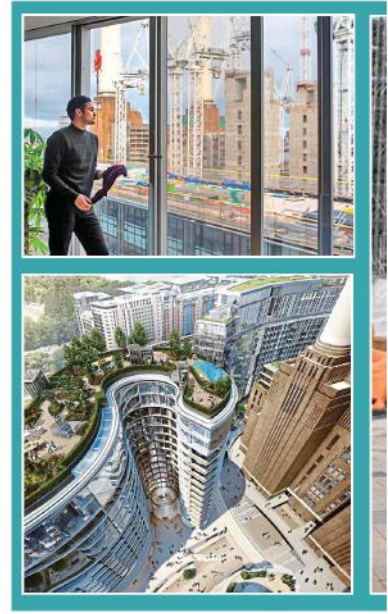


# Homes & Property | New homes



From £950,000: flats at 38 Langham Street, Fitzrovia, the conversion of a Grade II-listed building, include one designed by Katie Earl and Emma Rayner, right, founders of No 12 Studio



THIS is not a scene from a George RR Martin novel or Tove Jansson fantasy, but global tech giants and so-called unicorns – private digital companies valued above \$1 billion – are setting up in Battersea, Fitzrovia and Broadgate. They bring with them a tech workforce, drawn from Britain and around the world, that's changing London communities and lifestyles. Despite the threats Brexit may present to the City's financial services, London is already the European tech capital, having

## We believe in unicorns

produced the highest number of billion-dollar digital companies. "The UK is home to the highest concentration of ambitious tech entrepreneurs in Europe," a recent report by consultancy GP Bulldog reads. "With 102 tech start-ups fast approaching a billion-dollar valuation it looks like the prospect for Brexit Britain is strong." Of the giant brands, Apple is expected to amalgamate its multiple sites into one UK campus at Battersea Power Station by 2021. Its 1,400 staff

Start-ups are leading a generation of change across London, creating new areas, lifestyles and design ideas for future cities, says **Anna White**

will be spread over six floors within the Grade II-listed building beside the Thames. Facebook is in residence at Rathbone Square in Fitzrovia, close to Snapchat, Instagram and Netflix. Google is in talks with Camden council about plans for an 11-floor European HQ. Dubbed The Verge, the new office will hold 4,000 employees, with a running track on the roof overlooking King's Cross station. WeWork has created a vast new office "campus" at Liverpool Street and is building a new base in Waterloo with skateboard "half pipes" in the foyer and free beer and prosecco on tap.

As for the unicorns, the artificial intelligence company BenevolentAI has made Bloomsbury its home and digital bank OakNorth is in Soho. Silicon Roundabout at Old Street is no longer the only go-to destination for such companies. Tech clusters are springing up around the mega brands, driving the development of new homes and amenities.

### LESS BLING FOR YOUR BUCK

Fitzrovia has long been a creative area attracting media and PR companies, especially around Great Portland Street where Tank Magazine and Getty Images are based. Tech start-ups are gathering in Fitzrovia, Bloomsbury and Soho to access this market. Sam Amrani runs tech firms Tuneo and Olvin out of an office in Shaftesbury Avenue. "We relocated

from St James's and are now at the intersection of Fitzrovia, Soho and Covent Garden – perfect for the action," he says.

There is change afoot around this Zone 1 village. "The new mega department store Flannels is opening at the bottom of Oxford Street," says Becky Fatemi, founder of estate agents Rokstone. A regeneration wave is spreading out from luxury Centre Point tower along Tottenham Court Road. "Buyers are also spilling over from Marylebone into cheaper Fitzrovia," adds Fatemi.

There is mixed housing stock: Victorian terraces, social housing and warehouses with many conversions and new schemes. At 38 Langham Street, the transformation of a Grade II-listed block into 17 flats by Great Marlborough Estates, there are rooms available so entrepreneurs working from home can hold meetings without using their own private flat. It also has a secured cycle store.

"With Facebook and Netflix moving into the area, Fitzrovia has emerged as a tech hub, welcoming a generation of creatives who are shifting the way we think about property and interior design," says Grant Lipton of Great Marlborough Estates. "Ultimately, the new Fitzrovia native would rather acquire individual designs, less bling and fewer big-brand labels." Interior designer Katie Earl of No 12 Studio, who with co-founder Emma



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**Inspirational surroundings:** fashion techie Ryan Mario Yasin lives and works at Circus West Village, below far left, Battersea Power Station. He cycles around the complex to meetings

*'A seamless blend of old and new'*

THE first residential phase at Battersea Power Station, **Circus West Village** is now complete and home to fashion techie Ryan Mario Yasin. The Royal College of Art graduate founded Petit Pli (petitpli.com), a childrenswear firm that uses special technology to allow kids' clothes to expand as they grow. He cycles around the complex from home to studio to meeting rooms. "I moved to Battersea last year to live opposite the power station, which is an architectural icon and future home to Apple," he says. "As an entrepreneur, living and working in an environment which couples the old with the new so seamlessly is inspiring and the facilities are perfect for hosting creative pitch meetings with my team." Circus West Village flats start at £500,000 for one bedroom (020 7062 1840).



**Left:** appealing to the young techie crowd, Aussie coffee shop Kaffeine, with branches in Eastcastle Street and Great Titchfield Street, Fitzrovia, runs barista training courses, while Dutch interiors shop Moooi also has a Great Titchfield Street store

Rayner, has designed one of the flats at 38 Langham Street, says: "The tech crowd didn't tend to grow up with old-school wealth, and they spend their money wisely. They don't want the gratuitous overadornment so often associated with central London apartments. Their luxury has a more pared-back quality."

The average Fitzrovia property price is up nine per cent on last year at £1.8 million. Prices at 38 Langham Street (38langhamstreet.com) start at £950,000. Savills (020 3527 0400) has a two-bedroom, two-bathroom warehouse flat with a roof terrace for £1,895,000, and a two-bedroom lower-ground floor flat for £750,000.

A five-minute walk from Goodge Street and Great Portland Street Tubes, a newly refurbished two-bedroom first-floor flat in a period conversion is for sale with Foxtons for £875,000. Call 020 7659 8100.

There is demand for independent retailers, not Mayfair boutiques. There are Japanese record shops, cycling brands such as Vevolution and quirky coffee shops. There are barista courses on offer at the Australian cafe Kaffeine and you can buy wallpaper inspired by extinct animals from Moooi.

**From £502,000:** studios and flats with one, two or three bedrooms at The Silk District in Whitechapel (020 3918 9338)



**LIVE/WORK BATTERSEA**

Apple is expected to move in at Battersea in 2021. Though Battersea Power Station Development Company didn't set out to target the techie, there was a "huge boost to sales and confidence" when the giant brand signed up, says head of sales Mark Hutton. It has influenced the scheme since.

Exciting leisure activities, such as urban axe throwing, have opened up along Nine Elms and appeal to a young tech crowd. Whistle Punks axe-throwing league starts in February. A spokesman for the company says: "The local budding tech community visit us to let off steam after work or use us for team-building and networking events."

**SILICON ROUNDABOUT SPREADS OUT**

Worth \$2 billion, Mimecast is the latest and largest tech firm to take up office space at Broadgate Circle, a new commercial hub by Liverpool Street, a stone's throw from Silicon Roundabout. The cybersecurity firm has signed up for 113,000sq ft and will move in this winter. It follows tech Starling Bank, software firm Onfido and digital lender Neyber.

"Broadgate is located between the tech and creative areas of Shoreditch, Spitalfields and Old Street and the financial centre of the City. It's where tech and finance meet," says David Lockyer, head of Broadgate at British Land. The developer has welcomed restaurants and retailers that will suit the young workforce, such as Franco Manca pizza chain and speakeasy Mrs Fogg's Maritime Club & Distillery.

In Whitechapel, a Tube stop or a quick bike ride away, are new Mount Anvil homes at **The Silk District**. There will be 450 studios, one-, two- and three-bedroom homes in four phases. Residents have access to flexible workspaces, a rooftop terrace, a gym and a dedicated spin studio. From £502,000. Call 020 3918 9338.



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