

THE
SPEAR'S 500
2019

The indispensable guide to the top private client advisers,
wealth managers, lawyers and service providers for HNW individuals

THE LEADING PROPERTY ADVISERS OF 2019

Welcome to our selection of the very best property advisers to help you whether you're buying or selling, in a dormant London market or more buoyant rural areas

by **Emelia Hamilton-Russell** – researcher in the *Spear's* Research Unit



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READERS MIGHT NOTICE something different about this year's Property Index. As before, it contains a thorough list of the top property advisers – but this time to reflect the abundance of talent at the top, we are publishing top ten lists of London buying and selling agents, as well as a country top ten.

There are thus several new entries in the top lists. James Gilbert-Green, who has just moved from Strutt & Parker to Savills, makes the top ten buying agents. So does Lichfields' Ed Tryon, who's handling some of the capital's chunkiest off-plan new-build deals. GLP Fine Properties' founder Giuliana La Pera Davies is another new entry, with a focus on UNHW buyers requiring 'paparazzi-proof' properties. Meanwhile, Jo Eccles returns to the Index after a rebrand of her company, now called SP Property.

We've also grown our legal section, which now includes Sonal Thakrar of Mishcon de Reya, the 'dynamite conveyancer' who impressed with a number of complex, high-value transactions.

That's not to say there aren't mainstays across the Index, including the evergreen Peter Wetherell, who scooped up our 2017 Property Adviser of the Year Award.

On the whole, 2017 was bleak, even for our gilded entrants. Andy Buchanan – 'Mr Chelsea' as he's known – is one of many who think that it's not so much Brexit that's

to blame, but rather stamp duty and low stock: 'Brexit is an excuse for people not to do something, but actually what's behind it all is that there's very little temptation,' he says.

The good news is that the market looks set to bottom out this year – that's according to many out of the advisers we asked, although there remain some cautionary voices, among them Tryon, who take a less optimistic view. Outside the capital, the outlook is cheerier: experienced country hands such as Alex Lawson rejoice as buyers from the financial sector return after 'practically disappearing' post-Lehman.

It's a nuanced picture, and these advisers have never been more necessary. 'You wouldn't go into court and represent yourself,' says Camilla Dell of Black Brick, a three-time nominee for *Spear's* Property Adviser of the Year. 'Why on earth would you embark on such an important transaction without representation?'

Spear's is wary of concrete forecasts for the year ahead. Instead, we put our faith in the specialised wisdom gleaned from the best in the business. All our chosen few are worth their weight in gold – so perhaps the best bet for now is to be bold and give one a call. As Dell says, 'You can't afford not to.'

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in issue 62 of *Spear's*

OUR TOP TENS

LONDON BUYING

Robert Bailey Robert Bailey Properties
Camilla Dell Black Brick
Naomi Heaton London Central Portfolio
Nathalie Hirst Nathalie Hirst
Tracy Kellett BDI Home Finders
Guy Meacock Prime Purchase
Richard & Sophie Rogerson RFR
Roarie Scarisbrick Property Vision
Alex Stroud Alex Stroud Property Search
Ed Tryon Lichfields

LONDON SELLING

Trevor Abrahmsohn Glentree International
Andy Buchanan John D Wood
Rupert des Forges Knight Frank
James Gilbert-Green Savills
Gary Hersham Beauchamp Estates
Jonathan Hewlett Savills
Louise Hewlett Louise Hewlett Properties
Rory Penn Knight Frank
Jake Russell Russell Simpson
Thomas Van Straubenzee Knight Frank
Peter Wetherell Wetherell

COUNTRY

Philip Eddell Savills
Jonathan Harington Haringtons
Ed Heaton Heaton & Partners
Clive Hopkins Knight Frank
Tom Hudson Middleton Advisors
Alex Lawson Savills
Andrew Macpherson CKD
Mark McAndrew Strutt & Parker
Rupert Sweeting Knight Frank
Charlie Wells Prime Purchase

SPEAR'S

TOP TEN
LONDON BUYING

Robert Bailey

Robert Bailey Properties

Outstanding in field

FIRM SIZE *Boutique*

FOCUS *Prime central London*

Known for his discretion and prowess in sealing some of the capital's chunkiest residential deals, Robert Bailey is no stranger to the biggest and most expensive properties around. He had a long spell at Knight Frank – he was head of its private office for ten years – where he set up the firm's dedicated buying arm, the Buying Solution. He then struck out on his own in 2005 to found his own buying agency. Bailey's not one to fire and forget. 'A lot of our competitors are quite short-termist,' he says. 'The keys get chucked through the letterbox and it's on to the next one. That's not how you build relationships. We look after people on an ongoing basis – they can call any time.' Peers call him 'first class'.

Nathalie Hirst

Nathalie Hirst

Outstanding in field

FIRM SIZE *Boutique*

FOCUS *Prime central London*

A Spear's Property Adviser of the Year award-winner, Nathalie Hirst began her career in property more than 20 years ago by relocating bankers from Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan and UBS to London. She later joined two of the best-known buying firms in London – Property Vision and Primè Purchase – before striking out on her own. Now an eminent figure in the business of relocating global HNWs to prime central London, she has a clear and important mantra: 'I am a buying agent who only buys – and never sells.' Peers unite in praise. 'Nathalie operates at the top end of the market and feedback from clients is always positive,' says an industry expert. 'Incredibly nice. Incredibly hard-working. Incredibly successful.'



Camilla Dell

Black Brick

Outstanding in field

FIRM SIZE *Boutique*

FOCUS *Prime central London*

Camilla Dell – a three-time nominee for Property Adviser of the Year at the Spear's Wealth Management Awards – is described by peers as a 'powerhouse' in prime central, who is both 'tenacious and dedicated'. And her firm Black Brick, which she founded in 2007, is going from strength to strength. 'We've done more transactions at £20 million-plus than we ever have before,' Dell tells Spear's. 'We recently bought a house in Holland Park for £36 million, found a flat in Mayfair for just over £21 million, and we've just exchanged on an off-market home in Notting Hill for just over £20 million – it's a lot.' 2018 has proved itself to be a 'genuine' buyers' market. 'On average we have been saving our clients nine per cent from asking prices, and on one transaction we managed to save our client almost 19 per cent.' She has been helping a variety of clients to navigate the property market riddled with Brexit uncertainty. 'Patience is key. Clients are taking longer to make decisions and quite rightly want to be certain the property, the location and price are right before purchasing,' Dell advises. During her career to date, Dell worked for two of London's largest and most successful estate agencies, Foxtons and Knight Frank, before setting up Black Brick in January 2007. Since then, she has grown the firm from a two-person start-up to London's largest independent buying consultancy, with over 80 years' combined experience and a book of transactions worth in excess of £1 billion.



Naomi Heaton
London Central Portfolio

Distinguished individual

FIRM SIZE *Boutique*

FOCUS *Assets in prime central-London*

Naomi Heaton, MA Hons (Oxon), is founder and CEO of London Central Portfolio (LCP), a real estate advisory company focusing on the private rented sector in prime central London. She is known for representing investors seeking access to London property as an alternative, safe haven asset class. However, as the capital responds to ever-changing geopolitical conditions, Heaton is tasked with rising to the challenges created by these 'turbulent' times. She tells *Spear's* it's a 'frustrating time' for both sellers and investors if they do not take a long-term view of the market. 'On the other hand,' she adds, 'softening prices have led to significant opportunities for the contra-cyclical investor and the weakness of sterling provides an additional incentive.' Over the year ahead, Heaton would like to see a change in attitude towards UHNWs and property investment. 'I feel the government overlooks the vital importance of the foreign investor, both in terms of the money they bring into the UK economy and to sustaining the future health of British housebuilders.' She adds: 'The foreign investment market essentially runs parallel to the domestic one. Sale prices in new developments are generally quite beyond the reach of the local market. By "turning the tap off" on foreign investors, the government is not freeing up affordable housing... it is impeding developers' ability to provide it.' Heaton remains the life and soul of LCP which provides a unique one-stop service.

Tracy Kellett
BDI Home Finders

Outstanding in field

FIRM SIZE *Boutique*

FOCUS *Prime central London*

'Safe as houses isn't ringing true at the moment,' says Tracy Kellett of the PCL market, but she explains this is more due to the SDLT regime and compliance than Brexit. 'I'd take all the negativity around the market with a bit of a pinch of salt, because they [the values] will rise,' she advises. 'Unless Brexit is the bloodbath that it may well be... if it's just a damp squib then [in] the summer of 2019... you'll be looking at some uplift.' For the time being, her advice is to future-proof yourself. 'Buy in the places where people will always want to live. You're far better if you're buying something that's quality – a Victorian apartment in a mansion block in a prime area – than you are something shiny on the other side of the river.'

Roarie Scarisbrick
Property Vision

Distinguished individual

FIRM SIZE *UK*

FOCUS *Prime central London*

Thoroughbred buyer Roarie Scarisbrick paints a less than rosy picture of prime central London. Volumes of transactions have 'significantly reduced' – down 50-60 per cent in the £10 million bracket – since the happier days in 2014. 'It was the last functioning year – there were no disasters, no stamp duty hikes and no serious derailments in the market,' he says. But tough conditions thrill Scarisbrick, who relishes helping buyers through the property maze at a time when the disparity between asking and transaction prices has never been greater: 'We make sure [buyers] really understand the context of the seller,' he explains, 'how long the property has been in the market and what they should pay for it.'



Guy Meacock
Prime Purchase

Outstanding in field

FIRM SIZE *UK*

FOCUS *Prime central London*

'Despite some of the gloomy headlines, we are seeing a significant uplift in client numbers and activity – there is a noticeable air of optimism that hasn't been there for three years,' says Guy Meacock, the personable director and head of London. 'The marketplace is not driven solely by the certainty of price inflation anymore, so we are relishing the opportunity to help people who genuinely want to live in London, for a long time.' The diversity of transactions in 2018 has kept Meacock busy, against all odds, in what could well be a record year for him, as he says demand for 'unbiased, impartial advice' continues to expand across 'more locations and an ever wider price range'. He says the twin uncertainties of Brexit and stamp duty have created not only the need for a guiding hand through the market, but also thrown up significant opportunities for 'those brave enough to swim against the tide'. Being part of the Savills group, and the only buying agent in the country with ISO-accreditation, comes with its associated compliance burden, but equally he says 'this demonstrates not only the rigour with which we conduct ourselves but also underlines the credibility of clients we represent. We're more efficient, better supported and altogether a more transparent business than if we operated in isolation,' he adds.



Richard & Sophie Rogerson
RFR

Outstanding in field

FIRM SIZE *Boutique*

FOCUS *Cross-discipline, advisory*

'As good as it gets' is how a leading City lawyer described RFR. The award-winning property advisory firm continues to grow its reputation, and is shortlisted for *Spear's* 'Property Advisor of the Year' 2018. Established by former Macfarlanes lawyers Sophie and Richard Rogerson, the firm bridges the gap between the private client industry and the complex and unpredictable world of residential property. Providing a consistently high level of advice across all practice areas, RFR has become the 'go-to' solution for private clients and their advisors. 'We have an exceptional team of hugely talented professionals with backgrounds at leading City and property firms,' says Richard. 'It would not be possible to deliver the breadth of our services without this technical expertise in-house.' The team includes architects, project managers, interior designers, ex-City lawyers and litigators. The most recent addition is Charlie Naughten, a former partner at Strutt & Parker, joining the Search & Acquisition team. The firm's Chairman, William Drake – founder of Lord North Street and now Owl Private Office – commends the duo and the wider firm for its 'natural instinct to go above and beyond, and to protect their clients at all costs'. Indeed, one leading private client lawyer says of Sophie Rogerson that 'few if any, combine [her] levels of energy, intelligence, commercial insight and client-handling abilities.'

SPEAR'S

RISING STARS PROPERTY ADVISERS



Hugo James
Strutt & Parker
(BNP Paribas Real Estate)

Young turk

FIRM SIZE *UK*

FOCUS *Prime central London*

Strutt & Parker has identified a star in the making in Hugo James. The company describes the adviser as 'an up-and-coming force in the super-prime lettings market', and credits his success in growing new business in the area for the past two years, 'achieving excellent results' through the South Kensington offices, where he heads up the lettings and

super-prime lettings teams. James has been adept at securing 'outstanding marque rentals' recently, and is commended for 'his ability to forge close relationships through honesty, market knowledge and discretion', which has led to repeat business at the higher end of the market and saw an influx of clients from the Middle East and Europe. He has also noticed a rise in 'accidental landlords' due to the 'oversupply of stock' from a weakening sales market. But he has secured significant lettings, including four luxury penthouses in excess of £5,000 per week and a stand-out rental of a large family home in Chelsea in excess of £10,500 per week. With social media playing 'a much larger role' in the industry, agents who can adapt most effectively have a competitive edge. Strutt & Parker's recent merger with BNP Paribas Real Estate has been a boon, James says, leading to investment in digital platforms, which he says is 'paramount in an ever-changing industry'.



Trevor Kearney
Savills

Distinguished individual

FIRM SIZE *International* FOCUS *Super prime, celebrity and new build*

'**Trevor is the** best in business,' a peer praises the Savills adviser. One can see why; Kearney became the youngest partner at Knight Frank at the age of 26, and was then made the youngest director at Savills at 28. He describes his field as 'an obsession. To be the best at anything you do, you have to give everything and become totally immersed in it.' He illustrates a dynamic career in property, a world he has been immersed in since his teen years. At 18 he became the youngest member of the National Association of Estate Agents, where he studied real estate and construction. 'I did it because I cared and wanted knowledge – that hasn't changed,' he says. The passion has become further inflamed, 14 years on. Kearney has spent the past decade or so selling homes within the super prime bracket, to CEOs, celebrities, entrepreneurs, development elites, even the occasional royalty – he estimates transactions have crossed circa £1.6 billion. One memorable transaction broke the Land Registry record for Surrey. With a global client base of 'super rich', Kearney sees the super prime world in which he dominates as a very small and similar place, and enjoys providing his clients with a global view on their real estate assets due to his strong connections within the wider Savills network. There's a new niche Savills is set to explore through the enthusiastic adviser: Kearney is also a founding director of Savills Sports and Entertainment, which is an arm of the business offering confidential property service to sports people and those in film, media and entertainment – a first in the UK. 'While we have become the agency of choice for most in UK sports, I am hugely excited about working in new markets and regions,' he says; as a fan of NBA and the film industry, this makes his role all the more thrilling. An English Premiership footballer exalts the passionate adviser, calling Kearney 'one of my most trusted advisers' in the 'sometimes daunting world' of global real estate. Another UHNW says his 'enthusiasm for the housing market, regardless of the actual conditions' is one of his best qualities: 'His incredible drive that ensures he gets the job done.'

Rory McMullen

Savills

Young Turk

FIRM SIZE *International*

FOCUS *Cross-border investment*

London-based but with an international mandate, associate director Rory McMullen is a key member of the cross border investment team and private office, offering a residential service to international clients. He works alongside the Savills dedicated global capital markets network to link investor requirements and assets across the globe. His clients include UHNWs, family offices and multinational companies, exposing this international capital to residential opportunities outside their own domestic markets. Given the evolving and expanding residential sector and the increasing appetite in alternative asset classes, McMullen has an increasing focus on institutional capital.

Charlie Naughten

RFR

Best of breed

FIRM SIZE *UK*

FOCUS *Prime central London*

Charlie Naughten has 'considerable transactional experience across prime central London' notes Richard Rogerson, CEO of RFR (the firm he joined in late 2017). With 'exceptional industry connections and an ability to unearth properties for clients', the former Strutt & Parker Partner's skills are in demand in the current market (where a lack of quality properties continue to frustrate buyers willing to transact). Described as 'utterly charming' by one peer, he is able to navigate the most challenging of negotiations and still come out 'liked by both sides'. Often disarming, Naughten understands that at the highest echelons deals are about 'people as much as property'.



Julien Ward

Savills

Rising star

FIRM SIZE *International*

FOCUS *Private client liaison*

'The private office provides wealthy individuals and their advisors a discreet link into the wider world of Savills and our extensive business streams and service lines,' says Julien Ward, who was a private banker at Credit Suisse before joining the Savills team two years ago. 'The objective of the private office is that we are a global, discreet, one-stop service solution for our clients every real estate need, be that residential, rural, commercial or consultancy. Wealthy individuals, and their advisors, come to us with their enquiry and we help them navigate the opportunity set and connect with the right person within the wider world of Savills.' With a primarily European remit, Ward's role is international and multifaceted, as he acts as a point of contact for his clients as well as sourcing new clients for the firm. 'This week I'm in London, next week I'll be in Geneva, and then Paris the week after,' he says. 'The scope of work changes day to day. One moment I'll be in discussion about possible commercial acquisitions, the next talking about a residential transaction for someone's child.' Savills can help across all sectors, service lines and geographical locations up and down the value scale – from parking spaces in Monaco to high value residential units in major cities, leisure assets to student accommodation, the private office co-ordinates Savills specialists with high standards of client service.



Charles Penny

Knight Frank

Distinguished individual

FIRM SIZE *International* FOCUS *£3,000 per square foot market*

The profile of buyers in the prime and super prime markets is changing, and with it, the desired areas and list of requirements. 'Buyers are increasingly aware of the market and carry out considerable research,' says Charles Penny. 'There is a great deal of practicality shown by current buyers – not kowtowing to excess and concentrating on buying efficient spaces with superb volume in the best locations – and happy to pay for the best in class.' Penny works within the prime central London team – part of the Knight Frank global prime team – and specialises in the sale of high-value residential property throughout central London. His clients range from prime residential developers, selling in the £3,000 per square foot market, to private individuals and trust companies.

A few years ago, Penny was chosen as Knight Frank's Ambassador for Hong Kong, which entails visiting three to four times each year to assist HNWs and their families with global investment strategies across all asset classes. 'So far, this has proven incredibly successful,' Penny says. 'I have built a diverse range of contacts that keeps me busy throughout the year.' He describes buyers as increasingly diligent in approaching a purchase and, as a result of more aggressive taxation on residential property, the focus is moving towards more niche investment sectors with recurring income, such as student housing and HMO portfolios. Penny describes the past 12 months as 'unpredictable', but says the market is showing positive signs of moving in the right direction. 'I think we have reached a critical point, where vendors' price expectations are closest to buyers' expectations and, as a result, we have noticed an increase in the volume of sales, particularly over the summer,' he explains. Penny says the increase in the volume of transactions has provided good sentiment in the market and has ultimately encouraged buyers to make quicker decisions. 'What remains abundantly apparent is that 'best in class' sells, and lifestyle properties such as luxury new-build developments with facilities are continuing to drive values in prime areas of London.'