

FAST FACTS

Development: Westside Apartments

Current rent: : £540 (plus £35.85 pcm service charge)



KELLY PRESTON & JASKAWAL SAGOO

Key workers Kelly Preston and Jaskawal Sagoo are in dreamland now they have moved into a newly built apartment in Ilford. After years spent living in a crowded house, they now have their own space and save hundreds of pounds every month through subsidised rent.

Primary school teacher Kelly and her NHS dietician flatmate Jaskawal are both 27. Last November, they felt it was time to get away from the mess and stress of insecure and financially difficult renting arrangements.

"We looked at places from commercial letting agents but the nice, brand new ones were too expensive and we don't want to waste lots of money on rent," says Kelly. "Then a friend told us how we could take advantage of our key worker status through the intermediate rent scheme."

The scheme offers mainly key workers the chance to rent a brand new or refurbished apartment at a subsidised rent. The rent charged is usually 20-30% lower than the expected amount for a similar apartment in the same area.

The friends had shared a flat with twice as many people for the past three years. "It was okay for a while but it was cramped, student-type accommodation. We dreamed of a proper, new place that would stay clean and where we wouldn't have to worry about new strangers greeting us each morning," says Kelly.

Less than three months after starting their search they moved into Westside Apartments, let and managed by Tower Homes. They found the place in December, saw the show flat in January and had moved in by February.

Kelly says: "We were very impressed with how fast

the process was. It only took a week to confirm that we were eligible and Tower's sales team were really helpful and dealt with our questions with ease."

She estimates they are paying more than 40% less than they would on the open rental market, which allows them to save around £400 every month against the comparative rent they would have paid for a similar place on the open market.

"This is brilliant," says Kelly. "It's great to save money while renting and we plan to use the difference to save for a future home. We have the perfect arrangement until we can afford our own place."

Kelly is particularly pleased with the equally large size of the two bedrooms. "This is a bonus because one room was always much smaller in other places, which would have been awkward," she says.

"We can let friends stay over by using the extra space and sofa bed in the large living room, whereas before that was awkward. Before we saw the show flat we thought there would be something wrong with it, but there wasn't. It's a dream come true as it's exactly what we were looking for."

Meanwhile, Kelly is also pleased with Westside Apartments' strong environmental credentials as the first forest friendly housing development to receive full certification under the new Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Project Certification Standard. All of the timber used in Westside Apartments is FSC certified as originating from sustainable, ethical and environmentally friendly sources.

The building also has plenty of cycle storage inside the building and outside in a wooden shed. It's almost enough to tempt Kelly into cycling, but luckily her work is only a 20-minute walk away. ■

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