

Buyer's Guide

Buying a house is a very exciting yet sometimes a nerve racking experience, especially if you have never purchased one before. Below are a few pointers to bear in mind when looking for a new home. If you are unsure about the process or require guidance, then simply call one of our offices and make an appointment to talk with one of our experienced team members. We are happy to provide our advice free of charge.

Working out how much you can afford:

Speak with a financial advisor to get accurate advice on borrowing and mortgage rates. If possible try to get a 'mortgage agreed in principle' so when you find your ideal property you can then move quickly. It is always sensible to speak with an independent financial advisor who has access to a range of products across the whole mortgage market.

Other expenses to factor into your budget:

- Stamp duty. This is a tax paid by the purchaser and will be collected by your solicitor and paid directly to the government. To get an idea of the amount of stamp duty payable on a given purchase price, see this handy [stamp duty calculator](#)
- Solicitors fees
- Estate Agents fees (if you are selling)
- Survey costs
- Mortgage costs
- Removal costs

Finding the ideal property:

Try to make a list of your requirements. Include within the list what size of property you are looking for, what condition it could be in, what type/style of property you would like.

Then think about areas and whether you need access for work, schooling or transport, etc. No property is perfect; there will always be a degree of compromise and you may find that you need to look at a number of houses before you know yourself what elements are more important and which are less so. Do not be concerned if your criteria changes, this is very normal. Try searching in a slightly wider area and consider properties that although not perfect now, could be extended or improved to better fit your needs.

In short, be open minded. Not all properties are on the internet. If you haven't taken the time to register with individual firms of estate agents, then it is likely that you will be missing out on properties that never make it as far as the newspaper or online property portals.

Many of the properties handled at Breckon & Breckon are sold 'off market' to buyers registered with us and known to be actively looking within given areas.

If we do not know what you are looking for, then we can't help. So pick up the phone, call your local office and make sure we know about you!

Viewing properties:

The more properties you view, the more you learn about what is important to you as a buyer. So get out there and make a few appointments!

You can get a good understanding of an average sized family home in about 15 minutes. If the house is of interest, you can always make further appointments to come back for a more detailed inspection.

Making an offer:

The more information you can provide, the stronger your offer will appear. Within the offer amount, how much will be cash and how much will be finance? Is the offer subject to you selling a property or can you move straight away? What sort of time frame can you work to and are you able to be flexible?

Most offers are subject to survey. If issues are raised on the survey that weren't apparent when you inspected the property, then you may feel the need to renegotiate.

The seller will need a valid reason to convince them to make a reduction on a previously agreed sale price. Every negotiation is different and this is where you will benefit from the agents experience.

Please bear in mind that even if you think you have a valid reason for wanting to negotiate it does not mean the seller would necessarily agree with you or want to make any form of reduction.

Instructing a solicitor:

Once you have agreed to buy a property, the next step is to set the legal wheels in motion. If you don't have a solicitor in mind, then ask an agent. We deal with solicitors every day of the week and like any service industry (us included) some are better than others. Try to look for the best value as opposed to the cheapest. You will need a solicitor who is responsive and has the time to return your calls. Many of the cheaper online firms work as teams rather than as individuals and sometimes it is difficult to speak with the same person twice.

Our advice would be to choose a local, well respected firm of solicitors; we have seen too many buyers lose their purchases because of delays in the legal process.

Applying for your mortgage:

As soon as your offer has been accepted, you are now in a position to make a formal application for a mortgage on your chosen property.

Getting a survey:

Most mortgage lenders will insist on getting a survey on the property that you are hoping to buy. There are various levels of surveys available falling roughly into three categories:

1. **Valuation report**
2. **Home buyer's report**
3. **Full structural survey**

The **valuation report** simply reassures the bank/building society that the purchase price is the true value of the property for lending purposes.

A **home buyer's report** is a more detailed inspection of the property in a tick box format.

The **full structural survey** is generally dictated rather than the tick box approach allowing it to be much more detailed.

Time frames:

These will vary based on your buying situation. If the house you are purchasing is vacant with no onward chain then this can be a very straight forward process.

It is more likely that you will be in a chain of some sort and with a chain everybody will generally exchange at the same time with an agreed completion date. These dates are negotiated by either the estate agents or the solicitors.

Every purchaser in the chain will have their own reasons as to why their proposed dates are the most important so please try and be flexible in your approach.

Enquire about removals:

It's wise gain two or three different quotes to check the availability for the proposed completion date. If you have not exchanged contracts try not to book your removals as you will incur costs if you need to change the date.

Exchanging contracts:

This is the point where the sale becomes legally binding with implications if you then don't go on to complete the transaction. Your solicitor will have gathered key information and asked numerous questions relating to the title of your property. Your solicitor will review the legal aspects of the transaction with you prior to exchanging contracts.

On exchange, a deposit of between 5 and 10% is normally paid. Within the contract will be a specific completion date or a long-stop date.

Now you have exchanged contracts go ahead and book the removal company and obtain building's insurance.

Most solicitors will advise you to get building insurance on your proposed purchase as soon as you exchange contracts (even though you have not yet completed on that purchase).

Notify all relevant parties that you will be moving: utilities, friends, banks, building society, doctors, schools, etc. On moving day take meter readings of all utilities.

Completion:

Completion generally happens between 11am and 3pm and is reliant upon banks transferring the balance of money across to the seller.

If you are collecting the keys from the estate agent's office, please call them in advance to check that completion has taken place as they will not be able to release the keys until this has happened.

Remember to take meter readings on your new home and phone these through to the utility providers when adding your name to the account. Don't forget that after you have moved in, if there are any problems just pick up the phone to your agent who will still have contact details for the previous owner and will always try to help.