

25 JULY 2018 | *By Zoe Dare Hall*

Iconic streets: Westbourne Grove

Notting Hill's best shopping street

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Iconic street: Hanover
Square

A residential renaissance
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Long a favoured address for political, artistic and media elite, Notting Hill's Westbourne Grove has become a go-to destination for high-end shopping and weekend brunching – where period properties still command premium prices.

At first glance

Linking Kensington Park Road in the west (the smart end) to Queensway in the east (the improving end), Westbourne Grove provides a long run of fashionable retail opportunities, from upmarket clothing and design boutiques to abundant cafés and restaurants which have turned this well-heeled strip into a place for “destination brunching”, according to Thea Wellband from The Buying Solution, the independent buying consultancy of Knight Frank. Daylesford, the byword for organic, artisan coolness, is a one-stop honeypot with its café, butcher, bakery, fishmonger, grocer and the rest. And the no-reservations-allowed Aussie café Granger & Co sees long queues battling to do Saturday brunch. “We all marvel at how much of an impact the cafés and brasseries have had in moving the area on,” says Wellband.

On the fashion front, PS by Paul Smith marks the start of the posh end of the street and the street's many other high-end names include swimwear designer Heidi Klein, Joseph and Nicole Farhi, while bridalwear designer Alice Temperley has her HQ tucked away in a mews street just off the main drag.

Add in Smythson, Bodyism and Diptyque, along with a clutch of home/interior design shops and you have the blueprint for the ultimate luxury high street. Guy Meacock, director of Savills' buying agency Prime Purchase, calls it – along with Ledbury Road, which runs across it – “the retail mecca of Notting Hill”. Oliver Lurot, head of Savills Notting Hill, adds that the street's buzz attracts well-known names and “young creative individuals”. Among them are Ed Sheeran, who has just purchased a £15m house in the area, and Made In Chelsea's Hugo Taylor, whose Taylor Morris sunglasses store is on Needham Road.

Why iconic?

The street first took shape in the 1840s, named after the old River Westbourne that once flowed from Hampstead to Chelsea and into the Thames.

The first grand houses to be built could be found in nearby Westbourne Green, including Westbourne House, a Georgian mansion whose residents included baronets, ambassadors and a descendent of Samuel Pepys. It was demolished in 1836 to make way for Westbourne Park Villas, whose residents included Thomas Hardy in the 1860s.

It was around this time that the upper middle classes started to arrive, when wealthy landowner James Weller Ladbroke began his conversion of Notting Hill into a luxurious suburb for the cultural and political elites.

There was a blip a century on, however, when much of the housing stock had become rundown. Westbourne Grove became the headquarters of the notorious landlord Peter Rachman, who ran his empire of overcrowded slums and brothels from Nos 91-93. Many of the derelict properties were subsequently demolished, making way in some cases for new housing estates.

The street has its share of handsome stucco terraces, semi-detached villas and attractive conversions such as Westbourne Church, which Notting Hill Lofts turned into apartments with shops below. But it's the public lavatories on Turquoise Island that provide the street with its most recognisable landmark. Residents couldn't bear the thought of a run-of-the-mill convenience on their local traffic island, so they commissioned architect Piers Gough to come up with a cool redesign, with Nikki Tibbles' Wild at Heart flower shop at one end.

Living on Westbourne Grove



Iconic street: St John's Wood Road

[A sought-after mix \(/people-places/area-guides/iconic-street-st-johns-wood-road.html\)](#)

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Iconic street: Clarendon Road

[A 'triple A' location \(/people-places/area-guides/iconic-street-clarendon-road.html\)](#)

A buzzy, destination address for shopping and noshing it may be, but that's not always peaceful. Think buses, taxis, constant footfall (albeit in very fancy shoes). "I think it's a street that is more desirable to be seen on than live on," says Marlon Lloyd Malcolm, associate director at Lurot Brand. "If you have a maisonette above the boutiques of prime Westbourne Grove, then you are definitely fashionable and probably very wealthy, but you are less likely to be super rich."

That particular subset, says Lloyd Malcolm, are most likely to live around the corner in streets such as Dawson Place, Pembridge Crescent and Pembridge Square. Or they gravitate to the nearby garden crescents such as Elgin Crescent, "where Hugh Grant lives but floats around Westbourne Grove," adds Toby Simmonds, manager of the local branch of Dexters – who are marketing a two-bed, third floor flat above a shop in Chepstow Road.

West is best as far as Westbourne Grove's property values are concerned. "Closer to Ledbury Road is the more sought-after end. Beyond Chepstow Terrace and further east towards Queensway is less desirable, but I think many of the streets off it have some of the most interesting architecture to be found in Notting Hill," enthuses Lloyd Malcolm.

"It's easy to spot the more appealing part of Westbourne Grove," he adds. "Just look for the dark sunglasses brigade with their miniature hounds, drinking a vegan coffee while dressed in something elegant that screams European chic."

Much of the housing stock consists of flats above shops – a three-bed triplex will cost £2m-£3m, says Savills' Oliver Lurot. There is also a lateral 1,500 sq ft, two-bedroom apartment in The Corner, above the Maddox Gallery, for £2m through Marsh & Parsons.

"There are also some lovely terraced or semi-detached homes that sell for around £5m-£10m," adds Lurot, giving special mention to a rare find that sold a couple of years ago: a 7,000 sq ft duplex apartment with a swimming pool and large garden. "So far in 2018, the market in Notting Hill has been performing strongly and it seems to be the hot address in central London," he says. "Having seen the market slow slightly towards the end of last year it's reassuring to see movement again, but as always it is best in class and the more realistically priced properties which are attracting the most attention."

For those who want to secure their spot at the front of the weekend queue at Granger & Co, Thea Wellband mentions a top-floor apartment for sale in the converted convent opposite for £9m. "It's a sign of the area that a lateral apartment on a main road could be selling for that price," she comments.

Another local conversion stirred up far greater controversy several years ago: the redevelopment of the Westbourne Grove post office, which met with resistance from local residents including Damon Albarn, Ruby Wax and the late MP Tony Benn. They failed, however, and the ensuing 9,000 sq ft Hidden House in Lonsdale Road sold for above its £22m asking price, achieving more than £3,000 per sq ft.

Where to spend it

Breakfast hotspots include Café 212, part of Nicole Farhi's shop, "and Ottolenghi is great for any time of day," says Marlon Lloyd Malcolm. The tandoori restaurant Durbar is a neighbourhood favourite and The Ledbury is among the country's top fine-dining restaurants and the holder of two Michelin stars. There's also the hip vegan restaurant Farmacy for 'clean curry' and 'earth bowls' – and the Planet Organic supermarket.

Fancy a pint? With its local beers, great menu and strong wine list, Victorian pub The Cock and Bottle is tempting customers away from old favourites The Cow and The Westbourne. A hidden gem, says Lloyd Malcolm, is Italian restaurant Assaggi on Chepstow Place.

If cultural nourishment is what you need, the Maddox Gallery branched out beyond Mayfair to Westbourne Grove last year, attracting a celebrity-studded crowd of locals to its launch party.

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