

# ASK THE EXPERTS

Do you have a question you would like to ask our property experts?  
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Your questions answered by our local property experts...



## Q How do I go about pitching my property at the right sort of tenant?

**A** An experienced letting agent will know their market and be able to advise who your target market is likely to be. This advice can be invaluable in letting your property quickly at the best possible rental figure, so listen to your agent and “stage” your property accordingly. A young couple, for example, might happily live on a busy road near vibrant bars whereas new parents might prefer a quiet, secluded location.

Don't forget that corporate tenants come in all shapes, sizes too so if your property is next to a railway line, don't discount this market as your home will have other attributes. A good negotiator will extol the virtues of your property to get results and the likelihood is that if a home is close to a train line it's also in close proximity to the station or excellent local amenities!

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## Q What basic steps can I take to increase the appeal of my flat in the current market?

**A** First impressions are critical and getting these right can make the difference over how quickly your flat sells, so take heed of the three S's – Sight, Sound and Smell.

**Sight >>** De-cluttering is absolutely essential, so when viewings are conducted, the space within a flat is maximised. Furniture that is not intrinsic to the room (such as side tables), should be removed. In addition, try to allow as much natural light as possible flow through the flat. Make sure curtains and blinds are open and clean.

**Sound >>** If you live by a busy road, always make sure the windows are shut. There is nothing worse than arriving at a viewing and only being aware of noisy traffic. Try playing some calming background music, this will make your property stand out in the memory of the viewer.

**Smell >>** In the same way as sound, smell can stick out in the minds of viewers. If there's an odour of pets or damp in the flat, it should be addressed prior to viewings. Investing in a professional clean should pay dividends in the long run.

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## Q How do I go about choosing a solicitor and does my solicitor need to be based in London if I am buying a London property?

**A** One crucial point when choosing your solicitor is to ensure that they are responsive and efficient. A good solicitor should always be on hand to talk to and update you. The more they communicate with all parties involved (including the estate agent), the better. Property transactions can often fall through if solicitors aren't as quick and efficient as they could be.

It's also important to check that your solicitor is experienced in the type of property you are buying. For example, if you are buying a leasehold property which has a complicated lease or one involving an already progressing lease extension, it might be worth paying slightly more for a specialist solicitor, or checking to see if there is a solicitor with leasehold expertise within the firm.

Your solicitor does not necessarily need to be based in London as correspondence tends to be via e-mail and post and therefore you don't need to use someone who is down the road. Solicitors have a document exchange system (known as DX), so can easily pass documents between themselves. However, if you are working to an extremely tight time frame, then it might make sense to hire someone who is based locally to you as it can speed up the process if you can drop off documents and pop in to sign papers, rather than having to rely on the post.

One other thing to consider is cost; some solicitors outside London will charge lower fees than the big, central London firms. Overall, try to choose and instruct a solicitor as early as possible in your home-buying process, so that they will be ready to take action as soon as you have had an offer accepted.”

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