**Spotlight**

**Cricklewood**

Famous faces help tell story of a suburb with real sense of community

Novelist Zadie Smith was inspired by growing up in this part of north-west London, which ex-mayor Ken Livingstone calls home.

**Anthea Masey** went to find out more.

WHO is Cricklewood’s favourite celebrity? Could it be novelist Zadie Smith, who opened her first novel White Teeth with the lines: “Early in the morning, late in the century, Cricklewood Broadway” and who has recently returned to her home territory with her latest novel, NW? Or is it former London mayor Ken Livingstone, a longtime local resident who famously keeps newts in his garden pond?

Seven miles north-west of central London, this suburb sits on Watling Street, one of the straightest roads out of the capital; the old Roman road is now better known as the A5. Cricklewood Broadway is the heart of the neighbourhood and the current mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has noticed that the place could do with a facelift.

Tonight, Zadie Smith returns to her home turf with a charity event at the Elephant Café, opening her first novel White Teeth to a sold-out crowd. Meanwhile, the Mayor of London, this suburb’s on Watling Street, has returned to her home territory with her latest novel, NW.

**WHAT THERE IS TO BUY**

Cricklewood also offers terraces of Victorian houses off Anson road, with semi-detached and terrace Edwardian houses between the Broadway and Fordwych Road. Twenties and Thirties houses east of the railway, and mansion flats near Shoot Up Hill. Stewart Boyd, of the local branch of estate agents Winkworth, says property prices are now well above the level achieved at the last peak in the autumn of 2007.

Using as an example his own three-bedroom garden flat, he revealed that he bought it in 2007 near the top of the market for £295,000, and that last year an offer of £308,000 fell through. He put it back on the market again this year and recently sold it for £325,000.

Buyers on the Mapesbury Estate now expect to pay at least £1.2 million for a substantial house. The large twenty semi-detached houses in Asmara and Somali roads sell for between £1.2 million and £1.5 million. Smaller Thirties semi-detached houses in and around Penrith Drive sell for between £380,000 and £470,000, while in the roads off Anson Road, a three- or four-bedroom Victorian terrace is £550,000-£700,000, a two-bedroom ground-floor flat can be bought for about £400,000, and a two-bedroom garden flat is between £350,000 and £400,000.

The area attracts: Cricklewood has a real sense of community. People often arrive here first when they can’t afford Queen’s Park or West Hampstead.

**STAYING POWER**

There are long-standing Irish and Jewish residents who have brought up their families in Cricklewood.

**SHOPS AND RESTAURANTS**

The shopping along Cricklewood Broadway serves day-to-day needs but won’t set shopaholics’ hearts racing. There is a big B&Q on Cricklewood Lane and where Cricklewood Broadway turns back into Edgware Road there is a small retail park with branches of Matalan and Wickes. Close by there is a good lighting shop, Arrow Lighting, and Raft sells solid wood furniture. Elementree on the Broadway is a popular wine bar and restaurant.

On the Mapesbury Estate, people looking to make for the shops on Walm Lane next to Willesden Green station where there is a gastropub, The Queensbury, with an associated deli and café.

**OPEN SPACES**

Gladstone Park covers 97 acres between Cricklewood and Dollis Hill, with a walled garden, a café, tennis courts and children’s playgrounds. The Mapesbury Dell on Hovenden Road is a community “secret garden” with a children’s playground, owned by the...
Brick by brick: the entrance to pretty community garden Mapesbury Dell, between homes in Hoveden Road

THANKS to reader Colin Greener who suggested covering Cricklewood via Facebook. If you have an area you would like us to feature, tweet us @homesproperty

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