

What do you like about Bradley Stoke?

“It’s up and coming and has a lot more going for it than it used to. We used to have to go into town for everything but now everything has moved here. There is also good access to Cribbs Causeway from here.”



Susan Sperrings, 54, lives in Gloucester Road

“It’s close enough to the town to still be in the town and close enough to the countryside to think we almost live in the countryside. It’s easy to get about because we are close to four motorway junctions – we go to places like South Wales and the South Coast. There’s a good bus service as well.”



Carolyn Woods, 49, lives in Wheatfield Drive

“It’s one of the nicer areas around here and everything is setting up around here now. You feel perfectly safe in Bradley Stoke and it has everything you need although it doesn’t have the greatest nightlife. Overall, it’s improving.”



Amanda Sperrings, 26, lives in Gloucester Road

“I’ve lived here for about 15 years and it’s great. It’s close to everything, the Mall, Parkway Station and all the motorways.”



Steve Collett, 41, an underwriter, who lives in Wheatfield Drive.

A TOWN WITH REAL STAYING POWER

The property market in Bradley Stoke has had its share of twists and turns in its 22-year history, the most damaging being the negative equity disaster of the early 1990s. But with the opening of its eagerly-awaited shopping centre in 2008, its future looks bright. **MARC RATH** reports.

ONCE almost exclusively the preserve of first-time buyers and young couples, Bradley Stoke is steadily beginning to broaden its appeal.

For years, the town was viewed as an ideal area to step onto the first rung of the housing ladder before moving to pastures new.

But things are slowly changing – with the creation of new schools, shops and other community facilities in the town, more residents are choosing to stay for longer.

“Six or seven years ago, people selling their homes in Bradley Stoke were moving elsewhere,” says James Gingell, a director at Lifestyle Property Services, an independent estate agent based in the town.

“They were moving to places like Emersons Green, where they thought planners had corrected all the wrongs of Bradley Stoke.

“But now people are selling their houses in Bradley Stoke and buying a house elsewhere in Bradley Stoke.

“Now it’s not uncommon for us to sell to a first-time buyer in Bradley Stoke and then three or four years later sell them a bigger house in the town.

“Back in the early days it was classed as a first-time buyer area and there was nothing here – it was like a concrete city. There was a Tesco but there was no other reason to come into Bradley Stoke.

“Now, the area has become more established, trees have grown and there are nice grounds around. But the most notable

change over the years has been the completion of the shopping centre.

“We now have a huge Tesco, a Greggs, KFC and a Subway – all places which will bring youngsters in.

“Now we have leisure centres, doctors surgeries and schools – everything you need for a community. People are staying here now because we have everything.”

Lifestyle set up in Bradley Stoke 18 years ago and was the second estate agent to arrive in the town, after Halifax. It now boasts five estate agents – Lifestyle, Halifax, Woods, Taylors and Ocean.

The area attracts young buyers as well as older couples, says Mr Gingell, and has everything from one-bedroom flats to four and five-bedroom executive detached houses.

Mr Gingell, who has worked for Lifestyle for 13 years, said: “We’ve got people of retirement age moving from Winterbourne, Frampton Cotterell and Almondsbury from older properties with big gardens.

“They are releasing the capital and because they are buying modern properties, they don’t have to keep putting their hands into their pockets for repairs and maintenance.

“The most expensive houses with detached garages are up to £400,000 but you could pick up a one-bedroom flat for £100,000. I can remember when two-bed flats were starting to breach the £20,000 mark – we couldn’t believe they were going so high but now they sell for £150,000.”

Mr Gingell says the property market in Bradley Stoke has fared well despite the recession, a far cry from how it coped in the wake of the downturn of the early 1990s, when it was dubbed Sadly Broke after families living in the town sunk into negative equity.

Photographs: Jon Kent



Thriving: Maintenance manager Gari

Longi with colleagues at Bradley Stoke estate agents Lifestyle good shopping centre as well now and the Mall up the road.”

James Butler, a partner at Woods estate agent, said the opening of the secondary school in 2005 was a vital milestone in the town’s development.

He said: “There were couples living in a one-bed houses who had a baby and needed a two-bed house but couldn’t move because they were in negative equity.”

“We had a depression but because it was a new housing estate, it was a bigger problem for Bradley Stoke. It killed business. I had the *Panorama* show wanting to interview me but I didn’t want to do it because I thought it would damage business even more.

“But for the past 10 to 12 years, it has been a very busy, thriving area.

“You have the motorway network just up the road – and places like Bath and Wales are very easy to get to. You have a train station nearby and a very

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Vision has become reality

THE completion of the Willow Brook shopping centre in Bradley Stoke in 2008 marked the end of building work in the town on a project first conceived in the 1970s to cope with the anticipated housing shortage in the UK.

David Chandler, former clerk of Bradley Stoke Town Council, believes the aims of the original planners behind the project have been met.

Mr Chandler, who retired earlier this month after 18 years as clerk, said: “Looking at the original design and seeing what we have now, I think they have been reasonably faithful. Nothing of its scale had been attempted in Europe before.

“The original plan was for a private housing estate, although we do now have some affordable housing here. We’ve also got a lot more flats than were originally planned and four-storey properties. But plans have been modified as time went on.”

The idea of creating Bradley Stoke was conceived when Avon County Council was tasked with finding suitable areas for new homes in the 1970s.

Instead of extending villages and towns in South Gloucestershire, the authority decided to build a new town of 8,500 homes to house 20,000 people on 1,000 acres of land hemmed in by the M4 and M5 motorways.

However, executing the plan was down to Northavon District Council and the authority gave the project the working title of the Patchway Common brief.

It was the largest private housing estate in Europe and designed around the car, with



Masterplan: Former town council clerk David Chandler houses built with integral garages with good links to the motorway network, laid out with roundabouts and several long, winding cul-de-sacs.

Planners earmarked 180 acres of land next to the motorway for light industrial use to act as a buffer between the noisy roads and the new homes.

At one stage, up to 25 different developers were given fields to build on. This created variety within the town, as each building company constructed houses of different styles.

Work on the estate began in 1987 with builders working throughout the night under floodlights. But when the first residents moved in, community facilities were not in place until a doctors’ surgery, a cricket pitch and bowling green arrived in 1991.

Slowly, other facilities were added – Tesco in 1992, the first primary school in 1993, the leisure centre in 1995 and the secondary school in 2005.



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