

Dwayne Senior

If Wendel, the Saxon big cheese thought to have given his name to the south London borough of Wandsworth — it means “Wendel’s place” — were around today, he’d probably be living in the luxuriously revamped five-storey town house at 25 Spencer Road.

The seventh-century potentate would be able to pop his axe in the broly stand at the end of a hard day and say to himself: “Wendel, old boy, you’ve really made it. This house is lush — it even has wireless networking and waterproof speakers at the bottom of the garden.”

With all the very latest mod cons, and a 76ft landscaped garden, 25 Spencer Road would appeal to high rollers of any historical period. What makes the house unusual for Wandsworth is the stonkingly high price — it has just sold for roughly £1.575m — and its exceptionally high-quality finish.

For Paul Van Geens, the developer, it’s the first house he has overhauled in Wandsworth — the grander streets of Chelsea and Belgravia are where he does most of his work. So does the presence of Van Geens mean that Wandsworth — best known as where the professional middle classes go to raise young children — is now acquiring some glitz?

One set of figures seems to support this idea. While asking prices for properties listed on the website Primelocation have risen by 4.6% in London in the past year, they have shot up by 16.7% in Wandsworth.

But if asking prices are on the up, actual selling prices have been rising more slowly — the average price of sales in Wandsworth recorded in the last year by the Land Registry went up by 3%, from £337,982 to £347,144.

Ed Mead, a director of estate agency Douglas & Gordon, confirms that the market in Wandsworth is “in a remarkably good state. The houses in ‘nappy valley’ [the area around Wandsworth Common popular with families] are still selling. What tends to be happening is that greater affluence means people are bypassing the £550,000 three-bed house in, say, Clapham, and moving straight into the £750,000-plus Wandsworth home.”

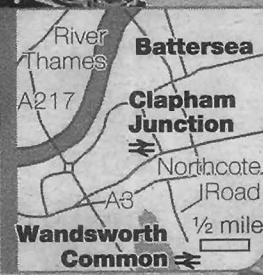
He goes on to explain that Wandsworth has “two very distinct markets”, the second being the shiny new glass-and-steel blocks of flats along the south bank of the Thames.

The tallest of Wandsworth’s new riverside towers will be the 17-storey Falcon Wharf, next to Wandsworth Bridge in Battersea, which has an innovative design — the cross-section looks like four interlocking boomerangs — to maximise views. Of 124 flats in the scheme, to be completed next year, 69 are still available, although the top three floors will now be knocked into a single 12,500sq ft penthouse, having been bought off-plan by a financier for about £15m.

Like most of the Thames-side developments in Wandsworth, Falcon Wharf is only a 15-minute walk from Chelsea, and Chelsea prices are creeping south. Developer George Wimpey City says prices start at £305,000 for a one-bed flat — a look at the website shows these to be rather pokey — while three-bed properties are £660,000 or more. Other new developments by the river include Riverside Quarter, Battersea Reach, Oyster Wharf, Albion Riverside and Chelsea Bridge Wharf.



Northcote Road, popular with affluent families



# Happy nappy valley

Wandsworth bucks the capital's sluggish market: house prices are still rising in the family-friendly suburb, says JOHN ELLIOTT



Riverside Quarter, left, is one of Wandsworth's new Thames-side developments, while 25 Spencer Road, right, has just sold after a revamp for more than £1.5m

“I am surprised at the take-up on these new riverside flats,” says Mead, “but they obviously appeal. In an area where public transport is not exactly great, I think they’re being bought because you can park your car underneath.”

Further inland, the unfinished Battersea Park Square development is designed with families in mind, playing to the strengths of the area. Large four-storey town houses — echoing the exteriors of the red-brick Edwardian mansion blocks of Battersea — cost from £1,219,950 to £1,429,950, while the cheapest two-bed flat is £364,950.

Back in “nappy valley” — where the baby-buggy count on Northcote Road, its high street of designer and foodie shops, reached 12 in one 100-yard stretch of pavement on a recent weekday morning — there is a definite pattern to the market.

Austin Thorogood of local estate agency John Thorogood explains: “The flat market has been slow, but from January to June we have been getting higher prices than last year on certain types of property, especially well-finished terraced houses in the £650,000 to £850,000 bracket. If you want to do well in this market, sell in February and March when the City

bonuses are flying around.”

On nearby Limburg Road, Douglas & Gordon is selling a four-bed Victorian terraced house for £599,950. It is narrow and the rooms are small, but given the location — Wandsworth has decent state primary schools — it might work well for a young family.

On the other side of Northcote Road, the same agency is selling a two-bed flat with 27ft garden on the ground floor of a Victorian terrace on Shelgate Road for £328,000. It’s the right flat for a mid-twenties graduate, part-financed by parents, renting out the tiny spare bedroom to the cox of the university rowing eight.

Although it may have the lowest council tax in London, Wandsworth still has a long way to go to rival the buzz of Chelsea, just over the river. But when you are raising a family, too much buzz can be exhausting.

■ Douglas & Gordon, 020 7924 2000, [www.douglasandgordon.com](http://www.douglasandgordon.com); Falcon Wharf, [www.falconwharf.co.uk](http://www.falconwharf.co.uk), selling agent Hamptons International, 0870 990 7599, [www.hamptons.co.uk](http://www.hamptons.co.uk); Paul Van Geens, 020 7823 3099, [www.cliftonproperty.co.uk](http://www.cliftonproperty.co.uk) John Thorogood, 020 7228 7474, [www.john-thorogood.co.uk](http://www.john-thorogood.co.uk); Riverside Quarter, 020 8877 2000, [www.riversidequarter.com](http://www.riversidequarter.com)