

Get thee to the country

Looking for the perfect balance of culture, community and countryside in retirement? Buckinghamshire's bustling market towns tick every box, as Sam Lewis finds.

A growing number of pensioners are shunning the seaside in favour of bustling market towns, where they can spend time enjoying history, the arts and outdoor activities during retirement.

Brimming with period buildings, culture and community spirit, market towns offer the best of both worlds, surrounded by idyllic rural scenery and with good transport links, medical facilities and a thriving social scene.

"Coastal places such as Torquay still have appeal, but we find that increasingly many people want to retire to busy market towns where there's an active high street, good independent shops and excellent social activities including theatre groups, book fairs and galleries," says John Lavin, managing director of Cognatum Estates, which manages retirement housing.

Buckinghamshire, explains Lavin, may not be well known, but it does offer a proliferation of beautiful market towns with excellent transport links to central London and its airports.

Such is its popularity, Beaconsfield in Buckinghamshire was recently ranked highest in Savills' list of England's top 10 market towns. Close to the M40 with



Old Town Farm – Cognatum



trains to London Marylebone taking just 20-30 minutes, the town is full of charming tearooms and independent restaurants and shops – as well as a Waitrose and a Marks & Spencer.

Cognatum's estate, St Mary's Court, couldn't have a better location, says Lavin, situated just off the picturesque high street in Beaconsfield's Old Town, with private terraces or balconies overlooking landscaped gardens with pathways and herbaceous borders. Just a few miles to the east lies Colne Valley Park, where residents can stroll along more than 60 lakes. There are also several attractive National Trust properties nearby.

The popularity of Beaconsfield, of course, commands a price, with Cognatum currently offering a two-bedroom end-of-terrace cottage for £550k.

But while all Cognatum's estates are at the top end of retirement living, there are cheaper properties on the market, also situated in some of Buckinghamshire's most idyllic market towns.

At Old Town Farm in Great Missenden, Cognatum has a two-bedroom apartment for sale at £350k, with larger cottages priced at around the £550k range.

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