



PREPARING YOUR HOUSE FOR SALE



Whilst we are still seeing strong activity in this area, particularly in the towns, the difficult conditions of the past few years have left buyers and sellers with a higher degree of caution. Buying a house has become more of a long term commitment with people put off frequent moves by the high cost of moving so the choice of house becomes more important and factors such as maintenance and running costs are an important consideration for many. Also, because renting is becoming more acceptable, many families are prepared to sit and wait for the perfect property and do not feel the need to rush or compromise.

Location is an important consideration for the house buyer. Many of our buyers are driven by good school catchment areas and easy accessibility to road and rail networks for commuting (particularly for those buyers moving out of London) and, whilst these are things you cannot influence, there are many other things you can do to ensure your property appeals to buyers:

Presentation

You need to ensure you present your property as well as possible prior to putting it on the market so that it looks its best for the agent's brochure and websites. It is thought that around 95% of buyers now use websites to view properties before calling the agent. People are viewing less properties because they use these sites to look at floorplans, location maps, site plans, street views

and internal photographs and will not view the property unless they are happy with all the details.

What you do to present your property well will depend on your budget and your target audience but, at the very least, you need to declutter and ensure your house is clean and tidy. Whether you are prepared to decorate/buy new carpets/put excess furniture into storage etc will depend on your budget but it may need to be considered if it will help you to sell your house for the price you want. Kitchens and bathrooms do sell houses but installing new units or suites will not necessarily be worth the outlay. They can often be modernized cheaply by painting units, fitting a new worksurface or simply regrouting, fitting new blinds, buying new towels and matching accessories. Do ensure, though, that you go for neutral colours and styles so that you appeal to as wide an audience as possible.

Broken tiles, leaking guttering, dead light bulbs, leaking taps will all give the impression that the house has not been looked after and will put many buyers off. Get these issues sorted prior to putting your house on the market.

Finally, don't forget the outside spaces. Mow the lawn, weed and declutter. To add some interest and colour, it is a good idea to plant up some pots, whatever the season, as these can be taken with you when you move.

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Know your target audience

You need to have some idea of the sort of buyer you are likely to attract. If you are in a good school catchment, it is likely that your buyer will be a family. Ensure you present your house accordingly with each space clearly defined eg. If you have a spare bedroom that doubles as an office, decide which is more likely to appeal to your target audience and furnish accordingly.

Kerb Appeal

This cannot be underestimated. Many potential buyers do a drive-by before arranging a viewing and if they don't get a great impression, they will never arrange that appointment. Repaint the front door, polish door furniture, plant up pots, sweep the drive, trim hedges etc.

Prior to a viewing

Ensure your house is clean and tidy and consider buying fresh flowers and using an air freshener. It is vital that floor and work-surfaces are spotless and windows clean. In the summer if the weather is good, open windows to air all the rooms or ensure the house is well heated and light fires if it is winter. Move pet beds and toys outside and ask someone to look after your pets during viewings. Remove anything that may alert a viewer to potential problems: plug in radiators will suggest the heating system isn't adequate, sandbags in the garage will suggest the potential to flood. Put lamps in dark corners, switch on any low energy bulbs in good time to ensure they are at full brightness for the viewing and open blinds and curtains to the maximum to ensure the



house is as light as possible. Plump up cushions on sofas and put clean linen on the beds. If you have limited driveway parking, move your car to leave room for viewers to park.

During a viewing

Consider what your buyers might be looking for and address this during any viewings. Also ensure you have facts and figures to hand eg electricity, gas council tax bills etc., as buyers are increasingly concerned about running costs. If it is a young family, mention its accessibility to schools/parks/leisure centres etc and if your buyer is a retired couple, you will need to consider that they may want to be able to walk to the shops/doctors or have easy access to a bus route. Give your viewers time to walk around the house on their own as there may be points they want to discuss without you present.



The role of the estate agent

A pro-active agent will start to talk to potential buyers about your property before it has reached the open market and will work tirelessly to get appropriate buyers through the door. They will vet any interested parties carefully before forwarding any offers through to you and will handle negotiations to ensure you get the best price for your property. They will then manage what is increasingly a lengthy and complex process, acting on your behalf, taking your sale through to completion, liaising with all parties (solicitors, surveyors, mortgage brokers etc) to bring all parts together. It is always best to leave negotiations to the professionals so it is vital that you choose an agent you trust to work to the highest professional standards and with your best interests at heart.