

## London village

# A touch of Cinderella magic in W14

West Kensington is coming out of the shadow of its better known, wealthier neighbour, says Ruth Bloomfield

**F**or buyers priced out of the golden streets of Kensington proper, West Kensington must seem like a bit of a no-brainer: just a couple of Tube stops away and half the price. Value for money is not the only thing this slightly Cinderella-ish postcode has going for it.

Its location is superlative, its Victorian streets are wide and leafy, and you can walk to the Thames, to some of London's best parks, and even to the West End if you are feeling energetic.

The downside is that West Kensington remains, oddly, something of a dormitory. Young professionals flock here for its good looks and convenience, but the bars, independent shops and interesting cafés you might expect have failed to follow.

#### Where is it?

Perched right on the cusp of prime Central London, about four miles from the West End.

#### How do you get there?

Pick up the District Line to either West

Kensington underground station or Barons Court (which is also served by the Piccadilly line). The ongoing work to repair the Hammersmith flyover can mean severe delays on the roads.

#### What is the property like?

Dominated by Victorian terraces carved up into flats, starting at about £350,000 for one bedroom, or from circa £400,000 for two. There are also some grand mansion blocks for which you will pay a premium — think about £370,000 for one bedroom and £450,000-plus for two in sought-after blocks like Queen's Club Mansions. Marcel Zaidan, sales director of Dexters estate agents, said houses tend to be harder to find, priced from about £850,000 for a three to four-bedroomed townhouse. Gunterstone and Edith Roads are the smartest, but you will need to find from £1.5m for a house.

#### What's new?

Bespoke developer Pocket (pocketliving.com) has just launched a development of 18 flats and studios. They are aimed at low(ish)-income buyers currently priced out of the mainstream market, but — with a maximum household income of £64,000 — are too well-off to qualify for affordable housing schemes. The properties are priced from £148,000 for a studio or from £220,000 for a one-bedroom flat, some with private patios. The first phase will be move-in ready in May. Pocket builds small homes at commensurately small prices — at least 20 per cent less than the local market rate. But the smallest studios are just 293 sq ft and the smallest one-bedroom flats come in at 404 sq ft.



A row of pastel-coloured terraced houses in West Kensington, an area dominated by young professionals

#### Who lives there?

Dominated by young professionals who work in the City, as well as plenty of doctors and lawyers on their first rung of the property ladder. Housing is roughly split 50/50 between homeowners and renters.

**What is the high street like?** Hmm. It may only 1½ miles from the glories of Kensington High Street but it is a world away in terms of pizzazz. There are some

basic, useful shops but interesting retail therapy opportunity is thin.

#### What else is there to do?

Tennis fans with deep pockets — and who can find two existing members to support their candidacy — can play at The Queen's Club, and the Olympia and Earls Court exhibition centres are on the doorstep, although the latter is to close after the Olympics.

#### And what about green space?

A couple of pocket-handkerchief parks but nothing special. However, Holland Park and Kensington Gardens both are within walking distance.

#### Eating and drinking:

The Cumberland Arms is a good traditional (gastro) pub and the Colton Arms is very popular.

#### What are the schools like?

Avonmore Primary School and St Mary's Catholic Primary School are rated "good" by Ofsted, while the Cardinal Vaughan Memorial RC School is considered "outstanding".



**FOR SALE**

Pocket flats have built-in wardrobes, underfloor heating, large windows and communal gardens. Prices start at £148,000 for a studio and £220,000 for a one bed flat through Pocket, 02072913691, pocketliving.com