

The farm shop factor

(the effect of schools and farm shops on property interest)

Suffolk Food Hall just south of Ipswich has become a beacon of local food and, with its new Cookhouse restaurant and jumping pillow, is a honey pot for mummies and children alike. Its boast is that food is 'as it should be' with a full traditional butcher's shop, huge wet fish counter, scratch bakery, delicatessen, garden centre, Pilates studio and much more. But it also now has a series of other artisan producers on-site along with a cookery school, private dining rooms and supper clubs. Fear not; the best qualities of life at sensible prices are all now available in the depths of Suffolk.

The effect on house prices of leading maintained and independent schools is well known, but what effect do such foodie venues have? Premium property prices can be chunky in areas such as the Shotley Peninsula (the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty around the Suffolk Food Hall) as the attractions of homes, schools and local services feed each other. The ultimate embodiment of the Suffolk ideal a Lutyens house in Wolverstone, with 10 bedrooms and the most enchanting garden, costs £2.75m through Strutt & Parker (01473 558474). But you can still buy into the dream with a smaller budget. Abbotts Countrywide (01473 378042) is selling a period home in Lower Holbrook, a 3-bed semi-detached for £250k. Second-home owners are also among the new rural foodies.

James Blyth, who runs Friday Street Farm Shop, is perfectly placed at the gateway to Aldeburgh and Snape and has found that freshly-made meals and desserts are gratefully snapped up by weekenders. "We get a lot of people with weekend cottages and others holiday shopping with us and they love the fantastic range of local and unique produce we stock. It's a privilege to have their custom along with the locals" says James. "They also love stocking their cars up with local goodies for the week ahead in London."

"A few years ago it was often about the Waitrose Effect," says Gi d'Angibau of Savills. "Now it is much more about the local schools and the Farm Shop Factor, as consumers opt for the right education and local amenities to enhance their life. As a result of the horsemeat scandal consumers are much keener to shop in delis, farmers' markets and butchers which sell local products with known sources of origin, and ask about local offerings when viewing properties."

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