

Living in Fitzrovia: area guide to homes, schools and transport

To this central area with fine Georgian buildings come new continental-style cafés, pocket parks and a £1bn station revamp for Crossrail.

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This Easter weekend will see a new dawn of pavement cafés, improved air quality and pocket parks for Tottenham Court Road, the eastern boundary of Fitzrovia, in a £35 million redesign by Camden council.

The authority says the scheme, which sparked street protests by taxi drivers, “provides a safer, greener and more attractive street for residents and visitors”.

Known as the West End Project, it got the go-ahead four years ago and will return Tottenham Court Road to two-way traffic. Controversially, it will also ban all traffic except for buses and bikes from part of the road every day from Monday to Saturday between the hours of 8am and 7pm.

The central London district north of Oxford Street and south of Euston Road between Tottenham Court Road and Great Portland Street, Fitzrovia has an almost continental feel. Its streets are packed with cafés, bars and restaurants plus a mix of homes, some fine Georgian architecture and many creative businesses, including architects and advertising agencies.

Homes here aren't cheap but that traditional bohemian, rough-around-the-edges feel that gave it such charm is making way for smart new schemes by leading architects. The two most prominent are Rathbone Square off Rathbone Place and Fitzroy Place, the redevelopment of the former Middlesex Hospital site in Mortimer Street. Both have brought a mix of

offices, shops, cafés and new homes. Facebook chose Rathbone Square for its new London engineering HQ, while cosmetic brand Estée Lauder's UK operation is now in Fitzroy Place.

Both developments provide attractive new public squares and through-routes. Rathbone Square is entered through arches of green glazed tiles. Fitzroy Place's Pearson Square has at its centre Fitzrovia Chapel, the renovated, listed Middlesex Hospital Chapel, designed by leading Victorian church architect John Loughborough Pearson. Now run by a trust, the chapel is open every Wednesday from 11am to 4pm for quiet contemplation.

Estate agent Simon Bray, of Hudsons, based in Charlotte Street, has been selling homes in Fitzrovia since 2002. He says the area is eclectic and creative with an interesting mix of residents, workers and visitors. But he also says Fitzrovia is changing, with new developments now attracting overseas buyers.

The property scene



A mix of Georgian houses, period conversions and new developments can be found in Fitzrovia

The Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association estimates the area houses 8,000 residents with 50,000 people coming in every day to work. There are Georgian houses, period conversions — especially above commercial premises — mews houses, mansion flats, warehouse conversions and modern flats.

Fitzroy Square at the Euston Road end is one of London's finest garden squares. This Grade I-listed late-18th century square was designed by architect Robert Adam and was named after Charles Fitzroy, 4th Duke of Grafton.

At No 29 are plaques to author Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) and playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), while writer Ian McEwan, 70, a former resident, used the square as a setting for his novel, *Saturday*. Houses here can sell for £10 million.

In Colville Place, a quaint, car-free street off Charlotte Street, a four-bedroom Georgian house is for sale at £2,775,000.

The cheapest home currently for sale is a 257sq ft studio flat over a shop in Warren Street, priced £395,000.

Estate agent Christian Lock-Necrews from Knight Frank says price per square foot in Fitzrovia can vary between £1,000 and £3,500 for a flat in one of the new developments, with an average of around £1,550 a square foot.

However, he says this is still around 15 per cent cheaper than Marylebone. He has noticed people are moving to Fitzrovia from areas such as Notting Hill, because they are attracted by the unique atmosphere of the place.

New-build homes

The largest current development is Derwent London's **80 Charlotte Street**, a mix of new-build and refurbishment of the former Saatchi & Saatchi building between Charlotte Street and Whitfield Street.

There will be a mixture of uses, including offices — pre-let to Arup, the giant engineering and architectural firm, and the Boston Consulting Group — plus shops, restaurants and new homes, designed by Fitzrovia-based Make Architects. **Asta House**, in Whitfield Street, the residential part of the development, is launching soon and will offer 20 one-, two- and three-bedroom flats, two penthouses and four homes at intermediate rent.

The design follows the street's industrial feel with a red-brick façade and Crittall windows. Prices start at £950,000. Contact Hudsons on 020 7323 2277 and CBRE on 020 7420 3050.

From Great Marlborough Estates comes **38 Langham Street**, a development of one- and two-bedroom flats with retail or restaurant use on the ground floor in a listed red-brick mansion block. Prices range from £950,000 to £3.5 million. Call Knight Frank on 020 3826 0673 or Savills on 020 7409 8756.

Behind the early 20th-century façade of a former John Lewis building, **19 Bolsover Street** is a new-build scheme offering 16 one-, two- and three-bedroom flats and a penthouse. Prices for these homes start at £1.25 million. Call Knight Frank on 020 3435 6440.

First-time buyers

As part of the 80 Charlotte Street scheme, a separate building in Whitfield Street will have 10 flats available at social rent. Call Origin Housing on 0300 323 0325.

Rental homes

This is a popular area with families whose children are studying in London, while Fitzrovia workers with families based outside the capital often rent weekday pieds-à-terre. Flats and penthouses in the new developments are also now attracting wealthy individuals and families to rent in Fitzrovia.

There is a wide range on offer, from £1,365 a month for a studio in council-owned Holcroft Court in Carburton Street, to £30,117 a month for a three-bedroom penthouse in Pearson Square.

Houses to rent are harder to find, starting at £2,999 a month for a two-bedroom house in Richardson Mews to £7,150 for a three-bedroom house with that rarity, a garage, in Bridford Mews.

Transport

Nowhere in Fitzrovia is more than five minutes' walk from the Tube, and Tottenham Court Road station is being rebuilt for Crossrail.

The new hub will have a Tube station and ticket hall in Dean Street, Soho; a ticket office below St Giles Circus in Oxford Street, and public realm improvements above ground. The station is on the Northern and Central lines and when the Elizabeth line is up and running, it will be used by 200,000 people a day.

The four other Tube stations are Warren Street and Goodge Street (Northern line); Oxford Circus (Bakerloo, Central and Victoria lines), and Great

Portland Street (Circle; City & Hammersmith and Metropolitan lines). An annual Zone 1 travelcard costs £1,404.

Staying power

Traditionally Fitzrovia has been a place where people have hung on to their homes for 30 or 40 years or even handed them down the generations, but with the influx of new flats, and more international buyers, that may change.

Postcode

Fitzrovia falls in to the W1 postcode and you can't get more central than that. More specifically, it's in W1T to the east and W1W to the west and north.

Best roads

Fitzroy Square is the standout address, although if measured in pounds per square foot some of the penthouses in the new developments command higher prices.

Up and coming

Holcroft Court occupies a whole block between Clipstone Street, Carburton Street, Clipstone Mews and Great Titchfield Street and while it's not the prettiest of council estates, it has a secret central communal garden and offers the cheapest homes in Fitzrovia. Currently for sale is a three-bedroom flat for £649,950.

Council

West Fitzrovia is in Conservative-controlled Westminster, where Band D council tax for 2019/2020 is £735.85. East and north Fitzrovia are in Labour-controlled Camden and Band D council tax for 2019/2020 is £1,562.35.