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There's space for micro-apartments in Croydon's housing market

By [Martin Skinner](#) - Thursday 31st May, 2018

Can smaller apartments be acceptable living spaces? A local developer explains why he thinks that they can work for couples and singles



Photo by Inspired Homes, used with permission.

I recently read an article in the *Croydon Citizen* titled '[Do Croydon's children and young people have enough space at home?](#)', which suggests that small homes should be rejected because of the impact that they have on family life. I disagree, and I'll explain why.

It goes back to 2002 when, aged just 24, I bought my first property, a three-bedroom house in North Woolwich. The mortgage was a big responsibility and left me stretched financially. As any young person would, I wanted some spare cash to enjoy myself. I reconfigured the house to add two extra

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bedrooms. I lived in one and rented out the other four. My tenants, young professionals like me, had somewhere affordable to rent and I was able to maximise my income.

That first property paved the way for everything that I do now. Inspired Homes's micro-apartments starting at 30 square metres are 40% smaller than a typical new-build apartment at 50 square metres, but more affordable, putting them within reach of young professionals on average salaries.

Apartments are built to a high specification and feel spacious

Over the years, we've become smarter in the way that we design our apartments, so they feel really spacious. We build them to a high specification, and we provide shared social spaces such as club lounges and rooftop terraces, to give residents somewhere else to hang out where they can get to know their neighbours and enjoy music and other social events.

Of course, they're not family homes, and our typical buyers are singles and couples in their twenties or early thirties, who otherwise can't afford to get onto the property ladder. In Croydon, it means that they can purchase a new home with salary of around £34,000pa, instead of the £43,000pa required to purchase a larger apartment. This offers them the opportunity to build equity from a younger age, so that they can trade up to a larger home if, for example, they decide to have children. For me, getting onto the property ladder from a young age was the best thing that I ever did, not just so that I had my own home, but so that I could establish a nest egg.

Planning is far too focused on family-sized homes. In reality, only 28% of households have dependent children

In fact, I would turn this discussion on its head and argue that planning is far too focused (almost exclusively) on family-sized homes when in reality ONS data reveals that only 28% of households have dependent children. The greatest need is for singles and couples, where we have proven the demand for our micro concept, with customers who are delighted to become homeowners. It's true that the poorest families have been impacted by the housing benefit cap and a shortage of social housing, but housing solutions are also desperately needed for those without children who don't qualify for state help and simply want somewhere decent and affordable to live – and preferably own – so that they can build for their future.

The British Property Federation [published new definitions for micro living](#) just a few weeks ago. We have been lobbying the government tirelessly to view micro living as a viable housing solution and I hope that these new definitions pave the way for its inclusion in the planning system.

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Martin Skinner

Martin is the founder and chief executive of the multi-award-winning homebuilder Inspired Homes and of the property investment and development company, Inspired Asset Management. He creates high-tech, high-spec affordable private homes in greater London and urban hotspots such as Manchester, specialising in micro-apartments for the young professional market. Martin is a vocal advocate of micro-living as part of the solution to an entire generation priced out of home ownership.

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