

SELF BUILDERS FAR FROM FEELING THE CRUNCH

A survey published today by self build and renovation experts BuildStore reveals that the credit crunch has not deterred self builders and renovators from building their dream home.

The survey of over 500 budding self builders and renovators from across the UK revealed that over 90% intend to continue with their projects, despite the market conditions caused by the credit crunch. What's more, BuildStore reveals that the number of plots and building opportunities added to its land-finding database, PlotSearch (plotsearch.co.uk) has been increasing since the start of the credit crunch, and has risen by over 20% since January 2008, offering more choice to self builders and renovators, the majority of whom spend over two years looking for land or a building opportunity. With the availability of specialist finance offering up to 95% advance payment on land or project and build costs, offered by exclusively by BuildStore, self builders and renovators remain sheltered from the set-backs felt by the wider housing and financial markets.

"Self build's niche status has protected it from the major effects of the credit crunch, which have led to problems in the mainstream housing, construction and mortgage marketplace. The current market conditions have helped to create a more favourable environment for self build. Not only are the majority of current self builders and renovators still continuing with their projects, but more people are beginning to recognise it as an affordable and rewarding way to improve their position on the property ladder" explains BuildStore's Chief Executive and founder, Raymond Connor.

"Whilst this is a good sign for current homeowners, the Government should take note too. In the current climate, where the supply of housing is allowed to stagnate and even stop, self build and renovation continues its trend of uninterrupted and sustainable quality housing supply.

"If the Government steps in to make land supply and planning conditions more favourable for self build, then it could prove to be a major and influential contributor to the UK's housing stock", he concludes.

In the current climate, houses are taking longer to sell, property prices are falling and mortgage lending is becoming more restrictive. As a result, most homeowners have put off selling their house, to protect their equity. One of the reasons self builders and renovators are able to continue with their projects despite the climate is because they don't need to release equity from their existing properties to fund their build. The Accelerator mortgage, developed by BuildStore, provides funds in advance, enabling more people to build their dream home with a positive cash-flow, allowing them to buy materials and pay bills, etc. Homeowners who choose to fund their build this way can take advantage of the rental opportunities and can delay selling their existing home until the market improves.

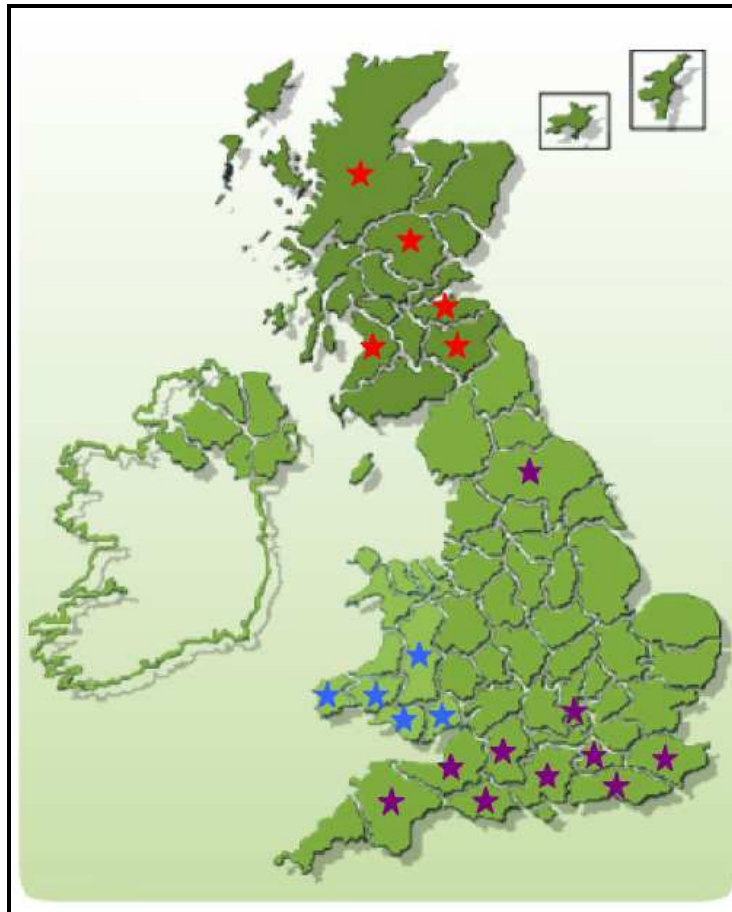
So, even in a housing and economic downturn, thousands of people are still looking for and buying land, renovation and conversion projects, as a way to achieve their dream property. The survey reveals that most people (92%) are dissatisfied with the current housing stock, and turn to self build and renovation to create a very individual and bespoke property, at a more competitive price.

Self builders and renovators are so committed to finding that elusive perfect plot or inspiring renovation project, that some of them will wait months and even years to find it. Of those surveyed, over one third (42%) have been looking for land or a project for over a year, and more than half of those (62%) have been looking for over two years. With more opportunities being added to PlotSearch and the number of plots being sold dropping, people may be able to snap up that bargain plot or renovation opportunity quicker than usual.

The survey has also revealed some very sought-after 'hot spots' for self build and renovation, across the UK. The most popular counties, where self builders and renovators are looking for land, are shown below:

Scotland
1. Borders
2. Lothian
3. Highlands
4. Perth & Kinross
5. Ayrshire

Wales
1. Glamorgan
2. Gwent
3. Powys
4. Carmarthenshire
5. Pembrokeshire



England
1. Kent
2. Wiltshire
3. Yorkshire
4. Surrey
5. Devon
6. Sussex
7. Buckinghamshire
8. Dorset
9. Somerset
10. Hampshire

Furthermore, PlotSearch figures reveal that more than half of the self build plots available are under £150,000, up 2% since last year. Almost a third of available plots are priced under £100,000, meaning that with an average build cost of £80 per ft², it's possible to get a 12,000 ft² 3-bed detached family home for under £200,000; as compared with average prices for detached homes in May 2008 at just over £342,000. The market for bigger luxury plots, particularly in parts of England is still thriving, with just over 13% of plots priced over £500,000, and just less than 5% are priced over £1 million, with some plots in Greater London, Dorset and Surrey reaching more than £4 million.

Mr Connor is confident that given the availability of finance, land and labour, more people will turn to self build and renovation to meet their housing needs: "Self build is fast becoming a more accessible and affordable alternative, particularly in the current economic climate, providing a constant delivery of housing stock. Our survey demonstrates that most people are continuing their self build or renovation journey, remaining unaffected by the credit crunch.

"Although self build still remains a relatively under-represented sector, its potential to make a contribution to the housing market should not be ignored. In providing homes that are 'lifestyle compatible', cost-effective and profitable even in the current climate,

self build could be one of the key solutions to solving the UK's housing 'crisis'." he concludes.

For more information and inspiration on self building or renovating, log onto www.buildstore.co.uk

- ENDS -

Notes to editors:

Total surveyed = 523 PlotSearch.co.uk subscribers (20 – 25th June, 2008).

For a full breakdown of plot/project prices and availability, please contact Jaclyn Thorburn.

BuildStore is the UK's leading specialist at the heart of the self build and renovation market, with a bespoke end-to-end offering of products and services, specifically designed to help self builders and renovators throughout their projects. Since 1998, its pioneering solutions and services have helped thousands of people build and improve their own home, and it continues to develop and improve its offering, leading the way in the marketplace.

BuildStore's services include:

- Land finding via PlotSearch, the UK's largest and most accurate online database of building plots, renovations and conversions. There are over 6,000 self build and renovation available, from a wide range of agents and private sellers
- Financial Services – BuildStore is the UK's leading provider of tailored self build and renovation mortgages, with funds released in stages throughout the project, allowing positive cash flow. Mortgages are sold direct to the public and via intermediaries and BuildStore currently arranges over £500 million in mortgages each year.
- Buying materials - BuildStore's TradeCard provides over 3,000 members with discounts and offers of building materials, plant and tool hire from leading suppliers and builder's merchants, by combining the buying power of the UK's self builders and renovators
- The UK's first and only National Self Build & Renovation Centre, Swindon; an impressive 67,000 sq ft Centre designed to educate, inform and inspire self builders and renovators.

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