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Old docks will be reborn and, with lessons learned, showpiece homes will become part of a new district for Greenwich, reports **David Spittles**



£535,000: three-bedroom flats in Greenwich Square, a new town centre scheme. Through Savills (020 7531 2500)

A first for London

Cruise liners will glide into a glamorous wharf with new homes

LESSONS have been learned from the recent "underwhelming" regeneration of stretches of the Thames. The latest plans for new waterfront districts are more ambitious and imaginative. They are bringing back to life "lost" riverbanks, not just by building new homes, but new communities that include cultural centres and improved transport links.

The waterfront should be a destination for Londoners to enjoy. Today's planners want to avoid the previous sterile gated enclaves created for rich buyers that were set apart from surrounding neighbourhoods.

A NEGLECTED STRIP
The latest district to be launched will be the nine-acre site that forms part of the neglected strip of riverbank between Greenwich town centre and Greenwich Peninsula, where the O2 Arena sits.

For years the so-called "Thames path" has been inaccessible there, blocked by depots and disused wharves. But Greenwich, with its maritime past, will have a new chapter in its history when work starts next month at **Enderby Wharf**, where 770 homes will be built alongside the capital's first cruise line terminal, along with a hotel, shops and river taxi pier.

An adjacent showpiece scheme is **River Gardens**, formerly Lovell's Wharf, occupying a dramatic bend of the river. The bright green laser marking the meridian from the Royal Observatory cuts through the 12-acre site, which was snapped up several years ago by reclusive billionaires Richard and Ian Livingstone, whose trophy assets include Strand Palace Hotel and Cliveden House in Berkshire.

The brothers appointed renowned architect firm Squire and Partners, which has designed a series of apartment blocks built at a right angle to the river and separated by waterside squares and gardens (described as "breather spaces"), tennis courts and a landscaped promenade.

It is an inspired design, resulting in no obvious front or rear side to the

development and allowing open views from all the apartments.

Inside too, the emphasis is on space and natural light. Bigger-than-average flats have floor-to-ceiling windows and some apartments have two balconies to maximise the sweeping views. Italian kitchens and bathrooms are a grade above the norm. Apartments are also pre-cable and have reinforced walls for plasma televisions. Storage cages are for rent in the underground car park.

Eventually there will be more than 600 homes in eight buildings, plus restaurants, crèche and supermarket. Prices start at £300,000. Double-height penthouses are coming later. Call 020 3747 6111.

Enderby Wharf was first developed in the 18th century by a whaling company and was later used to manufacture the first transatlantic telecommunications cables and a cross-Channel petrol pipeline to support the D-Day invasion.

Barratt is building the residential element, while the cruise liner terminal is being developed by Morgan Stanley Real Estate and West



A river runs through it: River Gardens, Greenwich, will be a showpiece scheme, and a village in itself, on a dramatic bend in the river

Welcome aboard: 770 homes and a new passenger liner terminal are being built at Enderby Wharf, between Greenwich town centre and the peninsula

Properties. Cruise ships docking in the heart of Greenwich will be a game changer, allowing up to 3,000 people on board to visit all the local attractions, a huge commercial boost.

BUOYANT DEMAND
With its post-Olympic glow and recently-conferred Royal Borough status, the old naval town is sailing forward at full speed. Already a Unesco World Heritage Site – because it is the "finest and most dramatically sited architectural and landscape assembly in the British Isles" – the town centre is getting a facelift too. The medieval market square is being upgraded and prized Georgian buildings refurbished in a Marylebone-type makeover that aims

to spruce up Greenwich's retail and residential draw.

New Capital Quay, a "waterside village" of 980 homes being built in former dock basin moments from Cutty Sark, has a central boulevard and plaza that has created a new vista of the Thames. A curving 14-storey tower has duplex penthouses with glazed winter gardens and the complex will have an art gallery, museum, crèche, design studios, bars and restaurants. Prices from £340,000. Call 020 7620 1500.

Joined up thinking by planners has resulted in a new pedestrian bridge across the dock which links a broken riverside path. This has helped open up a closed zone where a major new cultural venue is to be unveiled next month. The 38,000sq ft gallery is

part of **Paynes & Borthwick Wharf**, a prized Victorian edifice built in 1860 for the manufacture of marine boilers which were loaded on to ships through magnificent Italianate arches. The restored wharf will house the gallery plus exhibition, commercial and retail space, while glass-walled penthouses are being built on top.

INTERACTIVE ART
Futurecity, a cultural regeneration agency that works with developers to deliver art projects, says the gallery will focus on "digital art and interactive experiences". In total, the scheme has 247 homes. Prices start at £250,000. Call 020 7087 5000.

Elsewhere along the Thames, water-based projects seek to use the

river for housing and leisure and promote the river as a transport artery.

One idea is for "floating villages of modern, eco-friendly houses", where residents have security of tenure and own the property and the water below them on 50-year leases. These permanent villages are a far cry from the makeshift, bohemian houseboat communities that have sprung up along London's canals and rivers. They would be linked by pedestrian and cycle bridges to parks and islands, transport interchanges, leisure and cultural attractions.

Royal Docks, which has more waterfront than Venice, is the most likely area for these new communities, according to London mayor Boris Johnson.

Paynes & Borthwick Wharf: 247 homes, right, and a 38,000sq ft gallery will feature in the transformation of a former marine boiler works

Right: the latest apartment building at New Capital Quay is helping open up the Thames path, until now blocked at Greenwich by disused factories and wharves

Right: almost 1,000 new homes are being built in a distinctive group of new riverside buildings at New Capital Quay, on the Thames between Deptford and Greenwich



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