

Lessons from Lockdown

Cognatum 



Sociable kitchen space at Petersfinger Farm near Salisbury, a Cognatum development of four immaculately renovated 18th and 19th Century barns, arranged around a landscaped courtyard, that sit peacefully in 37 acres of landscaped grounds and meadows leading down to the River Avon. Prices for the barns start at £699,950.

While the success of the vaccine rollout and the hope of some social restrictions being lifted are offering hopes of brighter days, it is clear that a series of lockdowns has made many people, especially those approaching retirement, re-evaluate what is important to them.

Richard Williams of Cognatum says, "While we are an ageing population, 'retirement' has become something that happens later and later in life. People of 60 and 70 continue to feel young, but the pandemic has changed all that. Those over 60 have experienced, probably for the first time, being considered 'vulnerable'; which in turn has meant more time spent in their own homes protecting themselves from risk, and learning to find joy in their immediate surroundings.

"At some level, Lockdown has given those people in the pre-retirement stage a glimpse of what retirement may look like. Without the demands and commitment of dependent family and work, life becomes very much more home-centric. The home needs to meet so many demands, so when choosing a property and a place to retire to, buyers should factor in the lessons they learnt during Lockdown.

"Don't underestimate the space you need in your home when you retire. Whatever plans you have to travel, visit family and pursue interests, you will inevitably have long stretches of time in your home. So if you're

put off by the notion of downsizing, think of it more as smart-sizing, creating space that will suit you in your latter years. Don't think small, think different.

"Functionality is important, if you're going to be away for long periods of time, a property that isn't going to go wrong, and that will be safe and secure in your absence is a blessing, and brings peace of mind to travellers. Even better if there's someone who can keep an eye on it for you, pick up post and so on.

"Depending on your interests, a property needs to accommodate the paraphernalia that inevitably surrounds so many pursuits, whether they're artistic, creative, musical, tech, or anything in between. It's extremely helpful to have somewhere, be it a room, studio, shed or even a quiet corner to leave as it is in between sessions rather than having to tidy it all away. And ideally you need a space like this for every member of the household! This is one of the best ways to avoid clashes and disagreements when perhaps you are spending more time together than you are used to!

"Kitchens are more important than ever, with plenty of time available many people discover or rediscover the joy of cooking and creating, which has often become a necessary utility. Small galley kitchens can feel a bit cramped and unsociable, sometimes it's nice to have company while

you're at the oven. Check out the possibility of knocking through to a dining room or living space if you're a cook who likes to chat while you create.

"Open plan has of course become increasingly popular, and works very well for sociable space. But if your ground floor is largely devoted to open plan living, you may struggle to find private areas to pursue individual interests. Consider how you can use partitioning, and creation of smaller areas within the larger space, so you can have each have some privacy. Everybody needs a bolthole for one on occasions.

"And remember, there's no reason why bedrooms have to have beds in them, or dining rooms have to accommodate dining room tables. In the end they're all just rooms so kick off the old fashioned labels and turn them into what you want them to be.

"Retirement is a time to be more selfish than you've been in a position to be for decades. Don't be sensible at this stage, if there's a space you've always wanted, and you have the square footage available, then create it. Don't keep the best rooms for occasional guests and entertaining, use them every day and make the most of the time and space that you've worked so hard for.

"Think about the things you don't need any longer – that may be a large garden, a garage, being in a school catchment area, or requiring multiple bedrooms with en suite bathrooms.

"Self-knowledge is a precious thing when it comes to buying property, and a retirement property is absolutely no exception to that rule. The trick is knowing what the retired 'you' will look and feel like! Lockdown has given us all a glimpse into the future."

Cognatum, an independent not for profit company, has 60 retirement estates across central and southern England. All are in prime locations within vibrant market towns or villages, within walking distance of shops and restaurants. Each estate benefits from thoughtful architecture, landscaped grounds, and a dedicated estate manager.

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