

In 1980 Elvis Costello sang these words about the Hoover Factory: "Five miles out of London on the Western Avenue/Must have been a wonder when it was brand new/Talkin' 'bout the splendour of the Hoover factory/I know that you'd agree if you had seen it too."

He wasn't the only one to be inspired by the factory: John Betjeman described it as "a sort of art deco Wentworth Woodhouse" after the grade I listed Yorkshire country house.

The art deco building in Perivale, in the west London borough of Ealing, is to become a wonder once more. An ambitious restoration project now under way will transform it into 66 apartments. The range of studio to three-bedroom apartments by the developer IDM Properties is due to come to market next spring, with prices ranging from £275,000 to £695,000.

The Old Hoover Building, as it will be known, was commissioned in 1931 and built by the architectural partnership Wallis, Gilbert and Partners. Renowned for its art deco designs, the company has built some of the country's most distinctive properties, including Victoria Coach Station in London, General Electrical Company's Witton Works in Birmingham, and the Firestone Tyre Factory in Brentford in the London borough of Hounslow — its demolition in 1980 caused much controversy.

Vacuum cleaners were produced at the Hoover factory for about 50 years, and during the Second World War aircraft parts were also manufactured in the camouflaged building. In 1982 production was moved to a factory in Cambuslang, Lanarkshire, and shortly afterwards the main offices closed. The building was bought by Tesco in 1989 and was reopened as a store and offices a couple of years later.

A deal brokered by the commercial property adviser DeVono Cresa between Tesco and IDM Properties means that the front of the building, which has been empty for 12 years, can be developed into homes, while the supermarket continues to trade at the back. The factory's former canteen, a striking art deco structure next to the main building, will remain as the Royal Nawaab restaurant.

Jonathon Curtis, a partner at IDM Properties, says that the project has the backing of English Heritage and experts have been consulted on the preservation of the Hoover Building's original features. The developer will restore the distinctive Crittall windows, wrought-iron banisters, travertine marble floors and art deco lights. The



The historical art deco Hoover Building in Perivale, London, is being restored and will include 66 apartments

'The splendour of the Hoover factory'

Elvis Costello extolled the glories of this art deco landmark and soon you can buy an apartment there, says **Carol Lewis**

basins from the factory toilets will be relocated to the roof terrace and used as planters, and the gardens will be reinstated, using historic photographs as a reference.

Restoration work may prove tricky because the building is blighted by what Curtis calls "concrete cancer", which is when steel reinforcements rust, expand and blow off the concrete. "It is treatable — it is just difficult. We had the same problem when we renovated [the grade II listed] Keeling House in east London, but that worked out well, and English Heritage wanted the same here," he says. When completed, the Old

Hoover Building will strike a balance between art deco, and modern style and technology, says Curtis. Secondary double glazing will be placed behind the Crittall windows and a ventilation system will allow the building to be sealed, so that apartment owners aren't kept awake by the nearby A40.

The fluorescent lighting that has led to the Hoover building being dubbed



"the big green monster" by locals — the lights are now switched off at 10pm each day after residents complained — will be replaced with more subtle white lighting.

However, one thing that local residents are unlikely to complain about are the building's house prices. Unlike many conversions of architecturally significant buildings, the apartments are moderately priced. In other schemes, IDM has sold up to 100 per cent of its homes off-plan, with 80 per cent of buyers utilising the government's Help to Buy scheme. "This is where the demand is — this is what London needs," Curtis says. Or, as advertisements for the Perivale product used to state: "You'll be happier with a Hoover."

The former Hoover factory, above and left, was camouflaged in the Second World War when it produced aircraft parts

More images of the Hoover Building online and in tablet editions thetimes.co.uk/property

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