhere to engage with their neighbours, let their children play in a safe environment or just enjoy some downtime.

"The residential garden is steeped in London's history and we wanted to bring that here for the first time, while creating a truly unique outside space within one of the city's tallest towers." JLL and Knight Frank are joint selling agents for the project.

Michelle Bishop, sales manager at JLL, says, “This isn’t just the first of its kind in the area, it’s the first major residential tower that has a dedicated residential garden inspired by the grand squares of west London.”

Indeed, the closest private garden square to the development can be found more than five miles away in the form of Bedford Square, Fitzrovia.

The 239m (784ft) tall skyscraper comprises 752 residential properties with suites, one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom apartments, as well as a collection of penthouses. Prices in the final phase start from £542,750 for a one-bedroom flat.

Since the Mayor of London declared he wants the capital to be a greener city by 2050, designers and planners have been working overtime dreaming up schemes that combine densification with open space.

Ruth Holmes, chair of the Trustees of the London Parks and Gardens Trust, which organises the annual Open Garden Squares Weekend, taking place in June this year, argues that “a greener city is not a luxury, it should be our norm”. “Green spaces should be planned, designed, linked-together and delivered just like any other essential urban infrastructure such as transportation.”

Developers have listened, and are employing award-winning garden designers and landscape architects to deliver spaces that offer calm leafy sanctuaries, children’s play areas and panoramic views.



Battersea Power Station Roof Gardens

Battersea Power Station, which neighbours 200 acres of Battersea Park, is creating a sky garden using the same team that designed New York's High Line.

Some 19 acres of open public space, including a new six-acre public park, will also be incorporated into the plans. "Access to green, open spaces is increasingly sought after when it comes to selecting a place to live," explains Mark Hutton, head of sales and lettings at Battersea Power Station Development Company.

“Having all of this open space on the banks of the River Thames is a real selling point and is something that is already proving popular among existing residents and buyers who have bought off-plan in the Power Station and our third phase of the project.”

Down the road from the Power Station, Bowden House is employing landscape architects Gillespies, creators of the stunning Sky Garden which spans three storeys at the top of 20 Fenchurch Street, to turn 2.5 acres of Prince of Wales Drive into a showcase courtyard, picnic areas, a Zen garden and play zones.

“Planting is key to creating distinctive atmospheres through the various spaces of the landscape,” explains Gillespies’ senior associate Neil Matthew. “A grid of Japanese maples provides intricate leaf forms followed by stunning autumn colours, all reflected in a shallow pool which surrounds them.”

St William, a £700m joint venture between National Grid and the Berkeley Group, is redeveloping five acres of gasholder sites in Prince of Wales Drive into 995 new homes with Bowden House offering a superior collection of 90 one, two and three-bedroom apartments.

To the north in Hampstead, just ten minutes from the wild and beautiful heath, the Belle Vue retirement development aims to harness nature with its surrounding interlocking gardens and communal roofscape with wildflower meadow, bee boxes and outdoor seating. The PegasusLife one- and two-bedroom apartments are available now starting at £792,000 (pegasuslife.co.uk).

At Luma King's Cross, an Argent development due to complete next year, views of greenery are at the heart of the scheme. Balconies look onto the Persian-inspired Jellicoe Gardens, created by award-winning designer Tom Stuart-Smith, and the expanse of Lewis Cubitt Park. Knight Frank are selling the one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments and pethouses starting at £1.325m (lumakingscross.co.uk).

For those who like an even more rural feel, further north in Southgate Yogo Group is launching Sir Thomas Lipton this month, with apartments available in the Grade II-listed former home of the tea magnate. The apartments, as well as the surrounding new townhouses, mews houses and penthouses are set in five acres of private historic grounds, despite being only 42 minutes from Heathrow. The two-bedroom maisonettes start at £1.08m (yogogroup.com).

Whatever the ambition, cost and design, each new urban garden has the aim of providing a haven of tranquillity a mere stone's throw from the noise and bustle of the city.
