

PROPERTY MARKET

DAY TWO

WITH the brand new year cranking into gear, thoughts of buying a first home, or even trading up, will be orbiting the minds of many. Yet, talk of 2012 as a year to buy is raising eyebrows. Word on the street, and that of the property merchants and experts is pretty unanimous — the shutters are still down on the finance houses.

“It’s really the banking system that’s holding back the market more than anything else,” says Robert Ganly of Knight Frank.

What of Finance Minister Michael Noonan’s jump-start plan?

“It may stimulate things. And if so, we’ll see more civilisation — normal banking — by the time we get into 2013. Yet, I can see more facility this year for first-time buyers. As for the middle market, that’s much harder to predict.”

Ed Carey, residential head at the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland, agrees: “Banks aren’t lending, and so we’re starved of credit. There are chances of a recovery. Sporadic though, depending on the property. Certain types of houses in certain locations — urban first, and then quality rural — they’ll sell, according to demand.”

“I’ll tell you in 2015 if it was a good year to buy,” says Carey. “What I mean is people will do rental versus mortgage calculations, and if it’s cheaper to rent, chances are they’ll keep renting. But if there isn’t too much of difference, they might try to buy,” he says.

So, let’s just say, you get the green light — finance approved — how do you know you’re doing the right thing? Duncan Stewart, award-winning architect and energy specialist, has a rule of thumb, which was all but ignored during the years when the property ladder has little more than a rope dangling from a giddy hot air balloon.

“Think of what it would cost to build as a guide to a house’s real value,” he says.

“Obviously there won’t be an absolute match. However, it should get you closer to a realistic price. And then consider the travelling involved,” he says.

The caveat isn’t only based on the time you’ll spend sitting in your car. It’s premised most pragmatically on the sheer cost of fuel.

“From now on, it’s going to soar,” Stewart readily points out, also cautioning that bigger houses aren’t necessarily better.

“Our homes in Ireland consume twice the European average in fossil fuels — annually. Typically, because we’ve gone and built larger houses. But the average home here consumes much more energy. And that costs.”

“So, we’ve got to start looking at buildings in a different way. Where it might be costing €2,000 to heat a home today. The real spend is more than likely double that in the same house was to be kept in comfortable conditions,” he says.

But what about the wonderful traditional open fire we all crave?

“It’s at best 20% efficient. Stoves are much warmer. Think about it — for every €10, €8 goes straight up the chimney. And whatever fuel you put into your fire, it’s using up four times what a typical boiler



In part two of a three-day series, **David Young** discovers the single obstacle holding back the market

would. So, it’s incredibly wasteful. You take out a mortgage for, say, 25 years,” Stewart cautions.

“You should have an idea before doing so of what your best expectations are of what the energy will be for running the heating of that house. That’ll give you a good picture of what it’ll cost in 25 years time. And you then build that into your price,” he says.

Instead of an annual oil bill of €2,000 totalling €50,000 over the lifetime of the mortgage Stewart does the maths more tellingly.

“No, it turns into more like €150,000 in terms of the accumulated cost. It’s the punitive, cumulative cost over the duration of the loan, taking into account how energy prices are rising year by year,” he says.

“If you actually stand back and tally the spend — literally do it year on year — with prices going up around 5% you’ll get what the energy demand of the house really is,” he said.

Stewart’s approach is one of eyes wide open. He asks the questions most of us don’t even countenance, such as how much to look at houses as homes, and the kind of hole that might put in your pocket.

Happy hunting.



3 Landscape Terrace, Sunday’s Well, Cork

NUMBER 3 has the feel of a 5-star hotel. So much so, you’d think twice before sitting down for fear of the menu tariffs. This property has been expertly finished. And I mean ‘finished’. Every last inch of this period residence has had time spent on it.

And you wouldn’t know by looking at it from the outside. You could stand there for an awfully long time guessing what lies within, without even coming close. You’d have a better chance if you turned around and took in the immediate view of Cork City instead.

It’s probably what inspired the choices the owners made. For example, once you step through the front door you’re immediately met by a heavy inner double door, topped by a high glass arch. After which, you step into an exquisitely tiled hall that’s presided over im-

periously by a chandelier.

The subtle paint work and coving draw your eyes to the first return on the stairs, where a stained glass window plays with the entrance’s natural lighting. The living room/drawing room on the right-side of the house runs open plan from front to rear, incorporating two fireplaces, while easily accommodating a grand piano.

The dining room on the opposite side of the house is equally stunning in its fine detail. And on venturing upstairs, the visitor is treated to the same stunning theme. From the covered furnishings in the bathroom to the mirrors and wall-hung lamps in the corridor, Number 3 keeps on keeping on.

The bedrooms offer an insight into how built-in wardrobes can remain furniture-like, while storing a shipful of fine garments. The

The details

- **Location:** 3 Landscape Terrace, Sunday’s Well, Cork
- **Price:** €390,000
- **Size:** 2,960 sq ft
- **Bedrooms:** 3 (and 3 bathrooms)
- **BER rating:** Exempt
- **Broadband:** Yes



master bedroom vault of an archway into a sitting area, with open fireplace, is a sight to behold.

It’s almost a shame to tell you the rudimentary stuff, such as the house is wired for cable television; it’s gas-fired central heating; and there is parking. All told, it’s a must-see.

VERDICT: This is a fairytale home. Enchanting in every aspect.

Riverside, Fergus, Dripsey, Inniscarra, Co Cork

OVERLOOKING the Dripsey River, this robustly constructed property is set in a quiet cul-de-sac on a three-quarter acre site. With plenty of internal space, well-employed too, Riverside enjoys dimensions few other houses do.

The high quality of its features — from solid teak staircase to solid beech flooring — mark this home out from others, by the even aesthetic found throughout.

The kitchen is almost clinical in its precision. The breakfast bar looks like it actually functions as one, while the heavy duty range stove has the appearance of a hob that could cater for much more than just one hungry family.

The living and sitting rooms are both well lit naturally and have the dimensions to accommodate an entire family fighting over the TV remote. That is, if everyone somehow ended up in the same room.

On the ground floor, there is an office, WC, and even a guest bedroom. Above, there are three more. The master bedroom comes with walk-in wardrobes (one for him and one for her), en-suite and customised cedar for much more than just one hungry family.

This property is most remarkable for how it incorporates the river into almost every aspect. The view, which is well exploited by



the outdoor seating area, dominates, in the most welcome way.

By the way, there is also a home gym in the loft of the free-standing games room, if you find yourself so inclined.

VERDICT: With lakeside access, boor landing and boat shed (sorry, didn’t I mention that already?), this is a house you’re likely will forge all their Christmas and birthdays for. Honestly, try them.

The details

- **Location:** Riverside, Fergus, Dripsey, Inniscarra, Co. Cork
- **Price:** €475,000
- **Size:** 3,810 sq ft (Site: c0.75 acres)
- **Bedrooms:** 4 (and 4 bathrooms)
- **BER rating:** Pending
- **Broadband:** Yes

TOMORROW



All bets are off. Parachuting into the arena of the über homes, where you’ll get to browse dream properties. And for a few moments, consider what really takes your fancy, without losing a wink of sleep.

17 Cullinagh, Killaloe, Ballina, Co Tipperary

NUMBER 17 is a standalone property. Architect-designed and intuitively family-oriented, it is set in a quiet cul de sac. The house stands sentry over Lough Derg and Co Clare.

You’ll be drawn to the two gigantic deck areas protruding from the building — making the very most of an elevated location. There’s a tarmac driveway to the front, bordered by lawns, a patio area, and a fenced-in, tiered lawn to the rear.

Inside, the impression continues in the hand-painted timber kitchen, and its many features, including a Belfast sink, island unit, gas double electric oven, and French doors. And with windows to the front and rear, the light is maximised to the last in this well-tiled space. Of course, the dining room adjoins.

The children’s double bedrooms are both on the first floor, and the two are also en-suite with power showers, mind you. With polished floors, and plenty of windows, they are castle-like and fun.

The master suite occupies the entire second floor. The en-suite includes a jacuzzi bath, to wash away your troubles, a steam shower and bidet too. And there is the obligatory walk-in wardrobe. It’s also worth noting the lower ground floor that incorporates a



utility, a playroom, and en-suite. All that and you can still walk to the village of Ballina and Killaloe, and avail of their amenities.

VERDICT: A kid’s dream. Balcony decks, overhangs and stairs galore — like one gigantic treehouse.

The details

- **Location:** 17 Cullinagh, Killaloe, Ballina, Co Tipperary
- **Price:** €550,000
- **Size:** c1/2 acre
- **Bedrooms:** 4 (and 4 bathrooms)
- **BER rating:** Pending
- **Broadband:** Yes

Rochestown Old School House, Co Limerick

THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE may date back to 1921, but it is the modernity, thing from fusty.

Completely renovated and extended, the property has been spectacularly converted into a family home.

The lush mature, landscaped gardens make the place. It doesn’t hurt either that you’re part of the rolling countryside too.

A tar and pebble driveway leads to the house where visitors are then met by natural dry stone flower beds and a private patio area.

And nothing gets in your way of enjoying a clear view of Rockstown Castle, close by.

As you walk through the house, the architect’s hand becomes immediately apparent, with daylight spilling into the southwest facing kitchen and dining area.

The latter’s double height arched window, above its double doors opening out onto the patio, may just have something to do with this enchanting corner of the house.

And there’s plenty more — formal dining room, sitting room, music room, playroom, office, utility, and garage. Upstairs, you’ll encounter four double bedrooms, a main bathroom, and a master, complete with en-suite.



The details

- **Location:** Rochestown Old School House, Ballyneety, Co Limerick
- **Price:** €375,000
- **Size:** 2,500 sq ft (Site: c1/3 acres)
- **Bedrooms:** 4 (and 3 bathrooms)
- **BER rating:** C2
- **Broadband:** Yes

The detailing is there too. From coving to recessed lighting, and selected soft furnishings, this home has everything required for comfortable living — solid oak floors, tiled flooring, high ceilings, feature fireplace, stove, private well, and a bio-cycle system. Oodles of character too. And you can make the city in 20 minutes.

VERDICT: The Old School House has that rare thing called charm. Unfussy yet engagingly designed, it’s a sure place to lay your hat.

Average house price continues to fall ... and no end in sight

HOUSE prices continue to fall, with still no sign of the market bottoming out, according to the latest report by property website MyHome.ie.

The average price fell by 2.4% in the last quarter and by 13% overall in 2011, although the rate of decline slowed in the last quarter.

Asking prices nationally are now down by 43% compared to the peak in 2006, with prices in Dublin down 50% over the same period.

The average price for a home nationally is now €236,000 compared to €241,000 three months ago. In Dublin, the corresponding figures are €268,000 versus €275,000.

Cork City saw the largest decline in the third quarter of 2011, but has now stabilised. The average asking price in the last quarter of 2011 was flat at €225,000. This leaves the annual decline at 10%, down from €250,000 at the end of 2010.

Limerick city has generally showed a more moderate pace of decline. After staying flat in Q3 2011, however, asking prices declined again, by €5,000 in the last quarter, to an average of €180,000. The annual rate of decline in Limerick, at 10%, is now the same as in Cork.

In Galway, asking prices fell by €7,000 in the third quarter of 2011. They fell €2,500 in the last quarter, bringing the average asking price to €225,000. The figures suggest asking prices have fallen by 30% from peak levels. Other prices include:

- Donegal — €150,000.
- Mayo — €165,000.
- Monaghan, Roscommon and Wexford — €150,000.
- Waterford — €189,500.
- Tipperary — €168,000.
- Lowest asking prices for a 3-bed semi were in Leitrim (€115,000) and Westmeath (€132,000).

Annette Hughes, director of DKM Economic Consultants, said the economy remains in a fragile position and that the prospects for economic growth in 2012 remain uncertain.

“House prices will not stabilise until we have a period of sustained economic and employment growth. Right now the ongoing debt crisis in Europe combined with less than encouraging news on the international economic front, as well as the fiscal consolidation programme under way,

means the likelihood of an acceleration in economic growth in 2012 is questionable,” Ms Hughes said.

She said that many households will likely be worse off in 2012, there was good news for first-time buyers in the December budget, including:

- A 3% increase to 30% in the rate of mortgage interest relief (MIR) for first-time buyers who bought between 2004 and 2008. Based on the maximum amount of interest which qualifies for relief of €20,000 per annum for a married couple (€10,000 for a single person), the new rate corresponds to a maximum relief of €6,000 (€3,000 for a single person).
- A 3% increase to 15% in the rate of MIR for non-first-time buyers purchasing a home in 2012. Based on the maximum amount of interest which qualifies for relief of €6,000 per annum for a married couple (€3,000 for a single person), the new rate corresponds to a maximum relief of €900 per annum for a married couple (€450 for a single person).
- MIR is to be abolished after 2012 for people buying a home and is to be fully abolished by 2018.
- A new Capital Gains Tax incentive has been introduced for property purchased between midnight December 6 and 31, 2013. Where property is bought during this period and held for at least seven years, the gain attributable to that seven-year holding period will be relieved from Capital Gains Tax.

Ms Hughes said these measures should help the residential property market and stimulate transactions.

However, she said the market will require a considerable improvement in the supply of mortgage credit for potential buyers during 2012.

Angela Keegan, managing director of MyHome.ie, said: “We estimate transaction prices nationally are down at levels last seen 10 years ago... So affordability continues to improve all the time. There were a lot of buyers in the budget for first-time buyers, particularly with regard to mortgage interest relief. A lot of the uncertainty which was out there before the budget has been removed. Unfortunately, uncertainty over the future of the euro and economic growth remains and this continues to sap consumer confidence.”



West Ridge Lodge, Killarney, Co Kerry

WEST RIDGE LODGE is like none other. This property warrants the accolade of one in a million, and especially in Kerry. And I haven’t even considered its breathtaking views of Killarney yet.

So, hear me out. It takes ‘open plan’ to whole new heights. The entrance leads left into a gigantic sitting room, the ceiling for which is also that of the master bedroom, which in turn occupies the entirety of the upstairs. And that includes a four person hot tub.

Anyway, back downstairs you go. Taking a right once you come in the front door leads you into the kitchen area, which then takes you into a dining area, off which there’s actually a door, into a utility room and a shower area.

There are also two beautifully spacious en-suite bedrooms downstairs, one accessed from the kitchen area, the other from the sitting room. Confused? You should be, this house is by no means conventional.

Throughout there are superb materials used and finishes applied, from Brazilian hardwood floors, marble flooring too, and a wood burning stove, to recessed

The details

- **Location:** West Ridge Lodge, Gortagullane, Mangerton, Muckross, Killarney, Co Kerry
- **Price:** €375,000
- **Size:** 2,300 sq ft (Site: c0.5 acres)
- **Bedrooms:** 3 (and 3 bathrooms)
- **BER rating:** Pending
- **Broadband:** Yes

floor and wall lighting. And, of course, the obligatory exposed beams. And a walk-in pantry, with disco red double doors. Mind you, the whole kitchen gets the same effect.

This house baffles and excites in equal doses. You’ll still be trying to figure it out as you trek up nearby Mangerton mountain or hike through Killarney’s national park.

VERDICT: What a brave design. And the result ain’t half bad. This house is a marvel. But not for the faint-hearted.



Kilmaley, Co Clare

THIS is an impressive over-basement home with four double bedrooms, balconies to the rear, and landscaped gardens.

You enter the property through automatic wrought iron gates, and follow a driveway that wraps around both sides of the house. There is also a carport at the back.

Through the front door, you are met with a porch and then an entrance hall with Cherrywood flooring, recessed lighting, and a walk-in cloak room. From here, you can also make your way to the 1,300 square foot basement.

The kitchen keeps the flag flying with solid oak built-in wall and base units, tiled flooring, and generous work surface space. Then, it’s open plan into the dining area, which in turn brings you through an archway to a maple-floored sun lounge, with vaulted ceiling.

From this vantage point you can lose your self in thought while eyeing the rolling countryside, and contemplating the remainder of this floor — with its main reception area and feature fireplace, home office, and playroom, before even venturing upstairs.

The details

- **Location:** Kilmaley, Co Clare
- **Price:** €349,000
- **Size:** 3,000 sq ft (Site: c0.75 acres)
- **Bedrooms:** 4 (and 3 bathrooms)
- **BER rating:** Pending
- **Broadband:** Yes

Two bedrooms are en-suite, yet the main bathroom still competes for your attention with its jacuzzi bath. There is also ease of access to the attic for storage. All told, the defining aspect is the escape to the rear via the balcony. That is if you aren’t enthralled by the stonework at the front, with its double-height windows.

VERDICT: Arguably, a lot of bang for your buck, when you consider everything is on a plate for you. Even a fenced-in lower back lawn in which you can pen the kids.



VERDICT: Minutes from Clonlea beach, and Dungarvan town, this home also has several golf courses on its doorstep. Then again, you could just sit back and relax in its very own ambience.

Clash, Ballynacourty, Co Waterford

ONLY a three-year old, this property has the feel of a house that has taken time and thought to choreograph into a home.

Both inside and out, the finish is to impeccable standards. The stone wall and wrought iron gated entrance set the tone.

Stop to consider the tidy landscaping and smart outdoor lighting, and your hopes will be raised even further for what lies in store. There are three reception rooms with solid oak timber flooring, just in case all your friends and family arrive at the same time. There’s also an office/study and walk-in

hot press (if you need to hide).

Throughout, the detail is notable from coving and chandeliers to natural wood flooring and old world fireplaces. Each room looks to have jumped straight off the pages of a brochure — toned and coloured to maintain brightness and freshness.

The kitchen boasts a hefty cooking range with a tiled splashback. A seating area bridges into the dining room, with large windows drenching the area in daylight and double doors to take you outside. In the main living area, a floor to ceiling feature window allows un-

The details

- **Location:** Clash, Ballynacourty, Dungarvan, Co Waterford
- **Price:** €495,000
- **Size:** Approx 3,000 sq ft (Site: c0.75 acres)
- **Bedrooms:** 5 (and 6 bathrooms)
- **BER rating:** Pending
- **Broadband:** Yes