



Living the dream

A practical guide to relocating
to the coast or country



Attwaters
Solicitors

Home sweet home

A swim in a secluded bay. A picnic in a country park. A walk in a shaded forest. Eight in ten Brits say spending time in nature helps to boost their happiness levels¹. Instead of just getting their nature fix at the weekends, some people want a more regular dose of green and blue spaces.

According to one survey, demand for homes in rural and semi-rural locations rose by over 30% in 2024 when compared with 2019². At the same time, house prices in predominantly rural areas rose by 23% compared to 18% in predominantly urban areas between December 2019 and December 2024².

Despite the increase, property prices in many rural country or coastal settings are still much lower than in towns and cities. For example over the last year, the average house price in Hertford was nearly £500,000 compared with just over £290,000 in Looe, Cornwall³.

The shift to working from home during and after the Covid-19 pandemic has made it much easier for people of all ages to escape the city without the worry of a lengthy daily commute. However, the grass is not always greener in the country.

Properties in rural locations can come with additional challenges and costs, which need to be considered long before you sign on the dotted line. That's not all: a quieter pace of life doesn't always mean a simpler way of life.

In this practical guide, the residential property specialists from Attwaters look at the pros and cons of relocating to the coast or country, and how to prevent your dream turning into a nightmare.

¹Aviva, ²Rightmove, ³Nationwide

How to avoid making a false move

The sun is shining. The birds are singing. It's easy to get carried away when you're house hunting during the summer. You can use this checklist to home in on any potential challenges when viewing a property or starting the conveyancing process.

- **Is the property listed or in a protected area?**
This could impact any alterations or renovations that you want to undertake.
- **What are the rights of access?**
Unadopted roads could impact how you reach your property while public rights of way on your land could turn a country idyll into a tourist trap at the weekend.
- **How is the neighbouring land used?**
A nearby farm could mean unexpected noise, smells or heavy vehicle traffic at certain times of the year.
- **Is the roof thatched?**
If so, it will need regular maintenance, which can be expensive. Home insurance premiums are often higher too due to perceived fire risks.
- **What and where is the water source?**
If the property is served by a well, spring or borehole, it's a good idea to check the location and that the relevant rights have been granted if situated on a third party's land. Don't forget to ask to see water quality tests too.
- **How is the property heated?**
A lot of rural properties are not connected to the mains gas grid. Solar panels and heat pumps might be an option in some locations depending on planning restrictions. If not, then heating and hot water might be reliant on less cost-effective and environmentally-friendly energy sources, such as oil and LPG.
- **How is wastewater managed?**
If the property is served by a private sewage system, such as a septic tank or a cesspool, it might be shared with neighbours. A private drainage survey can help confirm your rights and obligations and whether repair or replacement (the cost of which could be significant) is required.
- **What is the broadband coverage?**
Slow and patchy connections are a common problem in some rural locations. Find out if the property already has a dedicated fibre line or broadband satellite dish and do a postcode speed test via Ofcom or individual providers.

Escaping the city: a charm or a challenge?

Lower crime and poverty rates. Higher employment¹ and life expectancy levels. Quitting an urban life for a rural one can deliver a range of benefits. But it's a big change – and it's not suitable for everyone. One study found that over a third of rural residents were likely to consider moving away to a town or city². So how do you know if a rural life is right for you? These are some of the things you might want to consider.

Health services: A government report³ found that there were more GP working hours per patient in rural areas than in urban areas. However, the average wait time for an appointment was longer. Journey times could be longer too as small villages often have a shared GP practice in a central location. The same will apply for dentists, physiotherapists, and hospital appointments. With limited public transport options, having your own car could be essential.

Education opportunities: The same study found that the number of schools in predominantly rural areas has reduced over the last decade. This is a trend that could continue due to lower student numbers, resulting in a very long school day for young children. Smaller class sizes, however, can mean better results.

The report revealed there were a greater number of 'outstanding' and 'good' secondary schools in rural areas, with more pupils achieving higher GCSE grades. Although most private schools are usually located nearer larger towns, some will offer a transport service for day pupils.

Local amenities: British pubs are closing at a rate of almost two per day in 2026⁴ while the UK lost about 37 shops a day in 2024⁵. These losses might not be noticed in a large city, but they can rip the heart out of a small village. Communities, however, are increasingly stepping in to save their local amenities.

There are now more than 400 community-owned shops in the UK with a survival rate of 94%. Rural shops frequently offer additional services, for example nearly half have free-to-use cash machines while 33% make grocery deliveries and 27% have on-site post offices⁶.

Community links: Rural areas often have close-knit communities that are quick to provide help if there's a crisis. People living in rural areas are more likely to volunteer³; for example driving neighbours to medical appointments or collecting prescriptions. Local groups, councils and churches generally host a range of activities to encourage greater community engagement. Think village fêtes, farmers markets and cricket matches.

¹Rural Economic Bulletin, Defra

²Virgin Media O2

³Statistical Digest of Rural England, Defra

⁴BBC

⁵The Guardian

⁶Association of Convenience Stores



17%
of England's
population
live in rural
settlements



27%
of rural
residents
are aged 65
and above

Defra, based on mid-2024 figures



The price is right. The prospect is bright.

Relocating to the coast or country from a big city can make a big difference to your wallet and your wellbeing. Depending on the popularity of the location, property prices can be significantly lower, but this doesn't always mean running costs, such as water and Council Tax bills, will be lower too.

As well as researching how a move will impact your finances, it's a good idea to think about practicalities too. If you enjoy city breaks and West End shows, then a rural location could make travelling more complicated and costly. To help focus your research efforts, we've compared a central London borough with a former Cornish mining town.



	Camden Town	Camborne
Detached property average price	£3.2m	£365,760
Terraced property average price	£1.5m	£197,190
Council Tax Band E 2026	£2,698	£3,167
Average annual water and wastewater bill	£658	£740
Overall cost of living compared to UK average	78%+	13%+
Train/tube journey time to London Paddington	20 minutes	5 hours 15 minutes
Distance to beach	40 miles	4 miles
Health index based on UK average of 100	95	103

Sources: Rightmove, ONS, Economic Research Institute, MoneySavingExpert, London Borough of Camden, Cornwall Council
Some figures have been rounded up/down and/or averaged

Ready to make your move?

From listed buildings and country estates to thatched properties and barn conversions, our Residential Property specialists understand the challenges that can come with a move to a more rural setting.

Contact us on **0330 221 8855** or enquiries@attwaters.co.uk or drop into one of our offices.

Where we are

■ Hertford ■ Ware ■ Loughton ■ Harlow (by appointment only) ■ London (by appointment only)

0330 221 8855 | enquiries@attwaters.co.uk

www.attwaters.co.uk

Attwaters Solicitors LLP (trading as "Attwaters" and "Attwaters Solicitors") is a limited liability partnership, registered in England and Wales, with registered number OC451709 whose registered office is at 72 – 74 Fore Street, Hertford, SG14 1BY. Authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority. SRA ID 8007943. A list of members' names is available for inspection at the above office.


Attwaters
Solicitors