



Mews views: gorgeous little mews streets, many with the added glamour of a Blue Plaque, are a hallmark of South Kensington

A £160m revamp, with new homes by Brompton Estates and a boutique quarter with a touch of French charm, are giving South Ken a serious makeover, says **David Spittles**

SOUTH KENSINGTON is getting itself spruced up for spring. The historic neighbourhood, with its world-famous museums, the Lycée and French Quarter and elegant garden squares, now has the glamour of a new boutique shopping district at The Brompton Quarter, while streetscape improvements around two



From £1.95 million: new luxury apartments (above) at Queen's Gate Place, SW7 by Northbeach. Call Farleys (020 7589 1234). Left: spacious mews house in Pont Street, SW1 (as before)

A YOUTHFUL REMIX FOR SOUTH KEN



£10.5 million: for utter self-indulgence, this four-bedroom mews house in Pont Street, SW1, is hard to beat (left, below left and above right). It comes with a full-size golf simulator, steam room and gym, and offers surprisingly spacious living accommodation. Through Strutt & Parker of Knightsbridge (020 7235 9959)



key points – South Kensington Tube station and Exhibition Road – are making it more attractive for pedestrians. Last week, Prince's Gardens, with its grand stucco town houses, reopened after a £160 million revamp by Imperial College, which has built seven halls of residence and a sports centre, adding to the upbeat and youthful feel. The makeover has not gone unnoticed by the new wave of bonus-happy, chequebook-wagging City bankers, and property prices have rebounded strongly. "Judging by the calls we started to get after Christmas the bonus buyer is back," says Tim Wright, of Knight Frank's Kensington office. Most enquiries appear to be coming from people who want to upgrade by buying a better, bigger house in London rather than splitting the money up into investment and country property. Kensington heaves with seriously wealthy people – the long list of Blue Plaques proves it has been the address of choice for the rich and powerful since Georgian times. Yet it has a mix of properties that have always catered for those in transit: businessmen, creatives, students from around the globe and singles enjoying central London before settling down. All of

whom have appreciated the mix of mansion block apartments, mews houses, purpose-built Sixties freehold homes and leases short and long to suit every kind of budget. With much of the district listed, where eagle-eyed conservation groups keep guard, opportunities to squeeze in new homes are rare. Yet resourceful developers manage to find some each year. Three houses have been built on the site of the former Coys Of Kensington classic car showroom, tucked away in cobbled Queen's Gate Mews. Ranging in size from 2,000sq ft to 3,400sq ft, the homes overcome the restrictions – narrow reception rooms, poor natural light – of traditional mews houses. Integral garages have been made extra-wide to accommodate larger, high-end cars, such as a Bentley. Prices start at £4.25 million. Call Jackson-Stops & Staff on 020 7581 5881. Conversion of a house in Coleherne Road has spawned three flats, priced from £675,000 to about £2million, which are already receiving offers. For more information, call 020 7589 1234. Mainstream properties in Kensington equate to roughly £1,200 a square foot, though the best homes can cost twice

this figure. Typical is a refurbished two-bedroom apartment (947sq ft plus terrace) at the top of a substantial town house in Queen's Gate, which is on the market for £1.15 million. For more information, call Hamptons on 020 7584 2044. Five luxury apartments have been created at 3 Queen's Gate Place, a leafy garden terrace behind the Cromwell Road museums. These homes have "classic-contemporary" interiors, with modern finishes such as black-gloss kitchens set against restored architectural details, and come with air conditioning, audio-visual system and programmable mood lighting. Prices range from £1.95 million to £4.95 million. Call Farleys on 020 7589 1234. The tract between Old Brompton Road and Fulham Road is the residential heart of South Kensington, with Thurloe Square, Pelham Crescent and Onslow Gardens among the prestige addresses. Most of this patch used to be owned by The Henry Smith Charity, landowners since the 17th century, but in the Nineties the estate was sold to Wellcome Trust. Since then, there have been a number of disposals, allowing local small estate companies to consolidate their

property portfolios. One of these is Brompton Estates, which is focusing on a micro neighbourhood between Beauchamp Place and Thurloe Place, opposite the impressive bulk of Brompton Oratory. This prized chunk of freehold bricks and mortar has more than 100 retail units with mansion flats above. When Brompton Estates acquired the land five years ago, it was a grimy, unfashionable strip, strangely at odds with the glamorous shopping experience available at Harrods, only a stone's throw away. Today, it is called Brompton Quarter, an upmarket retail destination, specialising in homewares (Divertimenti, Smallbone, SieMatic, Skandium, Boffi, B&B Italia). In neighbourhood terms it has filled the gap between swanky Knightsbridge and the ultra-smart cluster of shops

and restaurants around the wonderful Art Nouveau Michelin Building on Fulham Road. A rolling programme of refurbishment is bringing new flats to the market. Visit www.brompton-quarter.com. South Kensington Estates, another local company, has about 100 properties in the area and is renovating two buildings with 14 flats, including a penthouse, on Egerton Gardens. Properties are let on annual leases by WA Ellis, with rents ranging from £495 a week. A refurbished mews house with a Danish design theme is available for £875 a week. Call 020 7306 1600. As in Marylebone, where high-quality retail has been nurtured by The Howard de Walden Estate, South Kensington residents will benefit from better amenities on their doorstep and a price boost to their homes.

"The makeover has not gone unnoticed by the new wave of bonus happy, chequebook wagging City bankers"

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Homes & Property

SOUTH KENS SPRING CLEAN NEW HOMES P4 OYSTERLAND SPREADS OUT P7 AUSTRIA HAS IT ALL P8 GARDEN FROM SEED P13

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Shopping heaven: South Kensington is renowned for its range of ultra-smart shops and celebrity-haunt restaurants