

# The Telegraph

## Britain's new commuter hotspots where house prices are on the up

Demand for homes around the biggest regional cities have soared since the pandemic started

By [Arabella Youens](#)

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From top left: Stockport; Balfron; North Berwick; Hampton-in-Arden

The pandemic-era race for space has sent [property prices in commuter belts soaring](#). Savvy buyers looking for a route out of the city, with an eye to returning to the office a few days a week, have driven up demand in these areas.

Unlike people [moving out of London to the South East](#), where the capital's high prices offer more value for money beyond its borders, those moving from regional cities to the suburbs can face higher costs.

Research by estate agency Savills revealed that in some cases the premium required to move from the city to a [commuter hotspot](#) is 280pc.

Frances Clacy, of Savills, said: “We have seen more buyers move to areas further out of cities to commuter markets they would not have previously considered.

“As a result, values across [commuter belts](#) have outperformed cities, supported by a lack of supply in the most popular locations. But while we do anticipate this trend to continue this year, to an extent, we are also seeing regional cities bounce back as more people return to the office.”

Savills has crunched the numbers to find the top commuter hotspots around Britain’s biggest regional cities, where house prices have risen the most in the last two years.

## Manchester



SOURCE: SAVILLS

Maps show the top three commuter hotspots where prices have risen the most in the last two years

The [suburbs of Manchester](#) have always been popular with buyers looking for a bit more space than the city centre can provide, said Ed Lucas, of buying agency Property Vision.

“One of the many great things about Manchester is its transport links – either the tram or rail network – which have always enabled people to get in and out of the city centre with ease,” he said. “Historically, the most established commuter towns have been in south Manchester, but areas such as Stockport in the south east are gaining ground with buyers looking for more value for money.”

Stockport and the surrounding villages get positive reviews from David Lewis, head of Garrington Property Finders, a buying agent.

“It’s full of young professionals who have moved out of either London or Manchester city centre,” he said.

Mr Lewis highlighted suburbs of Stockport including The Heatons – Moor, Mersey and Chapel – as other ones to look at, especially for buyers with families.

Kathryn Meikle, 31, is about to move from her current home in central Manchester to a flat in a Grade II-listed former cotton mill at Meadow Mill in Stockport. She has bought a two-bedroom flat for £172,500, but the average second-hand sale price for properties in Stockport is £279,799, a premium of 57pc on city centre values.



Kathryn Meikle | CREDIT: Guzelian/Asadour Guzelian

“I was at Manchester University and have loved living in the city centre but I’m keen to move back to Stockport to be closer to my family.

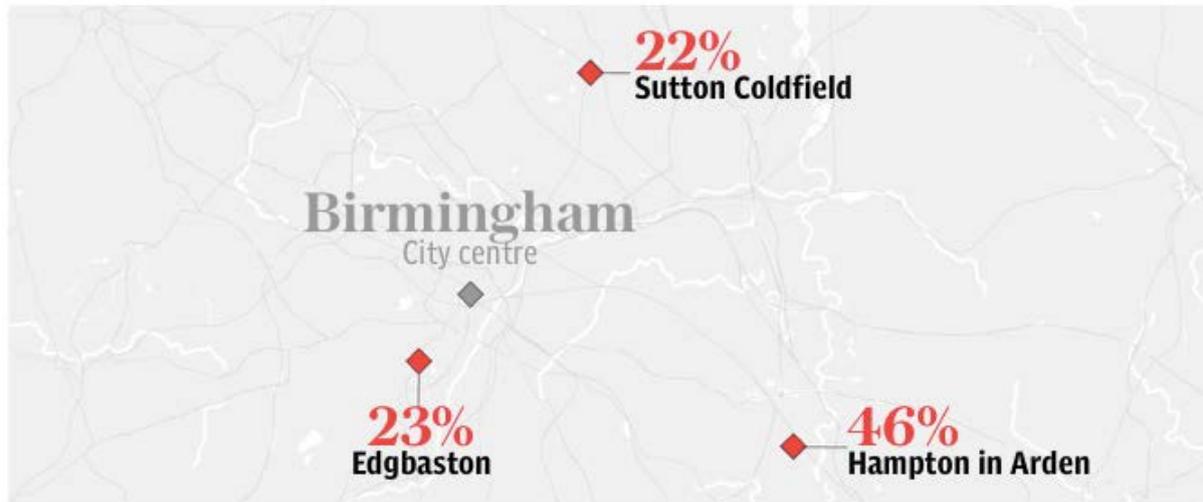
“It has a buzzy centre with bars and restaurants so you don’t always have to go back into the city, but I also love the fact that I can hop on a direct train to London.

“As more people come out of the city, I’m hoping this will prove a good investment,” she said.

Prices in Stockport, and Meadow Mill in particular, have increased by 15pc over the past year and a half, according to Baljit Arora of estate agency Orlando Reid. “The market in Stockport and other commuter towns has been very active.”

The other commuting hotspots with the highest price rises over the last two years – Failsworth and Blackley – both have house prices that are lower than the city centre, offering great value for money and investment opportunity.

## Birmingham



SOURCE: SAVILLS

The southern suburbs of Birmingham have long been where wealthy locals have chosen to live, and the impact of the pandemic has put even more pressure on house prices in the area.

Average property values in Hampton-in-Arden, a village in the green belt between Birmingham and Coventry, have risen by 46pc since 2020 and now stand at £649,603. That means anyone moving here from Birmingham city centre will pay an average premium of 280pc.

Ben Evans of Mr and Mrs Clarke, an estate agency, said: "Demand for this gorgeous village with a blend of cute cottages and larger family homes doesn't seem to be waning."

This is driven by good transport links and independent pubs and shops, as well as its proximity to an HS2 Interchange Station.

"Many family homes will sell before even hitting the market," he added.

Edgbaston has been long regarded as Birmingham's premier suburb; the average price of a property is £491,244, which is 188pc higher than in the city centre. Soon, it will benefit from the West Midlands Metro extension to the city, and prices have soared by 23pc in the last two years alone.

## Leeds



Leeds had already established a reputation as a seat of financial services in the North, and has recently experienced a mini tech boom. Now Channel 4 has moved in and the Bank of England has made it the site of its new northern hub.

This promising economic news has not trickled through to its house prices. The average cost of a city-centre property in Leeds is £185,687, according to Savills, making it one of the cheapest of the major regional cities to buy a house. But since the start of the pandemic, it is also [one of the only ones to have seen prices dip](#), by 3.7pc.

That suggests many are choosing to live outside the city and commute in for work. But in Leeds it's no easy feat: the city suffers from a lack of a mass transport system. The bus network is run by various private companies and has no common ticketing system. Journeys are long, too: a recent report by the Centre for Cities, a research firm, found that only 38pc of bus users could reach the city centre in 30 minutes.

Buyers who want to live outside the city and commute into the centre keep a firm eye on areas that have rail stations. That helps explain why house prices in and around South Milford, a village to the east of Leeds that has regular train services to the city centre, have gone up by 32pc since the start of the pandemic.

Justin Johnson, of estate agent Hunters in Wetherby, said there had been a transformation in the past five years in villages such as South Milford and Sherburn in Elmet. Budgets for houses in this area range between £200,000 and £500,000.

"These once sleepy villages have had in excess of 4,000 new homes built in recent years and the regular train connections to Leeds and York have made them popular with buyers. Not only that but you can also hop on the motorway network easily, living on this side of the city," Mr Johnson said.

Joshua Halsall, 35, is one of these buyers. In November last year, he moved with his wife and young baby to a new-build house at Drovers Court in Micklefield, a few miles west of South Milford, where prices for three-bedroom houses start from £275,000.

“Lockdown made us realise our previous house [in Garforth, four miles closer to central Leeds] wasn’t big enough,” said Mr Halsall, who works at the University of Leeds.

“We liked the east Leeds area, which has easy access back to the city and the semi-rural location of Micklefield.”

## Edinburgh

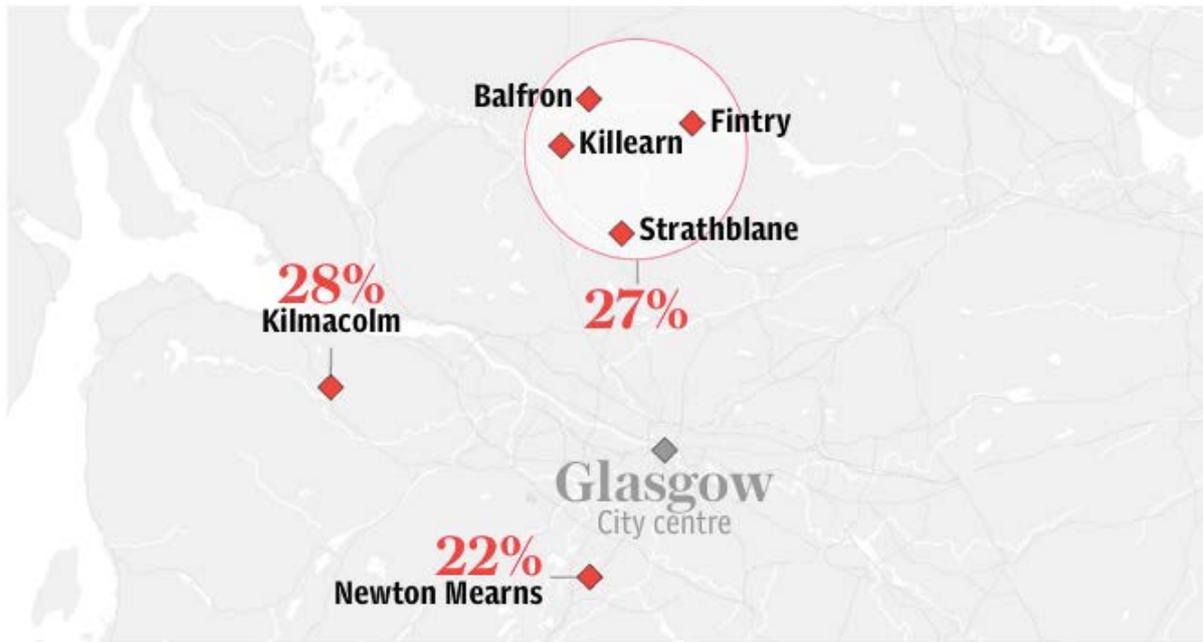


SOURCE: SAVILLS

The seaside towns of Gullane and North Berwick have long topped the list of favourite [commuter locations for Edinburgh](#). And both will require reaching deeper into pockets to afford the property prices: average values are £498,503 and £479,212 respectively, a premium of 58pc and 52pc on Edinburgh city centre.

Their draws are obvious, said Andrew Thomson of estate agents Savills. “Both are home to some of Scotland’s best golf courses and beautiful sandy beaches. Gullane is 20 miles from the city centre while North Berwick has direct trains which take 23 minutes.”

## Glasgow



SOURCE: SAVILLS

Kilmacolm in Renfrewshire came top of the list of Glasgow's commuter hotspots. Less than half an hour by car to the city centre and 15 minutes to the airport, it's home to one of the best-rated independent secondary schools in Scotland, St Columba's.

Average property prices are just shy of £200,000, a 16pc discount from central Glasgow prices.

John Boyle of Rettie, an estate agency, said: "Given the race for space and greater willingness to live outside main cities since the onset of the pandemic, these areas are high on the lists of those looking at attractive locations not far from cities."

Prices in Kilmacolm have jumped 44pc since the start of the pandemic. But Mr Boyle added a "health warning" to this figure, explaining that Kilmacolm's small population of circa 4,000 means that a handful of sales can cause significant fluctuations in average prices.

## Cardiff



SOURCE: SAVILLS

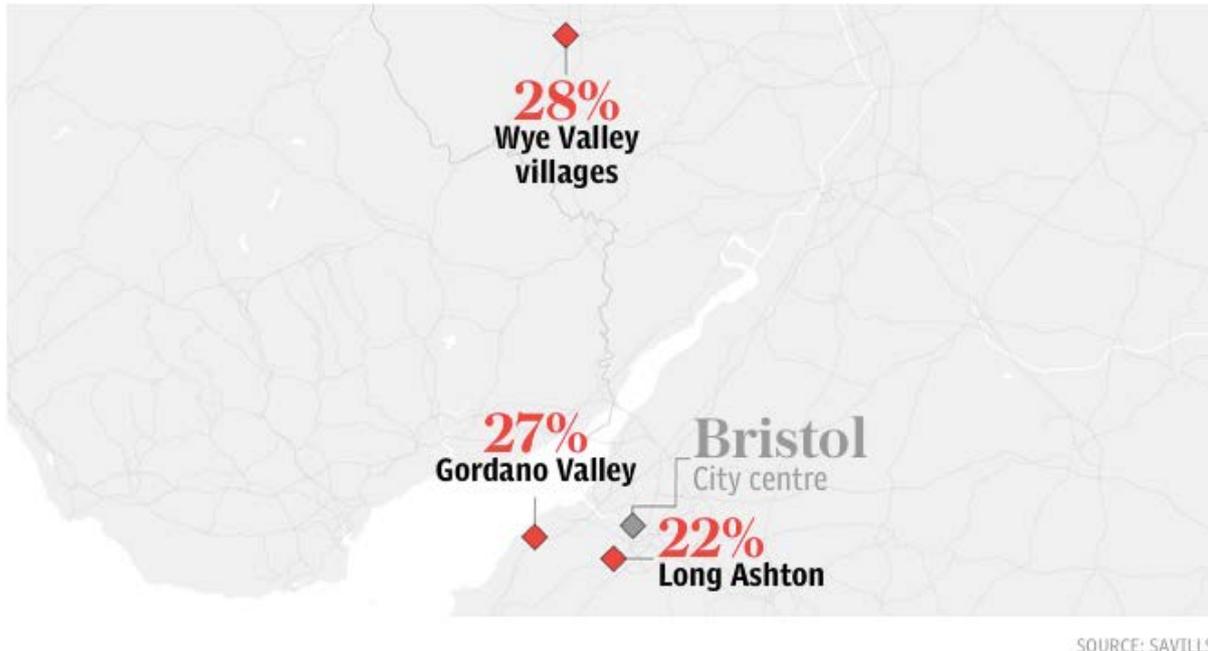
Two of the villages outside Cardiff which have seen the greatest house prices rises since 2020, Llanharan and Llanharry, are both in the old mining area to the west of the city. Values in Llanharan have gone up by 47pc while those in Llanharry are up by 23pc.

David Lakin of Harris Birt in Cowbridge, an estate agency, said: "You're just two minutes from the M4 corridor so it's an easy commute back to Cardiff. There's also a programme of regeneration going on in this part of the south Rhonda Valley with lots of new developments and improved access roads. Plus, Dragon Studios in Llanharan has been busy with productions for the likes of Disney+."

With Cardiff booming and house prices rising, these villages have been rediscovered as convenient places for families with parents working in Cardiff, added Carol Peett of West Wales Property Finders, a buying agency.

"The villages are only about a 20-minute drive from the coast with lovely beaches at Porthcawl, Llantwit Major and Barry. And there is pretty countryside and plenty to entertain children like St Fagans Park Museum and Bryngarw Country Park, for example, both within about 10 mile radius."

## Bristol



Property prices in and around Bristol have [risen by nearly 20pc](#) since the start of the pandemic to £350,400. Many point to the exodus west from London and the South East over the past two years to explain this.

Villages in the Wye Valley, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty north of Bristol, have become increasingly appealing over the last couple of years, said Richard Brooks of Savills. This is principally a result of the toll charge for the Severn Bridge being scrapped in 2018.

“Suddenly this opened up the idyllic setting of the Wye Valley to those commuting in and out of Bristol each day,” he said. “The transport links enable you to get into the city within 35 minutes or so. There’s a real attraction to living out there.” Average house prices stand at £524,282, a premium of 101pc on city centre prices.

Other areas that have seen values go up include Gordano Valley (where the average property is priced at £584,220) and the village of Long Ashton, which stands on the outskirts of Bristol and Clifton where “you can enjoy the best of the countryside while being on the cusp of the city, making it perfect for commuting,” said Mr Ashton. Prices here command a 123pc premium on those in the city centre.