

What the Dickens

David Spittles has great expectations for an SE1 backwater

BEHIND the Southwark waterfront, less than five minutes' walk from the brutalist urban splendour of Tate Modern, is a small-scale commercial and residential district opening up to homebuyers.

Until recently, this pocket of SE1 was judged the wrong side of the tracks, too close to the grubby railway viaducts running between London Bridge and Waterloo. But the ripple of development is spreading in its Victorian backstreets, still redolent with Dickens associations.

Here you will find Copperfield Street, with its pretty terraces of artisan cottages; Marshalsea Road, where the infamous debtors' prison once stood; Dorrit Street, Quilp Street and Lant Street, where Dickens lived as a child.

Former warehouses and workshops remain, too. Many of these buildings were turned into offices after the decline of the docks in the Sixties. A number of charities settled in the area because of the cheap rents but are now relocating as it becomes a fashionable residential address.

Shoemakers, Great Guildford Street, was once a footwear factory. Rather than split the handsome warehouse into boxy units, developer Artesian has created lateral apartments, one on each floor, above lower levels let to a firm of solicitors.

The flats range in size up to 1,250sq ft and have a

large open-plan kitchen/reception plus two bedrooms and two bathrooms. High ceilings and classic factory-style windows enhance the sense of space; finishes include walnut floors with underfloor heating, Travertine tiles in the bathroom and lacquered fitted wardrobes.

"The developer could have squeezed in another bedroom but this would have compromised the space," says Ben Babington of estate agent

**'Look at Copperfield Street,
Dorrit Street and Quilp Street,
all where the author lived'**

Jackson-Stops & Staff. "The area is taking off and we believe boutique apartments of this standard will be well received."

Interiors lack real architectural flair but they are stylish enough to entice the trendy buyers now scouting this part of London — among them



From £725,000: a shoe factory (above and right) is becoming an apartment complex (020 7620 3400)

high-earning professionals working at the London Bridge City office complex (some 20,000 employees).

Prices range from £725,000 to £875,000. There is no private parking but both the City and West End are walkable. Call 020 7620 3400.

Tucked away behind Shoemakers is a handsome Welsh congregational chapel and the Duthy Hall theatre and rehearsal rooms.

Check out Union Street, where car parks, now valuable land, are being snapped up for development. Also Great Suffolk Street, lined with depots and old railway arches that are ripe for redevelopment into bars, galleries and flats.

Q Developments is seeking permission for an eye-catching scheme of 183 flats on the corner of Pockock Street and Great Suffolk Street. Designed by Conran & Partners, it has giant zinc roof pods cantilevering over the main building. The pods will provide a platform to view Tate Modern and St Paul's Cathedral. Commercial space will be at



ground level and the scheme has an internal pedestrianised street. Completion is expected in 2010. To register, call 020 7223 1300.

Great Guildford Street runs into charming Trinity Square, a Georgian conservation area favoured by Guys Hospital surgeons and City barristers. Coming soon here is a small infill scheme. Call estate agent Daniel Cobb on 020 7357 0026.

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