

BLOCKBUSTER LIVING

ONE SIZE FITS ALL FOR TODAY'S EVER-SHIFTING CAST OF FAMILIES, DISCOVERS CHERYL MARKOSKY

Just as a multiplex cinema has different screens with films for everyone, a multi-generational home has plenty of areas to suit various family age groups.

Recent research by the NHBC Foundation reveals that more than 1.8 million households in the UK contain two or more adult generations.

As younger generations return home to save for a deposit and older generations move back in with their children, multi-generational living is becoming increasingly popular.

John Elliott, managing director of Millwood Designer Homes, notes that this mode of shared existence is appealing on a number of levels.

"Splitting the cost of bills, helping with childcare and providing support for older family members are among several positives to having more than one generation living under one roof," he explains.

Robert Jacobs, head of Savills' Tunbridge Wells office, believes that elderly parents moving in with their adult children is nothing new. "What is relatively new, however, is adult children moving back in with their parents."

A shortage of affordable housing makes it difficult for young adults to get on the property ladder. Walking into a highly paid job is no longer a given, and the high cost of renting prohibits saving for a deposit.

Multi-families look for ancillary accommodation, "such as an attic or self-contained floor. Separate entertainment areas, like a second living room or converted barn, are also desirable," Robert says.

Homes with options for those bunking up together attract a premium, but young people leaving London to give their kids the same kind of upbringing they had aren't daunted by the extra costs, says Stacks Property Search & Acquisition's Bill Spreckley.

"Most want a home with an annex for the nanny, which then becomes a games room – and eventually a zone for their parents in the future."

At present, only 16% of families believe their existing home would be suitable for a multi-generational existence. John says Millwood's addressing the problem with well-designed, practical living spaces ideal for modern family life.

JARDIN, BINFIELD, BERKSHIRE

FROM £440,000

Grandparents, children and grandchildren can live together in 24 homes on a small Spitfire Bespoke Homes' scheme in the original kitchen garden of Binfield House.

www.jardinbinfield.co.uk



SULLIVAN ROAD, FULHAM SW6

£2,195,000

Flexible annex in the garden adds value to this five-bedroom house with media room.

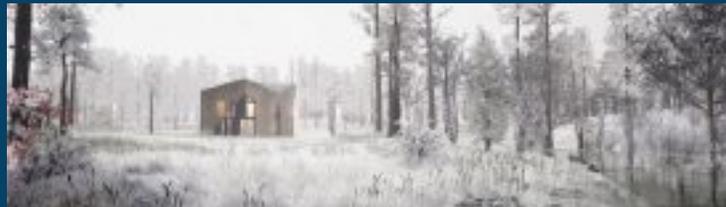
www.struttandparker.com

LITTLE CLOSE, BLEDDINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

£2,250,000

Family home on the edge of a village, with a self-contained, one-bed annex with kitchen to suit boomerang children or grandparents.

www.butlersherborn.co.uk



SET DESIGN

Self-builders and developers can get a helping hand from Ekkist (www.ekkist.co), a new venture providing the blueprint for Ori House, a smart home that shrinks and expands – very sci-fi.

Chartered surveyor Olga Turner and her partner, Jonathan Baker, are marketing a building that's more sensitive to people's needs – from the opening scene to the last reel of life.

"Ori House can grow with you," explains Jonathan, "with pre-designed extensions you can add as you go, a loft you can convert, and cupboard space off the lobby that can hold a lift in the future."

Initially, Ori's annex could provide an income stream if you want to rent it out, while later providing accommodation for children or elderly relatives.

Jonathan argues that a home with flexible elements needn't have a Hollywood-sized price tag attached. Ori starts at about £480,000, not including land costs, but is larger than normal at nearly 3,000 square feet.

Ekkist's also working on a more affordable townhouse prototype, housing a cast of thousands – or at least several generations of your family.

Layouts at Millwood's Lavender Fields in Isfield, East Sussex, include self-contained offices, or workshops with kitchenettes and WC's "to suit a range of circumstances and generations throughout a lifetime".

Another solution is to mix age groups on-site, according to Richard Page from Spitfire Bespoke Homes. At Jardin in Binfield, Berkshire, six out of 24 two- to five-bedroom homes are specifically for buyers aged 60-plus.

The rest of the open market homes are available to anyone. Already, Richard's getting interest from empty-nesters returning to the country, "who are encouraging their parents to buy homes next to them".

And over at Glade in The Spinney in Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire – where only the £1.9 million show home remains – Spitfire's putting in extra accommodation above garages to house extra family members.

"Our divorced son came back to live with us for a while, so I understand the social pressures families are under," adds Richard. He thinks a "cradle to grave" approach can benefit co-existing, crossover generations.

He also believes that housebuilders should try to help purchasers with varying needs. "If someone asks at an early stage, we'll try to tweak things so the house works better for them."

For many families, multi-generational habitation isn't a permanent situation. Robert finds that after a few years of living rent free, the younger generation can usually afford to buy somewhere of their own.

"And then their parents generally downsize again," he declares.

There's also growing demand from aspiring homebuyers finding a new way to own their dream home, observes Jenny Murphy, head of sales and marketing at Notting Hill Sales.

"Sharing the financial costs of a property with family can be a good, affordable way to get onto the property ladder," notes Jenny, who's marketing a selection of shared ownership projects designed with family living in mind.

"Our three-bed homes at Broomfield in Enfield offer layouts incorporating elements of privacy, as well as core areas where families can spend time together, both indoors and outside," she reveals.

A happy ending for everyone. 🏠



BETRIDGE ROAD, FULHAM SW6

£2,850,000

Five-bed house with basement extension of a large reception room, bedroom and bathroom – a great Granny annex.

www.struttandparker.com



CRAB APPLE COURT, LEATHERHEAD, SURREY

£2,450,000

Six-bed country house with flexible north wing featuring a bedroom and bathroom, and annex space with kitchenette and bathroom above the triple garage to accommodate relatives.

www.savills.com



SHIRKOAK FARM, WOODCHURCH, KENT

£1,395,000

Georgian farmhouse with two-bed barn conversion and its own kitchen, art studio, tennis court, paddock and other outbuildings.

www.savills.com



LITTLE SALTERN, BUCKLERS HARD, HAMPSHIRE

£5,950,000

Glazed corridor links four-bed annex to the main five-bedroom house, which also comes with a pool, tennis court and billiards room.

www.struttandparker.com



FLAGPOLE HOUSE, BRAY, BERKSHIRE

£2,250,000

Commuter-friendly house with detached cottage that includes a sitting room, kitchen/breakfast room, shower room and covered seating area.

www.struttandparker.com



CANNY CO-PRODUCTION

After struggling to find a home in her price range for herself and daughters, Jasmine, 22, and Emilia, three, Rachel Kabambe, 44, bought a property with space for everyone at Notting Hill Sales' Bowles Square in Enfield.

Rachel, an NHS service manager, says the layout allows Jasmine plenty of privacy "in what we call 'the penthouse suite' on the top floor with her own bathroom".

As well as appreciating individual zones, the Kabambes can enjoy family time together in

their new home, which Rachel has bought via shared ownership. She owns 40% of the property and pays subsidised rent on the rest.

Although homes at Bowles Square have now sold out, families looking for more room can purchase three-bedroom townhouses at ASPIRE in Enfield's Arnos Grove.

Prices start at £186,000 for a 30% share of the full market value of £620,000.

www.nottinghillhousing.org.uk



HADLEY WOOD, ENFIELD EN4

£5,500,000

Only two six-bed houses, ideal for multi-generational living, with separate accommodation, indoor lift, pool, spa and home cinema.

www.bellishomes.co.uk