

PRIME FRINGE

AUTUMN REPORT 2026

The autumn brought a steadier pace across our outer prime offices, and in a prime London market that went backwards, holding steady was a result in itself. Agreed sales across prime London fell; ours matched last autumn, even as buyer registrations rose by 13%. There was no shortage of buyers. What changed was their willingness to pay. After a summer in which sales agreed ran well ahead of 2025, the season was less about momentum than about price.

The market divided along property type. Family houses, the homes owner-occupiers trade between, kept moving, some above £2m, and talk of a lower £1.5m mansion tax threshold barely registered with buyers. Flats told a different story. They are where landlords sit, and as more of them sold up, buyers of one- and two-bedroom homes found more choice and offers slipped below asking. Across prime London, around half of homes for sale have now been reduced. Our offices draw that link directly.

That connection is the season's defining story, and it runs through both sides of our business. Handling both sales and lettings, we see landlords' decisions from each end happening just outside the borders of prime central. Over the summer, as the Renters' Rights Act came into force, sales valuations rose 18% on a year earlier while lettings valuations fell 21%. By the autumn the flow had partly reversed: with sale prices disappointing, some landlords came back, and new lettings instructions were 15% higher than a year earlier. Central London moved the other way, with landlords bringing homes forward around the Act's May start. Within the outskirts of prime central, the exit appears, for now, to be checking itself. The more landlords sell, the softer flat prices become, and the more of them decide to let for a while longer. Smaller landlords are still leaving; the committed are holding on. Tenants grew as price-conscious as buyers: demand that rose over the summer levelled off in the autumn, though rents have continued to climb steadily.

Events since October have changed the calculation for both. From April 2027, the Budget's higher tax on rental income will make it more expensive for landlords to hold on, and the Bank of England's first rate rise in three years has pushed cheaper borrowing further away for buyers. Landlords waiting for better sale prices, and buyers waiting for cheaper mortgages, may both be waiting longer than they hoped.

−21% decrease in lettings valuations
Q2 2026 vs Q2 2025

+18% increase in sales valuations
Q2 2026 vs Q2 2025

+13% increase in buyer registrations
Q3 2026 vs Q3 2025

+15% rise in new lettings instructions
Q3 2026 vs Q3 2025



FRINGE SALES

AUTUMN MARKET

Our fringe network came into this season on the back of a busy mid-year period, when buyer registrations ran 23% ahead of a year earlier and agreed sales comfortably outpaced 2025. The autumn kept the buyers but lost some of the urgency. Between July and September, registrations were still 13% higher than a year earlier and new instructions edged up 4%, yet agreed sales only matched last year's level.

The gap between interest and commitment showed first among sellers. Over the summer, more owners asked us to value their homes than went on to sell: around three in five valuations turned into instructions, against two in three a year before. By October the two had moved back into step, and the hesitation had passed to buyers. There were now around nine registered buyers for every new instruction, up from just over eight a year earlier, but more buyers per home did not translate into more deals.

More Buyers, Less Bidding

Buyers who came to market this autumn were ready to act, but only on their terms. Our typical home exchanged at just over 97% of its final asking price, down from almost 99% a year earlier, and the journey from launch to exchange stretched to around six months, roughly a month longer than a year before. Across prime London, offers were being agreed but were slow to reach exchange, and August was the quietest for completed sales since 2008. Our fringe network felt the same drag.

The buyer base itself has narrowed. Across prime London, demand now comes overwhelmingly from people buying homes to live in, with investors and second-home buyers largely absent. That suits the fringe better than the centre, but it leaves buyers more exposed to the cost of borrowing. From August to early October, the prospect of cheaper mortgages receded as markets moved to price in rate rises rather than cuts, and buyers adjusted what they were prepared to pay.

Faith Cook, Director of Winkworth Fulham & Parsons Green, describes a market that has been unforgiving all year. "The market has been incredibly price sensitive all year and presentation is key," she says. "If properties go on at the right price and present well then they will sell. If not, it is very detrimental." Earlier in the year, many homes in Fulham sold for over asking. Now, she reports, offers are more often accepted below it.





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Faith Cook, Director, Winkworth Fulham & Parsons Green

Houses Hold, Flats Give Way

The clearest dividing line ran between houses and flats. In Fulham specifically, a mainstay of the Prime Outer London landscape, family houses above £1.5m continued to change hands, some beyond £2m, and Faith saw no sign that talk of a lower mansion tax threshold had affected pricing. Neil Sloam, Managing Director of Winkworth St John's Wood, reports the same on pricing, though the house market there remains as subdued as it was at the start of the year, with flats still offering the better value. South-west family-house markets, including Barnes, bucked prime London's wider fall in sales. With the Budget now confirming that the surcharge will start at £2m, owners of family houses around that level at least know where they stand.

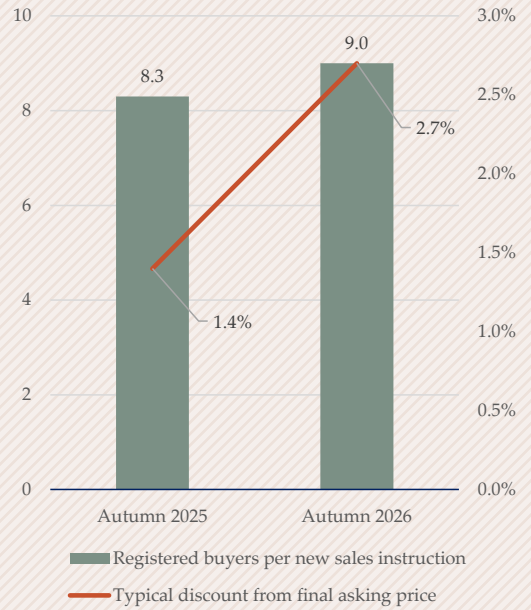
Flats carried more of the strain. Across the capital's prime markets, flats have been under more pressure than houses for some time, weighed down by service charges, building safety concerns and rising supply, and the fringe has not escaped it. Our exchanges still carry the imprint of the late summer's deals. One-bedroom homes made up 22% of the sales we completed in the three months to September, up from 17% a year earlier. Two-bedroom homes slipped to 31%, and homes with three or more bedrooms to 47%.

Where the Rentals Went

Supply in the flat market is where the landlord story enters the sales picture. Our offices describe a steady stream of former rentals reaching the sales market this year, and in some areas the effect has been pronounced. "The market has been flooded with rental properties this year," says Faith Cook, and she is in no doubt that it has made 2026 harder going for sellers in the neighbourhood. In St John's Wood, Neil Sloam reports that a lot of landlords there are still choosing to sell up.

Across our offices as a whole, though, new instructions rose only modestly, so this is a pressure concentrated in particular areas and property types rather than a flood across the fringe. It also has limits. As flat prices soften, a landlord thinking of selling is weighing a weaker sale against holding on and letting for longer, and this autumn some chose to stay. That decision, and what it means for renters, is where the lettings market picks up the story.

*Buyers per new sales instruction vs discount to final asking price**



*source: Winkworth internal data

FRINGE LETTINGS

AUTUMN MARKET

The lettings market followed a similar arc to sales, with one difference: the bigger swings came from supply. Tenant registrations across our fringe offices ran 9% ahead of a year earlier over the summer, then flattened between July and September to finish level with last year (as of October). New rental stock moved the other way. In those summer months, new lettings instructions fell 17% on a year earlier, leaving close to 23 registered tenants for every home we brought to market. By the autumn, stock had returned and that figure had eased to around 16, below the 18 of a year before.

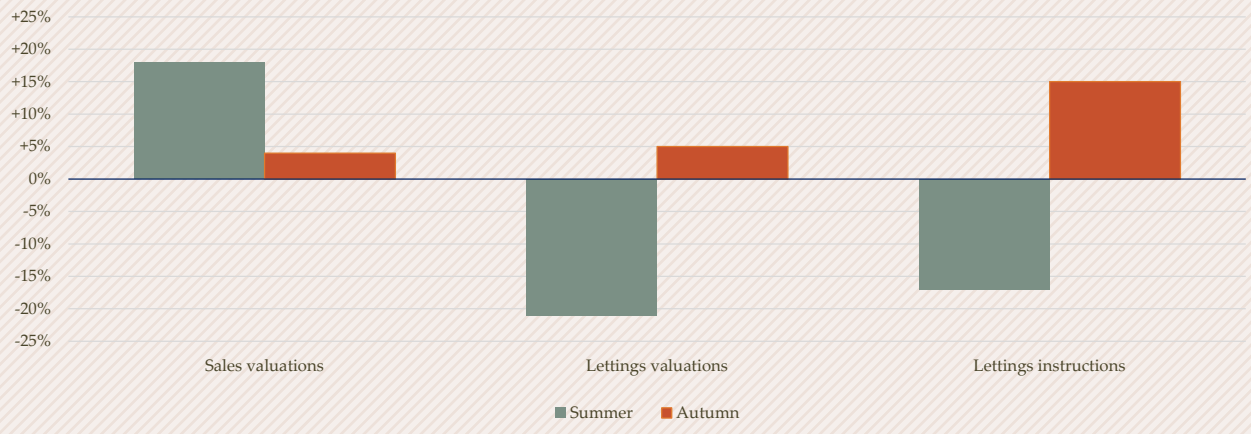
Georgia Everton-Wallach, Director of Winkworth Fulham & Parsons Green, describes the result as a more balanced market after several exceptionally competitive years. Tenants, particularly professional couples and families drawn by the area's schools and parks, are still there, but they are more price-sensitive and taking longer to decide. "The extraordinary rental growth we experienced following the pandemic has certainly levelled off, and we are now seeing rents stabilise, with some landlords having to adjust their expectations to secure good-quality tenants," she says. Across prime outer London, rents rose 3.3% in the year to October, the fastest pace since mid-2024, though well below the double-digit rises after the pandemic.

Between Selling and Letting

The swing in supply is the clearest sign yet of landlords weighing their options, and our sales and lettings figures, read together, capture it. Over the summer, as the Renters' Rights Act came into force, lettings valuations fell sharply while sales valuations rose, a shift our agents link to landlords testing the sales market. Since then it has partly reversed, even as prime London's rental listings fell.

Ben Ainsworth, Director of Winkworth Clapham, has watched landlords make the round trip. "The sharper softening of sales prices this autumn has brought some landlords back to the lettings market, having initially explored selling over the summer," he says. "My sense is that a significant proportion of landlords would still prefer to sell, but have been discouraged by the prices they can realistically achieve." In St John's Wood, Neil Sloam sees

*Sales valuations and lettings valuations & instructions 2026 vs Summer and Autumn 2025**



*source: Winkworth internal data

a pull as well as a push: a lot of landlords are still selling, he says, but some are returning to lettings as rents have risen.

Not every landlord is coming back, and Georgia sees a clear divide. "We are seeing more landlords choosing to sell rather than re-let, particularly those with one or two investment properties who feel the financial and administrative burden is becoming increasingly difficult to justify," she says. The Budget has added to that weight: from April 2027, rental income will be taxed at 24%, 44% or 49% depending on the landlord's tax band, a further two percentage points on top of the rise announced last year. With investor buyers largely absent, few new landlords are arriving to replace those who leave. Those who stay are not necessarily committing for the long term either. Ben suspects many are holding on for better sale values rather than settling into letting for good.

The Act in Practice

This was the first full quarter under the Renters' Rights Act, and its effects are showing in tenant behaviour as well as landlord sentiment. With fixed terms gone, tenants can leave on two months' notice, and some are using that freedom. "In practice, we've seen tenants become more willing to serve two months' notice and move if they are unhappy with their accommodation or how management concerns are being handled," says Ben Ainsworth. More landlords, he adds, are turning to fully managed services as a result, recognising that keeping tenants satisfied now matters more than it did.

The picture is not uniform. Across prime London, agents also report the opposite effect: tenants who do not need to move are staying put, wary of a market where competition for new lets has increased. In Clapham, regulation has reshaped the shared-house market too, with some HMO landlords switching to single-household tenancies, reducing the supply of individual rooms and putting further pressure on demand.

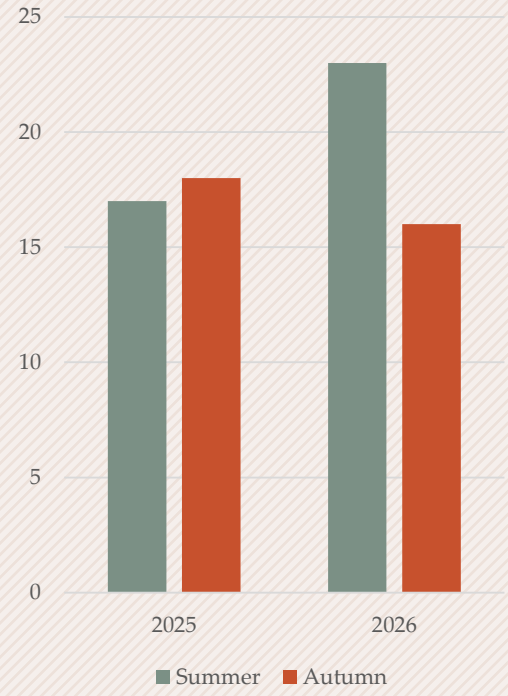
For tenants, the result is more choice than a year ago, but no fall in rents. For landlords, it is a decision deferred rather than made, and one the Budget has just made harder.



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Ben Ainsworth, Director,
Winkworth Clapham

*Registered tenants per new lettings instruction**





LOOKING AHEAD

WINTER MARKET

The fringe goes into winter on steadier footing than central London, but not untouched by the forces now bearing on both. October was prime London's quietest October for sales since 2018 as the market waited for the Budget to land, and the Budget itself, when it came, was restrained. Stamp duty, capital gains tax and inheritance tax were largely left alone, and the mansion tax will start at £2m as planned. Across our offices, the early reaction has been relief, except among landlords, though for some the Budget was a missed chance to revitalise the market.

Borrowing is the bigger unknown. The Bank of England's rise to 4% was widely expected and largely priced into mortgage rates, and while falling oil has eased pressure, further rises remain possible. Fringe buyers rely on mortgages more than those in central London, so the cost of borrowing is likely to shape the winter more than any tax change. We expect needs-driven buyers to keep transacting, and family houses to sell, though at softer prices. Flats are likely to stay harder work while former rentals continue to come through.

For landlords, the Budget sets a deadline rather than an immediate cost. The higher tax on rental income does not take effect until April 2027, which gives those weighing a sale until next spring to decide. In the meantime, we expect rents to keep rising as supply thins, though not at the pace of recent years.



Dominic Agace, CEO,
Winkworth Franchising Limited

After an up-and-down year shaped by global events, a more settled picture is emerging. Interest rates have turned upward and mortgage rates have priced that in, but buyers are more price-sensitive and fewer are committing. Needs-based buyers and sellers are still transacting, though the zest of early 2026 has come off. Pricing to attract interest at launch, rather than with too much enthusiasm, gets the best result.

With wages outpacing house prices, some lenders trimming fixed rates and a labour market that is holding up, the market should remain steady, albeit with continued pressure on prices at the top of the family-house market as budgets stay tight.

WINKWORTH
BARNES
+44 (0) 20 8255 0088
barnes@winkworth.co.uk

WINKWORTH
CHISWICK
+44 (0) 20 8994 7096
chiswick@winkworth.co.uk

WINKWORTH
CLAPHAM
+44 (0) 20 7871 4822
clapham@winkworth.co.uk

WINKWORTH
FULHAM & PARSONS GREEN
+44 (0) 20 7731 3388
fulham@winkworth.co.uk

WINKWORTH
ST JOHN'S WOOD
+44 (0) 20 7586 7001
stjohnswood@winkworth.co.uk

WINKWORTH
NORTH KENSINGTON
+44 (0) 20 7792 5000
northkensington@winkworth.co.uk

winkworth.co.uk

Winkworth