

# House & Home

New York, London, Zurich and... Bruton? The home of the new Hauser & Wirth gallery in Somerset, southwest England, may not be quite in league with its three other locations, but its new director Alice Workman believes the space at Durslade Farm – which launched on July 15 with a sculpture exhibition by Phyllida Barlow – could play an important role in bringing international artists to the area, not to mention attracting an estimated 60,000 visitors a year.

"Somerset is a large county but there are not many galleries exhibiting contemporary art," she says. "So as well as the space being for the local community, we're confident we'll attract a national and international art-loving audience who will probably bring new custom to Bruton and have a positive impact on the local economy."

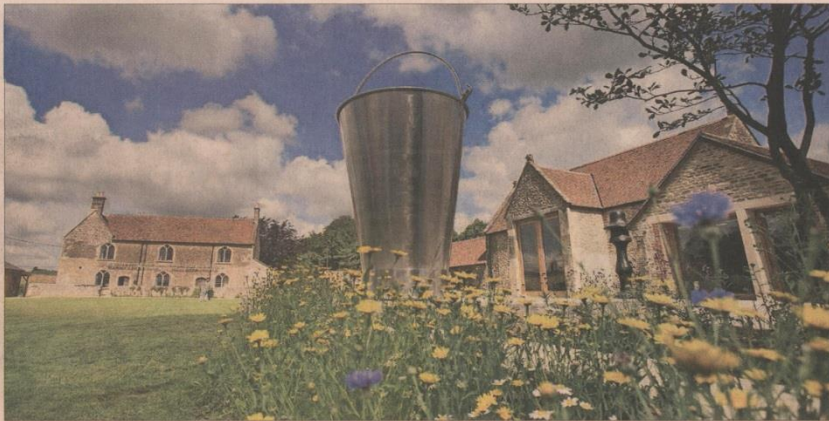
It is a prediction echoed by local property agents, who are convinced the arrival of Hauser & Wirth Somerset is indicative of the growing artistic and cultural scene in Bruton and the surrounding villages. In recent years the area has seen the arrival of several high-quality restaurants, bars, boutiques and markets, which, in turn, are attracting homebuyers from London and the southeast to pep up a housing market that, according to Savills, had pretty much been flat-lining since the 2008 financial crisis.

"Particularly in the last few years the area has become really in vogue," says Luke Pender-Cudlip, head of Knight Frank's Sherborne office, who estimates that about 40 per cent of his prime buyers (those looking for properties worth more than £750,000) are from London. The remainder are roughly split between Somerset locals looking to up- or downsize and incomers from other parts of the country.

Philip German-Ribon, of Jackson Stobs & Staff, agrees. "We've got some incredibly good schools in the area," he says. "Bruton School is independent and very highly rated, so we see a lot of young London families sell their main house in, say, Fulham for about five times more than they were expecting... and then buy in this part of the world around the £1m mark, keep a flat in London and £1m for school fees."

Typically, houses in Bruton cost from £250,000 for a smallish, two-bedroom cottage up to about £900,000 for a sizeable family home with a garden. However, the majority of prime buyers tend to look for properties in the outlying villages, such as Shepton Montague, Bratton Seymour and Penselwood.

"A large number of buyers are moving down from London and buying homes in the countryside and villages immediately surrounding Bruton,"



Untitled stainless steel sculpture by Subodh Gupta in the grounds of Hauser & Wirth Somerset in Bruton

Matt Cardy/Getty

## And you, Bruton?

UK property New gallery puts focus on the Somerset town. By Nathan Brooker

says Matthew Pegler of Savills' Bath office. "In fact, our last three sales in the area have all been to London buyers – the village of Batcombe, in particular, is already home to a number of ex-City dwellers and weekend homes for Londoners." In Batcombe, Savills is marketing Turret House, a modern, four-bedroom family home with a separate one-bedroom annexe for £1.35m.

German-Ribon says his prime buyers are looking at other locations such

**Godminster Wood House, a seven-bedroom property with 19 acres, £2.75m**

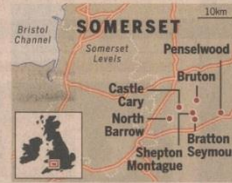


as Castle Cary (which has a direct rail link to London Paddington), Evercreech and North and South Barrow. "They're quintessential English villages," he says. In North Barrow Jackson Stobs & Staff is selling Richmond House, a five-bedroom former rectory, for £1.75m.

Closer to Bruton, Knight Frank is gearing up to launch Godminster Wood House, a seven-bedroom Bathstone house built in 1922 that comes with 19 acres of land and which is likely to go on the market early next year with guide price of £2.75m.

"Once you get over £3m, selling a property gets tricky; the market really slows down at the top end," says German-Ribon. "But beneath that, the turnaround is very fast indeed – a nice period house in Castle Cary will sell very quickly. We've sold two or three there this year and they all went within two to three weeks of being placed on the market."

Another brake on the market is the perceived danger from flooding. At



### Buying guide

- Bruton train station does not have a direct link to London, but fast trains take 92 minutes to reach London Paddington from the town of Castle Cary, four miles away
- The crime rate in Bruton is lower than the national average, with 1.93 offences per 1,000 people reported in May this year
- The Glastonbury festival at Worthy Farm in Pilton is nine miles from the centre of Bruton
- Hauser & Wirth Somerset welcomed 900 visitors on its opening day in July and 10,000 in the first fortnight. The gallery's garden, designed by Piet Oudolf, will open to the public on September 14

**What you can buy for ...**  
**£250,000** A small, two-bedroom cottage in Bruton  
**£1m** A four- or five-bedroom family home in Batcombe with about 10 acres of land  
**£5m** An eight-bedroom, Grade-I listed property with 20 acres in the countryside surrounding Sherborne

the beginning of the year, heavy rain caused some parts of south Somerset to flood, including Muchelney, Burrowbridge and North Curry, in an area known as the Somerset Levels. "Thankfully Bruton and the surrounding villages weren't too badly hit because it's a bit hillier here," says German-Ribon. "But we had a few sales fall through around then – buyers were very nervous, and rightly so, I think."

Apart from the art and the schools, German-Ribon thinks the slower pace of life in south Somerset is another big lure. It is also something that Alice Workman is trying to build into the new Hauser & Wirth schedule.

"Life in Somerset is more relaxed than in other Hauser & Wirth locations," she says, "and [we] will reflect this with longer exhibitions and a new artist's residency programme... which will invite artists to spend time in an alternative environment and benefit from the idyllic rural surroundings."

The atmosphere at Hauser & Wirth Somerset will be enhanced in September when the gallery's extensive gardens, designed by Piet Oudolf – who was involved in the High Line in New York and much of the planting in the London Olympic site – opens to the public. Oudolf's amorphous design, which features raised grassy mounds and densely planted beds of tall perennials, is intended to complement the gallery, providing calming respite from the sometimes frenetic art inside.