



property

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The Daily Telegraph

THINK SMALL

With house prices soaring and space at a premium, tiny homes are going to become the norm, says Caroline McGhie

When Alice finds a bottle in Wonderland with a label around the neck saying "DRINK ME" in beautifully printed letters, she swallows the dose and promptly shrinks to 10in tall. People trying to find a bolt-hole in London experience a similar dystopia. Even the well-off are beginning to feel that property prices are so high they need to think small.

The microscopic but smart trend is already visible in the hotel world. Osaka in Japan has the Capsule Inn, which advertises itself as "small in space but generous with amenities". Each room is large enough to hold a sleeping human with a television, radio, lights, bathrobe,



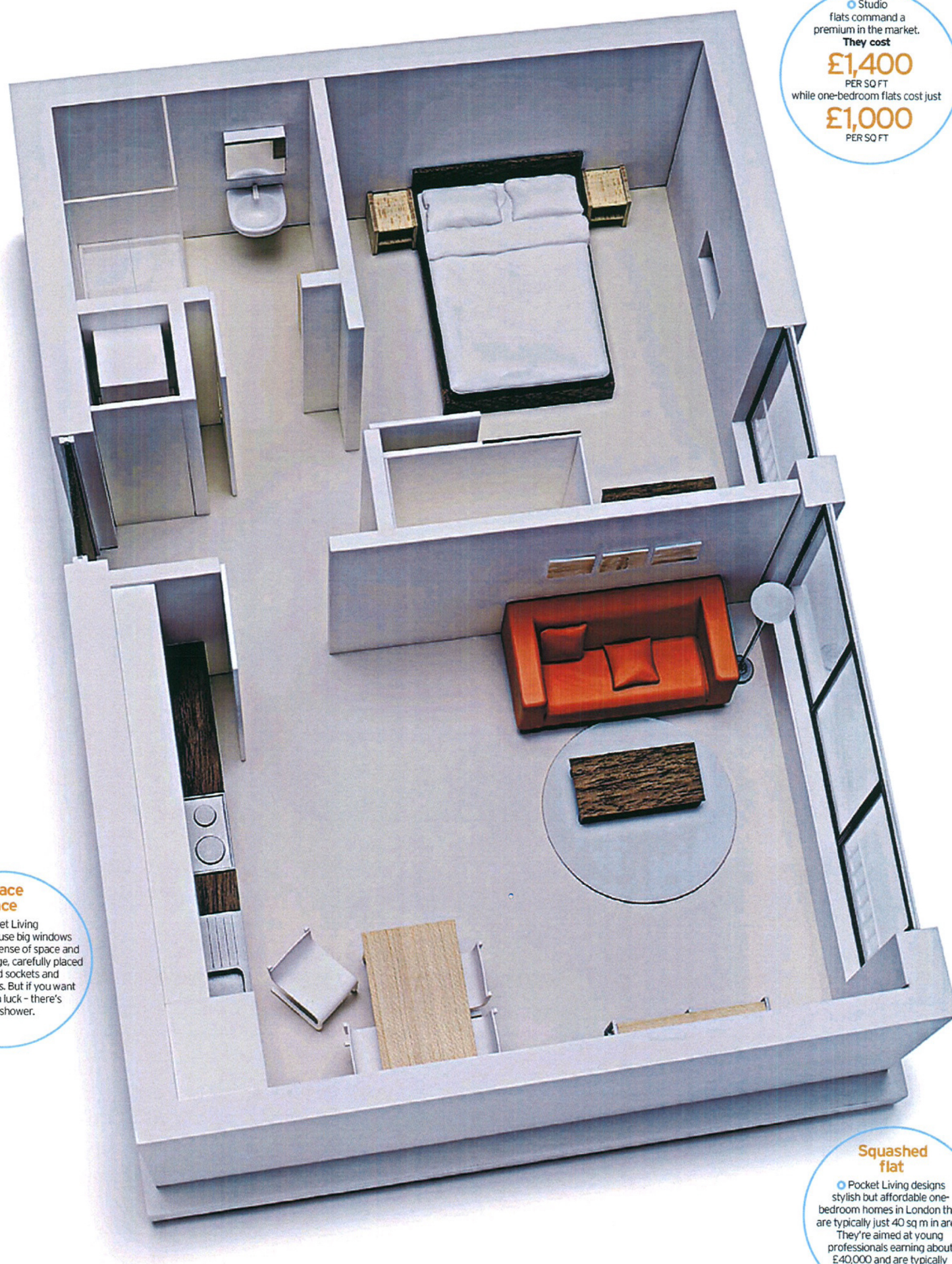
Smart spaces: buyers pay a premium for studio flats such as Kenton Court

towel and toiletries. This is supplemented by an in-house spa and gym.

In New York, Pod Hotels are offering tiny rooms packed with electronics. Guests eat in an attached cantina or gastropub. The theory is that you still want to eat like a gourmet but don't necessarily need to sleep like a king. In London we have Z Hotels in former office buildings in Shoreditch and Piccadilly where the rooms are a little like aeroplane cabins with the shower, loo and tiny luxuries folded neatly into one space.

Titchy flats are already the tasty sweetmeats of the market in London. Figures from Savills show that the studio now commands a clear premium in the market, at £1,400 per sq ft, compared with one-bedroom flats at

Continued on page 2 ▶



Studio flats command a premium in the market. They cost

£1,400

PER SQ FT

while one-bedroom flats cost just

£1,000

PER SQ FT

Space race

Pocket Living developments use big windows to increase the sense of space and offer great storage, carefully placed switches and sockets and communal areas. But if you want a bath, tough luck - there's only a shower.

Squashed flat

Pocket Living designs stylish but affordable one-bedroom homes in London that are typically just 40 sq m in area. They're aimed at young professionals earning about £40,000 and are typically sold at a discount of 20 per cent.

Cover story

◀ Continued from page 1

£1,000 (though we have to remember that there is an even bigger premium for large ritzy flats at £2,000 per sq ft). "People crave super convenience and urbanites don't spend much time at home. It is often a place to crash and they treat it a bit like a hotel," says Dominic Grace, the head of London residential development at Savills.

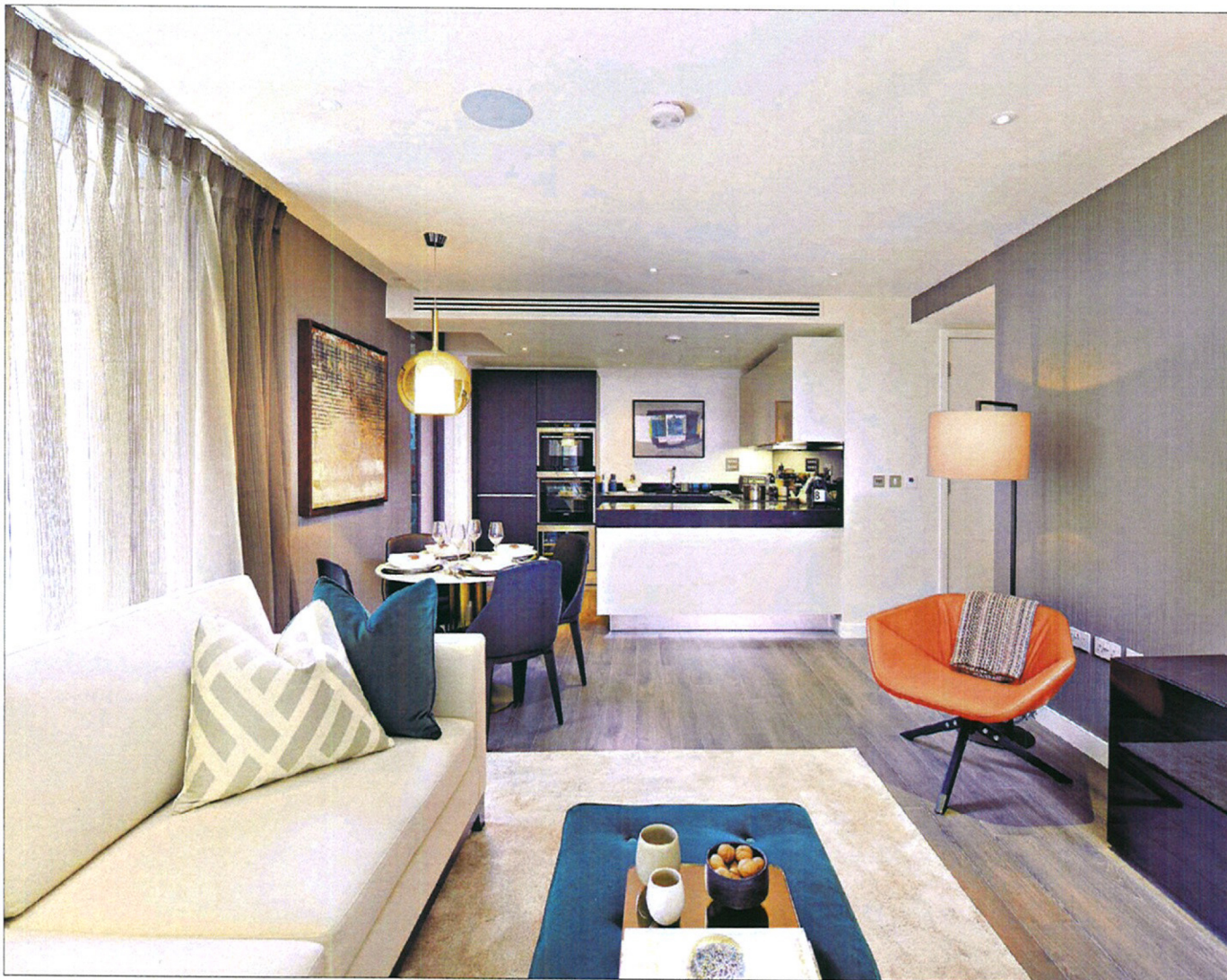
The rise of the mini-flat is foreseen in a report called *Housing Futures*, published this week by Strutt & Parker. "As urbanisation gathers pace around the world, central locations in the most sought-after cities have become too expensive for the majority," it says. It predicts the solution will be "dedicated tiny living spaces".

But even as living spaces might become microscopic, the thinking will be grand, hence they are dubbed "micro-mansions". These are not the converted broom cupboards or recycled hallways we have seen in previous decades. These are premeditated, pre-shrunk spaces that have been meticulously designed using every hi-tech gizmo available to man. How small can we go? You might well ask.

"A micro-home is 100 sq ft to 250 sq ft, compared with a two-bedroom flat of 750 sq ft," says the report. "As our cities increase their pull on the global workforce, micro-mansions will grow in popularity." They are for the work-hard play-hard generation and allow buyers to feed off the takeaway food culture and indulge in the bars and clubs of our city centres.

Another new type of property is neither a studio nor a one-bedroom flat but a hybrid called the "suite", where life is zoned between sleeping, eating, working and chilling, and which might be divided by a half wall or a screen (which doesn't happen in a studio). "These suites are really clever," says Grace. "They do things like combine the entrance hall and kitchen in one space. We don't spend more than a few seconds a week in an entrance hall, so it can double as something else. It can also be closed off, so you don't have to pass the washing up left over from the night before."

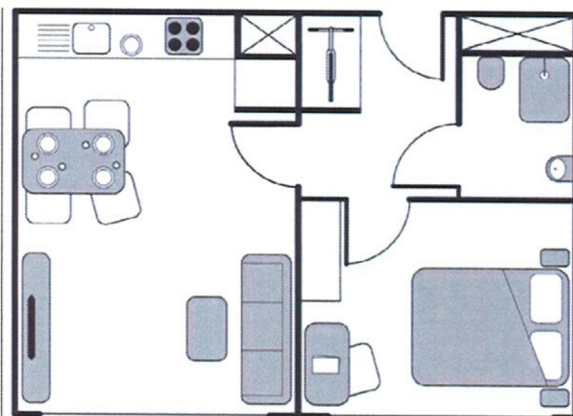
We have the technology, the half-size dishwashers, swivelling flat screen TVs, beds that fold out of the walls or from a sofa, mini ovens and many other smart ideas in this hi-tech age of pull-out-fold-down. Ikea is ahead of



SIMON WINSON

the game and caters for people making "small spaces big" with benches that double as shoe storage and beds that allow staff to be stored under the mattress.

Berkeley Homes calls its "suite" the Manhattan. At Royal Arsenal Riverside at Greenwich, south-east London, they range in size from 436 sq ft to 445 sq ft, and in price from £367,500 to £402,500. They have all sold, so new buyers will have to wait until the next phase of the development. Developers are shy to talk about them because they raise fears of a return to Victorian overcrowding and cramming, but Yolande Barnes, the head of world research at Savills, believes tiny spaces have a role to play in the mix of properties to meet the needs of the market. In Singapore, she says, they are



Little wonder: 'suites' make the most of small spaces by creating zones for eating, sleeping, cooking and entertaining

called "shoebox units" and come with shared space to socialise in, which young buyers don't find in our sleeper suburbs.

This trend for "shutting up like a telescope", as Alice described it, echoes a time between the wars when suitable husbands were in short supply and young women came to London to earn a living. Flats such as Florin Court in Charterhouse Square (later used as a location for the television series *Agatha Christie's Poirot*) were developed for the purpose and William Heath Robinson produced a book of humorous drawings, *How To Live in a Flat*, in 1936 in which he invented space-saving ideas such as beds that doubled as baths.

But today's micro-flats are mansions too. They come with a

24-hour concierge who will keep your keys, take your deliveries and greet you as if you were Wooster to their Jeeves. You might also have use of a swimming pool, a gym, a bar and a garden.

A new developer, Pocket Living, sees small as a solution for city people trapped between social housing and the open market. It is designing compact starter homes on land bought from local authorities using an interest-free £21.7 million loan from the Greater London Authority. They are small and smart and sell at 20 per cent below market value.

"Our apartments are for the millions of young, middle-earning Londoners who contribute to their city in so many ways but can't afford to buy their first home," says Pocket Living.

Squeazy does it



New York grunge

• A true loft-style studio in Euston Reach with a daytime concierge, cycle storage, large atrium with hanging gardens, close to Camden High Street, £490,000, Savills (020 7299 3023, savills.co.uk). Size: 372 sq ft



Hipster

• Studio in Kenton Court, a portered mansion block in Kensington High Street with a hidden pull-out bed, £595,000 (0207 535 2980, savills.co.uk). Size: 372 sq ft



First step

• One-bedders by Pocket Living (020 7291 3680, pocketliving.com) at 20 per cent below market value. To qualify you must live or work in the area, earn less than £66,000 and be a first-time buyer. Average size: 400 sq ft



Mansion-style

• Studio in Goodman's Fields, Aldgate, with health club, swimming pool, spa, media room, business lounge, £735,000 (020 32 17 1000, goodmansfields.co.uk). Size: 516 sq ft