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# You are now entering Utopia: welcome to Elmbridge

[Rebecca O'Connor](#), Property Correspondent

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**Elmbridge in Surrey is the closest thing to paradise in the UK**, according to a new report, topping a list of the best places to live for the second year in a row.

The quality-of-life survey by Halifax has found that residents in the **Conservative-run district** typically enjoy above-average earnings, better health, greater longevity, bigger houses, better GCSE results, less rain and more sunshine than most of the rest of the country.

Perhaps understandably, given its popularity, the only measure on which Elmbridge falls down is traffic. The area, a 45-minute drive into Central London along the A3, has a relatively high 13,468 cars per square kilometre, compared with 903 in the Cotswold district, in the South West, ranked 35th for quality of life.

Despite this, the district, including the popular commuter towns of Weybridge and Esher, beat East Hertfordshire, which came second, Surrey Heath, third, and Uttlesford and Sevenoaks, fourth and fifth.

The top of the table was dominated by the South East, where seven of the best ten local authority districts are located, with the other three in the East of England.

London districts led the pack on the measure of highest average earnings, with residents of Kensington and Chelsea earning the highest weekly incomes, at £1,306 a week, followed by the City of London on £1,196 and Westminster at £1,132 a week. Elmbridge came fourth on this measure.

The size of average earnings also appears to be the biggest determinant of house prices. An earlier survey by HSBC found that the highest concentration of properties sold for more than £1 million are in London, followed by Elmbridge.

However, residents in parts of the country that do not measure up in terms of average earnings or property size need not be disheartened, as their area may have other benefits, the Halifax reports.

Home ownership is highest in Castle Point in the East of England, at 88 per cent of residents, while Gosport in Hampshire has the highest employment rate, at 86.7 per cent. Berwick-upon-Tweed, which came 250th out of 408 local authority areas covered by the Halifax survey, has one of the lowest crime rates, at 9.7 burglaries per 1,000 people — compared with 37.94 in Elmbridge.

Parents whose priority is small class sizes for their children should head to the Isles of Scilly, which has the fewest number of pupils in primary classes, at 12. Meanwhile the

Isle of Wight is the best place to live for sun-worshippers: it gets the most sunshine in the UK, at an average of 37.4 hours a week.

Nitesh Patel, housing economist at Halifax, said: “Many areas in Southern England score strongly in categories such as the labour and housing markets, Northern areas tend to perform well on physical environment characteristics, particularly carbon emissions, and lower percentages of empty homes. In Scotland and Wales, several areas enjoy low traffic and burglary rates.”

Despite analysing 408 local authorities, Halifax only published a list of the top 250. It said it does not publish details of places that rank poorly in its index — which gathers data from sources including the Office for National Statistics, the Met Office and the Department for Transport — but added that it may do so in future

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