

Property

Doing all right Dot Dot Dot property guardians mix affordable living with community work



Get outta town!

Buy cheap and still get your fix of London by commuting in

More and more people are heading out of London when they're ready to buy their first home. Most of them, though, aren't giving up on city life completely; in 2014, 80 percent of them bought within commuting distance of London. It's simply a case of getting more bang for your buck. 'First-time buyers leaving the capital spend £192,000 on average, compared to £248,000 spent by those buying in London,' explains Johnny Morris, head of research at estate agents Hamptons International. 'That means they need about £10,000 less in stamp duty and deposit and pay £250 less a month in mortgage payments.' For that money, you'll usually get an extra bedroom, too. Somewhere for mates to stay when they want to escape their London rabbit hutches at the weekend.

Guard somewhere

Property guardianships can mean low rents in cool areas says **Catherine O'Dolan**

Londoners need cheap homes. Empty properties need protection from vandalism... Hey, let's solve two problems in one with live-in 'guardians' to look after the properties for a low rent!

The idea of property guardianship is over 20 years old. Places aren't always glamorous and you have to move on at short notice, but it's big business and an increasing number of young Londoners have done their time flitting from place to place.

To some, it's more of a necessary evil than a fab-flat trend. 'Property guardianship is a product of the housing crisis,' says Katharine Hibbert, founder and director of Dot

Dot Dot Property Guardians. 'In an ideal world, everyone would have long-term, affordable housing.'

Katharine decided to put her energies into making property guardianship as good as it could get for landlords and guardians alike. In addition to minding duties, Dot Dot Dot Property Guardians do at least half a day's volunteer work a week.

Dutch-born Margriet Schuring, 30, has been a Dot Dot Dot property guardian since 2013, and currently resides with another guardian in Balfron Tower, a high-rise designed by architect Ernő Goldfinger, awaiting refurbishment. 'Being a property guardian is a great

way of living in London and being part of a real community,' she says. Properties are unfurnished, so it's up to guardians to make themselves cosy. 'I've become expert at creating a home quickly with a few accessories,' she says. 'You just have to remember that it's temporary: you never know when it will end.'

To be a property guardian you need to have proof of income, be 18 or over, and have no criminal record. There is also a rigorous interview process. But, says Hibbert, 'the main thing we ask of our guardians is to be great neighbours.' www.dotdotdotproperty.com

Five top first-time buyer destinations

The most popular locations new buyers head for, and their average spend.

Dartford	£210,000
Caterham	£338,000
Slough	£282,000
Hemel Hempstead	£240,000
Luton	£182,000

FIVE RENT HOTSPOTS

MOST WANTED

GOLDBORNE ROAD

The super-stylish grillhouse West Thirty Six is about to open at 36 Goldborne Road. Expect classy all-day dining and lounge chic to hit affordable Zone 2 rentland.

£346pw

SHAD THAMES

You're so close to London Bridge you can walk to work and sidestep all that Thameslink construction disruption plus you're handy for the brand new morning yoga sessions on the glass floor walkway over Tower Bridge.

£410pw

HARROW

Harrow is about to get almost half a million quid to spend on improving bus service reliability, new cycle projects and 20mph zones. Well posh!

One-bed flat £230pw

STRATFORD

Get Living London, who rent the former athletes' flats at East Village are offering a year's free gym membership for tenancies signed in January, for occupation by April 30. The perfect excuse to get into the Olympic spirit.

£380pw

PECKHAM

SE15: thinking London's postcode. Its latest idea is a New York High Line-style green walkway along a disused railway. A la north London's Parkland Walk? Nice.

£254pw

Rent price examples are for a one-bed flat, from www.rightmove.co.uk. Stratford price from www.getlivinglondon.com.

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