

# Exit plan for city dwellers

**Well-connected rural areas are proving popular with house-hunters as people start to consider life after lockdown and to capitalise on the opportunities of working from home, reports DEBORAH STONE**

**Edited by DEBORAH STONE**

**L**IVING in lockdown has permanently affected our outlook on life. Even as the property industry makes its first steps back to normality, at least in England, many of us are thinking differently about how we want to live. Experts predict increased demand for homes in the country, partly fuelled by the frustration of apartment-living during coronavirus restrictions and also driven by the belief that working from home is here to stay.

If you've found lockdown bearable then you're probably in the right kind of property and location for you but many people will be seriously reassessing their priorities.

"This summer will be busy," predicts Bill Spreckley, of [Stacks Property Search](#). "There was already pent-up demand from buyers who had been waiting for a Brexit resolution and this will be exaggerated by buyers who have spent time in lockdown in what they are now sure is the wrong house. They will be anxious to move on, with a new 'life is too short to spend it in the wrong property' attitude."

Rightmove.com property searches in April revealed that 51 per cent of enquiries from Londoners were about homes outside the capital, compared with 42 per cent last April.

Even in Edinburgh, with easy access to coast and countryside, 60 per cent of enquiries were from those planning to move outside the city, up from 53 per cent last year. And in suburban Birmingham, 50 per cent of people were looking further afield – up from 45 per cent.

"The longer people spend in their homes, the more they may be considering not just a new home but also a new location and are starting to search for their next move, leading to this slow but steady recovery in activity,"

says Rightmove's commercial director and housing market analyst Miles Shipside.

It's not unusual to move from cities to countryside for bigger homes at more affordable prices but the desire to work from home also appears to be strong.

"It remains to be seen how people's commutes may change when lockdown is over," says Shipside. "Some people may

already be thinking of moving further out from their current place of work if they can perhaps work from home a few days a week, which opens up a number of new areas they had never considered before."

In most cases the success of working from home depends on your broadband strength and the Government is already being urged to increase the £5 billion upgrade for rural broadband announced in the spring Budget.

In the meantime, new-build homes remain the best option for people who want to move reasonably quickly, not least because it's easier to view an empty property.

Show homes and visitor centres at Legal & General Homes's developments will reopen by the end of the month, although viewings and enquiries will be by appointment only.

The company's Buckler's Park and Finchwood Park developments in Berkshire have high-speed fibre broadband, accessible countryside and are within easy reach of trains to London from Reading and Wokingham.

Phase one of Buckler's Park is next to 100 acres of parkland with woodland paths, decked areas and ponds. Its contemporary-style one, two, three, four and five-bedroom homes start from £251,000 (01344 981593; [landghomes.com](#)), with online viewings available.

Finchwood Park has traditional-style homes on a 270-acre site that includes 140 acres of open space, with prices starting from £465,000 for a semi-detached three-bedroom house (0118 391 4953; [landghomes.com](#)).

But the stand-out feature is that both developments have the latest smart technology as standard, with high-speed fibre broadband cabled directly into each house from day one.



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**ROOM TO BREATHE: Finchwood Park homes, above and below, are on a site with 140 acres of open space**



**HIGH-SPEED: The Ealing-style homes, above and below, at Buckler's Park, Berkshire have fibre-optic broadband**

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