

Alexanders

Short Guide To Property

Buying Renting Selling Letting

Short Guide To Buying

Here are some important points, but it would be better to come in and go through the process in detail. We'll be delighted to share our knowledge with you.

Instructing A Solicitor And Due Diligence

When your offer has been accepted, you will need to instruct a solicitor to act on your behalf. We can put you in touch with solicitors we find to be thorough and efficient. They will carry out 'due diligence', including local searches to make sure there are no unexpected surprises, review the lease and point out any possible problems. Most people also have the property surveyed. If you are taking out a mortgage this is normally carried out as part of the mortgage valuation, in conjunction with your mortgage provider. This whole process generally takes between two and six weeks.

Stamp Duty

Stamp duty is payable by the purchaser on all property purchases of over £120,000 on an increasing scale of 1% to 4%. We can tell you exactly how much you will have to pay. You should include this, together with removal and legal costs, in the total amount you need to buy the property.

Exchange Of Contracts

When you and your solicitor are happy that all the necessary investigations have been carried out, you are ready to exchange contracts with the vendor. At this stage you must pay 10% of the purchase price, which you lose if you subsequently pull out of the purchase. On exchange of contracts it is normal to agree a completion date, usually 28 days ahead, when ownership of the property will transfer to you. Throughout this, we will liaise with the vendor to chase up information and keep things moving. We also try to negotiate a timescale that is acceptable to you, the vendor and any other people if the transaction is part of a chain.

Completion Of Contracts

This is when you pay the remainder of the money, including stamp duty and, often, legal fees. At the same time, you become the owner of the property. Completion is usually electronic, carried out by your solicitor, without you signing any documents on the day. On completion, we will give you the keys and you are able to move in to your new home. We will also make sure you have details of utility companies and other information that you will need.

Utilities And Other Practicalities

It makes sense to contact utility suppliers in advance to ensure that all supplies are connected and in your name when you move in. You should also contact the local council about council tax. We will make sure that you get these details as soon as possible after exchange of contracts.

Land Registry

Details of the ownership of all land and freehold buildings are held at the Land Registry. Your interest will be registered with them, usually by your solicitor.

Title Deeds

Title deeds prove you own the property (whether freehold or leasehold). If you own the property outright you will receive the deeds (usually from your solicitor) but if you have a mortgage your mortgage provider may well require them as security against the loan.

Short Guide To Renting

Here are some important points, but it would be better to come in and go through the process in detail. We'll be delighted to share our knowledge with you.

Rent And What It Includes

Rent excludes council tax and all utilities, which you must pay separately, but includes service charges and ground rent.

Deposit

When you agree to rent you pay a deposit equivalent to six weeks' rent in our client account to pay for possible damages during the tenancy. On checkout, we will return this to you, after deduction the cost of cleaning and repairing any damages that may have occurred. In most cases, such costs are minimal and the better you look after the property during your tenancy the lower the costs are likely to be.

References

Before signing a Tenancy Agreement you will need to supply the following references:

- Bank
- Previous landlord
- Employer
- Solicitor or accountant
- Personal

Inventory

We will arrange for an inventory to be prepared at the start of the tenancy and a check out report when you vacate the property.

Other Charges

An administration charge of £75 + VAT (£88.12) will be charged to cover the cost of preparing the Tenancy Agreement.

Short Guide To Selling

Here are some important points, but if you are not familiar with the process it would be better to come in and talk it through in detail. We'll be delighted to share our knowledge with you.

Valuation

With over fifty years' experience of assessing properties in Central and Northwest London, our valuations are reassuringly accurate, whether the market is difficult or strong. We will give you our realistic view of what your property could realise, together with advice as to when would be the best time to market it, all of which is free of charge and with no obligation.

Preparing Your Property For Sale

The more effort you put into preparing your property for sale, the faster it is likely to sell – and at or close to the full asking price. We would be pleased to advise you on how to can achieve the best price.

It makes sense to take a critical look at your home. Is the garden (or terrace) tidy and enticing? Does the front door need a coat of paint? The hall should be welcoming and uncluttered, so remove objects such as bikes and prams. Look critically at each room and remove things that make it seem small and untidy. Make sure that the kitchen and bathrooms are spotlessly clean. Fresh flowers are always a nice touch. As part of our service, we will give you more tips on how to make you home sell more quickly.

Viewings And Answering Questions

The more accommodating you are about viewing times the faster your property will sell. You should give us keys if this is possible, so that you do not have to be at home for every viewing. Also, showing people around when you are having a meal, or when the children are in bed is not ideal. We will make sure that we are fully informed about your property, for instance the type of central heating, so that we are able to give potential buyers all the details they need.

Short Guide To Letting

Here are some important points, but it would be better to come in and go through the process in detail. We'll be delighted to share our knowledge with you.

Structure

We recommend carrying out a thorough inspection of the property to ensure that the structure, roof, plumbing, wiring, etc is in good order. We can do this as part of our property management service and make sure that any repairs required are carried out before the property is let. We can also make sure that your property is maintained throughout the tenancy, in line with the terms of the Tenancy Agreement.

Décor And Fittings

A property that is in good decorative order, preferably in neutral colours, will let faster and is likely to be better looked after by the tenants. The kitchen and bathrooms should be equipped in a way that is suitable for the area. We can advise you what equipment will help you achieve the best rent. As part of our management service we will have the property professionally cleaned, including windows, prior to letting.

Appliances

As part of our management service we will have all appliances, including the central heating system, checked and serviced. We usually recommend taking out maintenance contracts so that any problems that occurs during the tenancy can be dealt with quickly and easily, although this depends on the equipment and we will advise you accordingly. It is advisable to give the tenant operating manuals and guarantee card if they are warranty for all appliances so that the manufacturers can be contacted if necessary. We do this as part of our management service.

Upholstery And Soft Furnishing

It is important that all upholstery, soft furnishings, etc comply with the 1993 Furniture and Furnishing Regulations. Failure to do so can result in six months in prison, a fine of up to £5,000 or both. We can make sure you meet these stringent regulations.

Smoke Detectors

We recommend installing smoke detectors throughout the property and can arrange for this to be done on your behalf. As part of our management service we ensure they are checked regularly, especially if they are battery operated. By law, all homes built after June 1992 must be fitted with mains operated smoke detectors on every floor.

Gas

If your property has a gas appliance, you must ensure that the pipework and installation of each appliance is checked by a CORGI registered engineer and complies with Gas Safety Regulations before letting. This check has by law to be carried out annually. This is an important aspect of safety and breach of these regulations is a criminal offence and could result in a fine of up to £20,000 or imprisonment. As managing agents, we arrange this and keep the required record of all safety inspections, which we will show the tenant if requested.

Garden

The garden should be in good condition, the lawns cut, shrubs and trees pruned and flowerbeds tidy. As managing agents we can arrange for a gardener to visit regularly. However, if the tenant is maintaining the garden it is best to provide the tools needed to do this.

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Inventory

As part of our letting service, we will arrange for an independent firm to prepare an inventory and schedule of condition of the exact state and contents of the property. This will then be used at the end of the tenancy to ascertain any damage and wear and tear.

Insurance, Ground Rent And Service Charge

As owner of the property, it is your responsibility to pay any ground rent and we can do this on your behalf. We can also arrange insurance for the property and contents, including for public liability on your behalf and make sure the insurers know that the property is to be let.

Utilities And Council Tax

As part of our letting service we arrange for all utility accounts (such as phone, gas, electricity and water) to be transferred to the tenant's name. However, you are responsible for all utility bills when the property is not let. If we are managing the property we can pay these on your behalf.

Keys

Tenants will require a set of keys each. You should leave keys for internal doors, patio doors, window locks, cupboards, electricity, gas and water meters or mains in the property, clearly marked. If we are managing the property we will make sure this is done.

Burglar Alarm

The tenant will need clear instructions on how to operate the burglar alarm. If the alarm is linked to a central monitoring system or to the police, they will need to know the password. It is usual for the tenant to pay for any call outs and to reactivate the system. It is advisable to take out a maintenance contract so that any problems can be resolved quickly and easily. Arranging all this is part of our management service.

Redirecting Mail

If mail addressed to you is likely to be delivered to the property, it is advisable to set up a mail forwarding service with the Post Office to it redirect it. We would be pleased to do this for you and to redirect mail sent to previous tenants as part of our management service.

Authorisation And Approval Of Tenant

The landlord signing the Tenancy Agreement must have the legal right to do so. The tenants or their solicitor may require proof of such authority. If you are not available to approve the required documents, it is best to appoint someone to do so on your behalf and if necessary give them Power of Attorney to sign the Tenancy Agreement.

Consent To Letting

It is important to obtain the necessary consents, such as from the head lessor, mortgage lenders, etc, preferably well in advance of letting the property.

Short Guide To Letting

Status Of The Landlord

We will need to know your status as a landlord, for instance owner-occupier or resident landlord, as set out in the Housing Act 1988, or whether you own the property as an investment. We require this information in order to protect your position as much as possible.

In certain instances the tenant can obtain protection under the Housing Act and enjoy security of tenure.

However, depending on your status we may be able to help you avoid this possibility, usually by entering into an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST), which applies to individuals only, not to companies or embassies:

- the tenancy must be for a certain term, of not less than six months
- the prescribed notice informing the tenant that they are entering into an AST must be served on the tenant before signing the Tenancy Agreement and taking occupation.
- the landlord must not be able to terminate the tenancy before six months
- if the landlord requires possession at the end of the tenancy, a prescribed notice must be served on the tenant at least two months prior to the end of the fixed term.

Deposit And Dilapidations

The tenant will pay a deposit equal to no less than six weeks' rent. If we are letting the property but not managing it, we will pay the deposit to you on the first statement of account. If we manage the property we will hold this in our client account.

At the end of the tenancy, as soon as we receive details from the inventory firm, and providing there are no disputes, we will deduct the cost of any dilapidations from the deposit and return the balance to the tenant.

If the dilapidations are extensive, we can obtain estimates and, with your agreement, agree the costs with the tenant. Once you and the tenant have agreed

details, we will allocate the money accordingly. In the unlikely event of not being able to reach agreement with the tenant, we recommend resolving the issue through ARLA's arbitration service.

Stamp Duty

Stamp Duty is no longer payable on a Tenancy Agreement not exceeding 364 days. If the tenancy is for longer but less than seven years, the duty payable is 1% of the average rent over one year plus 50p on the counterpart. We will advise you if any Stamp Duty is likely to be payable.

Rent

If we manage the property, the rent is paid into our client account and then forwarded to you by standing order, minus any disbursements. To set this up we will need your account number, together with the name, address and sort code of the bank. We can arrange for the rent to be paid outside the UK, subject to deduction of any charges incurred and only if there are no exchange control restrictions. If we are not managing the property we will arrange for the rent to be paid by standing order directly into your bank account.

Overseas Landlords

Under Self-Assessment, landlords based overseas can apply to the Inland Revenue for permission to receive rental income gross. If permission is granted the Inland Revenue will issue an exemption certificate and send a copy to us, authorising us not to deduct tax from the rent. You must notify the Inland Revenue if you subsequently change agents.

If you are based overseas and we do not have a tax exemption certificate, we are legally obliged to deduct 22% from all rent received less any allowable expenses and forward it to the Inland Revenue.