

Estates



# St George's Hill versus

They have always had their differences but these two wealthy Surrey estates are changing and

## St George's Hill

**Where is it?**  
It is a private gated estate of about 420 houses set in 960 acres, near Weybridge in Surrey, about 20 miles from Central London and 13 miles from Heathrow. The focal points are its 18-hole golf course and separate private lawn tennis and squash club, although residency doesn't guarantee membership of either.

**What is it like?**  
The once quiet streets have become a bit noisy of late as more and more older homes (anything built more than ten years ago) are razed to make way for large Queen Anne Neo-Georgian style mansions. Most houses are on an acre of land; larger plots are fairly unusual. The most desirable street is Old Avenue. However, some buyers will pay a premium to live close to the golf course and for a good view — some properties have unbroken views for 50 to 60 miles.

Although the average plot is smaller than on prime Wentworth, some St George's residents buy neighbouring plots to create larger gardens, more privacy and greater security. Security is prime — you must pass through manned gatehouses to enter the estate. Most of the security is subtle but look closer and you can see that some of the houses are ringed by high fences and CCTV cameras. It is said that President Putin's eldest daughter, Maria, has a home here. Boris Berezovsky, the late Russian businessman, owned property on the estate too.

**Who lives here?**  
Hedge fund managers, bankers and businesspeople are common. Some 20-30 per cent of residents are thought to be from Russia or Eastern Europe, with much of the new building tailored for this market. Former residents include singers Tom Jones, Cliff Richard and John Lennon, and footballers Didier Drogba,



Frank Lampard and John Terry. Today businessman Theo Paphitis, actress Shilpa Shetty Kundra and former footballers Claude Makelele and Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink are thought to own property.

**What's happening?**  
Data from Savills estate agency suggests price increases have kept pace with prime Central London, rising 26.4 per cent since the peak in 2007. However, prices per square foot have been much cheaper — about £1,000 per sq ft.

Developers are rushing to build large new mansions to sell to wealthy buyers. "In the past two or three years, one or two houses have sold for more than £10 million. In the next two years, though,

From the top: St George's Hill golf club, Egon (£10.9m) and Warrenbayne (£15m) both on the market with Knight Frank. Right: Theo Paphitis



about 25 to 30 houses costing between £8 million and £30 million will be completed," says buying agent Tim Hubbard of Property Vision. "Get a one-acre plot for £5 million, build [a house] for £5 million and sell for £15 million — making £5 million profit, that is what a lot of the developers want to achieve. It is going to be a good test of the market and some might struggle," he says.

Tim Garbett, chairman of North Surrey residential for Knight Frank estate agents, says: "This is not just about raising the bar, it is about redefining the area."

The style of homes is changing too, with the first stone-clad houses appearing. The specifications and finish on the new homes are higher than in the past — expect lots of marble, cinema rooms, swimming pools, staff quarters, state of the art kitchens, integrated sound and light systems as standard. Local planning rules mean huge basements are unusual.

"A lot of buyers have looked, and probably bought in prime Central London. They have seen the kind of things the Candys are doing and want the same specifications out here," Hubbard says. This puts pressure on those looking to sell a pre-owned property. If you don't want your home bulldozed, you need to be able to compete: the owners of Warrenbayne, on the market at a guide price of £15 million with Knight Frank, spent about £1.5 million on refurbishment before putting it on the market.

**How does it compare?**  
It feels more enclosed and more exclusive than Wentworth, although a lot more spacious than Central London. The flurry of building work will change the look of the estate, while an influx of one nationality or type of buyer could substantially change the feel of the area.

## Wentworth

**Where is it?**  
The estate is spread over 1,750 acres near Virginia Water, Surrey. Estate agents divide it into two areas: prime Wentworth — mainly in the central "island" around the golf course that accounts for about 400 houses — and secondary Wentworth with another 400 homes. It is about 24 miles from Central London. The world-renowned Wentworth Golf Club, where the BMW PGA Championship will be played at the end of this month, is the estate's focal point.

**What is it like?**  
There are no gatehouses and driving into prime Wentworth feels like arriving at a country village — perhaps because most of the estate, unlike St George's Hill, is green belt.

The houses, which tend to be set in 1.5 to 2 acre plots, are generally set quite far back from the road and hidden by foliage. The range of sizes and styles appears to be greater than in St George's Hill. There is also noticeably less building work. West Drive is one of the most desirable streets, although many buyers will pay a premium to be close to the golf courses.

Residents are a mixture of British, American and other international buyers. The golf club and separate tennis and health club are popular with local families. Hyale, a six-bedroom detached house next to the West Course's famous 17th hole, is on the market with Knight Frank for £7.5 million.

**Who lives here?**  
British families through to international businesspeople and celebrities. The golf makes it popular with those that like to swing a club, including Ernie Els, Thomas Bjorn and Sir Bruce Forsyth. Former F1 motor racing chiefs Eddie Jordan and Ron Dennis are believed to own property here. Former residents