

Market Review

Strong early momentum in 2026 raised expectations for the property market, but global events have added uncertainty. Read on to see how Ashtons can guide you.

A positive start to 2026

The year began with strong optimism across both national and local property markets. Increased competition among major mortgage lenders, more flexible affordability criteria, and a base rate cut to 3.75% at the end of 2025 all contributed to renewed confidence. This marked the lowest rate since March 2023 and helped stimulate early momentum, giving both buyers and sellers greater confidence to act.

Early market activity

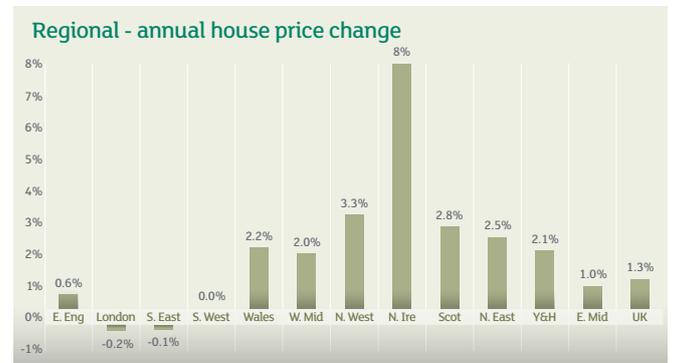
At Ashtons, this confidence translated into meaningful activity. By the end of February 2026, 10% more homes had come to market compared to the same period last year. Buyer demand also surged, with more new applicants registering than at any point since before the global pandemic. This created a more balanced marketplace, with increased choice for buyers while still maintaining strong competition for well-presented homes.

A promising outlook

The outlook for the year initially looked very encouraging. There was little anticipated government intervention, aside from the introduction of the Renters' Rights Act on 1st May 2026, which has added complexity for private landlords and prompted many to review their portfolios. Expectations were for further base rate reductions and steady house price growth of around 2%, creating a stable environment for both movers and investors.



Source: HM Land Registry



Source: Zoopla



Source: HM Land Registry



For an expert perspective and focused advice on how best to leverage your most valuable asset, contact our team to arrange a detailed appraisal for your future financial and lifestyle planning.

[ashtons.co.uk](https://www.ashtons.co.uk)

Global uncertainty

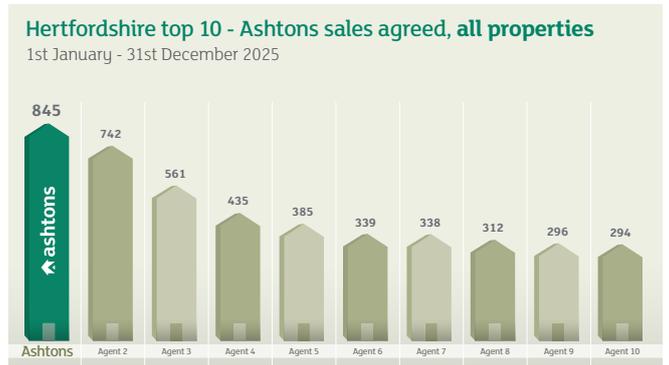
However, the wider geopolitical situation in the Middle East has tempered some of this early optimism. The anticipated interest rate cut following the Monetary Policy Committee's meeting on 19th March was paused, and expectations of further reductions have become less certain.

It is worth noting that during previous global instability, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the UK housing market, including Hertfordshire, remained resilient.

Longer-term impacts on the global economy will depend heavily on how events unfold between Iran, Israel and the US. It is worth noting that during previous global instability, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the UK housing market, remained resilient. It was not until the Truss-Kwarteng budget later that year that conditions began to shift significantly, highlighting how domestic policy can often have a greater impact than global events.

Strong local demand

Demand across our towns and villages remains very strong. While stock levels have increased slightly compared to last year, they are still historically low in the context of long-term trends. Hertfordshire continues to attract buyers due to its excellent amenities and strong transport links into London, making it a consistently desirable place to live.



Source: TwentyEA



Source: TwentyEA



Source: Rightmove.co.uk

National numbers

Rate of inflation: **3.0%**

Bank base rate: **3.75%**

Ashtons key numbers

Managing **£1BILLION** of assets under management

12,278 active buyers and tenants

Average days to exchange of contract in 2025

112 DAYS
Ashtons average

67 DAYS
average

128 DAYS
National average

Assured Move ✓
from **ashtons**

As at 31st March 2026

Supporting you through change

Whatever your plans for the year, it is easy to be influenced by wider uncertainty. At Ashtons, our focus remains on guiding clients with clear, honest advice and delivering the best possible outcomes. With over 45 years of experience navigating changing markets, we are well placed to support you, helping you make informed decisions and achieve your goals, whatever the market conditions.



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