

The Letter*

find your space.

www.chinneckshaw.co.uk/theletter

Spring 2013 Issue 6

PCC gets £19.5m to build Tipner junction



Plans for the regeneration of Portsmouth have received a huge boost with the announcement of almost £19.5m of government funding for the redevelopment of Tipner.

The Department of Transport has awarded the money for the construction of a new motorway junction on the M275 as well as a park and ride facility and a southbound bus priority lane. It will go alongside more than £8.5m it is investing in the project, which is vital to the city's

overall regeneration plans.

Portsmouth South MP, Mike Hancock, said: "Not only does it enable us to improve that area of the city, but the sustainable transport link it creates is invaluable to the future development of the city centre and seafront. It will provide access to the park and ride on the east of the M275 as well as unlocking land to its west for future development."

Work on the project will begin in January 2013

with completion expected in Spring 2014 and takes place alongside other land development projects being carried out to provide almost 600 homes as well as some retail space.

The cash forms part of £1bn investment headed to the city and is another step towards defining Portsmouth as a great waterfront city. Already Portsmouth has recently been named the fourth best place in the country to live and work by the Good Growth for Cities Report.

In this issue

Page 2

The Portsmouth Landlord Show

November

Council Tax Reform Update

Noisy Neighbour loses her Equipment

Page 3

Chinneck Shaw Q&A

Page 4

Unregulated lettings industry is like Wild West say RICS

Newsletter mailing list

If you would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list, please provide us with your name and address, and we will make sure that we send you a copy of *The Letter* each quarter.



Glynis Wheeler

We are pleased to report an extremely good start to the New Year. With the improved growth in business at Chinneck Shaw we recognised the need to further strengthen the Property Management team and we are delighted to announce that Glynis Wheeler has recently joined us. Glynis brings a wealth of experience to our company and we are confident that her arrival will make a positive contribution to the service we are able to offer our clients.



Landlord Show

Back in October, Chinneck Shaw exhibited at the second annual Portsmouth Landlords Show run by the Portsmouth and District Private Landlords Association. Held at the Queens Hotel in Southsea, the show was once again a success all round and we enjoyed an evening of meeting and greeting local landlords, property professionals and the other exhibitors.

November



In November; Neil Shaw, Tim Bourne and James Moran of Chinneck Shaw, all sprouted moustaches for the month in support of 'Movember'. The aim of Movember, a now global movement whereby men grow a moustache for the month of November, is to raise vital funds and awareness of men's health, specifically prostate and testicular cancer. Ironically, staff member Chris Beard did not take part!



Council Tax Reform Update



On page 4 of the last issue of *The Letter* was an article about the possible changes to council tax charges on empty properties. With effect from 1st April 2013 existing Class A and Class C exemptions will be abolished.

As of 11th December 2012 the City Council decided that these exemptions will be replaced by the following discounts:

- Discount of 100% for one month for properties empty and unfurnished (Class C). No discount given after one month.
- For empty and unfurnished properties undergoing major repair (Class A), discount is set at 40% for the first 12 months. No discount given after 12 month period
- Long term empty (over two years) properties premium set at 50%. This would mean a premium of 50% on top of the full council tax charges on these properties.

Noisy neighbour loses her equipment

This isn't strictly speaking a landlord and tenant matter but anyone who has ever suffered from deafening music through the walls will rejoice at the sentence handed out to this 18 year old in Plymouth.

Neighbours had complained for months about the occupant's loud music, shouting and banging but to no avail.

The council issued her with two noise nuisance orders, but still she didn't stop.

So at Plymouth Magistrates Court in August she was prosecuted, found guilty and:

- fined £500 for each breach,
- ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £15,
- her music equipment including CD player, synthesiser tuner, speakers, CDs and a DVD player was forfeited,
- the Council was awarded costs of £1,200
- and they made further application ordering her not to cause any such disturbance in any residential property at which she is residing in the area. The order runs for two years.

Chinneck Shaw Q & A

The Letter's editor in chief; Shelley Morris-Green asks Chinneck Shaw's Property Manager; James Moran some of the questions he is regularly asked by landlords and tenants alike.

Firstly, how does Chinneck Shaw advertise a property they have to let?

Our advertisements are mainly internet based on our own website; www.chinneckshaw.co.uk, www.teamprop.co.uk and www.rightmove.co.uk. In the past we have advertised in the local property paper but this became less and less of a priority as our target audience switched to more convenient and readily available internet searching. We do have advertisements in our office window and the presence of a board outside a property is still a valuable marketing tool.

How do Chinneck Shaw deal with tenant selection?

This is probably the single most important part of the letting process. We start vetting applicants at the first point of contact, whether that be a phone call, email or visit to our office. We check all the basic details when booking viewings to ensure that the situation will suit the particular property/landlord requirements. We do not work on a first come first served basis like some agencies, as we take the view that we would rather wait for the right tenant than let to an applicant we have reservations about simply because they were the first one to come forward. We believe our instinct and 'gut reaction' which has been built up over a number of years is extremely important in choosing who to offer a tenancy to. NB – our letting negotiators do not earn commission on lettings – they are under no pressure to let to anyone that they think will not be 100% suitable.

What sort of application and referencing process is involved for a prospective tenant?

Once we have found a suitable applicant, we then carry out comprehensive referencing including a credit check, previous landlords reference, checking of the voters roll and electoral roll and employment reference. This is all carried out by a third party specialist referencing agency, Letsure. If there are any adverse

references, we generally review them on a case by case basis, and liaise with the landlord as necessary. On some occasions we would require the applicant to have a guarantor, up front rental payment or ask them to pay a higher deposit to cover any risks. If the situation calls for it we will reject an application should we not feel confident with the situation.

What agency fees would a tenant have to pay?

We charge tenants £170.00 for a single applicant and £220.00 for a joint application. There are no additional fees whatsoever as we want to choose from the widest possible selection of applications and therefore do not wish to put financial obstacles in the way.

How is a tenant's deposit protected?

We use the Tenancy Deposit Scheme to register all our deposits as required by law. In the five years since the scheme was introduced, we have never had a dispute raised against us as we generally are always able to come to an agreement between landlord and tenant if there are any dilapidations at the end of the tenancy.

Is a tenancy renewed at the end of the initial term?

Unless our clients instruct us otherwise, we start all tenancies by offering a six month Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST). This gives both landlord and tenant an opportunity to make sure the fit is right without tying either party into an initial long agreement. After the initial term, we let the tenancy continue on a statutory periodic basis rather than constantly renewing the tenancy for an additional fixed term. Most of our clients are looking for long term tenants and we make this clear from the outset when letting a property, and try and choose a tenant who we feel is in it for the long run.

How do Chinneck Shaw deal with the issue of rent arrears?

Our bespoke property management

software is able to generate an 'up to the minute' arrears list which highlights any tenants which may have slipped into arrears. From this list we contact the tenant by phone/email/text/letter to find out why they haven't paid their rent. We try and work with all our tenants and agree suitable payment plans for those struggling with their rent. We then monitor the situation to ensure they stay on track with any agreements that have been made. Generally, we find that this approach to rent arrears work well and we are normally able to get the tenant back on track without having to resort to legal action. The process of issuing notice to quit and waiting for it to expire followed by the subsequent court action is a lengthy and expensive process which we try to avoid unless absolutely necessary.

How are property maintenance and repair issues dealt with?

All staff members in the office deal with day to day maintenance and repair call outs. We have a comprehensive list of contractors, some who we have used for many years, and some who we have not! We think it's important to have a variety of contractors and seek out new, reliable and reasonably priced ones when we can. Some of our clients have certain contractors which they prefer to use, and that is fine with us, we would make them our first port of call. If we feel that an issue needs some investigation prior to sending out a contractor, we will arrange for one of the property management team to visit the property before sending a tradesman out. We only give permission for work to be carried out up to a set cost (as defined by our clients) and would seek client's approval before agreeing any works over that amount.

If you have any other questions you would like us to put to our property manager, please give us a call on 023 9282 6731 or email info@chinneckshaw.co.uk and we will endeavour to publish the answers in our next issue of The Letter.

Unregulated lettings industry is like Wild West say RICS

'A complete lack of effective regulation has allowed the lettings sector to become the property industry's Wild West, putting consumers at risk.'

This accusation comes from the RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors), which is stepping up its campaign for the statutory regulation of agents.

The RICS lettings survey, published in November, highlights the potential for rogue lettings agents to cash in on the current rental boom, taking advantage of consumers' ignorance. They claim that the clear lack of awareness or apathy from tenants as to what they should expect from their agent is compounded by the lack of effective regulation which can lead to potential consumer detriment, with renters sometimes being charged extortionate fees or given unfair terms.

The results of the survey suggest renters have come to expect this level of service!

Further results show that 93% of tenants believe letting



agents should have to meet an industry code of practice, with 89% believing it should be compulsory for agents to belong to a regulatory body. In reality, it is currently possible for anyone to set up a lettings agency without appropriate qualifications, knowledge or understanding of the rental process. Nor is it compulsory for agents to conform to any code of conduct.

Peter Bolton King, RICS global residential director, said: "There are too many corrupt agents that do not belong to any Professional body who are taking advantage of the current gap in regulation, putting consumers at risk. Choosing the wrong agent can result in tenants encountering all sorts of problems such as lost

deposits, broken agreements and excessive charges. Until we see the Government taking direct action on this and introducing a regulatory system for agents, we recommend the tenants use a lettings agent that is a member of a professional organisation such as RICS".

Chinneck Shaw are regulated by RICS and we are bound to comply with a strict code of conduct. We think it is extremely important to demonstrate our commitment to providing a great service to our clients and their tenants.

Contact details

Editors

Miss Shelley Morris-Green and Mr Neil Shaw FRICS
11 Milton Road
Copnor
Portsmouth
PO3 6AN

t: 023 9282 6731

f: 023 9282 6733

email:

info@chinneckshaw.co.uk

website:

www.chinneckshaw.co.uk



Energy Efficiency Rating		Current	Potential
Very energy efficient - lower running costs			
(92 plus) A			
(81-91) B			
(69-80) C			70
(55-68) D			
(39-54) E	47		
(21-38) F			
(1-20) G			
Not energy efficient - higher running costs			
England & Wales		EU Directive 2002/91/EC	

chinneckshaw*

can arrange an Energy Performance certificate (EPC) for £60.00 + vat.

For more information contact:

023 9282 6731

or email

info@chinneckshaw.co.uk

The contents of The Letter are the copyright of the publishers. Articles may be reprinted without charge provided that credit is given to Chinneck Shaw.

A copy of any reprinted article should be sent to the editor at the above address.