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London's only 2026 super prime development is fit for a king — and more than 100 horses

The former home of The King's Troop and one of the capital's most visible ceremonial military bases is being turned into a new top-end residential neighbourhood. Arabella Youens puts on a hard hat for an early visit.



BY ARABELLA YOEENS PUBLISHED 5 DAYS AGO



*Special permission was granted by Buckingham Palace for the main thoroughfare through the square to be named King George VI Avenue.
(Image credit: St John's Wood Square)*

Anyone walking down the upmarket high street of London's St John's Wood on February 6, 2012, will have noticed something unusual taking place. All 109 horses that make up the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery were walking to their new £16 million, purpose-built home in Woolwich Garrison. The day marked the end of over 200 years of military presence in NW8 and 2,500 school children, along with 400 veterans and locals, lined the route, which was decorated with bunting and flags.

Alongside its operational roles, the King's Troop carries out ceremonial duties such as firing gun salutes and providing a gun carriage for state funerals. Being based in St John's Wood was handy as Buckingham Palace was a 40-minute hack from the barracks. Soldiers and their horses could regularly be seen riding in the leafy streets of the affluent neighbourhood and the sound of their reveilles was a feature of the community. The site had been home to a military riding school since 1825 and used exclusively by the Royal Horse Artillery since 1880. According to one report, in the mid 1850s, 228 men were living at the barracks — with a single bath.



The gun carriage leaving St John's Wood barracks for the funeral of George V, in 1936.
(Image credit: Smith Archive)

After the Second World War, the artillery was mechanised, but George VI wanted to keep a troop of horse artillery mounted and so formed the King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery, in 1947. When Elizabeth II acceded to the throne five years later, she insisted it should remain in her father's name in recognition of her father's special interest in the Troop. Today, the Troop takes precedence over all other regiments and parades and it's always on the right of the line of the British Army.

The lease on the barracks, granted by the Eyre Estate, expired in March 2012 and the 5.5-acre site was put up for sale. It was bought by the late Malaysian entrepreneur Ananda Krishnan — the force behind Kuala Lumpur's iconic Petronas Towers — for a reported £250 million with a view to developing it into a new residential space in one of his favourite parts of London. Following several years in planning and development, sales at the 120-home residential square will launch in the autumn.



The former riding school will act as a private residential club for owners including sports facilities, private dining areas, a screening room and concierge.

(Image credit: St John's Wood Square)



Squire & Partners have designed a contemporary interpretation of townhouses that hopes to connect the development the area's existing Georgian and Victorian architecture.

(Image credit: St John's Wood Square)

At the heart of St John's Squire is the Grade II-listed riding school, which has been carefully preserved and will form the community's residence club. The structure was completed by Royal Engineers in 1825 and has had numerous visits from members of the Royal Family, including Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, Elizabeth II, Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh, Diana The Princess of Wales, Princess Anne and Prince Charles before he became King.



Elizabeth II inspecting the horses in the tack room at St John's Wood Barracks in November 1962.

(Image credit: Mirrorpix/Trinity Mirror)

Former officer and Honorary Colonel of the King's Troop, Major General Matthew Sykes, is taking an active role in shaping the future of St John's Wood Square and was a serving officer when many of these visits took place. He remembers the final visit from Elizabeth II in 2011, where she underlined the word King's Troop in the visitor's book. When he heard that a sale of the land had been agreed, Sykes approached Krishnan to see if the history of the site could be woven into its new chapter. 'I had an idea that the company was going to build something very special in a very special part of London. The Royal Horse Artillery was stationed there for over 100 years and I wanted to ensure that, in 100 years, people would understand that history.'

The initiative paid off. Architects Wilkinson Eyre (co-founder Jim Eyre is chairman of the Eyre Estate family trust) and heritage experts Walter Lilly have spent just under three years restoring the riding school. The structure had to be secured to allow a team of Irish miners to dig a basement underneath; upon completion, it will be home to a 65-foot swimming pool and spa. The vast, 20-metre-long oak beams that span the width of the building — which Sykes remembers seeing from the floor of the school, having been thrown off his horse for the nth time — were cleaned and repaired while the roof was laid with nearly 13,000 Welsh slate tiles. A clock tower, which previously had just one face, was sent to specialist restorers Smith of Derby and now has four new faces. Two new street names are being introduced to the maps of London: King George VI Avenue and King's Terrace — an exercise which required special dispensation from Buckingham Palace.



More than 300 trees and over 270 plant species make up the gardens and central garden square all designed by Andy Sturgeon.

(Image credit: St John's Wood Square)

'They aren't paying lip service to the history of the site,' continues Sykes. 'That's obvious from the tremendous care that's been put into the restoration of the riding school, which looks better than it ever did. To me, it feels like the team is trying to create somewhere that people will be proud to live — somewhere that has soul.'

The scheme is spearheaded by Sir George Iacobescu, former chairman of Canary Wharf Group, and led by CEO Gareth Stow. While the launch is likely to draw some comparisons with Chelsea Barracks, Stow is quick to point out the differences. 'It's a much smaller site for one thing [Chelsea Barracks is 12.8 acres], there are only 120 properties compared with over 500 at Chelsea and it's also a very different part of London. While everyone knows Chelsea, St John's Wood is a bit of a hidden gem. Those who live there love it for its fresh air, proximity to Primrose Hill and Regent's Park and quiet, residential streets — and the fact that it's understated.'

Knight Frank recently identified St John's Wood High Street as the second best in the UK after Wimbledon Village. The popular American School in London is just opposite the main entrance to St John's Wood Square and is anticipated to draw buyers to the new homes. 'The area attracts sophisticated, well-educated and well-travelled residents who like the fact that they aren't in the hustle and bustle of areas like Mayfair,' says Stow.

The architecture and scale of the new houses, designed by [Squire & Partners](#), deliberately ape the terraces of Georgian and Victorian properties that surround the site and over half of the site is made up of gardens designed by Chelsea award-winning designer [Andy Sturgeon](#). 'We are custodians of a special site in a beautiful area of London,' says Stow. 'As an asset, we know we've got to respect the opportunity. We think that we're setting the highest standard of quality for a new residential development.'

Sales at St John's Wood Square will launch in the autumn of 2026. [Visit the website for more information.](#)