

CONVEYANCING

SELLING HOUSES – SHORT CUTS AND FALSE ECONOMIES

The whole process of buying and selling your home can be fraught with difficulties and disappointments. What can you do to prepare your home for sale to maximise the value but at the same time not spend money on a false economy?

PREPARATION FOR SALE

Before you decide to sell you should consider how best to present the property and make it attractive to a buyer. I am not referring here to the old clichés of fresh ground coffee smells or baking bread which are of course nice on the senses for a moment but hardly significant in the long term. What I have in mind is economically achievable additions or alterations that can transform your house from the mundane to something with special enhanced value.

What Estate Agents call the wow factor is still important, especially in our current rather slow market, but not every improvement will provide profit so be careful with how you direct your budget. There can be a great deal of discomfort if you have to continue to live in your house during conversions and months of brick dust flavoured food is really not much fun if there is no profit in it.

Sometime a house can become over developed eg. with unnecessary additional bedrooms when what is really needed is an enlarged kitchen come family room, a modernised bathroom or perhaps a conservatory for all year round use. Integral garages can make a handy low cost extra room and a downstairs toilet with both lockable external and internal access doors can be very useful item. Really it is all about what works best for you but what at the same time will enhance the value of your home

for eventual sale. Not everything you do is going to produce a profit-you need to balance what you need against what is desirable in the eyes of a potential purchaser.

WHAT HAS LAW GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Remember when considering how to enhance the facilities to comply with all relevant rules, regulations, restrictions, insurance and health and safety requirements. Unfortunately, we all too often come across conveyancing transactions where no planning permission has been obtained for development beyond the permitted limits and / or no building regulation approvals have been obtained.

Bear in mind when considering an attic conversion that the structure of the roof was never designed to support living accommodation. There may be roof lights installed where there should be none or a dormer window overlooking a neighbouring property so as to be intrusive of privacy or a staircase that is too narrow to comply with fire regulations.

You have to be careful when the two downstairs rooms have been knocked into one that adequate structural support has been inserted. We sometimes find that a chimney breast has been removed but nothing has been done to support the remaining chimney above it!

The conversion of an integral garage or even a separate one into living accommodation is a cheap way of acquiring an additional room but do bear in mind that the garage may not have been constructed to anything like the specification required for living accommodation in terms of damp proofing and insulation. Where there is a pitched roof the structure may not be adequate to support an upstairs room.

The title to your property may itself contain restrictive covenants which prohibit change of use and/or building alterations and additions. There really are a great deal of checks to go through before embarking on structural or conversion works which will come back

to haunt you later when the property comes to be sold and the required paperwork cannot be produced.

HELP YOUR SOLICITORS EARLY

*Preparation is vital. It is most important to gather together all relevant paperwork relating to your property and preferably not all jumbled up out of date order in a plastic shopping bag! Do remember to include any documentation that came into your possession when you bought the property if you are selling through a different solicitor. For example planning permissions, building regulations , certificate of completion of works, FENSA Certificates for new windows, guarantees for example for woodworm or damp proofing treatments, indemnity insurance policies that may relate to potential breach of covenants, lack of right of way, chancel repairs.

Lawyers love paper, well at least this one does, and in practice we really are a long way away from the paper free office when dealing with property transactions and of course there are a great many people who do not use computers and are not familiar with the benefits of emails and downloading of documents. You will be surprised how many clients selling properties forget to produce the now obligatory Energy Performance Certificate – a sort of hang over from the days of the much derided Home Information Pack and which is supposed to provide us with information to improve the energy and environmental ratings of a property. Gas and electrical installation certificates, boiler maintenance certificates are a great help if they are produced at the beginning of a transaction and not in dribs and drabs as we go along. When you buy a property I would suggest that you purchase a large ring binder and keep every piece of paper that comes your way from day one in that binder. It really is a big help when you come to sell and requires minimal effort but do please be careful not to lose it!

DO IT YOURSELF AND SAVE MONEY?

Typically the Sunday papers like to encourage their readers to become their own selling agent or even solicitor. Be careful. Years of experience in the two professions cannot be substituted by acquiring a pamphlet/book or even seeking guidance on line.

There are of course certain properties that will “sell all day” if the price is right but can an on line agency or conveyancer based in some distant northern city really know what your local Estate Agent knows and provide a secure and safe booking and viewing service, prepare a personal brochure and work in concert with your local solicitor? The answer is a resounding NO.

We all know that any house is only worth what someone is prepared to pay for it or more importantly what a Bank or Building Society is prepared to lend against its value and a good agent should earn their fee by accurately accessing and describing and marketing your property and working in close concert with your solicitor. Also bear in mind that solicitors and estate agents do not require payment until a transaction is completed except in the most unusual circumstances and in the current market that can involve a very long wait indeed. On line agencies usually require payment in advance and you really can get yourself in a an awful muddle if say, you already have a contract with an estate agent and you then wish to go solo and for example a buyer introduced by the agent later decides to buy from you direct. Are you liable to pay the agent anyway? Do please remember that estate agents and solicitors must comply with complex rules as to accuracy of description and disclosure on matters relating to your property and so must those seeking economy through self service.

In short, there are professionals out there who have put in years of training and experience to help you and I am sure that the vast majority are worthy of their fees.

For further advice email me on **david.helman@busbyslaw.co.uk** or phone Busbys on **01288 35 9000** and ask to speak to David Helman or my colleague, Ian Osborne.

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