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London's new live-work flats: 'co-living' is the capital's new property trend as shared spaces slash costs

With high living expenses and commuting hassles, young Londoners are opting for shared live-work spaces to meet like-minded people, boost productivity - and slash costs.

DAVID SPITTLES | Wednesday 16 March 2016 08:37 GMT | [0](#) comments



Sharing the space: young Londoners in Moorgate, EC2, at WeWork's serviced co-working offices for start-ups, fledgling entrepreneurs and small businesses

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A new property trend is taking hold in London – “co-living”. While it sounds like a revival of the counterculture of anarchist collectives and hippy communes of the Sixties and Seventies, co-living is something quite different.

It is an imaginative, modern response to high housing costs and commuting hassles, while also chiming with the green agenda and concerns about work-life balance.

Co-living projects allow mostly young Londoners to live and work under one roof and be part of a like-minded group happy to share space, facilities and services.

Peabody, the big housing charity, is the latest developer to launch a scheme, unveiling 580-home Fish Island Village in Hackney Wick, east London.

This is a collaboration with The Trampery, which provides “incubator” work studios for design and digital start-up companies, freelancers and early stage entrepreneurs, and which supports more than 500 jobs.

Creative spaces in central London

Providing serviced co-working spaces for start-ups, small businesses and entrepreneurs, WeWork has nine buildings in central London and is soon to launch a WeLive project, with apartments above offices. For residents and workers, it will operate like a private club, with member benefits and social events. Fitness classes, communal dinners, cleaning and laundry will be co-ordinated through a mobile app.





Commute? Not us: WeWork already provides co-working spaces and is soon to launch WeLive, with flats above London offices



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Co-working spaces in London's arty east end

As London's population swells and pressure on the transport system increases, city planners believe "integrated" schemes like this have a huge part to play.

"We're taking everything we've learned over six years building workspace communities and shaping it into a place where people live as well," adds Trampery founder Charles Armstrong, a Tech City pioneer who has also been commissioned by the Norwegian government to create the blueprint for an innovation district in Oslo.

Homes are being built above and alongside the workspaces at Fish Island Village. Peabody says they will be full-size apartments, not micro flats, available for rent, sale and shared ownership. Residents will also be able to make use of a theatre, bar, café and "fabrication workshop", say for 3D printing.

Fish Island is a 50-acre industrial zone next to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford. Already 600 artists' studios and

workshops are clustered in the area, and what was a virtual no-go district for home buyers is now a promising new frontier, with eager developers swooping on sites and estate agents plotting the future.



From £1.5 million: atelier-style houses in Dereham Place

Atelier-style houses at Dereham Place in Shoreditch offer vertical living over six levels, with a basement, ground-floor workshop or studio plus bedrooms and living spaces on the upper floors. Prices from £1.5 million. Call Frank Harris on 020 7600 7000.

Flexible homes in the west

Dandi Living is another company offering live/work studios, available to rent in Hounslow. The spaces are designed to be flexible, with beds that can be raised to ceiling height and desks that fold away into walls. The diverse range of residents includes a chiropractor, professional dancer, engineer and university researcher. Rents start at £750 a month. Call 020 7266 4424.

North London's 'hybrid' homes

Unsurprisingly, more developers are building “hybrid” homes for live/workers. Lawrence Square, Tottenham, offers two-bedroom apartments across two floors, one a designated “work” area with 600sq ft of self-contained space. Owners have to pay business rates on this work area, in addition to council tax on the residential element. Prices from £629,995. Call Bellway on 0333 202 5175.



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Live-work in south-west London

Crane Mews in Twickenham offers a rare chance to buy warehouse-style commercial properties that come with planning permission for conversion into a bespoke live-work space. The 19 two-storey semi-shell properties range up to 1,650sq ft and are set behind a gated entrance leading to a cobbled pedestrian mews with direct access to the riverbank and a shared garden.

New architecture has been grafted on to old workshops to create double-height units with big windows, exposed brick walls and steel staircases. Prices from £430,000. Call estate agent Featherstone Leigh on 020 8744 0595. Architect Dr Frances Holliss, who heads up the Workhome research project at London Metropolitan University, advocates more flexibility in the design of homes – architecture that allows the layout of a property to be adapted during its lifetime.

Her team has produced a pattern book of designs to help, taking the best examples from the past, such as the artists' houses in Talgarth Road, Hammersmith, as well as the best contemporary spaces, and devising transformable pieces of space-efficient furniture.

The growing live-work trend

The boom in self-employment is fuelling demand for live-work property. The number of Britons working from home rose by 800,000 to 4.2 million during the last decade.

For the 16-34 age group, the boundaries of the workplace are loose, with many working from a café, restaurant or library as well as home or an office. Currently, 35 per cent of all Londoners work from home for some time each week, and nearly nine per cent work full time from home, according to the Office for National Statistics.





From £225 a week: The Collective rent covers wi-fi, utility bills and council tax

A Confederation of British Industry survey shows more than 50 per cent of companies allow staff to work at home sometimes, believing this boosts productivity. The typical London commuter faces a 38-minute journey to the office every day – 227 hours per year – and spends more than £2,000 a year on travel costs. Tim Dwelly, director of Workbox, which provides “hub buildings” where home workers can meet clients and network, predicts live-work communities will become a far bigger part of the urban fabric in cities and take root in rural towns and villages. The West Country is a particular hotspot.

“Broadband makes it much easier to run a business from home,” he says. “High property prices, commuter stress, work-life balance and, above all, global warming are pressing issues that live-work can address. We just need to overcome issues of isolation and remoteness.”

"A hotel lifestyle" in north-west London from £225 a week

A “campus” idea, similar to co-living, is behind The Collective, a 323-unit development in north-west London, opening in May. Ambitiously, it has been built at Old Oak, amid the Park Royal industrial zone, an area earmarked for transformation into a new district with a transport superhub.

Clad in shiny metal, at first sight the canalside building looks like a Premier Inn hotel, and is aimed at Generation Rent. Compact studios

and “two-dio” two-bedroom homes with bathroom and kitchenette are set above the large communal spaces and coworking offices for 400 people.

Reza Merchant, The Collective’s founder, insists it is more than glorified student halls. “We’re offering the convenience of living in a hotel plus all the social and networking advantages of being part of a community. And it’s affordable and only 20 minutes on the train to the West End.”

Rents start at £225 a week and include wi-fi, utility bills, council tax, concierge, 24/7 security, room cleans and linen changes. Residents will be able to make use of an on-site launderette, bike racks, gym, spa, rooftop terrace, cinema and games room. Plus there will be an all-day food offering. Call 020 7183 5478.

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