

'Don't hang around to buy your dream home'

Agent reports increase in viewings of rural properties in the south-east

THE number of potential purchasers viewing rural properties for sale across the south of England increased by 25 per cent in January this year, compared with the same month in 2008.

The head of rural property research at Knight Frank estate agents, Andrew Shirley, said: "Although it is too early to say that this marks the end of the market downturn, it is positive news to start the year with."

Mr Shirley said that a combination of factors was encouraging more people to consider making a purchase.

He said: "House prices have fallen substantially as vendors have become more realistic, interest rates on cash deposits are risible and there are some attractive mortgage deals available for those with reasonable deposits. If anybody is thinking of buying, now is certainly the time to start looking."

"We have seen the biggest increase in activity in the south of England. This suggests that those areas favoured by

"Buyers recognise that there is a finite supply of this type of house and they risk missing out on their dream property if they stay out of the market too long

City workers, like the Home Counties, which were hit hardest by the banking collapse last year, are starting to recover first.

"Our Country House department, which deals with properties worth more than £2m, has seen viewings rise the most - 80 per cent compared with last January.

"Buyers recognise that there is a finite supply of this type of house and they risk missing out on their dream property if they stay out of the market too long. This sector of the market also

appeals to international buyers who have benefited hugely from the collapse in Sterling."

The head of Knight Frank's Country Department, Rupert Sweeting, said: "Compared with the run-up to Christmas, there has been a transformation in activity since the start of the New Year. We are seeing international buyers take advantage of the favourable Euro/ Sterling exchange that, together with the reduction in house prices, presents those buyers with opportunities to purchase a property for 40 per cent less than last year.

"Furthermore, those who have sold property and had their money on deposit producing six per cent or so are now getting no return.

"Their interest was enabling them to rent a decent house, but the rental is now eating into their capital. Now they want to buy 'bricks and mortar' and many have told us they feel that it offers a better return than the stock market or banks."

Town house with all the mod-cons

THIS spacious three-storey town house in Greenham has flexible family-sized accommodation.

The property, 11 Sandleford Lane, has an entrance hall, study/garden room, utility, ground floor double bedroom with en-suite shower room.

On the first floor is a large kitchen and L-shaped sitting/dining room, while on the top floor are two double bedrooms, both with en-suite bathrooms.

There is also uPVC double-glazed windows, gas central heating, a south-facing garden, garage and parking.

A director of estate agents Haines Residential, Ian Haines, said: "It is, we believe, the first of this style of property on this development to come to the market since new, and offers all that one would expect with a modern house."

The property is on the market for £279,950. For more details, telephone Haines Residential on (01635) 552552.



11 Sandleford Lane, Greenham

Family property with an annexe



West Acre House, Newbury

THIS well-presented and spacious detached family home and annexe is located in Newbury.

West Acre House has undergone a great deal of refurbishment and extension over the last few years and now has plenty of potential.

The main house has its accommodation arranged over two floors, comprising four double bedrooms, master with en-suite and a family bathroom to the first floor.

On the ground floor is a reception hall, lounge, dining room, sun room, study, refitted kitchen/breakfast room, utility

room and cloakroom. The first floor annexe comprises an open plan kitchen/living/bedroom and a shower.

To the front of the property is a large driveway which provides ample parking and access to the integral double garage.

The gardens are situated mainly to the west and north of the property and the overall plot measures 0.4 acres.

The property is on the market for £750,000.

For more details, telephone Jones Robinson estate agents on (01635) 35010.

Improving your dwelling could be easier in the current climate, says architect

THE storm clouds of the recession may be darkening our skies, but every cloud does have a silver lining for those people with the courage to invest in their homes, believes Annika Hatchwell of Newbury's award-winning Inspiration Architects.

"It really is a buyer's market if you are minded to invest in improving your home with an extension or remodelling," she explained.

"Six months ago builders were quite reluctant to tender and negotiation was the preferred route. Clients were also continually frustrated by the length of lead in times.

"However, now there are so many builders looking for work, it is definitely worth asking for tenders if you are going ahead with a building project and this could lead to significant savings. These savings are compounded when coupled with the VAT reduction for this year."

With the property market stalling and in some areas prices falling, many homeowners are looking at ways to enhance the value of their home.



Wilton House, Brightwalton Green

Home with impressive views over farmland

CONSTRUCTED by renowned local builder Westbuild Homes, this property in Brightwalton Green, has been built to the highest standards and provides luxurious and spacious accommodation in a rural/village setting, which would be ideal for a family.

Wilton House is built of mellow Flemish bond brick and part-stained timber clad elevations under a clay-tiled roof, which blends in well with neighbouring properties.

The interior has been decorated with neutral colours and the many windows, some of which are door height, further enhance the sense of light and space.

Accommodation comprises an entrance hall, drawing room, garden room, dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, utility and sitting room.

Upstairs is the master bedroom with en-suite bath and shower room, guest room with en-suite shower room, three further bedrooms and a family bath/shower room.

Westbuild Homes fitted out the house with a range of extra fixtures and fittings, including television and telephone points in all principal reception rooms and bedrooms, as well as a stylish-fitted kitchen with granite work surfaces, double Belfast sink, Aga S series range cooker, fully integrated dishwasher and microwave. US-style fridge/freezer and a fitted wine cooler.

The house also has underfloor heating and double glazing throughout, security alarm system, mains-supplied smoke detectors and an integral double garage.

Wilton House has fitted carpets to the first floor, with oak floor boards to the ground floor, and a tiled kitchen.

The property is situated on the edge of the village and within a conservation area.

The rooms to the rear of the house have views over the garden and farmland beyond, and in particular, some of the first floor bedrooms have fine panoramic views.

The large terrace and rear garden are accessed from the garden room, the dining room and the kitchen/breakfast room, which are ideal for entertaining in the warmer months.

The enclosed rear garden is laid to lawn, while the front garden has been professionally landscaped and includes a lawned area, borders planted with an array of attractive plants, and a generously-sized drive/parking area.

Wilton House has been constructed to NHBC standards and has a 10-year structural protection policy.

The property is on the market for £845,000.

For more details, telephone Knight Frank estate agents' Hungerford office on (01488) 682726 or email robert.wightman@knightfrank.com

"The whole process has sped up with planning applications being dealt with swiftly and, while we continue to work on a wide range of projects, we find ourselves with increased capacity as you would imagine

For many, especially those who have substantial equity, building projects that increase the size of their home are a serious consideration - and they have become easier to realise.

Ms Hatchwell said: "The whole process has sped up with planning applications being dealt with swiftly and, while we continue to work on a wide range of projects, we find ourselves with increased capacity as you would imagine.

"Before the credit crunch we were typically looking at a three-month waiting period because of the demand for our services - and people would wait. Now we are back to normal and manageable lead-in times."

"The builders, those who are falling over

themselves to tender for projects, are able to start work more quickly too, as are the specialist trades they may need to bring in to complete a project.

"There is no doubt that the marketplace is evolving quickly and it pays to involve an architect to project manage an extension or similar sized scheme with the investment in such advice more than paying for itself.

"Our services go well beyond the initial design of plans and involve specialist planning advice, submission of planning applications, handling the building tenders and then monitoring works on site.

"Having the clients brief always at the top of the agenda; not just in terms of time and budget, but also that it delivers what the home owner wanted, is important to us.

"That applies whether it is to improve the living space, to defend the value of the house to make it easier to sell now, or of course to ensure it is a really desirable home when the property market returns to buoyancy in the future."