

Homes & Property | Cultural hubs

Right: at the One Tower Bridge luxury residential scheme, the 900-seat Bridge Theatre is on site, founded by former National Theatre giants Sir Nicholas Hytner and Nick Starr

THE smell of greasepaint and the roar of the crowd have inspired generations of performers. Now house builders are harnessing the thrill of live music and drama, art, and exhibitions to lure buyers to London's new cultural hubs.

A series of new museums, theatres, cinemas, art galleries and performance spaces are proving popular in new-build areas, helping to establish a community, offering opportunities for people to meet and establish a sense of identity. Culture in all its guises crosses the divide for new renters and buyers, singles and families on a range of incomes enjoying and sharing events.

STRATFORD AND THE 'EAST BANK'

The most ambitious example of the trend is at Stratford, where a £1.1 billion vision for a cultural hub at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is rapidly taking shape. By 2023 the park will be home to the London College of Fashion and the BBC's music-recording operations, as well as a new 550-seat Sadler's Wells theatre.

Last month details of the V&A's plans for east London were revealed — two interconnected sites providing a new museum and a research centre, which will also open in 2023. The V&A is working with the Smithsonian



PHILIP VILE



Stratford: Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park will be home to London College of Fashion

The art of the community

Institution on the project, which it promises will "reinvent the idea of a museum" with 250,000 exhibits from the V&A's fashion, textiles, furniture, theatre and performance collections, plus paintings, sculpture, ceramics, glass, design, architecture and digital.

"I think it is the final piece of the puzzle that was missing in Stratford," says Simon Hart, sales manager of Foxtons. "At the moment if residents want to go to a museum or see a show they have to go to central London."

Hart believes the "East Bank" will help draw more people towards Stratford, both to visit and to live. "With the V&A and Sadler's Wells they have chosen two pretty established cultural brands, which you would hope would draw people to the area," he says. "It will be a big attraction, as well as the wider Olympic Park."

Cultural amenities also help give new homes developments a bit of buzz: imagine the concrete wasteland Barbican would be without the Barbican Centre. And Hart points out that with most first-time buyers now well into their twenties or thirties, a bit of sophisticated entertainment might hold more appeal than a nightclub or lots of bars.

At **New Garden Quarter**, a mix of rental, shared-ownership and private sale homes — 471 in total — is being built on land used as car parking during the 2012 Olympics. The first residents moved in last month and the site will be built out by next

Museums, theatres, cinemas and galleries are making new communities feel like home, says **Ruth Bloomfield**



From £1,909 per month: furnished rental flats at Manhattan Loft Gardens near Stratford International station

summer. Prices for one-bedroom flats start at £435,000 (telfordhomes.london/microsites/new-garden-quarter). Meanwhile, housing association Notting Hill Genesis has shared-ownership homes on offer, priced from £101,875 for a 25 per cent share of a one-bedroom flat (nghsales.com/sales), and Folio London (foliolondon.co.uk) has rental homes from £1,615 a month for a one-bedroom flat, or £1,870 for a two-bedroom flat.

Stratford has very much embraced the whole build to rent concept, and at the upscale **Manhattan Loft Gardens**, 248 furnished apartments will be available from the start of next month. One-bedroom lofts start at £1,909 per month, with two-bedroom lofts from £2,403 (manhattanloftgardens.com).

At **London City Island**, on the Leamouth Peninsula at Canning Town, just over 1,700 new homes are being built on a 12-acre site, with prices starting at £420,000 (londoncityisland.com).

The first residents moved in two years ago, and as part of the mixed development, which includes an outdoor pool, social club, gym, deli-