

# THE SOUTH BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND HENLEY PREMIUM HOMES MARKET UPDATE - Q1 2026

## An Insider's Guide to What's Really Happening in the High-Value Homes Market

Welcome to our first Prime Property Update for 2026. You're receiving this letter because you own a premium home in South Buckinghamshire and Henley. Whether you're thinking of selling or buying in the next 12 months, or if you just like to keep a close eye on the market, we hope you'll find this report helpful.

If you've opened a newspaper, scrolled the headlines, or had a well-meaning friend tell you, "now's not the time to move," you'd be forgiven for feeling slightly conflicted about the property market right now. Depending on who you listen to, the market is either on the brink of resurgence...or teetering on the edge of another wobble.

As ever, the truth, especially in the premium property market, sits somewhere far more measured, nuanced and frankly, far more interesting (well, we think so at least!).

So welcome to your Q1 2026 Premium Property Market Update. As always, we've stripped away the noise, dug into the data and combined it with what we're seeing day in, day out on the ground here in South Buckinghamshire and Henley and across the UK's high-value markets. Here's what we'll cover:

- **What the national market is really telling us as we move into 2026**
- **Why confidence is quietly returning, but selectively**
- **What's happening specifically in South Buckinghamshire and Henley £1m+ market**
- **Why pricing discipline has never mattered more**
- **Where opportunities (and risks) are emerging for premium homeowners**
- **And what we expect to see unfold as we head into spring**



*Sara Alston and David Rhodes,  
Directors,  
Stowhill Estates Buckinghamshire*

## The UK Market: Not Booming. Not Bust. But Finding Its Feet

If there's one word that best describes the UK property market as we enter 2026, it's this: **Resilient**. After a year dominated by Budget speculation, geopolitical uncertainty, sticky inflation and higher borrowing costs, the market has come through 2025 in better shape than many predicted.

According to the major indices, house prices ended 2025 anywhere between 0.6% and 1.1% higher year-on-year, depending on which measure you follow. Not spectacular, but crucially, stable. Transaction volumes reached around 1.2 million, up 9% on 2024 and broadly in line with long-term averages.

Mortgage rates, while still well above the ultra-cheap levels of the 2010s, have been easing steadily. The Bank of England cut the Base Rate four times in 2025, ending the year at 3.75%, below the psychologically important 4% mark for the first time since 2023. Two and five year fixed rates now sit in the low-to-mid 4% range - a meaningful improvement on where we were just eighteen months ago.

Wages, importantly, have continued to outpace inflation. Affordability, while stretched, is improving gradually. And perhaps most tellingly, first time buyers accounted for two in every five purchases last year, their strongest showing in over a decade - a vital ingredient for a healthy, functioning market.

But here's the nuance that matters most: **This Is Still a Two-Speed Market**

Properties that are priced correctly from the outset are selling well. Those that aren't, well...aren't.

Throughout 2025, homes that launched with a clear pricing strategy sold quickly and often achieved strong results. Overpriced properties, by contrast, lingered. Time on market stretched. Price reductions rose. Fall-throughs have become more common. Withdrawals followed. Or as the data rather brutally confirms: *Price it high, watch it die. Price it low, watch it go!*

Average time on market for unsold homes nationally crept up to around 179 days by the end of 2025, a forward indicator we always watch closely.

Longer marketing periods tend to precede price corrections, not because markets collapse, but because buyers simply refuse to chase unrealistic expectations when they have a choice. And choice, right now, is exactly what buyers have.

## **Budget Uncertainty Has Lifted and Confidence is Quietly Returning**

One of the biggest brakes on activity last year wasn't affordability - it was uncertainty. The unusually late Autumn Budget in November 2025 cast a long shadow over the final quarter of the year. Many buyers and sellers paused, waiting to see what might change. Yet when the dust settled, the impact was far less dramatic than feared. Surveys showed:

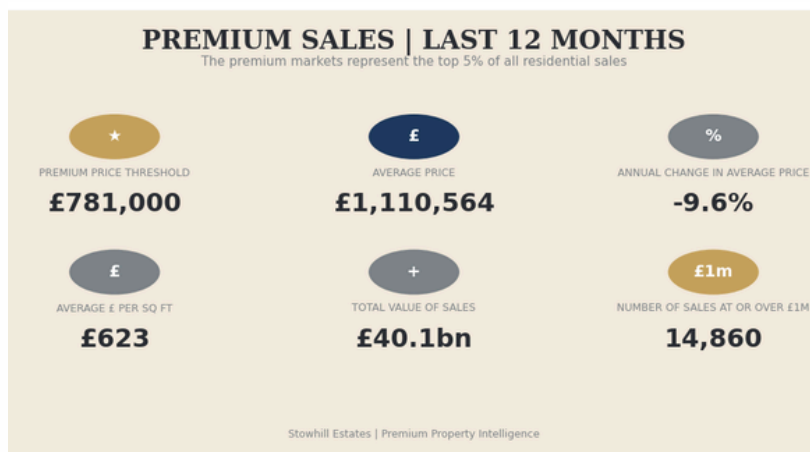
- 50% of movers said the Budget had no impact at all on their plans
- 6% actually accelerated their moves
- Only 15% delayed or cancelled outright

In the days and weeks that followed, early signs of a rebound emerged. Rightmove reported a 24% week-on-week increase in top-end London sellers, and mortgage search activity surged even before the Base Rate cut was formally announced.

### **What This Means for High Value Homes**

With the Autumn Budget behind us, and an earlier Spring Budget scheduled for March, one of the biggest psychological barriers to movement has been removed. That's important for premium markets, which are driven as much by confidence as by numbers.

For the owners of premium property, the national picture sets an important backdrop, but it doesn't tell the whole story.



High-value homes don't behave like the wider market. They never have. Premium homes are typically:

- Lifestyle led
- Equity-rich
- Less sensitive to small interest rate shifts
- More selective, more considered and more strategic

## South Buckinghamshire and Henley Q1 2026: A Market That Has Started the Year With Intent

January 2026 has delivered one of the strongest and most revealing starts to the year we've seen for prime property in South Buckinghamshire and Henley for some time. Let's look at the headline numbers first, then we'll unpack what they actually mean:

**740** Properties for Sale - the highest January stock level in recent memory

**4%** Up year-on-year and 31% above the five year January average

**146** New listings launched in January alone - up 35% on last year

**£1.74M** Average asking price of new listings

**45** Sales agreed, broadly in line with long-term January norms

At first glance, that's a lot of supply. But here's the crucial distinction: this is not distressed selling. What we're seeing is confidence. Many of these sellers are also buyers. They've waited and they've watched, and they've decided that market conditions now feel stable enough to move forward with their next chapter.

Metric	Jan 2021	Jan 2022	Jan 2023	Jan 2024	Jan 2025	Jan 2026	Average
Properties for sale	496	352	491	598	713	740	565
New Listings	64	81	99	101	108	146	100
Sales Agreed	58	45	47	48	40	45	47
Price Changes	45	17	34	38	48	47	38
Withdrawn	36	27	42	44	55	42	41
Fall-Throughs	11	10	17	10	14	16	13

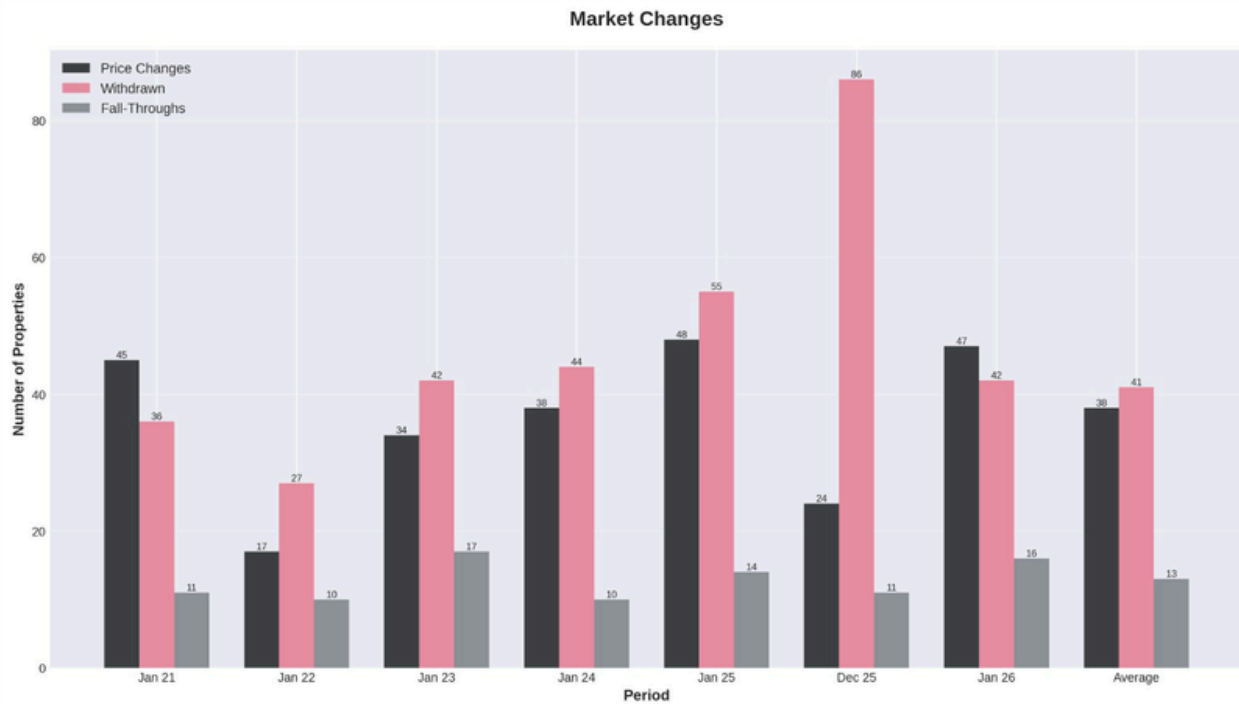
Postcodes: RG9, SL2, SL7, SL8, SL9, HP6, HP7, HP9, HP14 . Premium properties = £1m+

### Where Friction is Appearing

January also highlighted where alignment between buyers and sellers is breaking down:

- 47 price reductions (in line with January 2025)
- 42 withdrawals - lower than last year, but still meaningful
- 16 fall-throughs - higher than average, but not alarming

In simple terms, around one-third of new listings are encountering some resistance. And the reasons are familiar: Optimistic pricing driven by emotion rather than evidence, homes needing modernisation that are priced as ‘turnkey’ and less prime locations chasing prime pricing.



Postcodes: RG9, SL2, SL7, SL8, SL9, HP6, HP7, HP9, HP14 . Premium properties = £1m+

### Buyers: Serious, Savvy and Taking Their Time

For buyers, South Buckinghamshire and Henley currently offers something that’s been in short supply for years: choice. With over 700 premium homes available, buyers can compare, contrast and negotiate. That doesn’t mean they’re waiting for bargains, but it does mean they’re no longer prepared to compromise on value.

The good news for sellers is that once buyers commit, they tend to proceed. Fall-throughs account for just over 2% of available stock, suggesting that agreed deals are generally robust. The less good news is that buyers are not forgiving of missteps. Overpricing early, then chasing the market down remains the single biggest cause of frustration, delay and eventual withdrawal.

# DID YOU KNOW?

**FEBRUARY** and **MARCH** are the strongest months to sell

**LAUNCH TIMING** can matter more than presentation

**SPRING BUYERS** act faster - and with more confidence



The full story is in our short market report.  
Scan the QR code read the full details

## Renewed Buyer Confidence Meets a Busier Market

Buyer confidence remains the key underpinning. Inflation has stabilised, mortgage rates have eased, and buyers have adjusted to the reality of higher, but more predictable, borrowing costs. With further gradual rate reductions anticipated, activity looks set to remain steady rather than speculative as the year unfolds. If we had to distil Q1 into a handful of takeaways, they would be these:

- Confidence is returning, but selectively
- Choice is high, giving buyers leverage
- Well-priced, well presented homes are selling
- Overpricing is punished quickly
- Premium buyers remain active, but not impulsive
- Strategy matters more than timing



## Thinking of Selling Your Unique Home This Year? Strategy Matters - Here's How to Stack the Odds in Your Favour

*In today's premium property market, success is rarely about luck or timing alone. It's about strategy. Homes that sell well and for strong prices are almost always those launched with clarity, confidence and a considered plan. There are 3 areas where we see strategy making the greatest difference:*

### 1: Timing: Choose Your Moment, Don't Follow the Crowd

Timing matters - but not always in the way people expect. While spring is often seen as the "best" time to sell, launching when competition is lower, such as early spring or during the summer holidays, can give your home a clear advantage.

Fewer comparable properties means less noise, more attention from serious buyers, and a stronger chance of achieving your asking price. **With the right launch strategy, exceptional homes can attract strong interest at any time of year.** It's about positioning, not seasonality.

### 2: Marketing: First Impressions Have Never Mattered More

In today's market, **world-class marketing is essential.** The quality of your photography, copywriting, presentation and launch strategy directly influences buyer interest and how buyers feel about your home. The better the marketing, the greater the interest. The greater the interest, the more competition you create. **And competition is what ultimately drives strong sale prices.**

### 3: Strategic Pricing: Valuation Tells You a Number - Strategy Gets You a Result

In a choice-heavy, buyer-led market, pricing strategy is critical and it's very different from a simple valuation. Price too low and you risk leaving money on the table. **Price too high and you risk being overlooked altogether.** The right strategy creates momentum, viewings and competitive interest, without weakening your position.

*Pricing a unique home requires experience, judgement and a deep understanding of buyer psychology - not just comparable data. With the right approach, it's possible to achieve a strong result while maintaining control and confidence throughout the process.*

## Looking Ahead: Spring 2026 and Beyond

So what do we expect as we move through Q1 and into the spring market? In three words: **Cautiously Confident Momentum.**

Mortgage rates are expected to ease gradually, but not dramatically. We are moving towards a new normal of 4-4.5% mortgages, not a return to sub-2%. Buyers are adjusting to that reality and acting accordingly.

Supply may remain elevated through spring, particularly as discretionary sellers test the market. That means competition for attention will stay high, reinforcing the importance of standout marketing and accurate pricing. At the same time, the fundamental supports remain firmly in place:

- **Chronic undersupply of housing**
- **Strong equity positions (average UK LTV around 24%)**
- **Pent-up demand from delayed movers**
- **Lifestyle-led decisions resurfacing.**

This isn't a market for rushing, but nor is it one for sitting on the sidelines indefinitely. If you're thinking of selling this year, our advice hasn't changed: **Presentation is everything, pricing strategy matters more than ever and momentum is priceless.** And above all, choose an agent who understands that premium homes require a different approach.

### A Final Word

Over half the conversations we have with homeowners each month are with people who aren't ready to sell, and that's exactly how we like it. The best decisions are rarely rushed. They're informed, considered and well-timed.

If you'd like a calm, honest conversation about your home, your plans and your options either now or in the future, we'd love to help. Here's how to get in touch:

1. **WhatsApp me directly on 07766 02 11 11**
2. **Send me an email to [david@stowhillestates.com](mailto:david@stowhillestates.com)**
3. **Call us on 01628 562 555**

If we don't hear from you in the next couple of months, we'll catch up again in Q2. Hopefully the weather will be a little warmer (and drier) then.

Best wishes

David Rhodes  
Director  
Stowhill Estates Buckinghamshire



P.S. Markets move quickly. If you're considering any immediate decisions, please get in touch for a current, tailored market briefing.

P.P.S. Don't forget, you can scan the QR code to download our short report on the best time to sell.



Sources: Rightmove, Zoopla Moneyfacts, Dataloft, Bank of England, RICS, HMRC, ONS