

## Tardis terrace in popular city road

This hall entrance terrace home in Norwich is deceptively spacious and has been vastly improved by its current owners.

The property, 43 Alexandra Road, is for sale for offers in excess of £325,000 with D&G Residential.

The house offers two reception rooms, a fabulous kitchen/breakfast room, ground floor shower room and a first-floor bathroom.



Upstairs there are four bedrooms off a landing and there is also a converted

cellar, which is used as a study. Outside there is an extensive rear garden.

■ For more information contact D&G Residential on 01603 666888.



# How to keep a cool head in tougher times

Founder of Bedfords estate agency, David Bedford, who has more than 50 years' experience in the property market in Norfolk and Suffolk, gives his view of the current situation.

"In recent months, no potential buyer or seller can have failed to notice the media headlining the slump in the housing market – most of it overstated and alarmist. Estate agency offices across the country have already closed this year as a direct result of the number of property transactions being 50pc down on the same period in 2007.

"Agents do not expect a lot of sympathy, but the knock-on effect throughout the economy is very serious. One wag in the national press even suggested that agents are now selling the Big Issue rather than houses!

"So, what advice can you expect to receive from those who are actively involved in

the property market on a daily basis and can we draw any positives from the present situation? The answer is yes, we can, providing we accept some 'home truths'."

Here is Mr Bedford's advice in the following crucial areas:

### ■ Prices

House prices in the region have already dropped by about 10pc and in some cases they may continue to ease downwards in the immediate future. A wholesale slump is, Mr Bedford thinks, overstated and provided sellers take a realistic view of the value of their home, they will achieve a sale.

### ■ Lending

The mortgage market has undergone a significant change as a result of the credit crunch, with a number of lenders tightening their criteria. They will ask for at least 10pc to 15pc deposit and if the applicants do not have this then it is

questionable whether they should really be buying a property. All we are seeing is a return to sensible lending.

Understandably, the spot-light is always on the first-time buyer. A surprisingly high percentage, something like 30pc of all property transactions, do not involve a mortgage at all. Another indication of the amount of equity many people have in their property was highlighted recently by the Nationwide Building Society, which confirmed its ratio of loans to value was something like 45pc.

### ■ The future

The main factor slowing down activity is lack of confidence. The vast majority of buyers are sellers and vice versa; this can be likened to changing your car. What matters is the differential. You may get less than you had hoped for your property, but equally this will

usually be reflected in the one you're buying. It's a good time to move up the property ladder. There are signs that the "credibility gap" between buyers and sellers is beginning to close, as both parties realise that if they want to get on with their lives and move home, they have to take a more sensible view.

### ■ Your choice of agent

Estate agents who place an emphasis on excellent customer service and are really in touch with the local market, with the experience to know how to combat the current market conditions, are more likely to achieve a result for sellers.

Mr Bedford concludes: "The moral is simple; be prepared to take advice from an experienced, professional agent, be patient, don't panic and common sense will pay off."

■ You can contact Bedfords on 01328 730500.



## Speedy consent for homes

Norfolk housebuilder Abel Homes is bucking the gloomy trend and pressing ahead with 51 new homes in Swaffham – having gained planning consent in record time.

This makes it the first housebuilder in Breckland to gain approval, for the site in Castleacre Road, within the government's target timescale of 13 weeks. The company, which is family-owned and based at Little Cressingham, adopts a consultative approach to planning, and believes it is this which enabled the consent to be granted so quickly.

"Our commitment to consultation with neighbours and with the town council, along with our ability to be flexible, has allowed us to achieve a smooth planning

application," said Tony Abel, managing director.

Unlike some volume developers which are not bringing forward sites, Abel Homes plans to start work almost immediately on the site, which was a former Bernard Matthews turkey hatchery. The 3.65-acre site will see a mix of one to five-bedroom homes, as well as a large public open space, which will be provided by Abel Homes.

"Too often developers have no interest in the communities in which they are working," said Mr Abel. "As a local, family-owned firm, we are very aware of our responsibilities in the county."

Work is expected to start this autumn and last two years. Details at [www.abelhomes.co.uk](http://www.abelhomes.co.uk).

## Development has just one home left for sale

Persimmon Homes Anglia's Ashbrook Meadow in Diss is continuing to go from strength to strength as there is now only one home remaining for sale – the three bedroom semi-detached Sandringham design.

"It was only a matter of weeks ago that we were celebrating how successful our Diss site has been," states Jon Gibbs, sales director of Persimmon Homes Anglia.

The Sandringham design consists of an entrance hallway, lounge, kitchen with dining area with French doors leading to the rear garden.

Upstairs is the master bedroom with en suite shower room, bedroom two and three and the master bathroom. Fitted wardrobes are in every bedroom.



The Sandringham is priced at £162,250, and Persimmon is also offering the lucky last purchaser at the site the chance to take advantage of a £1,000 discount, £1,000 towards legal fees, stamp duty paid and carpets throughout the property.

■ To snap it up, contact the sales office during office hours on 01502 516 784.

## BARN ED AND SOLAR SIMON

Help make your home an eco-haven



**Simon:** Well, Ed, I see EDF has increased its prices and it seems only a matter of time before the rest of the energy companies follow suit. How are you saving energy at your barn?

**Ed:** When I renovated my barn, I made sure that it was extremely well insulated. I also chose appliances which were as energy efficient as possible. It is also about educating the children about saving energy by turning lights off when they leave the room and not leaving the playstation on all night! How about you?

**Simon:** Well, I started to change my energy use last year by changing all my light bulbs to either compact fluorescents or LEDs. I also changed my old thermostat to a modern digital one, as these are much more accurate, so therefore more efficient. I also added more insulation to my loft, so I now have about 300mm of insulation up there. I have also found out that, contrary to what I was told when I bought the house, I don't actually have any cavity wall insulation, so I am getting a quote this week to correct this.

**Ed:** How about generating your own energy, like at the ecobarn? As it is off-grid, the 2.5kW solar PV

and the 2.5kW wind turbine will generate the electricity, which is then stored in large batteries.

**Simon:** I dream of covering my roof in solar panels, I want solar thermal to heat my water and solar photovoltaic to generate enough electricity to run my house. A 3kWp solar photovoltaic system should generate enough electric to run an average house.

**Ed:** I thought you would want a wind turbine?

**Simon:** I'd love one, but unfortunately I don't have a large enough garden.

**Ed:** Although saving energy should be at the top of everyone's list of objectives, the rises in energy prices bring it back into focus.

**Simon:** With every energy price increase, micro-generation becomes more and more viable and it decreases the payback time. This will mean we will see more and more systems fitted.

**Ed:** So, what is the verdict? How do we all save energy?

**Simon:** If people want to save energy then they should insulate their homes, change their light bulbs to energy-efficient bulbs, and switch things off when they are not using them. A very good website is [www.energy-savingtrust.org](http://www.energy-savingtrust.org).

### PRODUCT:

### AURO PAINTS

Auro make natural paints, wood stains and glosses, fillers, waxes, cleaning products, brushes, rollers and much more.

I especially like the organic linseed oil, which we have treated the windows of the barn with. For products and retailers. [www.auro.co.uk](http://www.auro.co.uk) or 01452 772020.



### TOP TIP

Don't upgrade your mobile phone too often. I know it's tempting to have the latest gadgets, but if your phone still works, then keep it.

### CRACKING THE CODE

**NHBC:** The National House-Building Council is the standard-setting body and leading warranty and insurance provider for new and newly converted homes in the UK. Its role is to work with the house-building and wider construction industry to provide risk-management services that raise the standards of new homes,

and to provide consumer protection to new home buyers.

### Architect's Certificate:

A certificate issued by an architect with reference to a complete build, either new or a conversion. It is a certificate for building societies and lenders. These are intended for reliance upon by the banks and building societies when lending to small developers and self-builders, as evidence that the works have been satisfactorily completed before the release of funds.

■ If you have a question, get in touch with Ed and Simon by e-mailing [caroline.culot@archant.co.uk](mailto:caroline.culot@archant.co.uk). To contact Ed Masters at Barnmasters, ring 01379 852111 or visit [www.barnmasters.co.uk](http://www.barnmasters.co.uk) For Simon, either pop into his shop on Church Street, Harleston, ring 01379 854840 or visit [www.allthingsgreener.co.uk](http://www.allthingsgreener.co.uk)