

## Homes & Property Commuter watch

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**T**OWNS in the hinterland of a more fashionable neighbour can be very easy to overlook. And so it is that Worthing, 10 miles from the bright lights of Brighton on the South Coast, gets the elbow every time as the slightly shabby seaside town popular with retirees.

But Worthing is moving on. Starting with a bit of a stroke from Sterling Prize-winning architects firm Wilkinson Eyre, which is designing a £17 million swimming and leisure complex with a dramatic, curved bronze-coloured roof. The facility – with pools, a fitness suite and spa – will jazz up the seafront, where the

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pler and original 1920s picture house, the Dome Cinema, have already had a facelift.

Worthing Gateway, a £150 million regeneration project, has now been approved by Worthing Borough Council and work is due to start next year. This will provide 260 homes, a hotel, restaurants, shops and an exhibition centre.

Meanwhile, back on the seafront, the town's tired old hotels are getting a glitzy makeover and are being turned into apartments with on-site spas and stunning coastal views. At the weekends their residents are promised catamaran sailing or hikes over the South Downs. Trains from Worthing to London Victoria take just over one hour and 20 minutes (annual season ticket from £3,868). Worthing is its fair share of retirees, but higher prices along the coast make Worthing's prices appealing, and a good selection of period and modern homes means it is also becoming increasingly popular with young professionals and families priced out of Hove and Brighton, or evacuating from London or the Home Counties.

"People come here looking for more space for their money. Very often they are families who have moved from London to Surrey and then out to Sussex," says Clive Rainford, director of Henry Adams estate agency. Chris Stephens, manager of Jacobs Steel estate agency, said these newcomers could opt for a three-bedroom Victorian terrace in the town centre for about £250,000, or choose a two-bedroom converted flat for around £140,000 to £150,000. The gold standards are the town's fine Regency townhouses, particularly those in Ambrose Place, which can sell for anything up to £700,000 for a particularly grand

# Worthing's no long the wallflower

For so long in neighbouring Brighton's shadow, this South Coast commuter town is now fighting its corner with some prize-winning architecture, says **Ruth Bloomfield**



**£140,000**  
For two-bedroom conversion flats in Worthing, where three-bedroom Victorian terraces are about £250,000 and even the grandest Regency townhouses cost under £700,000

four-bedroom house. The streets around Steyne Gardens on the seafront are also very well liked.

For a more modest choice, you could pick up a fisherman's cottage for between £160,000 and £170,000.

Like many seaside towns around the UK, some of Worthing's biggest, smartest hotels have been redeveloped as apartments. Stephens picks Warnes, an all-singing, all-dancing seafront development with a pool by Roffey Homes (roffeyhomes.com), where flats re-sell for between £300,000 and £400,000. The same firm is now redeveloping another hotel, the Eardley, with an on-site spa and prices from £475,000.

The most popular suburb in Worthing is Tarring, where you can pick up a family-sized 1930s semi for less than the Stamp Duty threshold of £250,000, and still be just 15 minutes from the town centre.

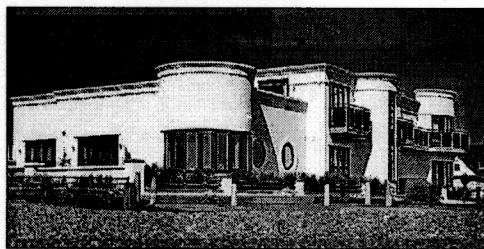
Worthing's position at the foot of the South Downs means there is plenty of open countryside – to the west is the Goring Gap, a protected habitat of fields and woodland, and to the east is the Sumping Gap, a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

If you want a home nestled within glorious countryside then there are three nearby villages which lie within the South Downs National Park: Findon, Patching and Clapham. Rainford says a substantial family home with a couple of acres in one of these lovely spots would start at around £600,000. "There is not much around Worthing for more than £1 million," he says.

In terms of lifestyle, the town's five miles of pebbly coastline mean it's a mecca for water sports enthusiasts, with everything from kitesurfing to catamaran racing on offer. The town holds an annual regatta and a completely bonkers "Birdman" contest where competitors attempt to launch home-made flying machines from the town's pier.



**FROM £225,000**  
Sea Place, close to the shore in Goring-by-Sea, is a new scheme of 12 flats, some with balconies and sea views, that are all available on a shared-ownership basis through Affinity Sutton (0300 100 0303)



**£895,000**  
The Penthouse at Art Deco-style Blue Waters, on the beach at Ferring, West Sussex, has two-bedrooms, two bathrooms and uninterrupted sea views. Call Knight Frank (01403 339180)



As well as the Dome Cinema there are three theatres, and plenty of open space including Beach House Park, home to the town's quirkiest landmark, a memorial to the homing pigeons which served during the Second World War, and Liverpool Gardens, decorated by a set of bronzes by Dame Elisabeth Frink.

There are a number of excellent schools in Worthing, particularly Thomas A Becket Middle School, which is rated outstanding by Ofsted. For seniors there is a choice of single-sex education – Davison High School (girls) is rated "outstanding"

and St Andrew's CE High School (boys) is considered "good" by the Government's schools watchdog. For mixed education, Durrington High School is also rated good.

When it comes to food and drink The Parsonage, in Tarring, is housed in a 15th century cottage and is exquisitely pretty. The village's George and Dragon pub is also a big draw. In town, locals rate The Fish Factory and Food.

On the downside, the town's shopping facilities are not good. But with Brighton close at hand, locals go out of town for their retail therapy.