



FUTURE
LIVING

INSIGHTS INTO THE
TRENDS RESHAPING
UK PROPERTY

**STRUTT
& PARKER**

BNP PARIBAS GROUP 

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WELCOME

Change is happening all around us. Technology is altering our lifestyles in ways we couldn't have imagined just a few years ago. Environmental issues and sustainability are top of the agenda for an increasing number of people. Our population is growing – and ageing. And there is an undeniably urgent need to provide more homes.

These factors will have a profound affect on property values. So whether you're a homeowner, a landlord or an investor, it is important to keep track of these evolving social, economic and technological shifts.

This is why, in *Future Living*, we explore a number of burgeoning trends that are having an impact on the residential property market now, and will continue to do so in the coming years.

Each short essay examines a key theme and comprises insightful comments from a range of expert perspectives to help you make sense of the way we live and what this means for the property sector – both today and tomorrow.

We hope you enjoy reading *Future Living*.

\ GUY ROBINSON, HEAD OF
RESIDENTIAL, STRUTT & PARKER

CONTENTS

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| <p>4
Connect more
The smart home is now a reality – but will the UK's networks be ready to handle the growing demand for data?</p> | <p>8
The future is modular
Why today's factory-made homes are a world away from the prefab housing of old</p> | <p>12
Trendspotting
Eight key trends that are set to have an impact on residential property</p> | <p>14
Meet Generation Downsize
More retirees are swapping large homes for smaller properties – and where they want to live is changing, too</p> | <p>18
Short-term thinking
The sharing economy has opened up a range of short-let opportunities for property owners</p> | <p>20
Paint the town green
More people than ever live in our cities. Can urban farming help make feeding them more sustainable?</p> |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|

Imagine that you're woken at 7am by your connected radio playing your favourite playlist. Then, after 15 minutes of snoozing, you see the room flood with light as your connected shutters open to let in the sun. As you rise, your connected thermostat is warming your towel ready for your shower, and your connected coffee machine is busying itself with the 7:30am brew. A quick check in the (unconnected) mirror and you're almost ready to face the day.

While it's not exactly the utopian vision of the 21st century as we pictured it in the 1960s, this

intimate, personalised lifestyle is what's likely to help sell the next generation of smart homes.

The concept of the connected home isn't new, but it's only recently that it has started to become reality. According to PwC, about 30% of us now plan to buy a smart device for the home – up from 14% in 2016 – suggesting that the technology is moving out of 'early adopter' territory. And last year, Marc Allera, CEO of BT's Consumer division, predicted that the average household will have 50 connected devices by 2023.

But are the UK's telecoms networks ready to cope with the demand for bandwidth that this will bring? How is the housing market set to adapt? And is the mainstream desire for connected homes here just yet?

Regarding the last question, the answer is 'perhaps'. Only one in five people, says PwC, expects a connected-home device to have a positive impact – but perceptions of value tend to improve once people have bought one. So it's not technology that sells a connected home; it's an understanding of how it can meet our basic human needs.

The connected home has been seen in the past as 'slightly pointless technology for technology's sake', notes David Mattin, Global Head of Trends and Insights at TrendWatching – a reputation caused by white-elephant goods such as \$10,000 smart fridges. But the uptake of virtual assistants such as Alexa and Siri shows things are changing, he suggests. »

£10.8 billion

Predicted spend on smart home devices in 2019

Source: PwC

CONNECT MORE

From voice-activated speakers to internet-enabled security cameras, smart devices are increasingly part of the furniture in many British households. But as the connected home becomes ever more data-hungry, how will the UK's networks cope?

Words \ Chris Alden



The user experience is what matters. ‘People obsess over things like their wake-up routine – small personal moments in their days,’ says Mattin. ‘They can become consumed by the perceived quality of those moments.’

Perhaps it’s people for whom these moments are most precious who will become the next wave of adopters for connected homes. These may be time-poor, work-focused, ambitious people who see the home as a sanctuary from the chaos of the world outside.

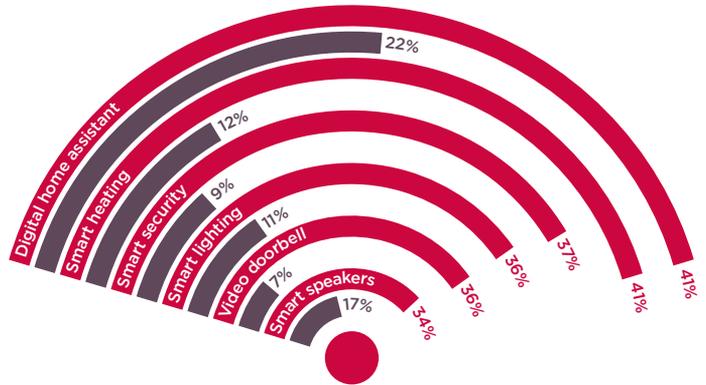
Over time, says Mattin, the experience in the connected home will become less transactional and more emotional – less about refilling the washing powder and more about needs such as health, wellness and companionship.

Two immediate obstacles stand in the way of this vision. One is privacy, with the ‘techlash’ being a growing media trend of the past couple of years. But Mattin argues that if the trade-off is right, people will continue to exchange privacy for the right level of personalisation.

Just as thorny is the question of connectivity infrastructure. If you already have high-speed broadband, then in the short run, the smart home is likely to mean a relatively small bump in required bandwidth.

A security camera such as the Google Nest Cam IQ, for example, requires an upload bandwidth of between 0.8 and 4Mbps, depending on the selected quality mode – though as it’s always on, it will eat through 100 to 400GB a month, so unlimited data is a must. Yet multiply the number of cameras, and your connected home could become a bandwidth-hungry hub.

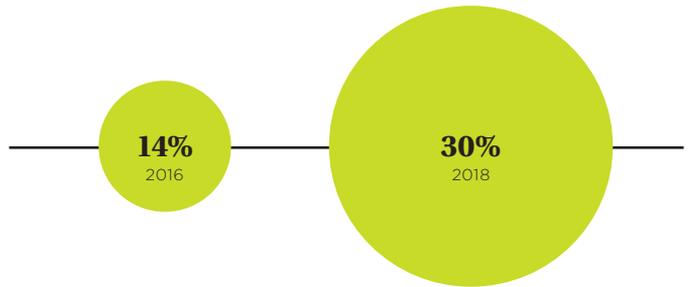
That’s small comfort to the 2%



■ Will own in five years
 ■ Currently own

Household takeup of smart devices in 2018

Source: EY



Demand for smart devices

Source: PwC

2025: 15 million

premises connected to full fibre

2027: 5G

deployed to most of UK population

2033: 100%

full-fibre coverage across all parts of the country

UK government telecoms targets

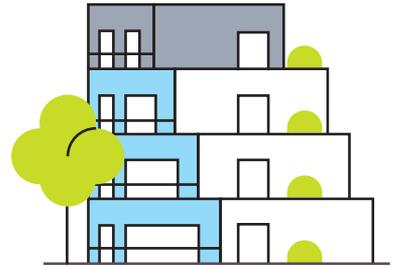
Source: Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

Good morning Paris: towards the personalised home

The future of connected homes lies in solutions personalised to habits, says Antoine Robin, Innovation Manager and Project Director at BNP Paribas Real Estate, which has recently launched Issy Préférence, a 60-unit connected apartment building on the outskirts of Paris.

A connected wake-up routine, he explains, is already compatible with an Issy Préférence home, with shutters, heating and coffee machine, for example, working in synchronicity. Other modes include 'departure', which prompts the building to close blinds, switch off lights and activate security features.

Issy Préférence allows you to incorporate devices such as connected thermostats, shutters, doorbells, TVs, lights, washing machines and more in a tech-agnostic, future-ready environment that you control with your smartphone. 'We installed the technology at no extra cost to residents, and the result is that almost 75% of them use the solution regularly,' Robin says.



of UK homes and offices – mostly rural – who get a download speed of less than 10Mbps, according to Ofcom, or the 5% who can't access super-fast broadband (30Mbps download speed). The picture is complicated by the fact that, video aside, many devices connected to the internet require only narrow bandwidth – but come with challenges of their own.

Take the mains-powered internet radio in your kitchen. It's happy enough on your existing Wi-Fi. A battery-powered sensor in your loft conversion's skylight, however, might struggle with Wi-Fi's power demands, and perhaps also its range. To solve these issues – and avoid a rewire in existing homes – new wireless networks are being developed that promise 'low power, wide access' (LPWA) suitable for internet-enabled devices, alongside a new iteration of Wi-Fi.

The national landscape will evolve, too. The government hopes that 5G, which should offer gigabits-per-second bandwidth, will be deployed to most of the UK by 2027. And 5G can enable the mission-critical wireless networking that future

automation will require, according to Rahim Tafazolli, Director of the 5G Innovation Centre and Regius Professor of Electronic Engineering at the University of Surrey.

'If you have video cameras or robots at home, and control them remotely, 5G will enable that automation aspect,' Professor Tafazolli says. 'If you are controlling a robot, it has to be very accurate and reliable. That's what 5G brings.'

What does this mean for property? The likelihood is that as it develops, the connected home will become yet another factor in what might be termed an 'infrastructure premium' for properties in areas with high population densities, where there will be more fibre links

and wireless access points. A property's connectivity will become part of its USP, alongside aspects such as the proximity of a railway station or an outstanding school.

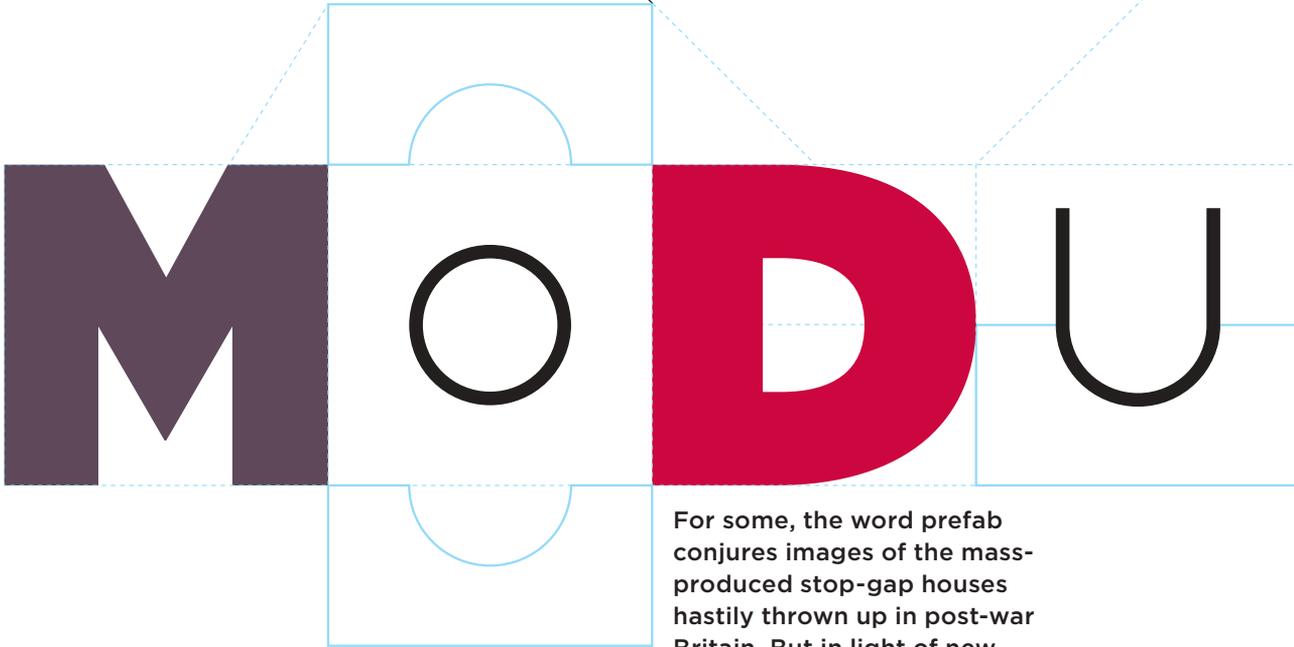
Ultimately, because connected homes have the power to serve basic human needs, it means they are here to stay, argues Mattin.

'The earliest adopters have been young people interested in tech,' he says, 'then we move to affluent professionals in metropolitan areas, and it will spread from there.'

But he adds, in the long term, there's no inherent limit to the number of connected devices: 'All homes will have these technologies, [just as] they now have a phone or a TV.' ♦

\\ **A property's connectivity will be part of its USP, alongside proximity to a railway station or an outstanding school**

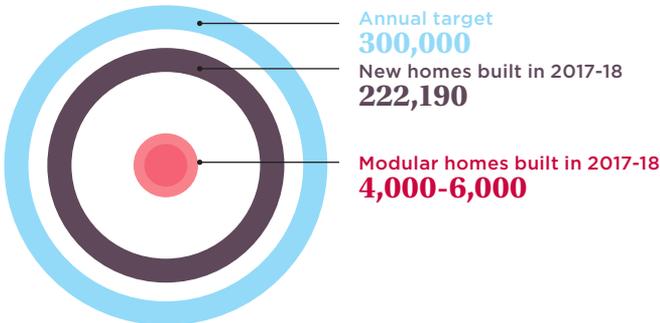
THE FUTURE IS

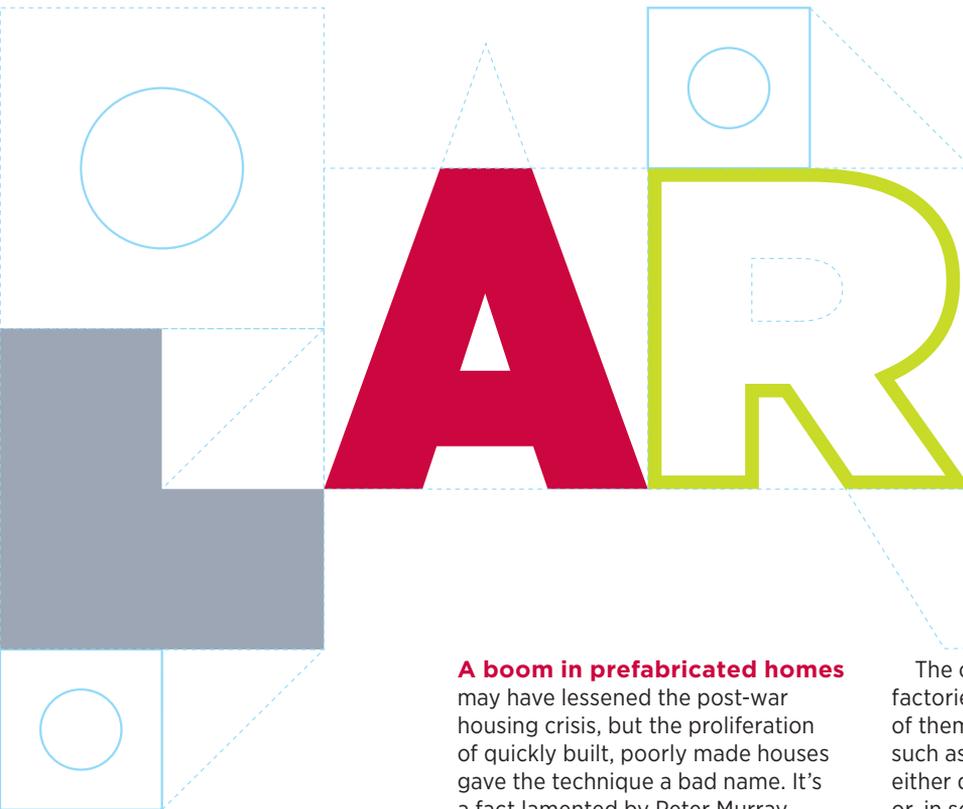


For some, the word prefab conjures images of the mass-produced stop-gap houses hastily thrown up in post-war Britain. But in light of new materials, manufacturing and construction methods, is it time to rethink our idea of a factory-made home?

Words \ Clare Dowdy

Housebuilding in England





25%

Potential reduction in costs for homes constructed off site compared with traditional methods

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

A boom in prefabricated homes

may have lessened the post-war housing crisis, but the proliferation of quickly built, poorly made houses gave the technique a bad name. It's a fact lamented by Peter Murray, Chairman of New London Architecture, in the organisation's *Factory-Made Housing* report: 'The failures of the 1960s were a huge setback for the concept of factory-made housing.'

But half a century or so on, offsite construction in the UK is having a renaissance. Thanks to modern technology, government encouragement and increasing interest from developers, it is starting to fulfil its potential. More and more homeowners and tenants are being introduced to the benefits of living in these buildings.

The fledgling sector has a multitude of monikers: prefab, factory-made, modular, MMC (modern methods of construction). These terms refer to a host of offsite building methods, from the creation of a window or wall to a frame, pod or entire volumetric floor.

The components are made in factories around the country, some of them owned by property developers such as Urban Splash. The parts are either delivered to a distant location or, in some cases, manufactured on or near the building site.

The latter is happening in Leeds. Developer Citu is making timber-framed housing in its own 7,400 sq m factory just a few hundred metres from its site on the city's South Bank, and will put up 520 low-carbon homes there.

For Chris Thompson, Citu's Founder and Managing Director, it's all about consistent quality. 'We want to get to a position of defect-free houses,' he says.

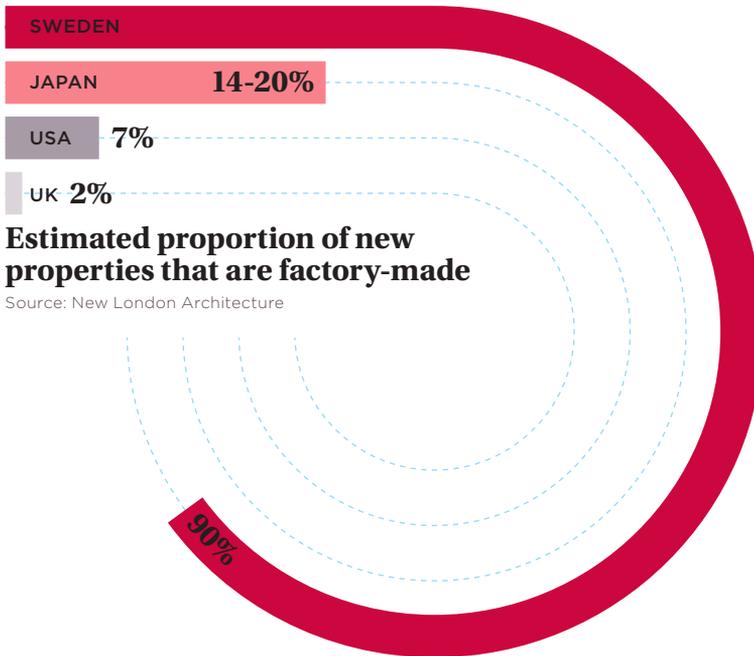
Many in the industry echo Thompson's belief that MMC's biggest selling point is its potential to improve standards.

'As technology and manufacturing combine forces, the new customer proposition will far outweigh doing business as usual,' says Mark Farmer, CEO of Cast Consultancy and author of the government's 2016 review of the housing industry, *Modernise or Die*. »

30%

Decrease in construction time for homes made off site compared with traditional methods

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government



Estimated proportion of new properties that are factory-made

Source: New London Architecture

‘It will be one that is underpinned by an “off the shelf” level of price certainty, more customisation and choice, high-quality architecture and design, and smart technology embedded into homes. All this will deliver a higher technical build quality and a better occupational experience than a traditional build. Customers will vote with their feet.’

Nicola Kelly, Partner at niche property venture Cube Haus, agrees: ‘The homebuyer can be assured that quality control processes in the factory mean that errors, redesign or correction can be done as the work proceeds and not at the end, where issues are usually hard to spot and only manifest themselves once the property is in use.’

Citu’s houses at its Climate Innovation District in Leeds are not the only ones trumpeting their sustainable credentials. ‘Increasingly, homeowners are interested in being eco-friendly from an economic standpoint,’ says John McLarty, National Head

of Planning at Strutt & Parker, referring to the potential for lower energy bills. ‘But they also want to have a lifestyle that fits with their sense of social responsibility.’

These homes are not just better made, they’re also quicker to build – good news for owners and buyers. Traditional onsite construction – with its ‘wet trades’, such as bricklaying – are at the mercy of the weather, delays in transporting materials, and poor communication between multiple contractors.

‘These are all very frustrating to homebuyers, with the resultant costs of interim accommodation while waiting for the project to finish,’ says Kelly. Offsite construction, on the other hand, reduces the noise, dust and nuisance to neighbours.

Some offsite developers offer a level of customisation that is rare with conventional construction. At Urban Splash’s House developments in Manchester, purchasers get a standardised shell with a staircase, kitchen and bathroom pod; they can then choose sizes, living spaces and layouts in a variety of arrangements.

In contrast to continental Europe, large-scale factory-made housing has been slow to get off the ground in the UK. But it’s now the disruptive force in housebuilding, and some of those factories are starting to deliver in greater numbers.

Financial services giant Legal & General has built a 51,000 sq m factory near Selby, North Yorkshire. This has the capacity to produce about 10,000 modules a year, which equates to around 3,500 homes.

Ilke Homes manufactures offsite affordable homes in partnership with housing associations and developers. Using MMC, its 25,000 sq m factory in Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, builds eight modular homes a day. The firm aims to build 2,000 new homes a year within the next 24 months, with plans to scale up to 5,000 homes a year in the next five years.

While MMC is getting plenty of attention, McLarty points out that ‘the uptake is still not yet there’.

However, Farmer believes ‘we’re finally entering the period when construction begins to transform itself’. If that’s the case, then perhaps it’s time to reclaim the term prefab. ♦

\\ We want to get to a position of defect-free houses

Today's offsite-manufactured homes are characterised by their high quality, precision engineering, digital design and eco-efficient performance... truly 21st-century homes

Nicky Gavron AM, Chair of the London Assembly's Planning Committee



Factory-made housing accounts for a small proportion of the homes built in London each year - less than 10% of total construction output

Source: New London Architecture

The micro wave

Hong Kong is famous for its 'micro flats' - and now they're taking hold in the UK.

Despite being controversially tiny - they are smaller than the 37 sq m (for a studio flat with a shower) that planning guidelines suggest - almost 8,000 were built in 2016, according to research from *Which?* magazine, after the government relaxed permitted development rules in 2013.

Micro flats offer just enough space to sleep and watch TV in and include a basic bathroom, fridge, microwave and kettle - but residents typically use a communal kitchen and dining area.

Most of the developments have been in London. For example, the Collective offers micro homes for short- and long-term lets in its 'co-living' developments in Canary Wharf and northwest London.

Electric dreams

Electric cars have proved popular in the luxury vehicles market and among taxi drivers in our cities' congested streets, but they have yet to go truly mainstream. That is going to change soon, says Deloitte, which predicts that the cost of electric and petrol car ownership will converge in 2024. In addition, the government is preparing legislation that will make it a legal requirement for new-builds in England to feature integral electric-vehicle charging points from 2020.

Green attitude

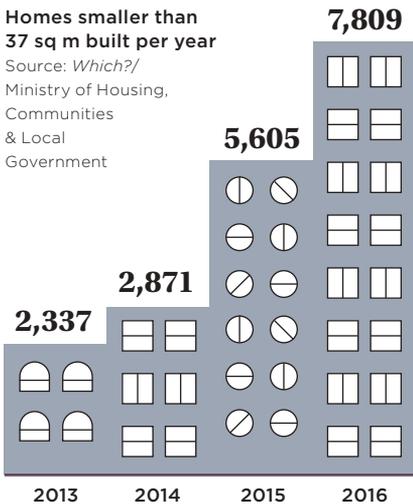
The increasing awareness of needing to take action to save the planet appears to be having an effect, *Strutt & Parker's latest Housing Futures report reveals. The most sought-after service among new property buyers is now recycling, beating porters, housekeeping and security.*

Smarter renting

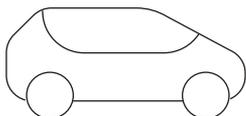
An American revolution is quietly taking shape in the UK as work gathers pace to construct purpose-built US-style 'renting-only' developments all over the country. Known here as 'build to rent', they are set to change the rental sector by offering professionally managed, high-spec apartments with amenities such as gyms or concierge services. Tenants pay a monthly fee that includes all bills and have longer, more secure tenancies, with no deposit or upfront charges.

Homes smaller than 37 sq m built per year

Source: *Which?*/ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

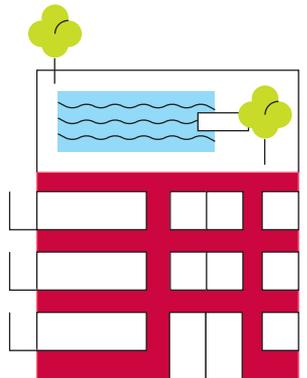


£2,040
Estimated cost to retrofit a charging point outside an existing property



£976
Estimated cost to install a charging point outside a new-build home

Source: Department for Transport



\ Property sales could take just three weeks

Speedier deeds

Despite its paper-bound history of deeds, the Land Registry is going digital and is leading a charge to make the UK a world-beater in home conveyancing technology. Its Digital Street project will, its latest pilot has suggested, help cut the time it takes to buy and sell a property from the current three months to three weeks.

The agonising wait between offer and exchange is one of the most frustrating periods during the homebuying process, as solicitors, paperwork, money and patience disappear into a black hole and purchases are at risk from gazumping and gazundering.

The Land Registry is working with more than 250 organisations – including law firms, banks and payment and identity technology startups – and other property companies, and says it expects the project to bear fruit in between two and five years.

Yo-Yo House

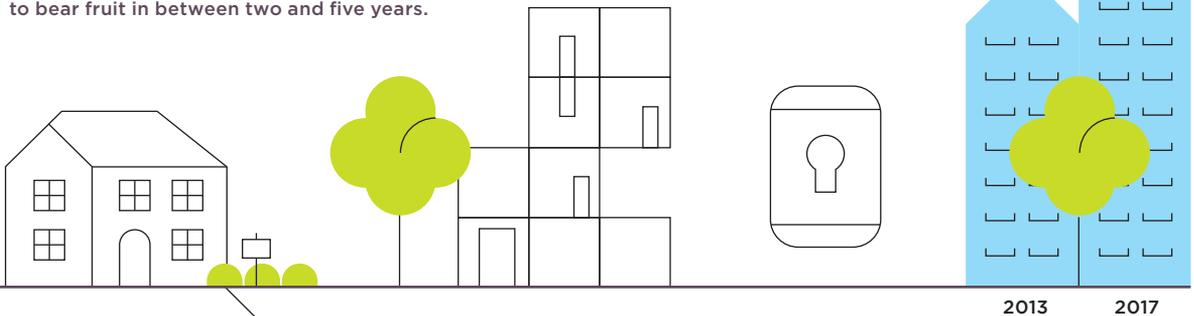
Homes with flexible walls and layouts are the next big trend, according to the latest *Housing Futures* report from Strutt & Parker. It highlights how, as people stay put for longer, we will increasingly need homes that can be easily adapted to suit changing circumstances and accommodate multi-generational households. This means movable walls and easy access to pipes and cables to enable a wholesale redesign of a property's interior.

No key, no problem

Door locks that use your smartphone and/or fingerprint to open your front door, rather than keys, are now available from companies such as Klevio and Yale. Keyless technology has been around since the early 2000s, but the recent quantum leap in smart home equipment has ignited the market. In particular, keyless doors are heralded as a solution to the problem of delivering goods when residents are not at home, as many of them also enable remote locking and unlocking.

Hot in the city

TV shows such as *Escape to the Country* imply that we all want to live in a more bucolic location, but research by Strutt & Parker suggests otherwise. Urban living is becoming more desirable, with 15% of respondents to a 2017 *Housing Futures* survey saying that they aspire to live in a city – up from 9% in 2013.



We highlight eight key shifts in lifestyle and technology that are changing the way we live in and sell our homes

Words \ Nigel Lewis

TRENDSPOTTING

As they approach retirement, many people find themselves asset-rich – perhaps owning a family house that, now their children have grown up and moved out, is bigger than they need – but relatively cash-poor. So what's the next step? For an increasing number, the answer is to downsize.

Selling a larger home to move into a smaller one allows homeowners to release equity to pass to younger generations, invest to fund the longer-term future, or simply spend on luxuries such as cars or holidays.

But downsizing can offer more than simply financial benefits. It can be an act of personal liberation, allowing older people to return to a lifestyle they put on hold during decades of parenthood, career progression and carrying the responsibilities of a family home.

In other words, downsizing can be the start of a new chapter, rather than the end of one. 'There's a generation of people with good levels of disposable income who want a lifestyle that reflects this,' says Stephanie McMahon, Head of Research at Strutt & Parker. 'Downsizing can make it happen.'

In 2017, Strutt & Parker's *Housing Futures: Platinum Generation* research revealed what downsizers want in their next home to improve their lives. For example, a third want lower maintenance and just over a

quarter require easier accessibility, such as lateral living rather than multiple staircases. Some 23% would like a smaller house with flexible space for guests or family when it's needed. Also, a fifth of respondents were seeking a smaller garden, which suggests that a balcony or shared and managed open space may be preferable.

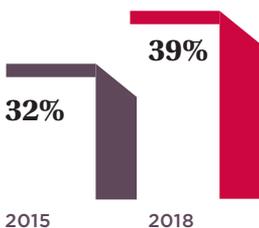
The idea of downsizing to obtain the ideal home for later life is gaining ground. A 2018 study by financial services group Legal & General found that 39% of UK homeowners aged 55 and over have downsized or are considering such a move – up from 32% three years previously.

Not only would downsizing make larger homes available for those who need them, but the downsizers would themselves secure a larger lump sum to use towards their enhanced lifestyle. The Prudential says a typical downsizer will net »

MEET GENERATION DOWNSIZE

Homeowners aged 55-plus who have downsized or are considering it

Source: Legal & General



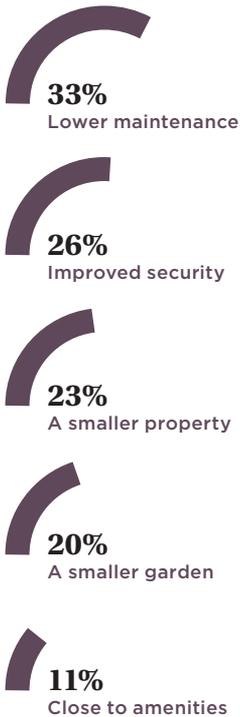
Many older people are choosing to downsize to unlock equity, move to their dream home and begin a new chapter in later life. But forget rural idylls or coastal seclusion – this group of silver city-slickers wants something more

Words \ Graham Norwood



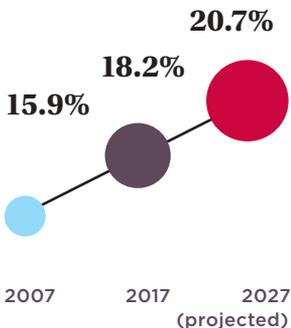
What the over-65s want from their next home

Source: Strutt & Parker



Proportion of UK population aged 65-plus

Source: ONS



£112,000 after buying a smaller home, with one in nine making more than £200,000. Owners of larger properties would in turn release even larger sums.

In years past, such windfalls might have prompted people to retire to a coastal haven or country retreat. Today, however, a growing number want to move to London. In the capital, active retirees can enjoy a rich cultural life alongside the infrastructure of excellent transport, super-fast broadband, hi-tech fitness facilities and well-resourced healthcare.

In addition, as the concept of 'older living' changes, moving to or remaining in London makes it easier for many people to continue working – as the dividing line between work and retirement is far more blurred now than in the past.

'The cliff edge of retirement is today more of a gentle incline, with people phasing out of work,' says Jon Greer, Head of Retirement Policy at investment solutions consultancy Quilter. 'Government predictions show a massive 50.5% of 65- to 69-year-olds will be economically active in 2067, compared to 10.2% in 1992.'

So what is the most liberating kind of property for the newly invigorated downsizer to enjoy in London?

'Some locations, especially new developments, are ideal for downsizers who don't want to compromise on quality or facilities but simply need less space and no garden to manage,' says Sarah Curtis, Director of London New Homes at Strutt & Parker.

She cites Television Centre, the former BBC TV headquarters in west London, which has been remodelled

into high-quality apartments with a Soho House members' club and gym, 24-hour concierge, private cinema, lounge and lobby.

'These facilities aren't aimed solely at downsizers, but a lot have bought there because they can see the quality of life the location offers,' Curtis says. 'The scheme is close to two tube stations serving three different lines, an overground station and a Westfield centre, and is conveniently located for Heathrow and the West. If you want an active lifestyle, you want to live somewhere like this.'

Another scheme that is set to be popular with the downsizing demographic is Triptych Bankside, which is being launched this autumn and is due to be completed in 2021. Close to the Tate Modern, Borough Market and Waterloo station, it's perhaps the quintessential central London destination for downsizers.

'A further advantage is that buyers can plan their move to a smaller but far more central apartment here,' says Mark Dorman, Senior Director and Head of London Residential Development & Investment at Strutt & Parker. 'They commit to buy off-plan now, and this usually means an uplift in value even before the purchaser moves in – plus, there's a chance to have a wider choice of fixtures and fittings.'

It's all a far cry from the idea of the thatched cottage or seaside semi, but retirees and downsizers in the 21st century are making a break from the past.

'Whatever their age, people want to live in places rather than buildings,' adds Dorman. 'We demand not just rooms, but facilities, services and a lifestyle of the highest quality. And now we can get it.' ♦

There is a need for housing that provides security, accessibility, community and care for individuals as they move into later life... Successful downsizing is about choice and not social obligation

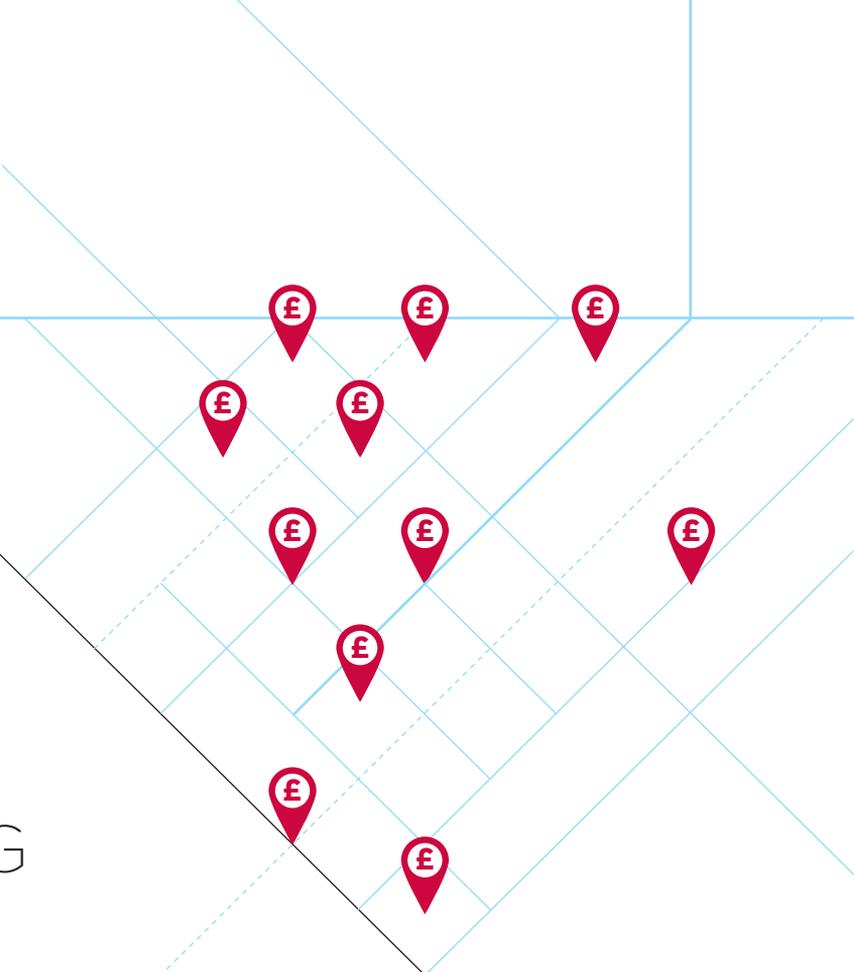
Strutt & Parker *Housing Futures: Platinum Generation*



More than a fifth of people who have downsized or are considering it say that it's best to do it when aged between 65 and 69

Source: Legal & General

SHORT-TERM THINKING



How have short-let marketplaces such as Airbnb and the wider sharing economy changed the way we think about our properties - and what opportunities does this new rental landscape offer for homeowners?

Words \ Nigel Lewis

From being a little-known

house-sharing platform created around a kitchen table in San Francisco in 2007, Airbnb has grown to become a global byword for holiday lets. In the UK, short lets are now booked more than 188,000 times every month through online platforms such as Airbnb, HomeAway and dozens of other similar sites, according to Airdna.

But while there is debate around what the growth of short-let websites means for housing markets, what's discussed less is the impact

they've had on people's attitudes to their homes. Many homeowners now realise that they can make extra income from their vacant property or spare room - a shift driven by both financial and lifestyle trends.

'People are beginning to recognise that leaving a home sitting empty is a missed benefit,' says Merilee Karr, Chair of the Short Term Accommodation Association (STAA) and founder of homestay company UnderTheDoormat. 'For example, the weak pound is persuading many British people to consider renting out their home while they're on holiday to help pay for their now more expensive overseas break.'

Indeed, recent research by Airbnb reveals that 63% of hosts reported that income from the site helped them pay bills they would otherwise have struggled to settle.

‘There are so many scenarios in which people who own properties will consider short lets,’ says Karr, ‘including, in some cases, the flexibility to help pay for their home’s running costs or the mortgage – while always seeking permissions where required.’

Another factor is that people are leading more mobile lifestyles. Retirees may have two homes, which means they’re empty half the time. Businesspeople and academics travel the world with their careers. Others have pieds-à-terre in cities that stand empty for long periods.

A survey by UnderTheDoormat suggests that more than half of all homeowners would consider short lets if they felt reassured that someone was looking after it while they were away.

‘For short lets to be successful, the apartment or house needs to be directly managed by an experienced hand if the homeowner wants peace of mind,’ says Kate Eales, National Head of Lettings at Strutt & Parker.

‘For example, homeowners need to be aware of local planning and leasehold rules about short-let renting, and it’s important to have someone meet the guests at the property before they gain access so there’s face-to-face contact.’

But short lets are not the only

way property owners can make money from the burgeoning sharing economy, as just about any vacant space can be put up for rent. For example, Stashbee allows people to let out garages for storage, JustPark provides forecourts to commuters, while Campspace offers gardens to ‘glampers’.

As more and more of us cash in on our unused property assets, the home-sharing trend is set to skyrocket as part of the wider sharing economy – which, PwC has predicted, will be worth £140 billion by 2025.

And there will be plenty of demand. Research by Warwick Business School reveals that 23% of the population has already used Airbnb, while 78% of 18-24 year-olds say they use sharing services. Indeed, the idea of ownership – of homes or otherwise – as a kind of status symbol is becoming increasingly obsolete, according to PwC, especially among young people.

But engaging in the sharing economy – whether as a host or a guest – isn’t limited to the youthful or tech-savvy. ‘It’s not just young people doing this,’ says Karr. ‘We see people of all ages – from first-time buyers to retirees – realising that their home can make them money.’ ♦



55%

of people in London would consider letting their homes out. This rises to 64% in central London

Source: UnderTheDoormat/Populous

60,471

Number of active short-let listings in London, July 2019

Source: Inside Airbnb

How property owners would use income from short lets

Source: UnderTheDoormat/Populous

74%

would put towards savings

45%

would put towards their rent/mortgage

44%

would spend on a holiday/visiting friends or family

42%

would put towards renovating/refurbishing

\ **People are beginning to recognise that leaving a home sitting empty is a missed benefit**

PAINT THE TOWN GREEN

As rooftop gardens and living walls make London's buildings increasingly verdant, could an urban farming revolution help cities to feed their growing populations?

Words \ Dominic Lutyens

We take it for granted that

we can feed cities easily and indefinitely. But with more than two-thirds of the world's population expected to live in urban areas by 2050, and global threats to food security (as outlined in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's special report, *Climate Change and Land*), governments, producers, planners and citizens are looking for more sustainable solutions to food production and supply.

It's a critical need, says Carolyn Steel, author of the book *Hungry City: How Food Shapes our Lives*. And she thinks we can resolve a looming crisis by learning from how earlier civilisations grew food.

'Our ancestors knew better,' she wrote in the *Architectural Review* in 2018. 'Ancient Athens understood the importance of scale in the city-state: if a city was too small it lacked the resources to defend its territory, too big and it struggled to feed itself. The ideal arrangement was for each citizen to have a house in the city and farm in the countryside.'

Today's urban consumers – in particular millennials – are increasingly interested in the provenance, health-giving qualities and environmental impact of what

they eat, according to Dejan Mitrovic, a director at the sustainability consultancy Department 22.

'We've seen a huge increase in interest and action taken by people and businesses,' he says. 'People realise that if we don't act immediately, it will be too late.'

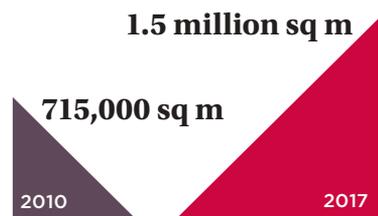
Neither is Steel defeatist: 'As we strive to lead good lives in a crowded, low-carbon future, we must learn to value food again,' she says. 'This would mean food markets, vegetable gardens and independent bakeries fighting back against supermarkets and retail chains. Our homes, gardens and workplaces would change, too, as we made more time for cooking and eating together and growing and preserving food.'

Ann Marie Aguilar, Director of Operations for Europe at the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI), also sees valuing healthy, natural food as an important step towards creating more sustainable cities.

'At IWBI, we advise on minimising the amount of processed foods introduced into communities by fast-food suppliers and »

Total area of green roofs in Greater London

Source: European Federation of Green Roof and Green Wall Associations/Greater London Authority





restaurants,' she says. 'We believe community gardens, allotments and farmers' markets impact positively on physical and mental health.'

Urban farming is now a global phenomenon. 'It is particularly prevalent in Dutch, German and Scandinavian cities and, increasingly, in the Far East and US,' says Mitrovic. 'Architects are beginning to incorporate food production into urban architecture.' He cites Swedish practice Belatchew Labs' proposal to establish edible cricket farms throughout Stockholm to provide an alternative protein source to meat.

Other forms of urban food production are mushrooming too. Rooftop gardening is popular in London's hospitality sector: for example, ingredients used at The Dairy restaurant in Clapham, south London, are grown on its roof, which boasts four beehives and numerous vegetable beds.

Hydroponics, meanwhile, involves growing crops in water and nutrients rather than soil. A leading exponent in the UK is Growing Underground, a subterranean farm co-founded in 2012 by Richard Ballard and Steven Dring that occupies 6,000 sq m of repurposed air-raid shelters, also in Clapham. It supplies products to Marks & Spencer, Tesco, Whole Foods Market and restaurateurs including Michel Roux Jr.

'Food production generates about one-third of carbon emissions,' says Ballard. 'By contrast, we grow herbs and salad mixes hydroponically using energy-efficient LED lights.'

'Grown underground, our products aren't affected by changing weather conditions, which often ruin crops, so they're of a consistent quality. As our farms are closer to the point of consumption, we use less transport, which reduces our carbon footprint.'

The success of Growing Underground mirrors the rise of vertical farming as a viable method of agriculture. Will Gemmill, Head of Farming at Strutt & Parker, believes that vertical farming – inside buildings, shipping containers and glasshouses using hydroponic or aeroponic methods – has significant advantages in terms of increased yield, reduced pollution and reduced packaging, and cites Ocado's investment of considerable sums into a vertical farming fund.

So is the spread of urban farming having an impact on the London property market? 'Traditional landlords are starting to consider leasing opportunities that address the growing desire for urban farming,' says Nick Hillard, Sustainability Director at BNP Paribas Real Estate.

In London, a 2008 policy of encouraging living roofs and walls has had a transformative impact on the city's roofscape, with the capital now accounting for more than 40% of all green roofs in the UK.

'London is forward-looking in its urban greening,' Hillard says. 'It has promoted green walls and roofs in developments. That said, we're still largely at a tokenistic stage: the comparative total yields for urban agriculture initiatives are still low.'

'However, there are good examples of buildings reconnecting with nature, such as London's high-rise 10 Fenchurch Avenue in the City, which has a roof garden with wisteria groves and wildflower areas open to the public.'

Whether all these are signs of a paradigm shift or a niche trend, it's clear that a new mindset is challenging the old ways of food production, resulting in cities that are greener in every sense. ♦

The benefits of vertical farming

Source: Strutt & Parker

10 times

the output of an outdoor farming system

95%

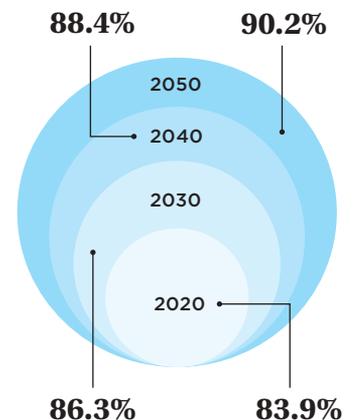
water savings compared with outdoor farming

85%

saving on inputs (such as fertilisers) compared with outdoor farming

Projected percentage of UK population living in cities

Source: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division



\ There's a trend in cities towards vertical farming, which has several advantages: it produces fresh produce all year round; it causes less pollution; and it uses less packaging \

Will Gemmill, Strutt & Parker Head of Farming



The UK imports 62% of its fruit and vegetables from the EU, highlighting the need for solutions such as urban farms to help reduce our reliance on imported produce

Source: European Commission



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