

Bishops Avenue Hampstead enters new chapter with development

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Hampstead's millionaire's row was once a byword for elegance and luxury but has become something of an eyesore in recent decades.

Once the hunting grounds of the Bishops of London, The Bishops Avenue earned its nickname from the huge plots where film stars, tycoons, and royalty settled in the 30s and 40s.

But as the housing market boomed, and the millionaires became billionaires, one of London's most exclusive addresses became blighted by boarded up crumbling mansions and a constant churn of tearing down and rebuilding.



Charles Leigh, Sales Director of Bishops Avenue Gardens and the stunning view from the top floor of of one of the 36 apartments. (Image: Bridget Galton)

Squatters, fire, offshore investment, money laundering investigations, and dodgy taste have all plagued the road's reputation over the years.

Early residents like the Sainsbury or Lyle sugar heirs, newspaper proprietor Lord Copper, Greek king Constantine II, Billy Butlin, or Gracie Fields would be shocked to see their genteel neighbourhood hollowed out.

The homes that were well maintained were often rented out to celebrities requiring privacy with Ariana Grande, Justin Bieber and Salma Hayek all taking up temporary residence.



The Swimming Pool at Bishops Avenue Gardens.(Image: Valouran)

So it's a relief for Hampstead locals to see quality developments breathing new life into the famous street with more "affordable" homes than the usual £100 million.

Charles Leigh, Sales Director of Bishops Avenue Gardens - a 36 development of two to four bed apartments - says the road is now entering its "third phase".

"This is one of the most famous roads in the world but the area has had some mixed press with some houses boarded up for a decade," he said.

"We're turning the page on a new chapter in the Bishops Avenue story and we're not the only ones - there are three other apartment developments underway and in another 18 months the road will have a new lease of life."



During his five decade career, Glentree Estates founder Trevor Abrahmsohn has sold around 100 homes on the Avenue.(Image: Glentree Estates)

If the 50-room mansions on two and a half acre plots were only affordable to Ultra-high-net-worths like the Sultan of Brunei, Saudi Royal Family or Lakshmi Mittal, then these beautifully designed apartments with their spa, fitness suite and concierge service will appeal to locals who want to downsize with all modern amenities.

Leigh adds: "Our biggest demographic are Hampstead residents selling their huge houses where they have been for 20 years.

"They love the area and don't want to move away from their friends, but want to be on one floor, with privacy, the security of someone on site on the end of a phone 24 hours, and ability to park downstairs and get straight up to the apartment."

Ranging from £2.5 -£8.8 million, Bishops Avenue Gardens is one of several similar developments on the street, which runs from Hampstead Heath to East Finchley.

It's at the Kenwood end, on the site of Oak Lodge, an arts and crafts property dating to 1927 which was badly damaged by fire three years ago. The house, thought to be designed by an architect who worked on Hampstead Garden Suburb, had been empty for decades, but enough has been saved to house a concierge, library and three apartments.

Due for completion in 18 months, it's selling a luxury - Hampstead style - lifestyle fringed by gardens and trees, with an indoor, outdoor pool, and terraces with incredible views - just what the modern millionaire is looking for.

"The wealthy no longer require 11 bedrooms and a dining room that seats 20," says Alex Michelin founder of Bishops Avenue Gardens developers Valouran whose projects also include 20 Grosvenor Square and The Whiteley department store.

A concierge instead of a retinue of staff, minimal maintenance, and security are all high on the tick list of these owner-occupiers and Valouran believe families, including footballers from Premier League clubs, might move into the complex which is close to the area's great schools.

Veteran local Estate Agent Trevor Abrahmsohn of Glentree Estates are handling sales - along with Savills.

He's been selling property on The Bishops Avenue for more than 50 years and sold Oak Tree Lodge three times to overseas buyers before Valouran bought it.

He says the scheme is unique in bringing "top quality" Mayfair-style elegance to Hampstead at an affordable price, selling permanent homes rather than investment properties.

"It's from Mayfair specialists with all the bells and whistles that people want now," he says.

"Bishops Avenue is renowned as being the most prestigious address in this area but what it didn't until the advent of these luxury apartments is a community spirit.

"It was designed to be exclusive, big houses for the domestic market bought by iconic figures of their day like Billy Butlin. But then people didn't want to buy so big or only the international buyers could afford it.

"Until recently a four bed apartment in this area didn't exist - this is feeding a gap in the market."

There's now a marketing suite at Bishops Avenue Gardens, 54, The Bishops Avenue. Enquiries to www.bishopsavenuegardens.com