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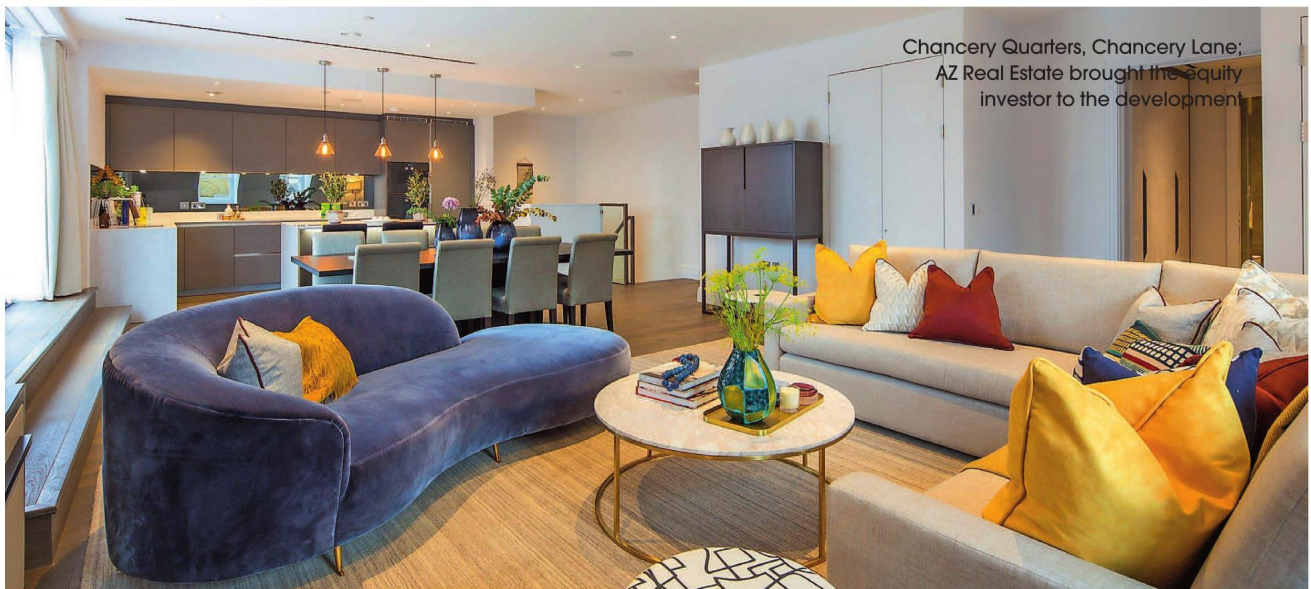
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# THE REAL WORLD

*The dust is settling on McMafia  
– but does it reflect what’s really happening in London?*

Words ALISA ZOTIMOVA

**U**nless you were living under a rock, it would have been hard to miss the whirlwind BBC drama that was *McMafia*. Charting Russian-born, but English-raised Alex Godman’s journey through London as he tries to make an honest living at a hedge fund, the show’s rollercoaster storyline captivated viewers – but it was the properties and interiors featured in the show that also got us talking.

A stylish house on Cranley Mews, South Kensington, where Alex lives in the show attracted a lot of attention when it went on sale just after the show aired – how about that for coincidental timing? Meanwhile, fans quickly took to their tablets and devices in a bid to emulate the rich interiors featured in the show, with eBay reporting spikes in enquiries and sales for Chesterfield sofas, retro drinks trolleys and ornate chandeliers. But what is the market really like for Russian property hunters?

London remains an attractive destination thanks to its stable

political system (although British readers might not think so!), rich cultural and lifestyle offering and, of course, its educational system. Traditional prime postcodes, the likes of which are the preserve of Alex’s parents on the show, remain a first port of call for many Russians moving to London. While the much talked about Nine Elms and neighbouring Battersea areas are slowly gaining traction, there is still reluctance from certain buyers for which these enclaves are not yet household names.

Education remains one of the biggest drivers of London property searches for Russians in the capital. Indeed, we have seen two clients in quick succession hold very specific rental requests: high end three bedroom apartments in Belgravia and Holland Park, with both families ‘following the kids’, whom are now on the roll call of some outstanding schools. What is interesting is that they are choosing to rent as a first step before committing to buying here, demonstrating a maturity and

flexibility in their property investment search that hadn’t typically been associated with Russian buyers when they first began to purchase in the capital. These renters often seek unfurnished properties – they know what they like and would prefer to buy or ship over their own furniture from elsewhere.

Equally, we are seeing a new wave of younger Russians, the Alex Goodmans of this world, who are twice as keen to prove themselves on their own merits. This demographic is also more likely to be open to new ideas, straying away from traditional central, west and south western haunts, looking east to areas like Islington and Dalston.

In summary, London will continue to be popular with Russians – although the next few years may see a move away from historic trends. **T**

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