

PRESS RELEASE

The benefits of building up – London’s tall towers & their lessons for the future

Last week the news that 436 buildings*¹ with 20 storey’s or more could be in the pipeline for London grabbed the headlines.

Yet, in 2014 Londoners’ took a pragmatic view about the capital’s changing skyline and the proliferation of buildings over 20 floors. A poll conducted by New London Architecture and Ipsos Mori into Londoners’ views on tall towers found 46 per cent agreed that tall buildings have made London look better. Only 25 per cent disagreed.*²

The challenge that faces London is undisputable: a growing population that needs to be housed and a shortage of buildable land. The most practical solution is to build up rather than out. A solution that is considered to work in a number of successful cities around the world including Hong Kong, New York and Singapore.

As David Salvi points out “the longer lasting impact of this building frenzy, which started in 2010 and is set to last a decade, will not be determined by how many towers are built in this economic cycle, but by the quality of the architecture that is created and left for the next 100 years and future generations”.

So what can these Tall Towers offer and why do people either love them or hate them?

The Barbican Towers are an excellent example of how high rise living appeals to many. The Towers were built in the late 1960s and according to Barbican specialists Hurford Salvi Carr they have always been highly sought-after. Many flats sell without ever going to market and bidding wars are common. A typical situation played out in February this year when Hurford Salvi Carr were asked to sell a client’s 28th floor tower apartment. Within 7 days offers had made above asking price, the final sale went to sealed bids and an offer was accepted at well over 2 million pounds*³.

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SALVI

CARR

61 Alie Street, Aldgate, London E1 8EB

020 7680 1888

As David Salvi points out, the three Barbican Towers*⁴ are an example of some of London's earliest tall buildings and offer important lessons for the design of future high rise apartments:

1. The integration of on-site facilities such as concierge services, cinema, gym and cultural attractions has been highly successful and is increasingly in demand. Today some developments are able to offer hotel style service offerings. All of these services are designed with the residents in mind and the key is to find the right balance of sustainable services for the residential community at the right cost.
2. The new towers tend to offer a range of services, as mentioned in point 1 above, these bring many benefits to individuals and the community, however, services come at a price and service charges need to be carefully considered when new towers are in the planning stage.
3. Transparency and good project management is needed around Planned Maintenance. 25 years after the Barbican was completed the lifts needed replacing. Even though this was an anticipated event it was expensive for the residents. There were additional maintenance charges because the complex did not have sufficient funds in its reserve fund to meet the costs of 3 new lifts in each tower, which highlights the importance of solid management and planning.
4. High Level Balconies – It is rare to ever see anyone out enjoying their balconies at the Barbican Towers. It is usually far too windy above 12 floors. New towers tend to avoid this problem by enclosing the space within winter gardens, which make the most of the light and space but without exposing residents to the elements. According to Branch manager Alex Myles at Hurford Salvi Carr's Aldgate branch the apartments in the Goodman's Fields development at Aldgate are an excellent example of how this concept can work well.
5. External Maintenance – Over the past 55 year The Barbican has mitigated expensive external maintenance by pioneering the use of hand finished rough concrete. Some of the new towers currently under construction have adopted contemporary cladding systems which are still to see the test of time.
6. Temperature regulation: The 21st century towers usually come equipped with comfort cooling and sometimes fixed glazed panels. Residents need to be aware that these

add additional annual maintenance charges and be aware of any contingency plans for their replacement in approximately 15-20 years' time.

What is clear is that the quality of the design of each new tower needs to be given careful thought in order to create attractive architecture and engaging ground floor uses within intelligent buildings, which are designed to be easily maintained. As David Salvi points out "it is critical that London's designers and planners learn from the successes and problems of existing tall buildings. It is only in this way that London will ensure its future tall buildings are fit for purpose"

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References and Footnotes:

- *1) New report by New London Architecture and GL Hearne property consultants - 2016
- *2) 2014 London's Growing Up – NLA Insights ISBN 978-0-9927189-1-6
- *3) Hurford Salvi Carr were asked by the client to market the apartment for a number of weeks to make sure a level playing field was provided to all interested parties and everyone was given the opportunity to put forward their best offer.
- *4) Build in the late 1960s each Barbican Tower has 43 floors. They were listed as a Grade II listed buildings in 2001

For more information or comment on the content of this press release contact David Salvi on david.salvi@h-s-c.co.uk

For general press enquiries or interviews contact: Hazel Sharman on hazel.sharman@h-s-c.co.uk or 020 7680 1888

About Hurford Salvi Carr:

Hurford Salvi Carr are an independent firm of property advisors and development consultants who specialize in the Central London property market. They have been selling and letting residential and commercial property in London since 1996 and pride themselves on their customer service and in depth knowledge of the local markets that make up the West End, City and Docklands.

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