

→ shops, it has a bank, a dental practice and a sports centre with a pool. Detached homes typically sell for £360,000, but you can pick up a smaller period terrace for £230,000. The local primary school is good, and private Marlborough College is six miles away.

6 KINGHAM, OXFORDSHIRE

With creamy Cotswold stone cottages and cosy manors, a village green and a well-regarded primary school, this is a classy sort of village. The Kingham Plough is run by Emily Watkins, former sous-chef at the Fat Duck, and offers a hand-raised pork pie with chutney, delicious with a glass of Weston's pear cider. Want to cook your own? Head to Daylesford Farmshop. Unsurprisingly, the area has its fair share of celebrity residents: Alex James, of Blur, lives on a local dairy farm. A three-bedroom stone cottage is about £555,000; grade II listed five-bedroom houses start at £1m. Trains to London Paddington take 90 minutes.

7 ALDERLEY EDGE, CHESHIRE

A lot of champagne is quaffed in these parts: this is where Cheshire's smart set live. Thirty minutes by train from Manchester, the village's designer shops and chic restaurants lure footballers, actors and self-made multimillionaires.



£799,500

ALDERLEY EDGE

Four-bedroom Manara is a short stroll away from bistros and bars, as well as open countryside. It has a split-level layout and more than 2,100 sq ft of living space, including a full-height reception hall with a vaulted ceiling.

01625 417450, savills.co.uk



£265,000

OVERTON

Near the centre of the village – and the mainline station, with services to London Waterloo – this grade II listed cottage has two bedrooms, a kitchen-diner and original features.

01256 811730, winkworth.co.uk



Flo Smith/Alamy

Join the free-range, organic crowds at the Daylesford summer festival, near Kingham

The homes are equally upmarket, with neo-Georgian estates commanding upwards of £5m; smart Victorian villas and barn conversions hover at about £2m.

8 GREAT SHELFORD, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Great Shelford is one of the county's most affluent villages, with decent convenience stores, a library, a doctor's surgery, a farmer's market – and a delightful cycle route into the academic heartland of Cambridge, four miles away. Trains from Great Shelford run to London Liverpool Street and King's Cross, taking 70–90 minutes. The housing stock spans Georgian manors, Victorian villas and the odd converted mill. Rightmove lists the average price of a detached house as £659,000, while a terrace is £463,000.

9 WATTON-AT-STONE, HERTFORDSHIRE

It may be the dictionary definition of a dormitory village, but Watton is popular with London commuters for a reason. It's surrounded by fields and woodland, with hourly trains to Moorgate (about 30 minutes) and two well-regarded schools: Watton-at-Stone state primary and fee-paying Heath Mount. It also has two traditional pubs, a post office, a hairdresser and a Chinese takeaway if you've just tipped off the late train. Grander detached homes with grounds typically cost just over £1m, and small three-bedroom detached houses start at about £370,000.

10 KINGS LANGLEY, HERTFORDSHIRE

A solid notch on the commuter belt, historic Kings Langley is a well-served village. The many shops include a local butcher, a post office/store and a decent delicatessen, and the train to London Euston takes less than half an hour. Victorian townhouses rub shoulders with beamed cottages; on the outskirts, new-builds with large gardens start at about £700,000. You can snap up a small three-bedder for half that.

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