



When buying, what questions should you be asking the Sellers and Estate Agent about a property?

Print this **Checklist** off and take it with you so you remember what questions to ask

Going through with a sale is both time consuming and costly and whilst, later down the sales progress line, many of these will be asked by your solicitor you will have spent a lot of time and money by then so best to pick these issues up early and pull out if there are real problems and save time and money

**Ask the Estate Agent**

| Questions  | Answers |
|--|---------|
| <p><b>Why are the Sellers moving?</b></p> <p>Have the sellers found a property or are they actively viewing</p> <p>Many sellers want to sell their property before looking for one to buy, if this is the case you need to confirm that they are really serious about selling because:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. They will probably be reluctant to negotiate on the price as they are not under pressure to move.</li> <li>b. If you do go ahead with the purchase then there is greater chance that the sale will fall through due to the seller being unable to find a house they want to buy.</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are they moving for reasons connected with the area?</li> <li>• Is this a probate sale, which may mean the seller could be flexible on price?</li> <li>• Are they moving for reasons connected with the property itself? (see bullet point 4 under: How long has it been on the market)</li> <li>• Does the reason for moving sound convincing?</li> </ul> |         |
| <p><b>What are the seller's timescales?</b></p> <p>The seller may be on a tight timescale due to a job relocation or children's schooling issues.</p> <p>If you are in a strong position with a good offer on your property down the sale process or do not have a property to sell, then you may be able to negotiate a good price.</p>   |         |

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| <p>If you are still trying to sell your property, then you will have to consider how to move things along with your sale.</p> <p>Remember that as soon as you instruct a solicitor or have a bank valuation you will start incurring costs and if the sale does not proceed this will be a loss to you!</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Have the sellers found a new property, what are their timescales and is there a chain?</b></p> <p>When a seller needs to sell can be an opportunity to drive a good deal so finding out how long has the sale been going through and who needs to sell is a good indication of where things stand.</p> <p>This is also a factor with a chain of houses where one of which is holding up the sale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the seller found another property or are they still looking? If they are still looking this may jeopardise your purchase if they can't find the property they want.</li> </ul>   |  |
| <p><b>How long has it been on the market?</b></p> <p>There are a number of reasons why a property is slow to sell but ask this question and you could find out whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A past survey has highlighted issues. You can ask why has the past sale fallen through</li> <li>• the property is overpriced compared with other properties of a similar size, location &amp; condition and the sellers are too inflexible regarding the selling price</li> <li>• there are issues with poor presentation i.e. The house is dirty or full of animals and the smell is overpowering, the kitchen needs replacing and these are putting off potential purchasers</li> <li>• there are local issues that are not making buyers come forward: crime, anti-social behaviour</li> </ul> |  |

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| <p><b>How many offers has it had?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there have been a number of offers, but none acceptable to the seller, this may show they are inflexible on price.</li> <li>• Have previous sales fallen through? If so, this may indicate that problems have been uncovered with the survey or some legal issues such as: restrictive covenants on the property or some local planning proposals that have made the buyers pull out of the sale</li> </ul>  |  |
| <p><b>How many viewings has it had?</b></p> <p>More than 10 viewings could flag-up the fact that the property is over-priced or has issues</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Is the property Freehold or Leasehold and if so, how long is the Lease?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short leases (Less than 80 years) can make a property hard to sell</li> <li>• What are service charges and ground rent (in some cases these can be high)</li> </ul> <p>If you are considering letting out this property at some time some Leases do not allow this or charge high fees</p> <p>If you are considering building an extension, conservatory, making external changes or internal structural changes you will have to get the permission of the Freeholder and pay his legal fees which can be high</p> |  |

## Ask the Sellers

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| Questions   | Answers |
|---|---------|
| <p><b>How long has the seller lived there and why are they moving?</b></p> <p>This may give you a clue as to what is going-on and how strong is your bargaining position</p>  |         |
| <p><b>What's included in the sale?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carpets</li><li>• Curtains</li><li>• White goods</li><li>• Electrical light fittings</li><li>• Wood burner, if there's a real fire, is it safe to use</li><li>• Other things (list)</li></ul>  |         |
| <p><b>Have there been any subsidence or flooding problems that they know of?</b></p> <p>This can affect your insurance and, in some cases, being refused insurance altogether.</p> <p>Insurance companies are increasingly picky about past claims and whilst, later down the sales progress, your solicitor should highlight these you will have spent a lot of time and money by then so best to pick these issues up early and pull out if there are real problems</p> <p>if they say no and you later find out that they have not told the truth you may be able to sue them for any losses</p> |         |

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| <p><b>Have there been any problems with the neighbours?</b></p> <p>Boundary disputes or just problem neighbours can be a nightmare and a direct question is the best way to tackle these nightmare issues early on</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Have they had any work carried out whilst they have been there? i.e.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensions</li> <li>• Conversions (attics garages)</li> <li>• New windows</li> <li>• Cavity wall insulation</li> <li>• Damp-proofing</li> <li>• Woodworm treatment</li> <li>• Builders work especially: removed any internal walls, chimney breasts</li> </ul>  |  |
| <p><b>Services: Gas, water, electricity and heating</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the gas and electricity on a pre-payment card.<br/>If so, this is more expensive and harder to change supplier than a metered supply</li> <li>• Has the property got a water meter<br/>If so, this can be an additional higher cost if you have a large family using a lot of water</li> <li>• How old is the boiler, is it a combi-boiler?<br/>Boilers older than 10 years can have expensive repair issues<br/><br/>Older back-boilers and systems older than 30 years will probably be at the end of their life and complete renewal of the hot water and heating system can be expensive and messy</li> <li>• When was it last rewired, can I see electrical and gas installation checks/reports</li> </ul> |  |

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| <p>Properties older than 25 years and have not been rewired might need expensive re-wiring and this will also mean replastering and redecorating (as the walls will have to be chased to accommodate the new wiring layout)</p>                               |  |
| <p><b>Are there any parking issues?</b></p> <p>If you have a car or more than one car and there is no off-street parking you will have to consider what parking facilities are available and if residents parking permits are needed and what is the cost</p> |  |
| <p><b>Other questions you want to ask (list)</b></p>  |  |

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