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UK's best place to live: East Herts tops the chart

- South East of England has the most entries in the top 50 places to live
- Affordability, safety and access to green space most important factors according to UK adults
- Yorkshire and Humberside is only region in North to appear in top 50

East Hertfordshire has been named the UK's best place to live according to the Halifax Quality of Life survey 2020.

Known for its many popular market towns, such as Bishop's Stortford and Hertford, East Hertfordshire in the East of England achieves its crown thanks to strong exam results, high life expectancy, excellent health and happiness scores, and high average earnings.

The annual Quality of Life research looks at local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales, and takes into consideration 26 different factors (table 3) that homebuyers may consider when choosing a place to live.

In addition, for the first time, the research also takes into account how important the survey factors are to people looking to find the perfect property, with affordability, safety, and access to parks and green spaces all proving most essential according to UK adults*.

All situated in the South East of England; Fareham, Hart and Horsham came second, third and fourth, with Maldon in the East of England coming in fifth. Whilst the South East and the East of England both feature four times within the top 10, thanks to Selby and Hambleton, the North of England also makes the lineup, in sixth and seventh place.

Russell Galley, Managing Director, Halifax said: *"With bustling market towns and picturesque countryside, East Hertfordshire has topped the table thanks to high life expectancy, good schools and health and happiness scores, with high average earnings.*

"Everyone has different priorities when it comes to choosing a place to live, depending on time of life, and personal circumstances. Affordability will always be one of the most important factors, with getting a foot on the property ladder still difficult for some people."

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Top 50 places to live

The South East of England is the highest ranking region, with 18 local authorities securing spots in the top 50 best places to live, including Wokingham (10th), Winchester (34th) and the New Forest (42nd).

The East of England comes second which, alongside the overall winner, boasts another nine entries in the top 50, such as St Edmundsbury (9th), Rochford (33rd) and Central Bedfordshire (37th). In third place is the East Midlands, featuring seven times, including South Derbyshire (12th), Rutland (31st) and Charnwood (38th).

Selby (6th), Hambleton (7th), Ryedale (11th) and York (48th) – all in Yorkshire and Humberside - are the only places in the North of England to make the top 50. The Scottish Orkney Islands (18th) are the only locality north of the border to feature and no London local authorities appear in the top 50. Just two London areas make the top 100, Richmond upon Thames (64th) and Kensington and Chelsea (79th). Wales' highest placing was the Vale of Glamorgan at 126th.

Wellbeing winners

Factors relating to wellbeing played a significant role in securing the top three places for East Hertfordshire, Fareham, and Hart - with high scores on general health and happiness. East Hertfordshire and Hart score well on life expectancy, where males can expect to live an average of 82.5 years, 3 years above the national average and females to 85, 2 years above the national average. Those living in Hart and Fareham score highly for life satisfaction - 8.2 out of 10 on average, compared to 7.8 for the UK. Employment levels are also significantly higher - 87.2% in Hart and 82.2% in Fareham, compared to 75% for the rest of the country.

What makes East Hertfordshire such a good place to live?

- Residents feel fit and well with more than nine in 10 (97%) reporting good or fairly good health
- East Hertfordshire has the 12th highest weekly earnings of any local authority across England, Scotland and Wales
- The latest ONS figures indicate adults living in East Hertfordshire are amongst the most happy and content in the UK with high life expectancies.
- Schools in the area also achieve excellent exam results (73.3% achieving grade 9-4 in English & Mathematics)

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Table 1: 2020 Halifax Quality of Life Rankings – the top 50 Local Authority Districts in the UK

Position	Local Authority	Region
1	East Hertfordshire	East of England
2	Fareham	South East
3	Hart	South East
4	Horsham	South East
5	Maldon	East of England
6	Selby	Yorkshire and The Humber
7	Hambleton	Yorkshire and The Humber
8	Babergh	East of England
9	St Edmundsbury	East of England
10	Wokingham	South East
11	Ryedale	Yorkshire and The Humber
12	South Derbyshire	East Midlands
13	South Cambridgeshire	East of England
14	Tonbridge and Malling	South East
15	Rugby	West Midlands
16	Runnymede	South East
17	Wychavon	West Midlands
18	Orkney Islands	Scotland
19	Woking	South East
20	Warwick	West Midlands
21	South Oxfordshire	South East
22	Rushcliffe	East Midlands
23	Huntingdonshire	East of England
24	Newark and Sherwood	East Midlands
25	Rushmoor	South East
26	Forest Heath	East of England
27	Elmbridge	South East
28	Wiltshire	South West
29	Gedling	East Midlands
30	North Dorset	South West
31	Rutland	East Midlands
32	Tewkesbury	South West
33	Rochford	East of England
34	Winchester	South East
35	Bracknell Forest	South East
36	Cherwell	South East
37	Central Bedfordshire	East of England
38	Charnwood	East Midlands

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39	Forest of Dean	South West
40	Vale of White Horse	South East
41	West Berkshire	South East
42	New Forest	South East
43	North Warwickshire	West Midlands
44	Guildford	South East
45	Swindon	South West
46	Lichfield	West Midlands
47	Suffolk Coastal	East of England
48	York	Yorkshire and The Humber
49	Basingstoke and Deane	South East
50	Erewash	East Midlands

Source: Halifax January 2020

Table 2: Local Authority District with the best quality of life in each region in 2019

Local Authority	Region
Fareham	South East
South Derbyshire	East Midlands
East Hertfordshire	East of England
Rugby	West Midlands
Richmond upon Thames	London
Wiltshire	South West
Selby	Yorkshire and The Humber
The Vale of Glamorgan	Wales
Orkney	Scotland
Eden	North West
Lisburn & Castlereagh	Northern Ireland
Darlington	North East

Source: Halifax January 2020

Table 3: Local Authority District with the best quality of life in each category in 2019

Group	Variable	Local Authority District	Region
labour			
UK average is 74.9%	Highest employment rate: 88.2%	Orkney	Scotland
UK- £712 per week	Highest gross weekly Earnings: £1,530	Kensington & Chelsea	London
UK – 29.9%	% of adults (16+) with highest qualification gained: 90.6%. This includes graduate and post graduate degrees, NVQ level 4 and above, and professional qualifications.	City of London	London

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Housing			
UK – 7.4	House prices to earnings ratio (All Buyers) lowest: 3.5	Copeland	North West
UK – 6.2	House prices to earnings ratio (First Time Buyers) lowest: 2.9	Copeland	North West
UK – 113M ²	Highest average size of house (M ²): 159	Fermanagh & Omagh	N. Ireland
UK – £2,488/M ²	Lowest average price of house per M ² : £978	Mid Ulster	N. Ireland
Urban Environment			
UK- 274 per sq/km	Lowest Population density per sq km: 9	Western Isles	Scotland
UK- 2,299 cars/km	Lowest traffic flows per square km: 75 cars /km	Western Isles	Scotland
UK-41 per 10,000 people	Lowest burglary rate per 10,000 population: 3.2 per 10,000 people	Orkney	Scotland
UK – 1.5 tonnes CO ₂ emissions per capita	Lowest Total Consumer CO ₂ Emissions: 0.8 tonnes per capita	Tower Hamlets	London
Physical Environment			
UK – 869.9 mm per year	Lowest average annual rainfall: 525mm	Castle Point	East of England
UK- 29.7 hours per week	Highest average weekly sunshine hours: 36.9 hours	Isle of Wight	South East
Health			
UK - 94.6%	Highest % of residents in good health: 97.4%	Hart	South East
Male life expectancy (UK - 79.5 years)	Longest Male life expectancy at birth for males: 83.3 years	Hart	South East
Female life expectancy (UK - 83.1 years)	Longest Female life expectancy at birth for males: 86.5 years	Camden City of London	London
Education			
Class size UK- 27.2 pupils per class	Lowest average number of pupils in primary school class: 16.6	Western Isles	Scotland
Secondary Education Exams UK- 64.5% (NB: UK average based on crude average scores for all local authorities)	England: Year 11 pupils achieving a standard GCSE pass (9-4) in English & Maths : 79.7 Wales: % achieving the Level 2 threshold incl. English/Welsh & maths: 66.3 Scotland % achieving 1+ SCQFs level 6 or above: 83.7	Sutton Vale of Glamorgan East Renfrewshire Lisburn & Castlereagh	London Wales Scotland N. Ireland

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	NI: % achieving 5+ GCSE pass (A*-C) inc Eng & Maths: 78.0		
Per pupil spending (primary & secondary) – UK- £4,633 per pupil (NB: Differing funding criteria across each of the nations)	Highest per pupil spend: England: £6,839 Scotland: £4,974 Wales: £4,927 N. Ireland: £3,304	Tower Hamlets Not available at local authority level Denbighshire Fermanagh & Omagh	London Scotland Wales N. Ireland
Personal Well Being			
UK- 7.8 from 10	Highest Life Satisfaction rating out of 10: 8.5	Flyde	North West
UK- 7.9 from 10	Highest Worthwhile rating out of 10: 8.5	South Derbyshire	East Midlands
UK- 7.6 from 10	Highest Happiness rating out of 10: 8.3	Ribble Valley	North West
UK- 2.8 from 10	Lowest levels of Anxiety rating out of 10: 1.8	Fareham	South East
Lifestyle			
UK-7.8 per 10,000 people	Number of pubs per 10,000 population: 22 per 10,000 people	Derbyshire Dales	East Midlands
UK-1.5 per 10,000 people	Number of commercial & public health and fitness centres per 10,000 population: 7 per 10,000 people	Islington	London
UK – 47.5	% of premises with Ultra-Fast Broadband available: 95	Luton	East of England

Source: Halifax January 2020

ENDS

Note to editors:

- See separate technical note for more information on methodology of index and data sources.
- The Quality of Life index aims to quantify where living standards are highest in the United Kingdom by ranking local performance across a range of indicators covering the labour market, the housing market, the environment, education, health, personal well-being and leisure. The index has been produced at a local authority district level.
- The Quality of Life reading for each local authority has been created by summing scores across 26 variables within 8 broad groups.
- Each local authority district is given a score out of 10 for each variable contained in the index. Scores within each of the broad groups are averaged and then the 8 group scores are summed to create an overall Quality of Life score.
- *This year, weighting has been applied to the Quality of Life score for each variable based on the findings from a consumer survey carried out by YouGov between 5th and 6th December 2019. Consumers (sample size 2101) were asked to give an importance score on a scale of 0-10 for each variable when considering somewhere to live. Weightings applied to Quality of Life score was calculated using the average score from the survey results. Polling was conducted in aid of weighting only and participants were not asked to give personal views.

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