

THE  TIMES

bricks & mortar

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Property
Supplement
of the Year

Where have all the
washing machines
gone? *Pages 10-11*



Hide your dirty laundry and entertain your friends in peace

possible to commute — the journey from Nottingham can be done in 1 hour 31 minutes, while the train from York can take as little as 1 hour 51 minutes to King's Cross.

Morris-Eyton says: "Not everyone needs to be in an office every day, which means those who have the flexibility to work from home could move further out and commute once or twice a week.

"That is a compelling argument when you know that a house in Lincolnshire sold last week for £655,000. It has seven bedrooms and 2.3 acres of land. There are some incredibly good value homes here, especially if you like old rectories."

Adam Challis, head of residential research at Jones Lang LaSalle, says: "People are using the very strong value growth in London to buy larger homes outside the city whose value has not been growing at the same rate over the past few years."

It is not only Londoners who are looking outside the capital. Morris-Eyton has seen prospective buyers from further afield returning to their roots. "We are seeing more expats coming back from Hong Kong and Singapore looking to settle with their families in this part of the country, where they can find space and good secondary education for children," he says.

James Way, head of Knight Frank's Stratford-upon-Avon office, says there is a growing trend for people who live in Scotland, the North East and North West of England to choose to live in the Midlands when they get a job in London.

"Families don't want to give up their space and so are increasingly buying property here where they can get far more value for money than in the South.

"We are also seeing more people moving from London who are staggered at what their money will buy. We are helping a family move from a £1 million three-bedroom, terraced house in Islington to a five-bedroom vicarage in a village near Rugby that cost £750,000."

What you can buy for £1 million

Ryedale Lodge, Nunnington, York
Ryedale Lodge is a five-bedroom house in the North Yorkshire countryside set in 4 acres of grounds and gardens. It has five reception rooms and a one-bedroom annexe. There are outbuildings in the grounds and an old railway platform that is used as a terrace. It is on sale with Savills for £1.1 million.
savills.com

Wolverton Court, Warwickshire
The seven-bedroom house, which has been extended at different times, comes with more than 2.5 acres. The Tudor part of the house has been used as a farmhouse, manorial court and school room, while a further addition was made on higher ground at the beginning of the 19th century. There are five reception rooms, a parlour, pantry and china store room. It is for sale with Knight Frank for £1.15 million.
knightfrank.co.uk

Low Farm, Newark, Nottinghamshire
Low Farm is a six-bedroom, 17th and early 18th-century Grade II listed farmhouse with a range of outbuildings and equestrian facilities set in just under 4 acres. It is for sale with Savills for £995,000.
savills.com

The trend for open-plan living is making the utility room the new status symbol, says **Jessie Hewitson**

The utility room — the favourite space of the over-organised neat freak — is more popular than ever. It is now possible to buy a T-shirt with the words "I Heart My Utility Room", courtesy of the website zazzle.co.uk.

"I like the idea of a very neat, well-thought-out utility room where every centimetre of space is utilised — probably a hangover from when I had to load vans as a roadie for the Clash," says Sebastian Conran, son of Sir Terence, who has designed utility products for his Universal Expert collection.

The big shift in recent years has been moving washing machines and dryers out of the kitchen. This has been a response to open-plan living; as the kitchen designer Matt Podesta points out, kitchens are now social and entertaining spaces. And trying to have a conversation over dinner while your washing machine is in full spin cycle will simply not do. Here are some ideas for installing the right utility space for you, whether you live in a "bijou" flat, a house in the city or a spacious country home.

■ Flat

"No matter how small the flat, you can almost always carve out a utility space," says architect Melissa White. She recommends creating a space in a cupboard or under the stairs: you may fit in a combined washer and dryer with a small rack above for hanging shirts.

For those with space in the bathroom, hiding a machine, vacuum cleaner and ironing board behind a "hidden" wall that is actually a door is increasingly popular. Tumble dryers, while ecologically debatable, can be the friend of the space-starved home-dweller as they mean reducing the time a bulky



Sara Fricker in her "kitchen quality" utility room, above; below left, a utility room with tongue and groove panelling. For more utility room ideas, see housetohome.co.uk

and unsightly clothes horse is out. For those who like to air-dry, it is possible to install a pulley maid above the bath or on the landing.

■ London house

Many of the above rules still apply as there won't always be room for a dedicated utility room — so cornering off a bit of the bathroom, finding a cupboard

under the stairs or near an upstairs bedroom is still how owners of smaller homes are creating solutions.

For those who have the space for a separate utility room, they might incorporate some pantry space as well as an overflow kitchen, home to an extra fridge (for wine) and freezer. Laundry chutes are increasingly common in London homes, so family members can chuck yesterday's clothes down the chute — which has concealed doors on the landings — so that they are speedily transported to the utility room on the ground or lower-ground floor. Bye-bye laundry baskets.

An alternative, according to Hugo Thistlethwayte, managing director of the Prime Purchase agency, is to have a utility room on the upper floors, thus reducing the need for lugging laundry.

■ Country home

A butler sink for scrubbing muddy boots and washing dog bowls is a must: as is a separate entrance to the home that opens on to your utility space. Ideally there will be a tap or hose outside, so you wash down muddy boots or pram wheels before entering a home, or hose down a shivering dog (those with serious money are installing low-level dog showers in their utility spaces).

The floor tiling should be easy to wash — slate is a country classic — with underfloor heating, suggests Carol Peett, director of the West Wales branch of County Homesearch, so that wet paws are dried more quickly. Sara Fricker is a housewife with two children, 12-year-old Freddie and 10-year-old Rosie, and a golden labrador, Willow. Fricker recently refurbished her utility room in the four-bedroom house in Marlow, Buckinghamshire, which she shares with her husband, Jonathan. "I didn't want our white goods on display when we're having dinner with friends," says Fricker, whose utility space features a butler sink, overflow fridge and freezer and cabinets that are of the same quality as her kitchen. "I spend quite a bit of time there ironing and I wanted it to be as beautiful as our kitchen."

The designer of her utility space — which comes with a teak-painted area to hang coats and store wellies — is Podesta. "In the old days a builder would install the cheapest kitchen unit they could find," he says, "but now we try to make it as attractive as the kitchen. It's a space you're going to spend a reasonable amount of time in, so it makes sense to enjoy it while you are there."



A utility room in the home of Jamie Telford, director of Roundhouse Design

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