

ELIZABETH HARRIS

Focused on getting results, dedicated to the lettings profession and passionate about her clients is how Elizabeth Harris, founder and managing director of Mayfair-based lettings and property management company EJ Harris describes herself. And having worked in the industry since the age of 17, she's something of a property veteran.

Elizabeth's first role in the sector saw her join East London lettings agent Antony Gover, and she moved to Foxtons in 1993. She worked as a lettings negotiator in Chiswick for six years, before being promoted to lettings manager. She then became lettings director for five years in the company's office on Park Lane.

In 2004 Elizabeth left Foxtons to start her own company, EJ Harris. With a team of four staff and smart offices on Brook Street, directly adjacent to the iconic Claridges hotel, EJ Harris is now regarded as one of the leading specialist and property management companies in the West End.

The fast-growing business increased in size by 30 per cent last year, and operates in Mayfair, Belgravia, Knightsbridge, Marylebone, Shepherd's Bush, Chiswick, Regent's Park, St John's Wood and Belsize Park. Half the business consists of corporate lets

and embassy work, and the rest is focused on private client work.

At any one time, Elizabeth has anything from 75 to 100 instructions on her books, with typical properties let for £1,500 per week. Elizabeth says: "Mayfair is where everyone aspires to live, and Mount Street, Dover Street and Grosvenor Square are the top three locations of choice for affluent tenants."

Around 85 per cent of the business comprises high-quality dressed apartments, while the rest are houses. Elizabeth's applicant base consists of mainly corporate and high-net worth individuals, with tenants from institutions such as JP Morgan, Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Unilever, Shell and PWC.

The upcoming general election has led to a flurry of activity in the rental sector, she says. "The Mayfair and wider West End lettings market has been extremely buoyant over the past six months, as concerns over stamp duty and the mansion tax have led vendors to place properties on the lettings rather than sales market.

"Likewise, potential purchasers have chosen to stay in rented accommodation this year until the results of the election and its property implications are known. Given all these factors, we anticipate another busy year for EJ Harris, and a healthy and growing lettings sector in central London."



HELEN FRANKS

The woman behind the revitalisation of Mount Street, Davies Street, North and South Audley Street and Duke Street is Helen Franks. As head of commercial leasing for Grosvenor, she has attracted a multitude of heavyweight brands to the area, including Balenciaga, Lanvin, Céline, Oscar de la Renta, Goyard and Christopher Kane.

On her watch, Mount Street has been transformed into one of Mayfair's most prestigious and desirable streets, with a buzzing restaurant and retail scene that has led to a surge in property prices. According to Zoopla, the average asking price on the street is now more than £6 million.

Helen's role includes balancing relationships with new and existing retailers to curate the best possible retail balance for Grosvenor's key streets. She works closely with the group's asset management team and advises on surrender opportunities and assignments.

She also oversees property redevelopment and refurbishment for retail opportunities to further enhance the estate; and sets retail leasing strategies and policies. Helen has been instrumental in bringing some of the most influential brands to Mayfair and Belgravia.

Other tenants she has brought to Mayfair include Gianvito Rossi, Roksanda Ilincic and Moynat, and she has been similarly successful in Belgravia, where new additions to the retail offer include Jo Loves, Floris, Luke Irwin, Fiona Barratt Campbell and Blo by Real Hair.