

a low-density development which grew in the Seventies, are among the most popular rural areas among overseas buyers looking for large old farmhouses to convert.

PROPERTY Showrooms is selling a large villa — typical of the new-build properties in the area — a seven-bedroom house with 40,000sq m of land for £1.18 million.

But beware of illegal properties, warns Robert Barclay. 'There are hundreds of houses hidden in the hills behind Tarifa and Algeciras, but more than 50 per cent of them are illegal,' he says.

'It's a particular problem in La Pena, where decades of no regulation saw people put up what they wanted without any licences.'

The difficulty comes when you

want to install mains water or electricity, or when you come to sell because, officially, the property does not exist.

'There are ways to legalise a property if it has existed for more than eight years, but in some cases you may be threatened with demolition. It's happened before in the area and is likely to happen again.'

But most of the houses in El Cuarton are legal and come with full paperwork. 'For a three or four-bedroom villa with a pool and views of Africa, you'll pay from £600,000 to £800,000. But seek advice and use professionals. If you want to go rustic, be prepared for a long wait for permissions.'

Zahara de los Atunes, a sleepy fishing village on vast sands half an hour west of Tarifa, has yet to make

a mark among British buyers, though Germans and wealthy Spanish families have built some designer villas, costing up to £4 million, on the hillside overlooking the spectacular beach.

'There's not much new building going on here — there never has been, because planning is so strict, which is a good thing,' says James Stewart of Savills.

'Developers are reluctant to start on new projects while they have so much supply to work through on the Costa del Sol.'

Local estate agents such as Melanie Coe from Olvera Properties, who has lived in Tarifa for 11 years, are realistic about the sluggish market that has hit the entire coast and seen property prices fall.

'Wait until this winter to buy, because prices will be on a par with what they were four years ago and you will get some good deals,' she says.

But the slowdown does at least bode well for this corner of the Costa de la Luz retaining its unspoilt beauty.

'The Spanish property boom has ended before the big developers could start pouring concrete on this coast, so the market has turned in time for Tarifa,' says Mark Stucklin.

■ **TARIFA Real Estate** (00 34 956 68 02 39, tarifarealestate.com); **Andalucia Exclusive** (00 34 650 795 416, andalucia-exclusive.eu); **Taylor Woodrow** (0800 012 1020, taylorwoodrow.es); **Property Showrooms** (0800 047 0597, propertyshowrooms.com); **Savills** (020 7016 3740, savills.co.uk); **Olvera Properties** (0844 734 33 58, olveraproperties.com).

de la Luz



Beachfront two-bedroom apartment, Tarifa, £204,000
FURNISHED and with a communal pool.

● **TARIFA Real Estate**, 00 34 956 68 02 39
tarifarealestate.com