



# MADE IN CHELSEA

It's already one of the city's most desirable areas to live, and thanks to a host of stunning new developments, makeovers and openings, this area of south-west London is more buoyant than ever

WORDS ZOE DARE HALL

**W**hen the first lockdown loomed, many of Chelsea's wealthy residents were among the first to leave London. Not that they were selling up, however – just relocating to additional, roomier homes elsewhere. "I'd say that 50% of townhouses were empty, either because their owners

had decamped to the countryside or had gone to join family overseas," comments Constance Cunningham at UK Sotheby's International Realty.

In March 2021, footfall on the King's Road was down by about 55% compared with pre-pandemic March 2019. By the final week in May, it was around 16% down on the 2019 count, but 202% above the dismal figures for May 2020. And its visitor numbers outperformed central London, according to King's Road ([kingsroadlondon.com](http://kingsroadlondon.com)), a partnership between the major local landlords, including the Cadogan Estate, developer Martin's Properties, HALJ Group and Peter Jones department store.

Between them, they're reinvigorating and future-proofing the world-famous street, driving up visitor numbers through year-round events and pop-ups, curating its mix of cutting-edge restaurants and shops, and sprucing up its tired old buildings.





Cadogan also recently launched its 10-year plan to make Chelsea net-zero (adding no more greenhouse gas into the atmosphere than it takes away) by 2030.

Such initiatives can count on the support of a “strong, affluent resident catchment who are loyal and local”, says Richard Bourne, MD at Martin’s Properties. “We’re seeing quiet, more difficult assets being transformed into buzzy, mixed-use developments – including King’s Walk, a forthcoming retail and leisure offering, and a boutique hotel on the site of the old Waitrose – and it’s bringing new life to Chelsea,” he comments.

This has been the summer of al fresco dining – one of the more enjoyable legacies of Covid-19 – and Chelsea has joined the fray in style by adding hundreds of outdoor dining seats in the King’s Road, Sloane Square and bunting-draped Pavilion Road, bringing a Mediterranean-style buzz to south-west London.

New openings include The Ivy Asia Chelsea on the King’s Road, with its luminous green onyx floor, sumptuous artwork, antiques and a large cherry blossom tree. Beaverbrook, the luxury

country-house hotel, has commandeered two Georgian townhouses on Sloane Street for its first London outpost, the Beaverbrook Town House, with 14 luxury suites and a Japanese restaurant.

On the corner of the King’s Road and Old Church Street, the Everyman cinema now forms part of the mixed-use Essoldo House, where the cinema – with to-your-seat waiter service – joins boutiques and apartments. A two-bed flat is on sale there for £4.8m through Susan Metcalfe Residential ([susanmetcalfe.com](http://susanmetcalfe.com)).

And it may be the 1970s punk scene that springs to mind when you think of Chelsea, but it’s porcelain that started the creative vibe, 250 years ago. At 26-30 Old Church Street ([oldchurchst.com](http://oldchurchst.com)), in the heart of Old Chelsea, Martin’s Properties’ new development of four lateral apartments priced from £1.8m and two townhouses (the



**Left to right:** the ornate facade of The Ivy Chelsea Garden hides one of the area’s many inviting terraces and leafy outdoor spaces for al fresco dining; inside one of the sleek new townhouses at 26-30 Old Church Street, whose light-filled, contemporary interiors are by award-winning designer Andrew Martin; The Ivy Asia is one of the area’s many new restaurants





remaining one, interior designed by Andrew Martin, is on sale for £9m through Knight Frank) sits on the site of the prestigious Chelsea porcelain factory.

“Chelsea is enjoying a personality transformation,” says Sophie Rogerson, managing director at the buying agency RFR Property. “It now has a host of incredible restaurants – including newcomer Stanley’s, whose secret English country garden has been the lifeblood of outdoor dining this year,” she comments.

The area’s prestige has kept the local property market buoyant, and even though most international buyers are still absent from the prime central London market due to travel restrictions, Chelsea doesn’t depend on them in the same way as neighbouring Belgravia or Knightsbridge. “Chelsea has a more reliable demographic. It doesn’t rely on new money and there isn’t masses of new-build,” says Guy Meacock at Prime Purchase buying agency.

There are two big, new-build exceptions. At Chelsea Barracks ([chelseabarracks.com](http://chelseabarracks.com)), the 12.8-acre former British Army site, prices are “gobsmacking”, comments Merlin Dormer from Heaton & Partners buying

agency, referring to townhouses that start at £35m. And there’s the riverfront Chelsea Creek ([chelseacreek.co.uk](http://chelseacreek.co.uk)), where developer St George has carved out London’s first new canal in 100 years and built 1,239 new homes overlooking new waterside cycle paths and a food market.

Those who didn’t hang around for lockdown are now fuelling the area’s pied à terre market, says Constance Cunningham of Sotheby’s International Realty. “Chelsea townhouse owners have reallocated their funds to buy a smaller property locally and a larger home in the countryside.”

Eternally popular among Chelsea’s smaller properties are its traditional cottages on roads such as Christchurch Street, or Lennox Garden Mews with its pink houses, starting at around £2.5m, says Dormer.

But most buyers are thinking big: that’s big family houses near “big-hitting schools”, says Nina Harrison at Haringtons buying agency. “Wealthy families with children at the best schools will never live anywhere else. Sussex House in Cadogan Square is as close as is possible to a feeder for Westminster School,” says Harrison of the public school that sends more pupils to





## “Prime Chelsea’s high prices are worth it for the lovely gardens – and the tricky access that keeps people out”

Oxbridge than any other in the country. Families want big gardens, too – the theme of the pandemic. And, although Chelsea houses aren’t known for their huge gardens, buyers may be surprised at the number of hidden green spaces, says Harrison.

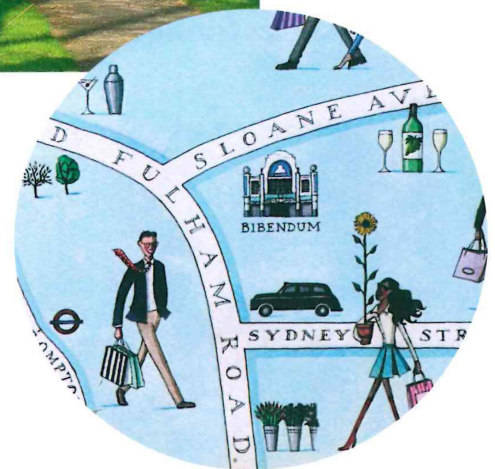
“They are the great untold secret. There are wonderful 40ft gardens behind flats in Danvers Street, and a surprising number of communal gardens. A personal favourite is the small but perfectly formed one behind Rossetti Garden Mansions,” she notes, referring to the red-brick mansion block where two-bed flats cost around £2.5m.

Deep pockets will stretch to a house on Royal Hospital Road overlooking the Chelsea Physic Garden, “and you’ll need several million for a house in Chelsea Square or Carlyle Square,” says Harrison. Or, for that matter, for a large, lateral three-bed apartment that exudes old-school Chelsea elegance, with its intricately panelled 24ft-long reception room and a main

bedroom with a mezzanine dressing area and a five-metre (16.5ft) ceiling height. The flat, on sale through Hamptons for £6.95m, is located on Cadogan Square – one of London’s most sought-after garden squares, and one of its most expensive addresses, where handsome red-brick houses frame the private gardens with a central tennis court.

Prime Chelsea’s high prices are “worth it”, says Harrison, “for the lovely communal gardens – and for the quiet, tricky access that keeps people out.”

And there’s the rub. The marvellous new array of restaurants, shops and leisure destinations will draw visitors in their droves, just as the King’s Road partnership hopes. But Chelsea’s wealthiest residents would rather keep it all under wraps. “They deliberately moved there because it’s tucked away and not show-off flashy,” says Harrison. “However, you can hide a lot of flash behind a discreet brick wall.”



**Left to right:** the new apartments at riverside Chelsea Creek overlook London’s first new canal for around 100 years; desirable properties such as this wisteria-covered low-rise eight-bed house in Chelsea Square sell for several millions; Cadogan Square is one of London’s most expensive addresses thanks to its wonderfully private central garden





“Cadogan Square is one of London’s most expensive addresses, where handsome red-brick houses frame the private gardens”



**Top:** on sale through Hamptons for £6.95m, this first-floor three-bed lateral apartment in Cadogan Square benefits from high ceilings, large windows and original features such as the intricate wood panelling in the drawing room  
**Left:** smaller, cottage-style houses such as those in Shafto Mews, off Cadogan Square, are eternally popular