



Property Mail

What a location!

A new development near Bath will be a dream come true for buyers who love this Georgian masterpiece

Picture: ALAMY



Elegant outlook: Bath and, above, Freshford Mill

BATH'S honeycomb terraces and Regency crescents make it one of the most beautiful cities in the country. People move there safe in the knowledge that nothing much will change. What you see is what you get — if you can afford it, of course.

The whole idea of new housing seems like a travesty to many die-hard Bath enthusiasts, an appalling blemish on the city's famous Georgian face. This is why there is growing excitement over the redevelopment of Freshford Mill, five miles to the south. Situated on the edge of Freshford, an attractive village on the River Frome, the historic former industrial site is a developer's dream.

There has been a mill there since the medieval era and, during the Georgian and Victorian eras, Freshford Mill developed into a local centre for wool production.

After the cloth industry declined, the mill was bought by a manufacturer of tyres and rubber products in the Forties.

Over the centuries, parts of the original stone mill buildings and workers' accommodation fell or burnt down and had to be rebuilt, though sections of the original Jacobean and Georgian structures remained. By 1995, the site was closed and became derelict, a target for vandals and ravagers.

Two development schemes have failed since then after locals objected, saying it was unsuitable for the location, which is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and subject to flooding.

Then, two years ago the site was bought by Environ Communities, a local firm that has brought fresh ideas. "The former plans were too urban," says company director Tony Dowse. "We wanted to design a project that would become part of the local community."

The developer is installing sophisticated flood defences, designed by a Dutch expert. It is also restoring and rebuilding the mill site into 21 homes that will be

chic and architecturally sympathetic. Each home will have river views and private outside space, be it garden, terrace or balcony, and there will be access to an island in the river with seating areas.

Where possible, any historic structures, such as the remains of a Jacobean house, will be incorpo-

rated into the new buildings. Homes are selling through Savills and will be completed next year. Prices range from two-bedroom apartments at £700,000 to five-bedroom detached houses at £1.6million.

Elsewhere in Freshford and nearby villages — such as Hinton

Charterhouse, Combe Hay and Wellow — prices start at £300,000 for a two-bedroom apartment in a conversion or a two to three-bedroom cottage or terrace.

Larger family homes with three to five bedrooms cost from about £500,000 for a period terrace to £1 million for a fine detached house

with land. From Freshford, you can cycle along the river to Bath in about 15 minutes and the village has a train station, with a ten-minute connection to Bath and to the Great Western rail service between Swansea and London.

THE main line is being upgraded and running times to Paddington, for example, will be cut.

Local agent Matthew Pegler, of Savills, says buyers of village homes are a mix of Bath residents wanting a more rural lifestyle, downsizers relocating from London and families moving into the area for the good local schools, such as Monkton Combe and King Edward's.

"The prices in the villages south of Bath are about 5 to 10 per cent lower than the city," says Pegler. "Bath has risen by 12 per cent in the past 18 months, while in the prime villages prices have risen by 4 to 5 per cent."

A large proportion of buyers commute part-time to London, but it's easier to commute to Bristol, 21 minutes away by train. The electrification of the rail link is set to increase demand.

"If Bath is more accessible from London, then prices will almost certainly rise in the city and across the surrounding area," says Pegler.

But there is, he says, a cut-off point. "Buyers want to be within five miles of the city and the station. Ten miles out is less sought after."

■ **Environ Communities:** 01225 864429, environcommunities.com.
 ■ **Savills:** 01225 474500, savills.co.uk.

LAURA LATHAM

ON THE MARKET... in surrounding villages



WELLOW

GRADE II-listed, Bath stone house in a peaceful village. It has three bedrooms, an attractive open-plan living area and a courtyard.

■ **Hamptons:** 01225 458544, hamptons.co.uk

£465,000



HINTON CHARTERHOUSE

TUGGY'S Cottage is a three-bedroom terrace on a no-through road five miles from Bath. The large garden has a summerhouse.

■ **Fine & Country:** 01225 320032, fineandcountry.com

£499,999



FRESHFORD

THIS imposing townhouse is part of a converted brewery. There are four bedrooms, three bathrooms, lovely views and parking for two cars.

■ **Carter Jonas:** 01225 560721, carterjonas.co.uk

£450,000