



ESTATE AGENTS

Guide to buying thatched homes

Information on thatched properties



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A timeless icon of traditional village life, the thatched roof has long been a symbol of English country living. Impressively alluring and picturesque, it's not just a boon to tourist authorities across the land, it's also a national symbol of settlement and continuity.

Britain's 60,000 thatched cottages are now among the most prized and protected in the country: 75% have listed building status and woe betide anyone who makes unacceptable alterations or crowns their pride and joy with the wrong kind of straw!

Thatch tends to divide potential purchasers straight down the middle. Here at GL & Co we are an Associate Member of the National Society of Master Thatchers, we find some people will be deterred by the maintenance and regulations but others are attracted by their individuality and character.

If you have any questions about purchasing a thatched property, please do contact us – enquiries@glproperty.co.uk or 01903 742354.

Buying a Thatched Home

Thatched houses are special homes, needing special care and maintenance. Purchasers can be daunted by what's involved but with the right help and advice buying one should be quite straightforward.

How long does a thatched roof last?

The life expectancy of a thatched roof will vary according to several factors:

- Regular maintenance
- Quality of materials used
- The skill of the Thatcher
- Proximity of trees
- Pollutants in the environment
- Geographical location - a high humidity level shortens the lifespan of the thatching materials as will a strong prevailing wind hitting the thatch.

Are all thatched roofs the same?

There are different types of thatching materials and each type has a different lifespan. The following figures are a guide only, allowing five years either way, are a reasonable guide to any thatched roof which is not exposed to great extremes.

- Water Reed (also known as Norfolk Reed): 50-60 years
- Combed Wheat: 25-40 years
- Long Straw: 15-25 years

Ridges (the capping or top part of the roof), whatever their design or type, have a life-span of 10-15 years. These can be replaced without having to replace the entire roof – in fact often the thatch can be ‘topped up’ to prolong the lifespan.

Does the thatch have to match the other houses nearby?

English Heritage is very keen, despite the protestations of owners and Thatchers, to protect regional styles and resist the spread of the durable Norfolk reed across the land. You should check with your local conservation officer to find out what's required in your area and then get a quote from a Thatcher.

What about fire safety and insurance?

Concerns about fire and high insurance costs are probably the two most common issues raised by prospective buyers. Fortunately thatch fires are very uncommon.

There are fire retardant applications that can be put on to the thatch and the internal timberwork which further reduce the risk of fire. Practical measures - testing electrics every 10 years, ensuring that any wiring is housed in a vermin-proof environment, having chimneys swept annually - should also help to keep the roof safe.

Insurance can be costly, however there are companies specialising in this market, so insuring the property should not be prohibitive. The Thatched Owners Group runs a special insurance scheme, with a discount for members.



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*figures from GL & Co Client Questionnaires



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