

Enjoy a little park life

Alison Jones looks at an alternative form of housing – park homes



Henry Morrison jokes that the units that make up the little communities on the parks he and his family owns should be called "immobile homes".

"These are not something you are going to move around."

Although the concept of mobile homes may have its roots in caravanning, the types of properties one finds in a Morrison Park, more closely resemble a one storey executive home.

There are plasma screens on the walls, tasteful furnishings, a bathroom for every bedroom, fitted kitchens with luxury integrated appliances and even decks attached to some.

Mr Morrison got into the park home business in 1980, when the opportunity came up to buy a park, inspired by close friends who are "quite big operators in the industry".

He now runs the business, Morrison Park Homes, with his two sons.

Over the years he has seen the type of people investing in park homes change. It used to be young couples buying it as a first home, moving on after a few years.

Now, however, the clients are more mature. They are looking for a property that is easier to manage and also they want to free up a little capital.

"People who live here want to downsize. Something smaller where they can look after the garden. Big isn't beautiful if it takes a lot of looking after and you can't get help.

"Another advantage of living on a park home estate is security. There is very little crime. Because a lot of the residents are at home all the time there are a lot of people around. Strangers stand out and a burglar might think there are too many eyes watching.



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"Some of the parks have gates and people like the security aspect, though they are not Fort Knox."

The homes can also be used as a UK base for buyers who have sold their large houses and also invested in a villa or apartment somewhere in the sun.

"Residents can go away on holiday for up to three or four months at a time and still have peace of mind about their home here."

There are six premier parks at Hanbury Wharf, Droitwich, Worcestershire; Long-cast Park, Stratford-upon-Avon; Meriden Hall and Eaves Green in Warwickshire;

Beech Park, Tring, Hertfordshire; and Swiss Farm, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire. Other parks are currently in development.

The location of each of the parks has been selected for its proximity to the type of upmarket villages and towns that the residents are used to or enjoy living by.

"At Meriden most of our customers are from Solihull, which is just a short distance away," he says.

The idea of park home estates is one that is well-established in America. However, over there trailer park has become something of a pejorative term.



Mr Morrison travelled out to the States to look at such estates and saw that the reality did not always fit with the negative stereotype.

"I went to Florida and had a look at how they are round there. They are very nice and very popular.

"Now they are catching on over here. I think they are nice communities of like-minded people."

Prices for the homes range from under £100,000 to more than £200,000, on a par with a luxury apartment or bungalow, and they can be brought fully furnished, right down to the plasma TV.

"All you need to do is wheel in your suitcases," he says.

The agreement for buying one falls somewhere between a leasehold and freehold, he says.

"It doesn't run out like a normal lease, it is open ended. You can pass it on to family or sell it to a third party. So it is not quite as rigid as a lease. But there is a service charge to pay which you wouldn't have to pay if it was freehold."

For more details look up www.morrisonparkhomes.co.uk