

# INIGO



## *The Old Guildhall*

**MONKS ELEIGH, SUFFOLK**

**£750,000 FREEHOLD**

This remarkable Grade II-listed, four-bedroom house in the chocolate-box village of Monks Eleigh, Suffolk, is thought to date to the late 14th century. The house has been restored by the current owners with the utmost respect for its historic fabric; original oak posts, beams and a carved king post, inglenook fireplaces and mullioned windows remain in situ. A half-acre garden that stretches to the River Brett is studded with mature alder, twisted willow and magnolia trees, acanthus, stocks and skimmias. Colchester is 18 miles away, with a wide array of amenities and direct railway connections reaching London Liverpool Street in under an hour.

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### *Setting the Scene*

A monastic-sounding name belies this village's storied past; Monks Eleigh owes its title to a peculiar connection with Canterbury, under whose jurisdiction it remained for nearly 900 years following the Battle of Maldon in AD 991. It was during this time that Canterbury monks financed the expansion of the local St Peter's Church, its tall tower visible for miles across the valley. Grade I-listed, the church is home to a set of Queen Anne's royal arms and stained-glass windows crafted by the renowned Ward & Hughes workshop.

Originally a hall, the house appears in Pevsner's Guide to West Suffolk and is one of the oldest in the village, its earliest parts dating from around the 1380s and later additions made throughout the centuries. These include a two-storey section built during Tudor times, as evidenced by the massive bressummer beams still visible above the inglenook fireplaces.

The central staircase was added in the 20th century, when first-floor accommodations were built above the hall section, set beneath what once were the main roof beams and rafters. A sympathetic renovation was completed in recent years by the current owners, who have exposed the beams and uncovered numerous original features, including an old hatch door and key, a lattice window and a section of the wattle and daub originally used to plaster the walls.

### *The Grand Tour*

The house sits at one end of the village, with a façade of lime plaster, casement and mullioned windows, topped with a traditional pantile roof. The first storey is distinctively jettied at the eastern end with a neat range of exposed oak posts.

A white-painted, panelled front door crowned with a carved frieze opens to a bright hallway, with white-painted walls and an exposed oak frame. Here, and throughout, the house exudes period character; interiors are defined by a restrained palette of natural textures, allowing the wide array of original features to take centre stage.

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A sitting room and a drawing room are on one side of the plan, both with large inglenook fireplaces set with heavy bressummer beams. The sitting room, which could also be used as a formal dining room, has a large bay window that invites in warm afternoon sunlight. Wooden floorboards in rich tones extend underfoot.

The drawing room is double aspect, with expansive six-over-six sash windows as well as a door opening to the rear garden. Elegantly appointed with pale yellow walls and soft carpeting underfoot, it is anchored by an impressive inglenook fireplace with a brick hearth and log store.

An internal hallway leads to the light-filled, double-aspect kitchen and breakfast room, with high ceilings and French doors that open to a patio surrounded by roses. Traditional farmhouse cabinets topped with granite are built around a midnight-blue oil-fired AGA range cooker, while tumbled marble tiles extend underfoot. There is plenty of space in the middle of the kitchen for a dining table and chairs.

Beyond the kitchen, there is a study with plenty of built-in bookshelves, and next door is an inviting snug. A practical utility room and a WC are at the end of the hall.

From the hall, stairs rise to the voluminous first-floor landing. Here, the medieval carved king post can be found, stretching between the tie beam and the rafters. Four bedrooms are arranged across the first floor, fitted with a combination of soft carpeting and elm floorboards.

The primary bedroom is set beneath soaring ceilings with exposed timber members and a skylight flooding the space with natural light throughout the day. There are white-painted ceilings and carpeted floors in neutral tones. The en suite bathroom has a shower fitted over the bathtub, and there is an adjacent dressing room with fitted joinery providing abundant space for storage.

The three further bedrooms are positioned at the other side of the plan, two of these complete with built-in wardrobes/cupboards. The shared bathroom, finished with soft pastel tones and overlooking the gardens, is fitted with a bathtub and a separate shower with glass screens.



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### *The Great Outdoors*

Enchanting gardens extend from the rear of the house, stretching to approximately half an acre. A patio covered in erigeron is surrounded by beds of daphne, roses and anemones wraps around the back of the house, offering the ideal spot for dining and entertaining outdoors. Purple-flowering wisteria and sweet-scented roses climb the house's brick walls.

Beyond the patio, sweeping lawns stretch to the River Brett at the end of the garden; here, regular visitors include swans, egrets and herons. Spring water meanders down the east side of the lawn to a culvert joining the river, ensuring a lush backdrop even in the driest seasons. There is an array of specimen trees, such as twisted willow, acer, hazel and weeping pear varieties. At one side of the garden there is a greenhouse.

A large, detached barn is also found in the garden, providing ample storage for tools and pots as well as covered parking. In front of the barn, there is a dedicated parking area with space for several cars, accessed from the street via an archway.

### *Out and About*

Monks Eleigh is a storied village peppered with pastel-washed houses and pretty cottage gardens in rural Suffolk.

Within a short walk from the house are numerous everyday amenities, including a village shop and post office. Local favourites include the family-run Corn Craft tearoom and gift shop; the Swan Inn, a traditional country pub set in a 16th-century thatched inn; the modern village hall, with a thriving calendar of activities including Pilates and yoga classes, carpet bowls, table tennis and the popular film club, Flicks in the Sticks. Hollow Trees Farm, with its fresh home-grown produce, café and farm trail, is a couple of miles from the house. Each week, a delivery arrives at the farm with excellent fresh fish.

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An intricate network of walks and cycling paths is accessible in and around Monks Eleigh. The surrounding Brett Valley is home to chocolate-box villages such as Kersey, Chelsworth and Brent Eleigh. Less than five miles away, Lavenham is the oldest recorded medieval village in the country, while the cathedral town of Bury St Edmunds is a short drive away to the north. The larger towns of Hadleigh, Sudbury and Colchester provide a wide selection of everyday amenities.

The port town of Ipswich is a 30-minute drive from the house, offering an excellent range of dining options, including local favourites The Salt House and Mariners Restaurant, which both sit alongside the town's historic waterfront and marina. For coffee, Applaud Coffee, The Green Room and Good Inside Social are all recommended. Ipswich market runs four times a week, and is renowned for its locally sourced fruit and vegetables, and fresh farm produce.

The Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heaths National Landscape is around an hour's drive away. Further afield, the Suffolk coast is noted both for its beauty and, increasingly, its cultural attractions, including Snape Maltings, part of Britten Pears Arts, which is an internationally regarded cultural centre, a mix of malthouses and granaries dating from the mid-19th century. It also hosts the Aldeburgh Festival, a 24-day event celebrating music, the arts, opera, comedy and film.

There are excellent schooling opportunities in the area, including Lavenham Community Primary School and Bildeston Primary School. For secondary education, Hadleigh High School and the independent Finborough School, and Stowmarket High School are within easy reach by car.

Colchester main line station is a 35-minute drive away, with direct trains reaching London Liverpool Street in approximately 47 minutes. There is easy access by car to the A12 and M11.

Council Tax Band: G

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## *About*

Inigo is an estate agency that specialises in selling marvellous historic homes, believing that a beautiful home is a pleasure that never ages. We connect discerning individuals with extraordinary spaces, no matter the price or provenance. Covering urban and rural locations across Britain, our team combines proven experience selling distinctive homes with design and architectural expertise.