

THE HOUSE ALWAYS WINS

When it comes to investment, well-chosen property is still your safest bet, says TV property expert and serial entrepreneur Gary McCausland, CEO of Richland Group

GARY McCAUSLAND IS a chartered surveyor and the CEO of the Richland Group, a property development company based in Berkeley Sq. Alongside regular appearances on TV, he is also the mastermind behind rovster.com, the UK's fastest growing property website.

On the London property market

The property market depends on five key criteria for ensuring strong performance: low interest rates; low unemployment; low inflation; high demand/limited supply; and the all-important feel good factor. London is doing well in all of these areas so prices are holding up. The market is also buoyed by the City and corporate business, unwavering tourism, and a very strong international sales and letting market. Over the long term property here is a great investment – over the last 100 years property prices have risen on average 10% per annum; now that's what I call a high performing asset.

On the best way to find a bargain...

You need to find a motivated seller, someone who will give you a good price because they really need to sell. Anyone moving abroad, getting divorced or going bankrupt will probably need a quick sale which is when you will get a good price. Check out the tiny ads in newspapers and on rovster.com – as motivated sellers often try to sell the property themselves.

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PROPERTY RICHLAND GROUP

On Location, Location, Location

Although everyone thinks they know what this phrase means, they often don't. A good location doesn't mean the best area in town; if you buy there then you are going to pay the highest price and have little headroom an increase in value. A decent location is actually somewhere on the fringes of a good area that, in time, will become part of that good area.

On adding value to your property

In London, owing to planning restrictions and limited space, it can be challenging to add real value to your property but there are clever ways to do it. At the Richland Group we specialise in adding value to properties and maximising their potential. Luxury extensions, multi-level 'super' basements and loft extensions are the key ways to add value and space. It's possible to take modest houses and apartments and literally double the size and value with underground parking, swimming pools, gyms, kitchens, cinemas, bedrooms, offices, etc.

We prepare designs and proposals that maximise your property's potential and value, obtain the necessary planning and statutory consents, provide high level project and construction management via a complete turn-key solution. I always pose the question "why bother moving when you can add huge value and space to the property you already own?"

On current projects

We are developing a £30m+ private top-end residence for an international client in one of the best streets in London. It really is the last word in luxury and we have an outstanding team working around the clock to ensure it is completed before the Olympic Games begin.

Meanwhile, rovster.com is also keeping me busy: with more than 500,000 'live' properties listed, we are attracting huge numbers of visitors and I hope to eventually make it the world's number one property website. It might take 25 years, but I'm here for the long run. ■

For more info: richlandgroup.co.uk; rovster.com