

Welcome to the **autumn** edition of the Aspire magazine...

Buying and selling a 'home' can be a very different process to buying or selling a property which is purely an 'investment'. With markets constantly changing and evolving it is increasingly important to ensure you are getting the best advice possible over every aspect of the market including obviously the price, the marketing and of course the timing of any move.

At Aspire we are proud of the experienced staff we employ who will be only too pleased to offer their advice not with a view to telling you what we think you might want to hear but what in our opinion is the best advice for your property sale or let. As we have often said before it can be a highly personal and sometimes emotional experience and it is, above all other things, the person that deals with your transaction that will make the difference. It is this personal relationship that is often key, so if you are thinking of selling or letting a property this autumn please do contact your local branch.

After a very busy start to the sales market this year, in part due to the additional stamp duty on second homes that was being introduced from April, the late spring and summer market inevitably slowed with the referendum also having its impact. Viewing numbers and subsequent offers are down 11% on the same period last year but these numbers appear to be settling down as the year progresses. Inversely the lettings market has been growing with viewings and subsequent offers up by 35% on the same period last year. Getting the right local advice is clearly going to be key in the coming months.

Alongside the specially chosen selection of properties across SW London in this latest edition of our magazine you will find the usual array of excellent local business that we like to feature. In this issue we have a fascinating interview with the guys behind Growing Underground, London's first and only subterranean farm. We caught up with Vanessa Birley whose passion for flowers and nature goes back to her childhood. Over in Fulham we spoke to Alice, Giovanni and Michele who recently opened their neighbourhood Italian restaurant C'Alice. These are just three of the many local companies we are featuring and we would love to continue to unearth and provide exposure for many more.

We also feature two members of those aforementioned staff. Tracy Mitchell, a senior lettings administrator who takes us through the process of letting a property for the first time and Sandra Murray, one of our branch managers who talks about her passion for property and how the Tooting/Furzedown branch is keeping her on her toes.

We hope you enjoy reading this magazine but as always we couldn't produce it without your help. If you are a local producer/retailer/artist etc. with a story to tell then please do get in touch. If you would like to see your property featured in the next edition then please contact your local branch manager who will be delighted to help.

For full details of all associated lettings fees for the properties advertised throughout our magazine, please visit our website: aspire.co.uk



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Aspire in the community

Aspire's Raynes Park office provides a pit stop for RideLondon spectators.

On Sunday 31st of July thousands of cyclists descended on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park for the much-anticipated RideLondon 2016 event. Now in its fourth year, the cycling marathon follows a 100-mile closed road route, which weaves through London before heading out into the Surrey countryside. Most cyclists taking part choose to do so for charity and within the last few years, RideLondon events have raised a whopping £29 million for good causes.

On the day itself Central London was teeming with lively spectators, cheering on participants from the sidelines as they whizzed past in excellent form. As well as braving the hot weather, the riders had to face the same steep countryside climbs that Olympian cyclists followed during the London 2012 Olympics.

With a portion of the route passing by Aspire's Raynes Park office, staff were given a front row seat on the action. Branch Administrator Georgina Griffiths says, "we threw open our doors and welcomed spectators

in for a refreshing soft drink and some shade from the sun, whilst kids were treated to balloons and professional face painting." People were grateful for the reprieve from the heat, and it was a great opportunity for the team to meet locals and integrate themselves in the local community.

What is Prudential RideLondon?

Prudential RideLondon is the world's greatest festival of cycling, with more than 100,000 cyclists expected to participate during the weekend of 28-30th July 2017.

It combines the fun and accessible element of a free family ride in central London with the excitement of watching the world's best professional cyclist's race. Taking a cue from the London Marathon, amateur cyclists also participate by riding a 100-mile or 46-mile challenge on the same closed roads as the professional men, with the added incentive of raising money for good causes.

RideLondon

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RideLondon events have raised a whopping £29M for good causes.





Aspire team get hands-on at St Matthew's Church of England summer fun day.

On Saturday the 18th June it was St Matthew's Church of England Primary School's Summer Fun Day, where members of the community and parents flocked to the school grounds for an action-packed afternoon of food, games, and fun. As expected it was a big hit for kids and adults alike, with the all-day sunshine keeping everyone in high spirits.

The event was organised by the school's top-notch PTA team, headed up by the wonderful Caroline Chrome, in order to raise money for the school. After another sponsor dropped out, Aspire decided to lend a few pairs of hands, with eleven members of staff giving up their time to roll up their sleeves get stuck in with the rest of the volunteers. Our duties ranged from manning the stalls, to selling raffle tickets for the prize-packed raffle draw.

The PTA team had ensured there was something for everyone on the day, with face painting, fair games galore, and numerous food stalls overflowing with delicious treats. For the youngsters the star attraction was undoubtedly the bouncy castle, whilst for adults it was the well-stocked bar and sizzling on-site BBQ.

Thanks to the large turnout of kids, parents and teachers, the event managed to raise in the region of £10,000! Giving St Matthew's Church of England Primary School a very respectable sum for the school and children.

If you would like **Aspire** to support your event in 2016, please contact us to make enquiries. Many of our staff live locally and supporting both local schools and charities is, we believe, a vital part of the role we play in the community as a significant local business.



An agricultural **revolution** has started in Clapham

After two years in the planning, entrepreneurs **Steven Dring** and **Richard Ballard** teamed up with Michelin-starred chef **Michel Roux Jr** last year to launch **Growing Underground** - London's first and only subterranean farm.

Located 33 metres beneath the streets of Clapham, the farm is set in an extensive underground tunnel network that was previously used as a Second World War bomb shelter. Large enough to fit 8,000 people, it's been fitted with state of the art lighting, hydroponics, a specially designed ventilation system and a sophisticated irrigation system, that enables the farm to harvest an array of fresh herbs, salad and vegetables such as pea shoots, rocket, red lion mustard, pak choi and miniature broccoli. In fact twenty individual herbs are being cultivated and supplied to markets, wholesalers and the public, via doorstep delivery service Farmdrop.co.uk.

What about the quality of the produce?

Steven and Richard explain, "our crops are grown year-round in the perfect, pesticide-free environment that these forgotten tunnels provide. Thanks to the controlled environment, each tiny leaf tastes as amazing as the last. The constant temperature and absence of pests contribute to the exceptional quality of our produce."

"Our hydroponics system uses 70% less water than traditional open-field farming, and all the nutrients are kept within the closed-loop system, removing any risk of agricultural run-off."

In addition to the fantastic quality of their food, the duo is not short on quantity either. The depth of the tunnel means that the temperature remains at a steady 16C, allowing crops to grow 52 weeks a year without any need to worry about the seasons, frost or drought.

Labour of Love

For Steven and Richard, Growing Underground is more than a business. It's a passion that offers a viable solution to the pressure of urban population growth in a way that has zero effect on the environment. In order to achieve this, Steven and Richard only work with green suppliers, and prioritise sustainable growing practices.

Steven explains, "our hydroponics system uses 70% less water than traditional open-field farming, and all the nutrients are kept within the closed-loop system, removing any risk of agricultural run-off." He adds "As we're limiting food miles by keeping our produce local, our leaves can be in your kitchen within four hours of being picked and packed."

This is exactly what attracted Michel Roux Jr, Michelin-starred chef and co-director of Growing Underground to get involved. A long-time Clapham resident, Roux heard about the ambitious project and needed little convincing to visit. He says "there's a growing demand for sustainably, locally grown produce in London. And although I thought Steven and Richard were absolutely crazy, when I visited the tunnels and sampled the produce they are already growing down there, I was blown away." He continues "I've enjoyed working with the team on the development of the offering and I am confident that these amazing herbs will be extremely popular with Londoners. They'll certainly be a fixture on the menu at Le Gavroche and I am developing a recipe with

Growing Underground herbs at its centre."

And Roux hasn't been the only one to see the potential in the project. Former Mayor of London Boris Johnson, who supported the original idea for the farm through the LSDC's London Leaders business start-up programme, said about the project: "This is a fine example of the dynamic start-ups that are helping London lead the world in green business innovation. I wish Growing Underground every success."

The London Leaders programme was established by the London Sustainable Development



Commission in 2008. The programme aimed to bring together some of the most exciting and innovative new leaders in sustainable business, helping them to demonstrate sustainability in action in the City.

What's next?

Where do the two West Country entrepreneurs plan to take the business next? "Eventually we'd like to go beyond underground to grow vertically – use the tiny footprint of a high rise and convert it into a farm," says Dring. "Urban farming will be the farming of the future." In terms of what else is happening out there, although there have been stories of rival projects, such as mushrooms growing in rail tunnels below Oxford Street, "they are just concepts at the moment", says Dring. "We are way past the concept stage. But if other people are going to do this then fine – we want this to spread.

The final word goes to Richard Ballad: "We're hoping Londoners will support us by buying our produce. This is about sustainably feeding the city from within the city and contributing to our community through food, jobs and education'.

Where can you buy some?

If you're looking to get your hands on Growing Underground herbs, you can order them from Farmdrop.co.uk or visit Ted's Veg at Borough Market, the London Farmers Market, County Supplies London, West Green Foods, 4DegreesC, or P&I wholesalers.

Growing Underground

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growing-underground.com

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© Emma Davies Photography

When Vanessa's not arranging flowers, she's painting them, or creating bespoke illustrations, textiles and products inspired by them.

Floral designs that create special memories

Vanessa Birley is a floral artist that specialises in chic floral designs for weddings, events, photo shoots, businesses and homes.

From her base in South West London, Vanessa spends her days creating stunning floral arrangements for the likes of The Royal Albert Hall, Nonsuch Mansion, Wimbledon Park Golf Club and Pembroke Lodge. When she's not arranging flowers she's painting them, or creating bespoke illustrations, textiles and products inspired by them.

Vanessa's passion for flowers and nature goes back to her childhood. She explains, "growing up, my parents were both keen gardeners, so I spent a lot of time watching them in the garden and picking

flowers, much to the annoyance of my father." But these special times laid the foundations for her future career. Vanessa's love of flowers carried on into her university years when her Design degree introduced her to a new way of expressing the beauty she saw in nature – painting. Naturally creative, she began by painting for her own enjoyment, until friends and family started buying her paintings. She now paints original artworks, designs logos and wedding invites, all inspired by the natural world. She added illustration to her tool-belt a few years ago, creating bespoke bridal bouquet illustrations as special wedding



involved in the process. Illustrating a bouquet is a great way to capture its beauty, symbolism and significance, as well as evoke memories of a couple's special day."

Vanessa spent years focusing on her painting, but knew she wanted to be a florist one day and now enjoys creating with both her paintbrush and stems. It took a good few years to get there, but on her 'landmark' 40th birthday, she decided it was "now or never". She did some vocational floristry training with premiere London florist McQueen's, during which time she was "fortunate enough to have trained with some of the world's best flower experts, including Holly Chapple, Ariella Chezar and Christian Tortu." She then did 18 month's work experience for McQueen's at Claridges. After a year with an online florist, Vanessa launched Vanessa Birley Florals, in 2013.

Vanessa's first job was the wedding flowers for her cousin, but word soon spread and she started getting requests for gift bouquets. The business has gone from strength to strength ever since. Today, with the support of three freelancers, Vanessa focuses on floral arrangements and styling weddings and events. Her work is gaining traction, both with the press and wedding bloggers, having featured in Rock My Wedding, BLoved, Wedding Flowers & Accessories, Flowerona, Boudoir Collective and Want That Wedding. Her work has also been featured on Countryfile Diaries.

Alongside the weddings, she creates weekly floral arrangements for businesses such as Chelsea

keepsakes. She says, "One of the joys of how I spend my days is re-creating the beauty of a bride's bouquet through illustration. Whether it be one I have designed, or one that's been created by the hands of another, there is something immensely honourable about being

Harbour Club, Neil Norton Design, Wimbledon and TLC Therapy Lounge, Earlsfield. She also creates bespoke arrangements for client's homes.

Flower Workshops

Vanessa also loves sharing her passion and knowledge about flowers, colours and scents with others by running workshops throughout the year. She partners with Emma Davies Photography to create memorable workshops such as, Style and Shoot for Florists, Photography and Nature Journaling, Instagram Styling, Terrarium Making as well as Floral Styling for Events. She also organises some workshops in conjunction with interior design expert Mathilde Kubisiak. Vanessa says, "Mathilde and I teamed up to host a series of styling and florally inspired workshops". Held in Wimbledon Park, they hosted an exhilarating afternoon with advice for styling a small area of your home, spring de-cluttering tips and a demo of how to make your own terrarium with participants creating their own individual and unique creations. Vanessa also runs her own workshops which focus on bouquet making and flower arranging. She enjoys inspiring and collaborating with people to find their moment of creative inspiration. She says "when people allow themselves to get in that mindset, flowers are an easy way of expressing creativity. It's lovely to see that and be part of their experience."

When asked what makes her business unique, Vanessa shared that she tries to use only British flowers and is proud to be a British brand. She says "I love being able to buy locally and incorporate their scent in a vase of flowers. You often miss that with imported flowers. I prefer to source locally."

The future's bright

The future is looking rosy for Vanessa. She's currently writing a book with two others about British flowers, and is planning more workshops in the lead up to Christmas. She would also like to combine her two businesses. She explains, "I do art and illustration under my Vanessa Birley Design brand and floral design and arranging under the Vanessa Birley Floral brand. I'd like to bring the two brands together so it's a more cohesive business." Finally, Vanessa gave her top tip for flower enthusiasts, without hesitating she said "choose seasonal flowers. There's so much on offer, there's no reason not to."

Vanessa Birley Florals

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Bespoke Breton shirts



Mon Breton, an online fashion start-up, is the brain-child of husband and wife team Charles and Isla Heller. Operating from their flat or ‘atelier’ in Clapham, the couple source authentic Breton shirts from Brittany and embroider unique design on each one by hand, to ensure every product is unique.

The concept for Mon Breton was born out of a comment Isla made about not being able to find anything to wear to work. She was Commercial Editor at Harpers Bazaar at the time. As Charles explains, “Isla said she was jealous that I got to wear a suit to work, as she never knew what to wear. She wanted a ‘go-to’ outfit that she could wear when nothing in her wardrobe inspired her. I suggested she wore her Breton shirt with some skinny jeans and kitten heels and she came up with the idea of customising the shirt to give it a unique twist. She spent the night sewing a heart into it, wore it to the office the next

“When you’ve got the Harper’s Bazaar team wanting your product, you’re onto a good thing.”

day and came home with five or six orders from colleagues.”

This was the start of the business. As Charles said, “when

you’ve got the Harper’s Bazaar team wanting your product, you’re onto a good thing.” And the idea grew from there.

The entrepreneurial couple sourced Breton shirts from vintage shops and eBay and started experimenting with bespoke designs for friends and family. But word quickly spread and demand grew to the point where they needed a professional supplier. Charles approached a small, family-run factory in Brittany that were keen to collaborate, and the business has gone from strength to strength ever since.

While Charles’ passion for the business is evident, he admits it hasn’t been easy. Both he and Isla run Mon Breton alongside their full-time jobs, so every spare moment is spent embroidering shirts, dealing with customers and updating the website. Charles and Isla also got married on New Year’s Eve last year, so much of 2015 consisted of juggling wedding planning, their full-time jobs and the ever growing demand for their Mon Breton products. They even postponed their honeymoon in order to meet the expectations of their customers. But it’s a labour of love. Charles loves chatting with customers and collaborating with them to understand exactly what they want from their Breton, because as he says “a Mon Breton is such a personal gift, it’s important to get it right.”

Steep learning curve

It’s been a steep learning curve for the couple, as Isla, who takes the helm on the creative side of the business, had to learn to embroider from scratch, while Charles, who manages the business and marketing side spent months learning about marketing and web design. But it was all worth it. Mon Breton is gaining attention from reputable fashion bloggers and the national press. The first magazine to feature the brand was Time Out, which resulted in 3,000 website hits in one day. Mon Breton has also featured in Look, Harpers and Boat International, and will appear in this month’s edition of Cosmopolitan.

What makes Mon Breton unique?

Charles doesn’t hesitate when answering this. “There



are other people doing Breton shirts, but no-one else is doing Mon Breton shirts. Every Mon Breton shirt is hand-embroidered by Isla and at the beginning even the labels were sewn on using an old Singer sewing machine. No two shirts are the same. And that’s what

sets us apart. The fact it’s done by hand means you can have whatever you want on there. A Mon Breton shirt gives you the opportunity to own an iconic, universally-loved design with a unique twist that’s personal to you.”

Ethically minded

It’s important to Charles and Isla that they know exactly where their products have come from, and that they’re ethically managed. As Charles says, “Mon Breton shirts haven’t travelled halfway round the world to reach you from a country with highly questionable labour laws. As the crow flies, our family-owned factory is only a couple of hundred miles south of Battersea.”

What’s next for Mon Breton?

The future’s looking bright for Mon Breton. Charles and Isla are extremely passionate about it, and are

“There are other people doing Breton shirts, but no-one else is doing Mon Breton shirts. Every Mon Breton shirt is hand-embroidered by Isla...”

dedicated to making it work.

They want to build on the success they’ve had so far with new product lines and ever more intricate

methods of customisation. They want to expand further into the male market, and have expanded their range to include T-shirts and more colours.

They are also working with a family-owned business in Yorkshire to add customised hand-woven baskets to their product range. The baskets, with their genuine leather handles, are entirely hand-crafted by a team of mothers in Morocco, who work from home whilst looking after their children. This enables them to earn a fair living wage whilst providing childcare. The baskets are then hand painted in the UK.

*Mon Breton are kindly offering readers of Aspire magazine a unique discount. If you visit their website and order a Mon Breton shirt by the end of October, you can get 10% off your order and free shipping by typing in **LoveMonBreton** at checkout. If you have any queries please don’t hesitate to email them.*

Mon Breton

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Stress free children's party planning...

Launched at the beginning of 2016 by mum of two Joanne Kay, The Humble Hostess is a small Balham based business that takes the stress out of children's party planning for busy parents.

From her base in Nappy Valley, Joanne creates and sells themed party boxes that contain all the supplies needed for a successful children's party. The items are customised according to the size and theme of the party. It is in essence a handmade party in a box. And this is Jo's USP. She says "everything comes in one neat box. It saves parents hours of hunting round for matching supplies, so they can focus on enjoying their little one's special day."

NCT Inspiration

Jo came up with the concept following a meeting with her NCT group, where all the parents were planning their children's third birthday parties. Jo says of the experience "it was the first time any of us had organised parties for our children and it was completely overwhelming. We were all reaching the end of our maternity leave, on the verge of returning to busy jobs, but were amazed at how

time consuming and difficult it was to find attractive, quality party supplies."

The group ordered items from various suppliers, but were disappointed when some didn't arrive in time for the parties or were different sizes or colours to what had been ordered. Jo knew she could do better, so decided to take the plunge and start her own business. For those that knew her, it wasn't a huge surprise however, as the party-planning seed

"Parents want to organise special parties for their children, but life is hectic with young children. Juggling childcare, running a home and working leaves little time for party-planning."

"All they have to do is give me a brief and I do the rest."

had been planted in Jo's head some time ago. Having previously worked in international development for a London University, she spent a lot of time travelling abroad. Whenever she was in the US, she was amazed by the huge range of children's baking and party accessories for sale – none of which were easily available in the UK. She was also impressed by the lavish nature of the baby showers, christening parties and birthday parties.

Jo believed there was a gap in the UK market for a high quality, personalised party planning service and set about organising focus groups with local parents, to find out what they would want from such a service. The parents confirmed what Jo suspected - that the days of the DIY children's party at home with balloons and musical chairs are long gone. Today they want to indulge their offspring with much more elaborate affairs, from movie-themed parties to speciality sporting events.

But as Jo also found out, the problem was lack of time. She says "parents want to organise special parties for their children, but life is hectic with young children. Juggling childcare, running a home and working leaves little time for party-planning." So she came up with a simple solution: an all-in-one themed party box, containing key party supplies, such as decorations, invitations and table wear, along with hand crafted keepsakes, including a framed print,

bunting and cupcake picks, which are all personalised with the child's name and age. The boxes also include party bags, water bottle wraps and stickers which parents can use to personalise other decorations. Jo also offers a full party coordination and planning service, for those parents that are really time strapped. Jo says "all they have to do is give me a brief and I do the rest."

In order to determine what goes in each box, Jo has an initial consultation over the phone to discuss the theme, colour scheme and any other specific requirements for the party. She then creates an initial design for the bunting, cupcake picks, table confetti, stickers and food label cards. She then follows up with a second consultation, where clients are given the opportunity to make amendments to the design. When the final design is agreed, Jo personalises the items and sends them in a unique box set, with co-ordinating table-ware. She also includes an information sheet in each box with ideas for cake designs, party games, food ideas and party bag gifts to match the theme, as well as links to high street or online shops, to save parents hours hunting round for all the extras needed to put together a great party.

To add further value, Jo regularly blogs about cake making, alternative party bag ideas, party themes and uploads videos on how to set up the decorations to create a party centrepiece.

What's next for the Humble Hostess?

Jo credits the success of her business so far partly to the people of Clapham. She says that, "being based in Nappy Valley has been hugely important to the business. Everyone has been really interested in what we are doing. The support and feedback from the local community has been invaluable."

With the business at such an early stage, there's lots of potential for The Humble Hostess. Jo plans to add personalised invitations and thank you cards to her range and is offering a bespoke service for those looking for particularly unusual or unique parties.

Jo is extremely passionate about the business. She says "I love creating themes, seeing my ideas come together and getting the photos back from our photographer. And I love the feedback I get from customers as to how easy it was to put together their party and how their child had a great time."

The Humble Hostess

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An eye for **exceptional** customer service



Clair Vision is a friendly designer opticians based in the heart of Balham. Well established on the high street, it has been providing high quality eye care to the people of South West London for almost four years. In fact the business will celebrate its fourth birthday in September.

“We’ve worked hard to establish relationships with the locals and our approach seems to be working.”

Claire worked in the corporate world for 20 years as a dispensing optician and retail director, and spent four years as a trouble shooter, turning around stores that were not performing as expected. Anita meanwhile

The business, which currently employs five full-time and four part-time staff, was the brain child of Directors Claire de Rose and Anita Sharma, who are both highly experienced in the fields of retail and optometry.

started the business with 25 years experience of consultancy for councils, logistics and three years experience of managing an optical store.

With Clair Vision, they each play to their strengths. Claire manages the dispensing, retail and fashion aspects of the company, while Anita handles the financial and manufacturing side. They chose to base themselves in Balham because, as Claire says, “it’s been an up-and-coming area for some time, ready for high-end fashion with quality eye care.”

So how did Claire and Anita go about setting the business up?

Claire and Anita are both passionate about eye care and fashion. And they both saw a gap in the market for a new type of optician. Claire explains, “I’d noticed that optics had become a homogenised conveyor belt and knew there was room on the market for a boutique style, customer focused alternative.”

They had a clear and shared vision for the business, and thanks to their extensive corporate business experience, knew how to go about it. Claire says “we started with the look of the shop, and then sourced frames and quality eye care products from ethical and high-end fashion retailers.” They now stock a range of designer frames from the likes of Tom Ford, Saville Row, and OGI.

Customer service is a top priority for Clair Vision. They have always aimed to differentiate themselves from other high street opticians by providing a truly exceptional service. Claire explains, “we wanted to freshen things up in the optical market, by providing a personal service, as there’s a distinct lack of focus on customer service in the industry. We employ our staff based on their empathy levels and train them in their optical skills on the job. This ensures that our staff is able to reach out to our customers in a genuine way and have a good understanding of their needs.” And the effort is paying off. Business is booming and Clair Vision has a loyal following from the local Balham



“We pride ourselves on making single-vision glasses in most prescriptions in 20 minutes.”

approach seems to be working.” She continues “I also love the variety involved with the job. An optician has to deal with a range of areas, from medical eye care, to manufacturing and marketing. So no two days are ever the same.”

It’s clear that the business is doing well, but what makes it unique besides the focus on customer service? From a practical point of view, it seems that speed and efficiency sets it apart, as Claire explains,

community. And when asked what she enjoys about her job, this is one of the first things she says. “We have a number of loyal customers that have been with us since day one, which we greatly appreciate. We’ve worked hard to establish relationships with the locals and our



“we pride ourselves on making single-vision glasses in most prescriptions in 20 minutes.”

With the business about to enter its fourth year, what does the future hold for Clair Vision? “We plan to invest in hospital-level equipment” explains Claire. “With hospitals struggling with finances, minor eye conditions in the community will be seen by independent opticians such as ours, that have the time and experience to serve this need.”

Education is also important to them. They often hold educational events in the community, which include interactive sessions for anyone interested in eye conditions.

Clair Vision

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Bringing a taste of **Italy** to Fulham



C/Alice is a bustling Italian wine bar and restaurant. It is run by husband and wife team **Alice Ravelli and **Giovanni Di Stefano**, along with **Alice's younger brother Michele**.**

The story behind the business is simple. Giovanni, a banker by day, and Alice, who previously worked in PR, were sitting in a charcuterie/wine bar in Paris, enjoying some cured meats and wines. After a few glasses, they started talking about how nice it would be to have something like this in London, but done the Italian way. Alice explains, "as Italians, we grew up with a very strong food and wine culture, so this is something we really wanted to do. By opening C/Alice we wanted to create a friendly, cosy wine bar and restaurant filled with regulars and residents, but also tourists, with an Italian touch."

Once back in London, Giovanni and Alice started looking around for a venue for their Italian bar and restaurant and with the help of a Business Consultant that specialised in hospitality (Stefano Potortí, from

Sagitter One); they found the perfect spot in Munster Road, Fulham.

They took over a Thai restaurant, knocked everything down and built C/Alice from scratch. Alice explains "we brought in an architect (Maurizio Balistreri, from Balistreri Experience SRL) from Italy and had him design the space, including the furniture which is completely bespoke."

Blood, sweat and tears

C/Alice opened in May this year with 14 human employees and one extra special member of the team - Tonino, Alice's toy poodle. The restaurant manages a total of 45 covers in the restaurant area, bar area and counter and outside terrace.

Alice admits that setting up and running the restaurant has been hard work, but says "it's worth it to see C/Alice busy with new faces. It's even more rewarding to see people returning because they had a good experience. This means they like our menu, they recognise there is a certain quality in the dishes we serve, and enjoy our friendly but intimate atmosphere."

"As Italians, we grew up with a very strong food and wine culture, so this is something we really wanted to do. By opening C/Alice we wanted to create a friendly, cosy wine bar and restaurant filled with regulars and residents, but also tourists, with an Italian touch."

One of the things that C/Alice prides itself on is its unique mix of cuisine and



"We chose to open in Fulham as we live there and love the area. It has a great atmosphere. It's green and friendly, but posh at the same time."

rest of the country is what makes C/Alice unique. Our team brings passion and knowledge of each region's unique wines together."

Why choose to open in South West London?

Alice explains "we chose to open in Fulham as we live there and love the area. It has a great atmosphere. It's green and friendly, but posh at the same time."

wine. Alice says "Giovanni is from Palermo in Sicily, and I'm from the north (Brescia, near Milan) so merging the two cultures and different cuisines (northern and southern) with a little dash from the

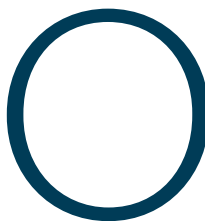
What's next for C/Alice?

Alice and Giovanni have high ambitions for C/Alice. Once it's established in Fulham, they would like to replicate the concept in other boroughs, and areas of the world.

They also plan to share their passion for Italian food and wine via regular wine tasting events and special dinners. The events are advertised on their website, so if you like good quality Italian food and drink, keep an eye out for their next culinary event.

C/Alice

199 Munster Road Fulham London SW6 6BX
T020 7385 4302 info@calicerestaurant.com
calicerestaurant.com



Originally from Scotland, Furzedown Branch Manager Sandra Murray has had a passion for property since managing the refurbishment of two of her own properties back in the west end of Glasgow. However, it was a role

in a family run advertising business that lured her to Surrey, over 25 years ago.

After 10 years in the advertising industry, Sandra's interest in property resurfaced after a friend

persuaded her to go for an interview at an Estate Agent in South West London. She says "I got the job on the spot in their Balham office and loved every moment of it. In my first year I became their top negotiator."

Sandra worked in another company for 7 years, with two of those based in the Balham and Putney offices. This got Sandra thinking about moving back to the Tooting area, closer to where she lives, but as she explains "the right job never came up." Fortune eventually intervened, as Sandra explains, "I received a call about an opening for Aspire's Furzedown office. It's a company I have always regarded in a very positive way, having lived and worked in the area for 14 years. The interview went well and here I am looking forward to the future and a new challenge."

Sandra is the newest member of the Aspire family, having joined as Branch Manager of the Furzedown office five months ago, and she's thoroughly enjoying her time there.

Although she's only just joined, she's making her mark, achieving lots of new property listings and high net sales, despite the fact that the Furzedown office has been going through a major refurbishment. Sandra puts this down to years of experience and the support of a great team. "I was made to feel like part of the team from day one, and feel like I've been with them for years. I am very lucky as I have a team that all live locally and have great knowledge of the local market and schools. There are five of us, but once the refurbishment is finished, we're hoping to make it six."

"The thing I love most about South West London and especially the Tooting and Tooting Bec area is that its cultural and gastronomic gems are not just limited to the city centre. Round every corner, something exciting awaits, whether it's a festival, quirky cafe, magnificent green space or authentic global cuisine."

What does Sandra enjoy about her job? "It varies from day to day which keeps it interesting, and it's a very sociable industry, which I enjoy. Keeping my clients happy and getting good feedback is always rewarding. You know then that you're doing a good job."

It seems like there's never a dull moment for Sandra, particularly as her first task as manager was to oversee the office refurbishment. But luckily it wasn't completely unexpected, as Sandra explains "I was told about the office refurbishment before I joined".

She says the office was in need of a facelift and extension, "in order to grow the office and fit in with Aspire's expanding office network. And having had personal experience of refurbishment, it didn't faze me."

Sandra is enjoying the challenges of Management at Aspire, but it's not all about the job. She also loves the office location. She explains; "the thing I love most about South West London and especially the Tooting and Tooting Bec area is that its cultural and gastronomic gems are not just limited to the city centre. Round every corner, something exciting awaits, whether it's a festival, quirky cafe,

magnificent green space or authentic global cuisine." And there's no shortage of things for Sandra to do on her lunch break, as she excitedly points out, "there's a stunning Grade II-listed Art Deco classic building and England's largest freshwater swimming pool, Tooting Lido minutes from the Furzedown office."

With all the stress at work, what does Sandra do to relax? "When I'm not at work, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends; trying out new restaurants, as well as having fun days out with my grandson, who keeps me on my toes. I also go to the gym and can often be found power walking on Tooting Bec common."

Sandra Murray
Branch Manager
Furzedown office
furzedown@aspire.co.uk

Agent profile

Sandra Murray talks about her passion for property and how the Furzedown Aspire branch is keeping her on her toes...

Sunlight Mews SW6

Number 5, Sunlight Mews is in no way your average property. This four bed, four bath house is the last remaining unit of the development and at 2,800sq ft it is the largest of the five properties. Every inch of it is incredible.



FOR SALE
 £2,395,000
 020 7736 6110
fulham@aspire.co.uk
 EPC - B



Edenvale Street SW6

One of the best conversions we have seen in the Sands End area. This utterly gorgeous top floor two bedroom maisonette is effortlessly on trend and provides a stunning living and entertaining space.



FOR SALE
£950,000
020 7736 6110
fulham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - C



FOR SALE
£1,575,000
020 7736 6110
fulham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D



Hamble Street SW6

An extremely well presented four bedroom family home on a pretty tree lined street in South Fulham. Hamble Street has been beautifully finished throughout; its 30 ft kitchen and 35 ft garden are just some of its many benefits. This home ticks all of the boxes.

LET

£995 PW

tenant fees apply

020 7736 6110

fulham@aspire.co.uk

EPC - D



Althea Street SW6

A charming family home with sunny, 25 ft south west facing garden, located on a quiet residential street. The fantastic living accommodation on the ground floor includes a double reception and fabulous kitchen dining room. On the upper floors there are five double bedrooms and three bathrooms.

Broughton Road SW6

A stunning one bedroom flat in this sought after new development situated in the ever popular Sands End. With a open plan kitchen/living area, large double bedroom with built in storage and a modern bathroom, the apartment offers space and plenty of natural light throughout.



FOR LET
£385 PW
tenant fees apply
020 7736 6110
fulham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - B

FOR LET
£700 PW
tenant fees apply
020 7736 6110
fulham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D



Piper Building SW6

A truly unique property covering three floors of this contemporary development. Situated in the Piper building this two bedroom property offers spacious living, coupled with large bedrooms and to top it off a top floor roof terrace offering widespread views of the River and London.



Marryat Square SW6

This absolutely breath-taking home is set in a highly sought after gated development with off-street parking in the Munster Village area of Fulham in South West London. The house has been meticulously finished to exacting standards throughout using the finest materials available to the market.

FOR SALE
 £1,595,000
 020 7381 7381
c.fulham@aspire.co.uk
 EPC - C

Kenyon Street SW6

Located on one of the prestigious Alphabet Streets is this fantastic, three bedroom property situated over the first and second floors of a period Victorian terraced house. The property has recently undergone a full renovation to the highest of standards and comes with a share of the freehold.

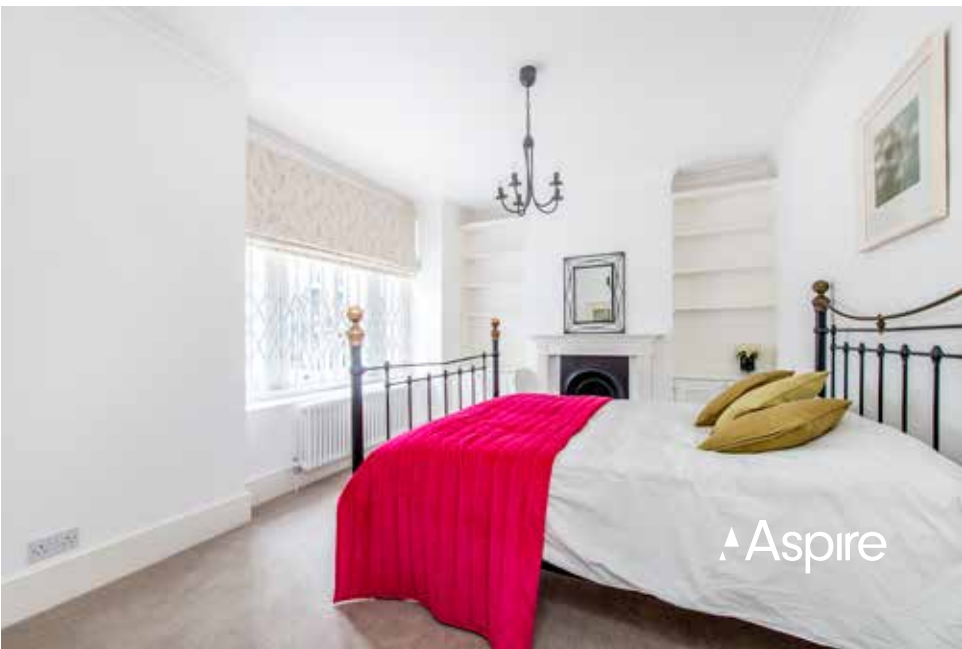


Vera Road SW6

Located in the heart of the Munster Village is this stunning two bedroom property. To the front are two bright double bedrooms, one complete with en suite and built-in wardrobes. At the rear is a sunny and spacious kitchen/reception room with a breakfast bar opening out to the patio garden. Parsons Green tube station is within walking distance along with the restaurants and cafés on the Fulham Road.

FOR LET
£460 PW
tenant fees apply
020 7381 7381
c.fulham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D

FOR SALE
£1,100,000
020 7381 7381
c.fulham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - C



Sherbrooke Road SW6

A lovely three bedroom family home. The property consists of a spacious double reception room and functional kitchen on the ground floor, with access to the rear patio garden. On the first floor are two double bedrooms and a family bathroom, whilst the third bedroom with en suite can be found in the loft conversion.



FOR LET
£610 PW
tenant fees apply
020 7381 7381
c.fulham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D



Crookham Road SW6

A fantastic top floor property is situated on a highly sought after road, just off the bustling Fulham Road and the prestigious Hurlingham Park, boasting a bright and airy open plan kitchen reception room, two double bedrooms and bathroom.

FOR LET
£395 PW
tenant fees apply
020 7381 7381
c.fulham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - C





Battersea High Street SW11

With over 1,300 sq ft of living space this immaculately presented duplex property is an Old Library conversion set within a private gated development with beautiful gardens and benefits from two off-street parking spaces.

FOR SALE

£1,299,950
020 7801 3400
battersea@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D



FOR SALE
£750,000
020 7801 3400
battersea@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D



Abercrombie Street SW11

A lovely four bedroom house situated on the popular Abercrombie Street. With off street parking for one car and with a large 36 ft South East facing garden this house would make an ideal family home or to live with friends.



FOR LET
£700 PW
tenant fees apply
020 7801 3400
battersea@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D



Albert Palace Mansions SW11

This beautifully presented mansion block sits just a stone's throw away from Battersea Park. The third floor property compromises of a master bedroom with a double fitted wardrobe, a second double bedroom and a bright and airy open plan reception come dining room, kitchen and modern fitted bathroom.



Atherton Street SW11

A beautifully presented ground floor one bedroom garden flat. The accommodation comprises a fully fitted kitchen, a reception room, a spacious bedroom with fitted wardrobes and a modern bathroom. There is also a private garden to the rear of the property.



FOR LET
£350 PW
tenant fees apply
020 7801 3400
battersea@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D



Surrey Lane SW11

A fantastic and unique, two bedroom property situated in the heart of Battersea, close to the Park and a short walk from Chelsea. The property has recently been stylishly decorated throughout, with added extras. Laid out over three floors comprising two double bedrooms, an en suite, and a large family bathroom. The property also has its own roof top terrace.

FOR LET
£575 PW
tenant fees apply
020 7801 3400
battersea@aspire.co.uk
EPC - C

Spinnaker House SW18

A well presented two double bedroom apartment within the award winning Battersea Reach development. The apartment is presented to the highest specification throughout and comprises reception room leading on to balcony with river views, open plan kitchen, master bedroom with en suite, second double bedroom and master bathroom.



FOR SALE
£685,000
020 7801 3404
riverside@aspire.co.uk
EPC - B

FOR LET
£1,950 PCM
tenant fees apply
020 7801 3404
riverside@aspire.co.uk
EPC - B



Phoenix Way SW18

A modern two bed, two bathroom apartment in this popular development close to Wandsworth Town and Clapham Junction stations. The property is well presented throughout and comprises reception leading out on to private balcony, semi-open plan kitchen, master bedroom with en suite, second double bedroom and modern family bathroom.



FOR LET
 £4,750 PW
 tenant fees apply
 020 7801 3404
 riverside@aspire.co.uk
 EPC - B

Rodenhurst Road SW4

Situated in one of Abbeville Village's most prestigious streets and within easy access of a host of local amenities. Offering astonishing potential to create the home of one's dreams the property stands on a substantial south east facing plot with driveway parking.

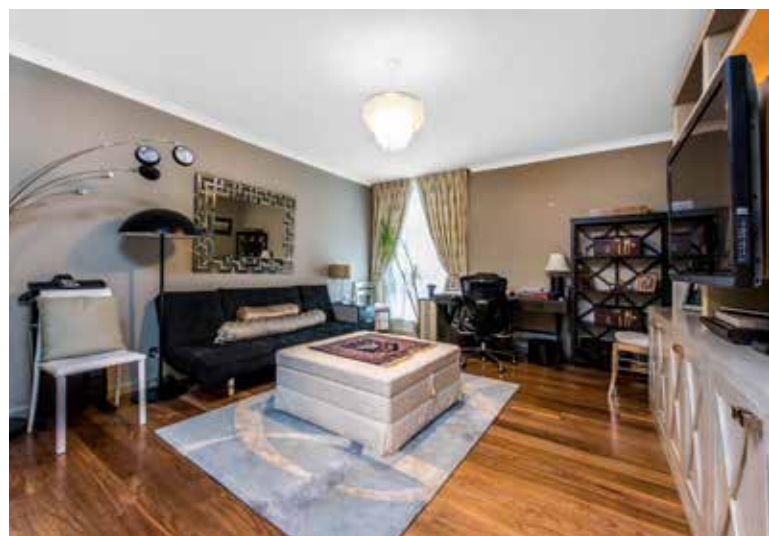


FOR SALE
 £1,950,000
 020 8675 1222
 s.clapham@aspire.co.uk
 EPC - E



Waterside Point SW11

A stunning lateral apartment in one of Battersea's most premier Riverside developments. With 3,300 sq ft of internal living space and with unrivalled views of Albert Bridge the property is a must see.



FOR SALE

£499,950

020 8675 1222

s.clapham@aspire.co.uk

EPC - B



Clapham Common West Side SW4

A fantastic three bedroom, two reception room flat on Clapham Common West Side. Comprising large reception room with large windows and beautiful views across the Common and Clapham Tennis Courts, separate kitchen, three spacious double bedrooms with built in storage, two modern bathrooms and a further reception room.



FOR LET

£692 PW

tenant fees apply

020 8675 1222

s.clapham@aspire.co.uk

EPC - D



Leppoc Road SW4

Delightfully spacious split level one bedroom property set in the heart of Abbeville Village on the top floor of this Victorian conversion. A high-spec finish from top to bottom including a beautifully redesigned kitchen with Corian worktops and double glazed windows throughout.

Narbonne Avenue SW4

A stunning four bedroom house arranged over three floors. The property is presented in excellent condition throughout and comprises of double reception room with doors leading to a sunny patio garden, eat in kitchen with garden access, four good size double bedrooms and two bathrooms.



FOR LET
£850 PW
tenant fees apply
020 8675 1222
s.clapham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D



FOR LET
£920 PW
tenant fees apply
020 8675 1222
s.clapham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - E



Kyrle Road SW11

This beautifully presented four bedroom house is located on a sought after residential road between the commons. The property comprises of a fantastic double reception room with original features. Large eat in kitchen leading onto the south facing patio area and a large master bedroom benefitting from a three piece bathroom with a further family bathroom.



Nealden Street SW9

A superb fully extended and refurbished home arranged over three floors and approaching 2,000 sq ft, with five bedrooms, three bathrooms, utility room and a beautifully landscaped rear garden.

SOLD

£1,295,000

020 7840 3700

hs.clapham@aspire.co.uk

EPC - D



Marmion Road SW4

A beautifully presented ground floor garden flat with two double bedrooms, modern kitchen, spacious bathroom, extended reception room opening to the garden and with a share of the freehold.

FOR SALE

£669,950
020 7840 3700
hs.clapham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D



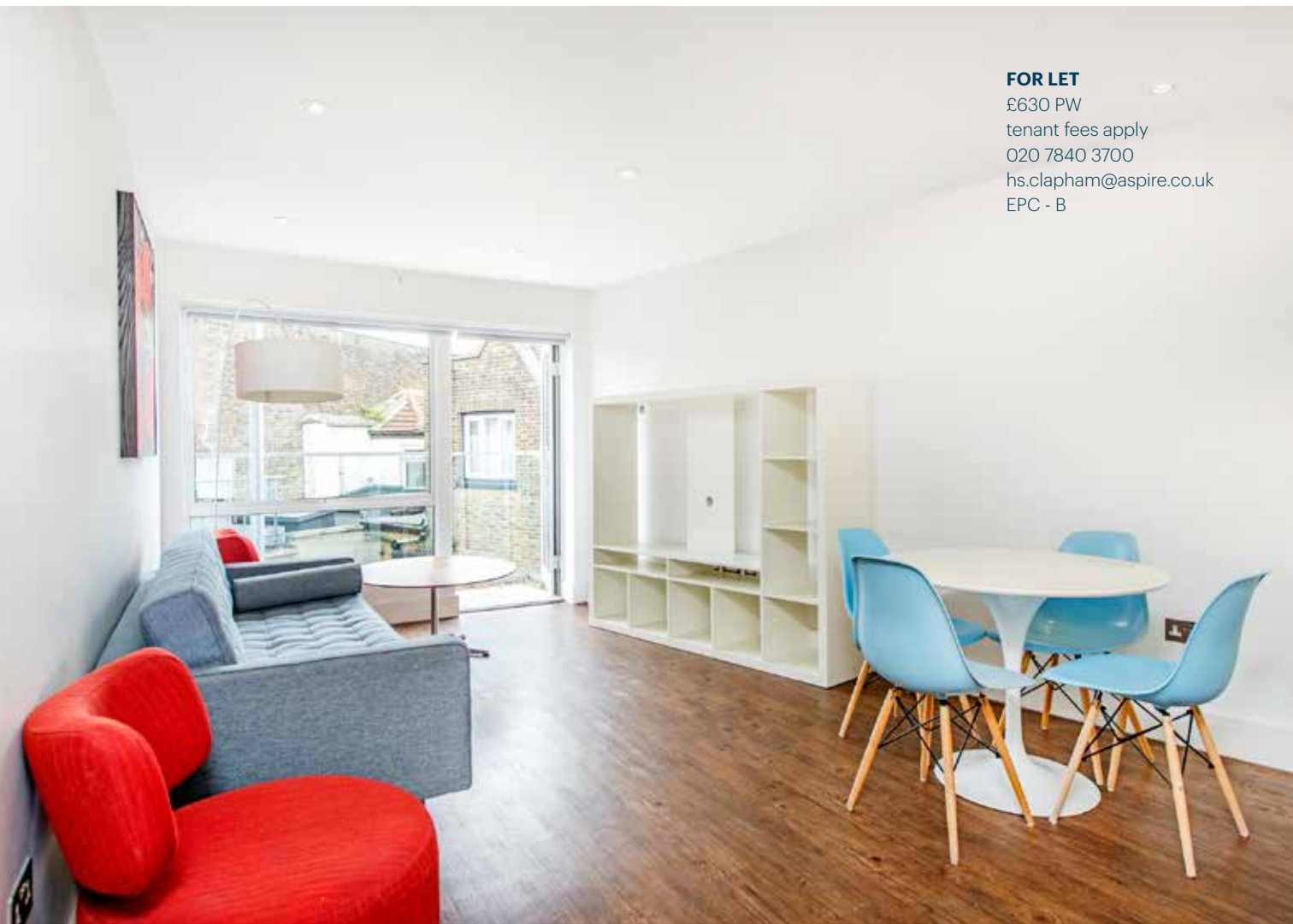
FOR LET

£520 PW
tenant fees apply
020 7840 3700
hs.clapham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - E



Enfield House SW9

A three double bedroom flat in an excellent location close to Stockwell tube station. The flat is in a small block set back from the road and benefits from really well proportioned rooms and is presented in superb condition throughout having undergone a full refurbishment.



FOR LET
 £630 PW
 tenant fees apply
 020 7840 3700
 hs.clapham@aspire.co.uk
 EPC - B

Chelsham Road SW4

An impressive Victorian conversion flat situated on the sought after Chelsham Road, just minutes from Clapham High Street and Clapham North Underground station and a short walk to Clapham Old Town.

FOR LET
 £450 PW
 tenant fees apply
 020 7840 3700
 hs.clapham@aspire.co.uk
 EPC - D



Gauden Road SW4

Stunning three double bedroom apartment situated in a new development of luxury apartments on Gauden Road. Located just off Clapham High Street located within a minutes' walk from the lively shopping and entertainment hub on Clapham High Street and easy walking distance to Clapham North Underground Station.



Drakefield Road SW17

This classic six bedroom Heaver house conveniently situated close to both the Tube at Tooting Bec and Tooting Bec Common itself. The highly versatile living accommodation is arranged over three floors and is complimented by many original period features including sash windows, fireplaces and exposed flooring.



FOR SALE
£1,795,000
020 8673 6111
balham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - E



Conyers Road SW16

Located in a period building is this quite superb ground floor flat with a substantial private rear garden, private off road driveway and a share of the freehold. The property is presented in first class order throughout and successfully blends plenty of period and contemporary features.

FOR SALE

£595,000

020 8673 6111

balham@aspire.co.uk

EPC - E



FOR LET
£825 PW
tenant fees apply
020 8673 6111
balham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - E



Lucien Road SW17

A beautifully presented three double garden flat located moments to Tooting Common as well as easy access to Tooting Bec Tube station. The property comprises a bright and spacious open plan kitchen reception room with bi-folding doors leading onto a private garden.



Chestnut Grove SW12

A stunning four bedroom house located in the popular Nightingale Triangle moments from Balham station. The property is in excellent condition throughout and comprises double reception room, large eat in kitchen with exposed brickwork and doors leading to a large private garden.



FOR LET
£485 PW
tenant fees apply
020 8673 6111
balham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - B

Sarsfeld Road SW12

An amazing split level one double bedroom flat located within a short walk of Balham Station. The property comprises open plan kitchen / reception room with doors opening up onto a private Juliette Balcony, good size double bedroom and modern bathroom with shower over the bath.

FOR LET
£365 PW
tenant fees apply
020 8673 6111
balham@aspire.co.uk
EPC - C



Leverson Street SW16

A chance to buy a truly stunning three bedroom loft converted freehold house in Streatham. The house is a very short walk from Streatham Common Station with its fast and frequent trains to London Victoria.

FOR SALE
£799,950
020 8769 7900
furzedown@aspire.co.uk
EPC - B



Fernthorpe Road SW16

A chance to acquire a spacious three bedroom family house found not far from Streatham Common Railway station. It has a separate front reception room with plantation shutters fitted and a feature fireplace.

FOR SALE

£695,000
020 8769 7900
furzedown@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D

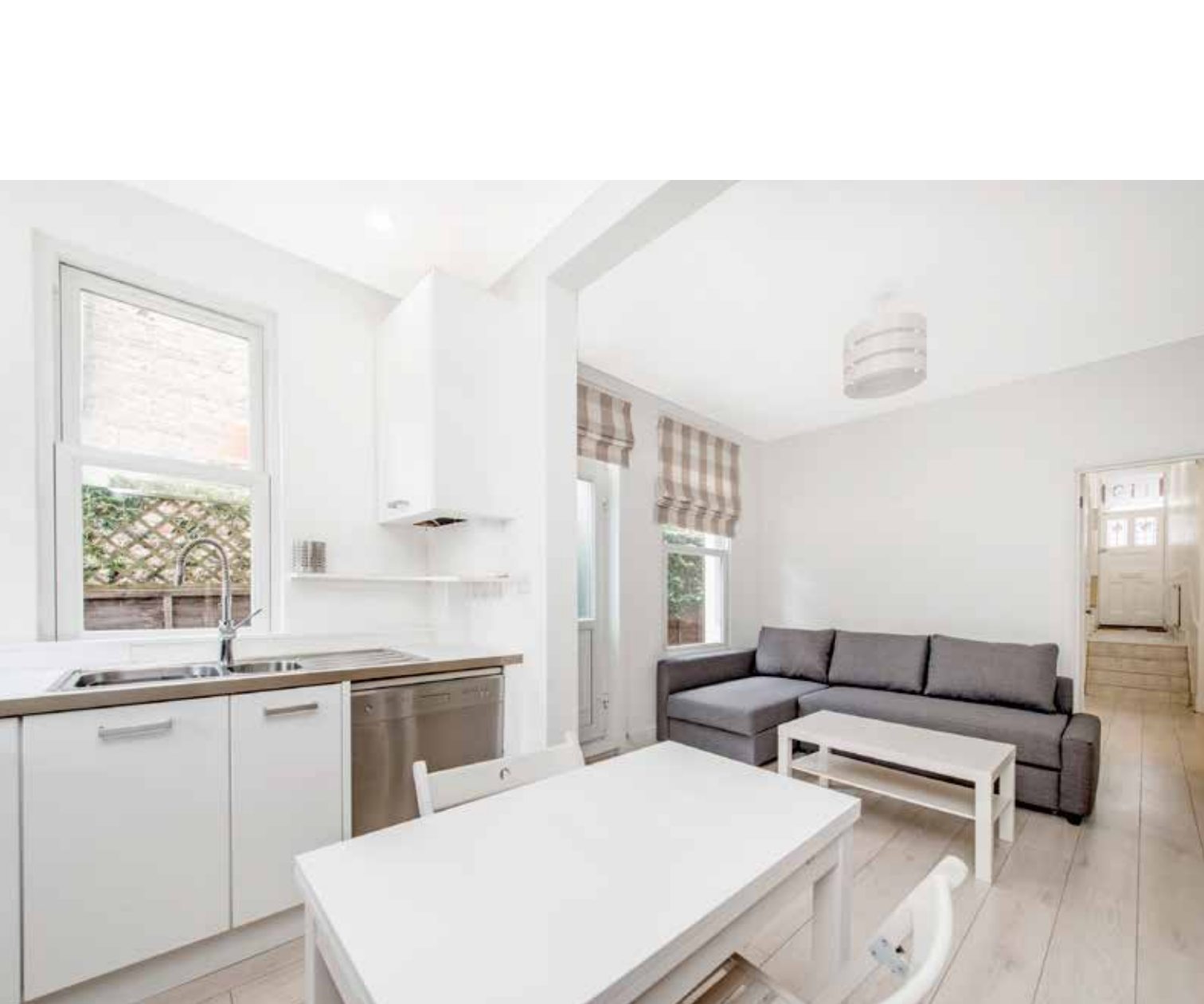


FOR LET

£650 PW
tenant fees apply
020 8769 7900
furzedown@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D

Mitcham Lane SW16

A newly redecorated four bedroom house located on Mitcham Lane. The property has been finished to a nice standard throughout and comprises fantastic reception room, second dining / reception room, separate kitchen with doors leading onto a large private garden.



Welham Road SW16

A beautifully finished two bedroom garden flat in the heart of Furzedown. The property comprises open plan kitchen reception room with space for dining and doors leading onto a well kept private garden, two good size double bedrooms and modern bathroom with shower over the bath.

FOR LET
£369 PW
tenant fees apply
020 8769 7900
furzedown@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D



Ask the expert

Tracy Mitchell is Senior Lettings Administrator for Aspire's Fulham, Battersea and Raynes Park offices. This month she takes us through the process of letting a property for the first time, and offers advice for new landlords on how they should prepare it.

First off, who do you need to obtain permission to let from, and is it a straightforward process?

Landlords need to contact the bank with whom their property is mortgaged, together with their insurers, and also check their lease - as they may need to get consent from their freeholder. Borrowers have a contractual obligation to inform their lender if they want to let a property. Some will face a rate rise plus an administration fee on top.

The agent is also usually required to complete a document stating information relating to the tenancy as well as being asked to confirm that the tenancy agreement complies with any stipulations set out by the mortgage company. Likewise with the insurance company who again may impose an additional cost and/or premium. However, the process is usually pretty straightforward and entails completing a few forms.

Are there any legal differences between renting out a property to a family member, and renting out an HMO (house in multiple occupation)?

Yes. HMOs are a special type of rental property, in which the facilities are shared by separate households - a 'household' can be one person or a family, or a co-habiting couple. Although HMO's can be an attractive proposition for landlords, we suggest you discuss it with your local branch as it's a complex area.

Does regular household insurance adequately cover rented properties?

If you haven't taken out specialist landlord insurance you are probably not covered adequately, if at all. It is vital to check your current policy and investigate specialist cover, which can even stretch to covering loss of rent.

Do electrical fittings and gas/electric appliances need to be checked prior to letting a property? And is furniture subject to safety checks?

Gas appliances always need to be checked prior to

tenants moving into a property, regardless of whether or not the appliances are new. This includes checking the boiler. The gas engineer is then able to issue a gas safety certificate, which will need to be renewed every twelve months.

Electrical certificates and so forth fall under the health and safety act. It's the landlord's responsibility to ensure that the electrical installation and appliances are safe when the tenancy begins, and are in proper working order throughout the tenancy.

Furniture needs to be fire safe and should have labels attached confirming so. If the furniture being supplied does not have these labels, it should be removed from the property. This falls under the health and safety act.

Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors have to be fitted, but how soon before a tenant moves in do these need to be tested?

It is essential for smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors to be fitted and working at the time of tenants moving into the property. Tenants are thereafter requested to check on a regular basis to ensure that the alarms are working.

And finally, what are the most common things new landlords overlook?

Some landlords will try and cut corners to save money, which whilst being understandable, is often short-sighted. A landlord may state that they would like to conduct their own inventory and check-in at the start of a tenancy, however, if the inventory report is not thorough and detailed, the likelihood is, should there be damages at the end of the tenancy, the funds would be returned to the tenant on the basis that the landlord does not have enough evidence to back up their claim.

Landlords also tend to feel that cleaning the property themselves prior to tenants moving in will be sufficient. However a full deep and professional clean of the property is always advised. A professional clean can take between 4 and 8 hours depending on the size of the property. If this is done at the start of a tenancy and a receipt can be provided, tenants will need to ensure that the same is done at the end of their tenancy.

Tracy.mitchell@aspire.co.uk

FOR SALE
£1,395,000
020 3846 6677
raynespark@aspire.co.uk
EPC - C



Burdett Avenue SW20

Located in sought after West Wimbledon, this outstanding four bedroom, semi-detached property has been remodelled to the highest standards to provide a home of exceptional quality. On entry into the property you first notice the meticulous attention to detail.

Crossway SW20

A spacious and well-presented extended family home. This property has been loved and looked after and is ready for the next family to move straight in and start enjoying all it has to offer. With no onward chain you could be moved in before Christmas.



FOR SALE
£900,000
020 3846 6677
raynespark@aspire.co.uk
EPC - D



FOR LET
£1,400 PCM
tenant fees apply
020 3846 6677
raynespark@aspire.co.uk
EPC - E



Spencer Hill SW19

Are you looking for a great size flat yet only a short walk to Wimbledon? Then look no further! This property has it all, allocated parking, lovely communal gardens and close to all amenities. The reception room looks out over the gardens and enjoys lots of natural light coming through.

FOR LET

£1,750 PCM

tenant fees apply

020 3846 6677

raynespark@aspire.co.uk

EPC - C



Darlaston Road SW19

A well presented and spacious first floor apartment. Located on a popular residential road and within walking distance to Wimbledon town centre and mainline station. The property benefits from a garage to the rear of the property, two double bedrooms, balcony, modern fitted kitchen and bathroom and is neutrally decorated throughout.