

## Threat to homes as rates rise

REPOSSESSIONS will rise as banks raise standard mortgage rates, warn housing experts.

Santander increased the rate for 400,000 borrowers last week from 4.24 per cent to 4.74 per cent following similar increases by Bank of Ireland, Halifax and Royal Bank of Scotland's One Account. Many homeowners paying these rates have little equity and cannot switch deals.

Housing economist John Wriglesworth reckons such moves mark an end to lenders' 'forbearance' for borrowers in difficulty.

'Until now, lenders have been spreading the pain,' he said. 'This was partly because of Government pressure and partly because house prices have not collapsed.'



**BIG NUMBERS:** Mobile phones are increasingly used to order goods

## Stores on standby for a smartphone Christmas

RETAILERS are standing by for a boost in business from customers ordering by smartphone this Christmas ahead of an expected surge in the use of 4G phones next year.

They are already gearing up their stores for Christmas. Harrods launched its Christmas department last month, including a box of crackers with silver-plated gifts for £1,299, while Debenhams is expected to unveil its festive range within weeks.

Asda said customers using mobiles accounted for almost one in five of its internet grocery orders after the introduction of a mobile-friendly site. Last year, less than one per cent of orders were placed this way.

The site allows customers with smartphones to scan groceries, adding them instantly to shop-

ping lists. Kate Cuthbertson, Asda's head of mobile innovation, said: 'It's a huge shift. I think we are definitely going to see a spike over Christmas.'

'It will be a real growth time for mobile. It will be a busy period and people are already using those spare minutes when they are in a queue or keeping an eye on the kids to take care of their shopping.'

Department store John Lewis said that revenue from orders placed by smartphone had soared by 196 per cent in the past 12 months.

Mobile phones operator Everything Everywhere has been allowed to launch 4G using its existing bandwidth next month before the auction to other providers next year.

■ Alex Barratt and Josie Thum