

ASHFORD

WHAT'S SPECIAL

Ashford's definitely on the up, argues Helen Turner at Property Turner. "High-speed trains to London and the Continent have lured big retailers, such as John Lewis and Waitrose, to the town." McArthurGlen Designer Outlet, just outside Ashford, has permission to expand by 100,000 sq ft, nearly doubling in size. Plans of a Stanhope PLC £75 million development on Elwick Road in the town centre, with a cinema, hotel and homes, have been revealed. Local luminaries: comics Julian Clary and Vic Reeves, conservationist John Aspinall, and Michael Howard, former leader of the Conservative Party.

SCHOOLS

Ashford School (private co-ed), Pluckley Church of England (primary), Highworth Grammar (girls secondary), Norton Knatchbull (boys grammar and girls in sixth form), Cranbrook (co-ed grammar), Benenden (girls independent).

CONNECTIONS

Channel Tunnel Rail Link improvements in 2001 introduced High Speed 1, with frequent expresses from Ashford to central London (37 minutes to St Pancras), Paris and Brussels. New motorway junction 10A on the M20 is due to open in 2019. Second-class annual season ticket: £5,324.

PROPERTY PRICES

"Homes are good value and about 20% cheaper than in Tunbridge Wells," points out Will Peppitt, Savills' head of residential in the South-East. There's a steady rollout of new developments reinvigorating Ashford's centre, explains Strutt & Parker's Edward Church. A one-bedroom house starts at £110,000, a three-bed house costs £250,000 and a six-bedroom period village house with half an acre can fetch up to £1.5 million. Values of villages such as Wye, Egerton, Pluckley (with its own station) and Bilsington have crept up, notes Charlie Warner of Heaton and Partners. Zoopla average asking price: £300,991.

HOT TIPS

"Prices of new homes through the Government's Help to Buy scheme are affordable from about £200,000 for a two-bedroom house."

Kevin Hall, Martin & Co

"To widen prep school options, look to the south-west so you can also take advantage of Cranbrook's and Hawkhurst's schools, or north-east towards Canterbury."

Helen Turner, Property Turner

"Stray a bit further from Ashford to villages proffering better value that are still a quick run to London. A new Kentish-style house at a bijou scheme in Challock starts at £400,000."

Edward Church, Strutt & Parker



FINBERRY - FROM £196,000
CREST NICHOLSON - 01233 223 133

A new village is being created, with 1,000 apartments, cottages and family houses, a new primary school, community centre and sports facilities.



COTSWOLD CLOSE - £450,000
MARTIN & CO - 01233 625 629

New five-bed detached open-plan house with solar panels, landscaped gardens and integral garage. Walking distance to town centre, station and local schools.



WINDMILL ROAD, WEALD - £590,000
JACKSON-STOPS & STAFF - 01732 740 600

A village location on the outskirts of Sevenoaks, this four-bed period cottage has two bathrooms, garage, living room with fireplace and pretty gardens.



ST GEORGES ROAD - £1,000,000
SAVILLS - 01732 789 700

One mile to train station and town centre, a contemporary, four-bedroom family house with oak flooring, Sonos sound system and attached garage.



BIDDENDEN - £650,000
WARD & PARTNERS - 01622 890 435

This Grade II-listed house has plenty of period features, including exposed beams and an inglenook fireplace. There's off-road parking and plenty of potential for modernisation too.