



THROUGH THE KEYHOLE

NorthWest catches up with Mark Pollack, Director of Aston Chase, to hear about the company's latest office in Hampstead Garden Suburb

How was Aston Chase established?

Aston Chase was established in 1985 by myself and Richard Bernstone as a niche agency specialising in high calibre property in central and northwest London and we have built a reputation as a market leader in Regent's Park, St John's Wood, Little Venice, Primrose Hill and Hampstead.

What is the company ethos?

The Aston Chase ethos is based on integrity and professionalism. We have built our business on a commitment to offer a highly dynamic bespoke service with innovative marketing strategies and we strive to make all transactions as stress-free as possible.

Why did you decide to open the new Aston Chase Hampstead Garden Suburb office?

Richard and I both live in Hampstead Garden Suburb and are passionate about the area. Having witnessed the growth in capital value of property in the area and the growing sophistication of the residential market, we felt there was a natural synergy with our Regent's Park office. Indeed, over the years, we have often found our numerous overseas clients to be highly attracted to the lateral residences occupying large plots found in Hampstead Garden Suburb, Kenwood and Highgate.

We felt that there was a gap in the market for a niche agency focusing on a high level of customer service and, to this effect, Richard and I are personally overseeing the launch of the new office so that we can ensure these integral values of

Aston Chase will be carried on in our new environment.

What are your favourite things about Hampstead Garden Suburb?

I love Central Square and the Lutyens architecture surrounding it. I have some very fond – albeit backbreaking – memories of teaching my children to cycle without stabilizers there. Also, I am lucky enough to live backing onto the Heath Extension and it is just a fantastic open space. I'm sure anyone who lives in the area would agree that it is like having your own private park in your backyard.

What are your thoughts on the local market at the moment?

It is a very tough market. There is always limited property for sale because people are committed to the area and will often only move if they can simultaneously find a property to move to. There is also a financial gulf between type of houses that can make it very difficult for some people to move, which is both a strength and weakness of the market.

What is your advice for prospective property buyers?

Be prepared to compromise in Hampstead Garden Suburb – it is worth it. There is so little for sale that the goal has to be first getting into the market. Also, don't be put off by some of the unfair bad press that the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust attracts. They are intrinsically involved with retaining the integrity of the area and the role they play is largely

responsible for Hampstead Garden Suburb being as desirable as it is.

Aside from the new office, what is the latest news at Aston Chase?

We have also been concentrating on growing our new developments activity and have been involved with a number of exciting transactions. We recently acquired a site in Winchester Road, Swiss Cottage for Galliard Homes, for whom we have pre-sold 85% of the units. We are also presently handling the sale of 15 town houses for Vanderbilt Properties at The Collection, the former Saatchi Gallery site in Boundary Road, St John's Wood. Furthermore, on behalf of Derwent London plc we are handling the former Virgin headquarters site known as Portobello Docks which is due to be launched in autumn 2007. We also feel it is important to contribute something back to the community and, to this effect, we are proud sponsors of the Avenue Road, St John's Wood 'Perfect Day' street fair which is raising money for the disadvantaged children who attend the Swiss Cottage School. On a more personal note, I will be participating in the ING New York Marathon in November to raise money for Rays of Sunshine Children's Charity, followed four days later by a 600km cycle challenge on behalf of Norwood in Vietnam & Cambodia.

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