

GRAND DESIGNS

The official magazine of the hit TV series



COMMUTER HOT SPOTS

Grab a bargain outside the city in one of these up-and-coming areas **Words Zoe Durr Hull**

What are your greatest gripes about getting to work? Is it the traffic jams or train delays? Or the cost?

The average British commuter will spend £42,000 on travelling to and from the office in their lifetime. These are some of commuters' daily pains as highlighted in a recent survey by Get Living London (020 3714 8083; getlivinglondon.com). Yet the rising cost of housing and/or the desire to find a better work-life balance outside cities means that many people travel for hours every day.

So where can you find a cheaper, bigger, better property without paying through the nose for a season ticket or starting to feel that home is a train carriage?

New transport links – in particular Crossrail – make Stratford a 'commuters' dream', according to Get Living London, which owns and manages rental properties in Stratford's East Village, the former Olympic athletes' residence. But it's far from the only place predicted to benefit hugely from the new speedy train line that will cut a swathe through London.

Jones Lang LaSalle (020 7493 4933; jll.co.uk) expects Slough's house prices to rise by 45 per cent over the next five years when Crossrail brings the Berkshire town to within 34 minutes of central London. But it's not just commuters to London who are buying at Verona Apartments (01753 694 153; veronaapartments.co.uk), where flats cost from £220,000 and have Kelly Hopper interiors, a concierge and use of a gym.

'A number of our buyers travel to the north or west each day,' says Ross Mansoori-Dara, CEO of the project's developer, C Group. 'Slough is within commuting distance of Oxford, Reading

and Basingstoke; it's at the junction of the M4 and M40 plus it's near Heathrow. It's one of the main reasons that many multinational companies have chosen Slough for their headquarters.'

Also in Berkshire, Reading will be within half an hour of London when its Crossrail line opens in 2019. Work in the city, but live in the bucolic bliss of Berkeley St Edward's (0118 402 3533; berkeleygroup.co.uk) distinctly New England-style Green Park Village, with 657 new homes, from one-bedroom flats to five-bedroom houses set around a large feature lake.

East of London, Essex offers great scope for affordable commuting. One of the most cost-effective towns is Basildon, 33 minutes from London with an average house price of £177,000; an annual rail ticket will cost around £3,700. But more appealing, perhaps, is a coastal spot such as Burnham-on-Crouch with plenty of charm, good schools and direct trains to London Liverpool Street. Corinthia Mews, in which four-bedroom houses cost from £480,000 (01621 212 591; lindenhomes.co.uk), is proving popular with London commuters.

In Kent, travel woes will be far from your mind at The Vale, a Millwood Designer Homes' development (01474 230 160; millwooddesignerhomes.co.uk) in Southfleet. It's a 10-minute drive from Ebbsfleet International Station, with six trains an hour to Stratford International, linking to the DLR, plus easy access to the A2 and M2. Three-bedroom properties cost from £395,000.

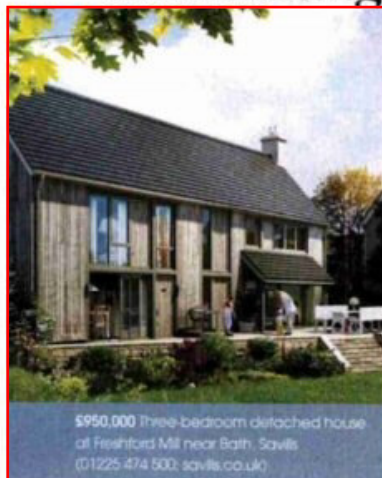
Bristol already attracts high numbers of

migrating Londoners seeking city life on a more manageable scale, but the electrification of the Great Western Line will make things even easier for those who need to return regularly to the capital or other cities en route. 'The line upgrade makes Bristol even more appealing to anyone working in areas such as Swindon, Oxford, Reading, Didcot and London,' says James Toogood at Knight Frank in Bristol (0117 911 4665; knightfrank.co.uk). 'The suburbs of Clifton, Sneyd Park and Redland, with family-sized homes, will appeal greatly.'

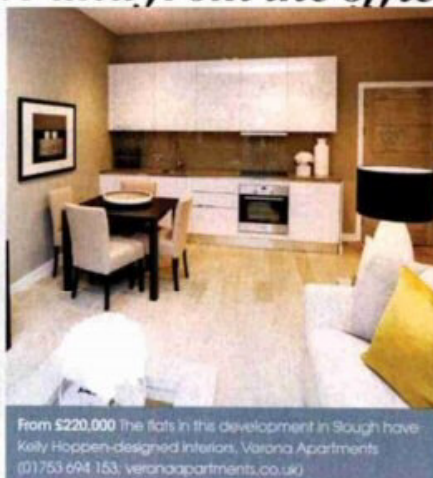
Bath is also set to benefit, with the train line upgrade bringing travel time to London to just over an hour. 'Bath and Chippenham will profit most,' says Luke Brady at Savills Bath (01225 474 500; savills.co.uk). He is marketing Freshford Mill, a development of new homes and converted mill buildings six miles from the city (01225 864 429; environcommunities.com).

Edinburgh's commuter belt is also expanding. The re-opening of the Borders Railway in September 2015 has halved travel time for towns south of the Scottish capital and late 2016 will see the completion of the second bridge over the Forth, bringing faster journey times to spots north of the estuary such as Rosyth and Dunfermline, says Fiona Duff at Strutt & Parker Edinburgh (0131 226 2500; struttandparker.com). Marketed as 'within easy commuting distance of Edinburgh', a five-bedroom detached villa with panoramic views over the Forth is on sale for offers over £725,000. **GD**

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£950,000 Three-bedroom detached house at Freshford Mill near Bath. Savills (01225 474 500; savills.co.uk)



From £220,000 The flats in this development in Slough have Kelly Hopper-designed interiors. Verona Apartments (01753 694 153; veronaapartments.co.uk)



£480,000 Four-bedroom houses at Corinthia Mews in Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex. Linden Homes (01621 212 591; lindenhomes.co.uk)