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Alex Michelin: Why London's super-prime buyers are no longer driven by location

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The significance of postcodes is fading, explains the influential luxury property developer, while demand for unique, individualised homes is rising.



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Location, Location, Location" is the age-old adage used across the property industry, implying that the most important aspect to consider when purchasing a home's is its locale. At Valouran, we believe this notion is becoming less and less relevant in London.

In today's super-prime market, buyers are increasingly prioritising design, amenities and lifestyle over the once dominant factor of location. Features more commonly associated with country homes, such as outdoor space, peace and serenity, lower pollution levels, wellness, and volume of space, have now become hugely important factors in most buyers' decision making.

Traditional prime central London areas, such as Knightsbridge, are struggling to meet these evolving demands, pushing super-prime purchasers to explore alternative neighbourhoods that can offer "more" and provide the balance of luxury, tranquillity, and urban convenience that they now demand.

While sought-after postcodes will always remain desirable, not least for their history and status, peripheral areas with more space to better accommodate our modern lifestyles are taking precedence over simply acquiring a trophy address which lacks, say, outside space.

Consequently, more village-like neighbourhoods such as Notting Hill and Hampstead that provide the best of an urban lifestyle but with excellent green spaces and more generous footprints and less pollution, as well as access to top-tier schools, are taking a larger and larger slice of the market. As a result of this shift in preferences, purchasers are being drawn to larger developments in less central areas which can offer comprehensive amenities, ranging from state-of-the-art wellness centres to landscaped gardens.

Whilst the significance of postcodes may be fading, we are finding that the demand for unique, individualised homes is rising. Clients at the super-prime level now pursue residences that offer distinctive features and architectural character – homes that stand out from the often-homogenous properties in many luxury developments. Recognising this demand is the reason Valouran is developing heritage structures, from The Chapel in St. John's Wood to an exceptional site on The Bishops Avenue set within 2.2.5 acres of mature gardens. By combining modern luxury and historical significance, we are able to curate homes with a distinct character, which appeals to buyers who don't want to follow the crowd.



Outdoor space, peace and serenity, lower pollution levels, wellness, and volume of space have become hugely important factors, says Michelin



The Chapel in St. John's Wood

The importance of location has been reduced by the impact of global connectivity and remote working, as (U)HNWIs are less tethered to specific offices and locations for work. They therefore now appreciate the benefits of gaining back so much travel time between meetings to enjoy the lifestyle offerings that these outer postcodes offer. London is a world-leading city, and to attract top talent, it must continue offering homes that draw industry leaders to lay their roots and base their lives. To account for this growing demand in less traditional, non-central London locations, incorporating dedicated home offices within our Valouran developments provides buyers with the flexibility to work from home in style and comfort.

Another factor influencing super-prime purchasing habits is the scrutiny being placed on size, driven by regulations in boroughs such as Westminster where stringent planning restrictions on larger properties – prohibiting those in excess of 200 sq. m. – has led to a spike in demand for spacious stock, ultimately creating a supply shortage. The shift towards this type of new legislation – with the likes of Kensington & Chelsea following suit – underscores the importance of well-designed, spacious properties and highlights that purchasers may need to look beyond prime central London to find them.

“ Neighbourhoods such as Notting Hill will also become increasingly popular...offering that neighbourhood feel, a greater range of amenities, and healthier living

Areas such as St. John's Wood, Primrose Hill and The Bishops Avenue exemplify this shift towards liveability, better quality of life and align with buyers' desires for unique, sizable homes that offer a blend of urban convenience and suburban tranquillity. Looking ahead, we believe neighbourhoods such as Notting Hill will also become increasingly popular among (U)HNWIs, offering that neighbourhood feel, a greater range of amenities, and healthier living, will prove to be better investments over the next decade.

In summary, as buyers navigate a landscape shaped by evolving preferences, the emphasis on design, amenities, space, green living and individuality is set to redefine the way in which (U)HNWIs approach where they purchase in London. The traditional metrics of super-prime London are being redefined, opening up emerging neighbourhoods that offer a better quality of life.



Valouran's forthcoming project on The Bishops Avenue in north London