

Jungle Property

INDEPENDENT LETTING AGENT



Tenants Guide to Viewing a Property

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JungleProperty.co.uk

Introduction

Viewing property is a time consuming but a necessary part of choosing your next home. The viewing itself is usually short and you may need to make a decision very quickly after the viewing to secure the property. The decision you make usually costs money in the form of fees and is a decision you have to live with for some time! If you are to choose your next home wisely it is important you are prepared for each viewing and have sufficient information to make the right choice as quickly as possible. This guide covers some of the more common things people consider when choosing a property. Some parts of the guide may not apply to your situation or may not be important to you but focusing on the items that are will help you find your ideal rental property.

We are always looking for ways to improve our guides so we welcome any feedback, ideas or insults!

Top Tip - List the things the location, property or tenancy 'must be' or 'must have'. Make sure you check all those things as part of the viewing process - don't leave it to chance or until after you have committed to a tenancy. Common examples are 'must have a powerful shower' - ask to run the shower during the viewing to check how powerful it is and 'must be in a quiet location' - visit the location on different days/times to check just how quiet it is.

Before

In preparation for the viewing make a note of any of the following information where known ...

Address:	
Asking Rent:	
Deposit:	
Address:	
Asking Rent:	
Fees Payable:	
Council Tax:	
Gas:	
Electric:	
Water:	
Other Charges:	

Complete any missing information during the viewing.

Must Be and Must Haves
Questions to ask during the viewing
Pros ☺
Cons ☹

Arrange a Viewing



Before arranging a viewing, read the property details fully to check if the property meets all your needs e.g. location, within budget, parking, garden, accepts pets etc. If it doesn't, then don't view it - it is a waste of your time and another, more suitable, property will come up soon.



Always view the property in the daylight. Places can look significantly different in natural light - any interior problems will be made more obvious and you will be able to gauge how much light the property gets.



Arrange the viewing for a day and time that best suits you. Don't be persuaded to view the property on a day or time that suits the landlord or agent who may have a reason for conducting viewings at a specific time e.g. When traffic passing the property is at its quietest.



Check with the landlord or agent what you will need in order to hold the property for you if you like it. Collate any documents or information needed to apply for a tenancy, plus have available any deposit or fees. Make sure co-tenants do too.



Try to be available and as flexible as possible. The lettings business can be incredibly fast moving and when a good property comes to the market there can be a rush to view and tenancies can be agreed quickly. You could miss out if you can't make yourself available soon after you find a property that suits you - it is a missed opportunity if you find a property that suits you, only to find it has been rented by someone else while you wait for your partner or co-tenants to be available to view.



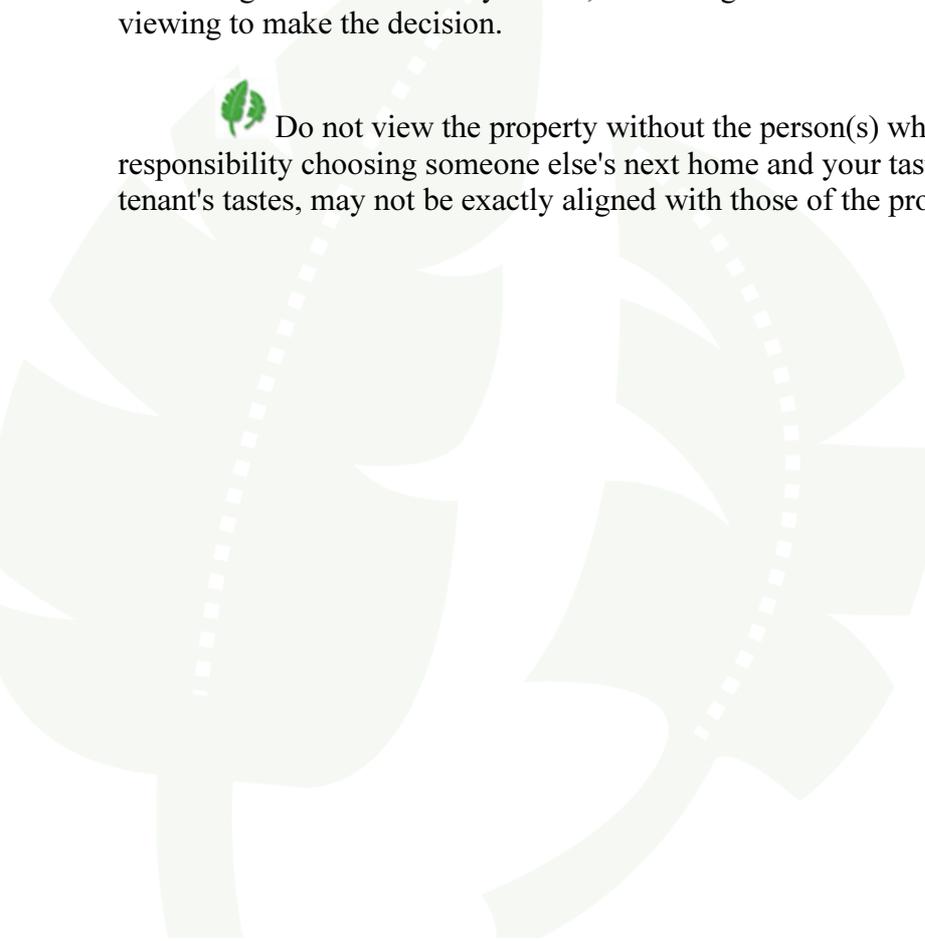
Arrange to view the property with a friend or relative. Two reasons for this; in the interest of personal safety it is not wise to make appointments to go into empty properties with someone you have never met before. Also there is simply too much for one person to take in during a viewing. It can be very difficult to remember everything you'll need to, particularly if you're viewing numerous properties in a short period of time. If you are meeting the landlord or agent alone for your viewing, make sure you have their contact details and you let someone know where you are.



If you are looking to share with other tenants, make sure that you're all available to view together. Landlords and agents can quite reasonably be reluctant to show one property to several members of a group at different times. If it is not possible to view together check out the area together, ask for internal and external photographs and talk to friends already living in the area. That way you can have an agreement between you that, if it is as good as it looks, it is ok for the person(s) attending the viewing to make the decision.



Do not view the property without the person(s) who would be the tenant. It's a huge responsibility choosing someone else's next home and your tastes, or perception of the prospective tenant's tastes, may not be exactly aligned with those of the prospective tenant.



Prepare for the Viewing



Ahead of the viewing read through this guide and write down any questions not covered that you wish to ask during the viewing.



If you have large items of furniture you are planning on moving with you, measure those items so you can check they will fit in the property you are viewing.



Take a notepad, pen, camera and this guide to the viewing - have whoever accompanies you on the viewing take notes and go through the guide and any questions you may have.

Research the Property and Locality



Make a list of the property's pros and cons before the viewing and update the list during and after the viewing. This will enable you to give thorough consideration to each of them before making a decision.



Make a list of all the features that are important for you to have in your property and check them before or during the viewing e.g. good mobile phone signal, combination gas boiler, good shower, en-suite bathroom, double glazing, south-facing garden etc.



Download the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the property – this will show how energy efficient the property is and will give you an indication of what your energy bills might be. EPCs can be downloaded from here: <https://www.epcregister.com>



Check the Council Tax Valuation Band for the property and check the level of council tax for that band and area for the current year. Council tax valuation bands can be found here: <http://cti.voa.gov.uk/cti/inits.asp>

Council tax levels for the area can be found on the district council website.



Find out about the neighbourhood using websites such as:

- <http://www.checkmyarea.com/>
- www.locrating.com
- www.ratemyroad.com
- www.police.uk

Research the Property and Locality continued



Use Google Street View maps.google.co.uk/ to look around the neighbourhood from the comfort of your home. Street View will help identify any parking issues and proximity to busy roads and local amenities.



Is the property close to local shops, amenities, family and friends and work/study?



If you have special health needs are there suitable healthcare facilities nearby? Find the nearest healthcare services including GPs here: <http://www.nhs.uk/service-search>



Is the property in the catchment area for good schools, nurseries and child care? Find the nearest schools and education establishments here: <https://www.gov.uk/find-school-in-england>



How good are the transport links in the area? Check transport links here: <http://www.transportdirect.info> Work out the distance and best possible route from the property to your place of work; a trial run in peak times could be a helpful exercise to determine whether the commute would be practical or more of a daily grind.



Check the mobile network coverage in the area here: <http://ask.ofcom.org.uk/help/telephone/mobilecoverage> as with any online tools they are only a guide – you'd need to check the signal on your phone when you view the property.



Check the availability and speed of broadband in the area here: <http://www.rightmove.co.uk/broadband-speed-in-my-area.html> Even if the property is in a broadband-enabled area, speeds will differ between addresses in the same street and will be dependent on many factors including who the provider is.

During

Locality

 Arrive early for the viewing and look around the immediate neighbourhood. Assess what the area is like and how well maintained the properties are, this will give you an indication of the desirability of the area. Is the area quiet/lively enough?

 If the property is in a block or on an estate, how well maintained are the communal areas and grounds?

 Is parking included? How easy is it to park? Does the property have off-road parking? Is the parking safe? Is there a permit scheme in the area? If parking is an issue ask if parking spaces are available for rent.

 Smells - Check the property is not downwind of a sewerage farm or factory that makes nasty niffs.

 Noise - Are there any noise issues such as machinery or traffic that could affect your enjoyment of the property. Noisy and anti-social neighbours are best identified by speaking to people in the street.

 Speak to neighbours, local shop keepers and current tenants about the neighbourhood and what it is like to live there.

Exterior

 Is the exterior of the property in a good state of repair?

 Are there any leaking or dripping gutters or downpipes?

 What sort of glazing does the property have - properties with single glazed windows will cost more to heat than those with double or triple glazing. Look out for rotten windows.

Communal Areas

 Who is responsible for cleaning communal areas?

Interior

 Ask if you can take photo's – this will allow you to review the property after the viewing which is particularly helpful if you have arranged to view several properties and you need to jog your memory or if you need to show other tenants you plan to share with who couldn't be at the viewing.

 Don't let the existing occupant's furnishings put you off and try to see past any current clutter and focus on the size and layout of the rooms.

General

 Take note of the general condition of the property – what are the windows like, the garden, carpets, kitchen, bathroom, taps, light fittings and doors. Pay particular attention to the structure of the property rather than just the aesthetics. For example check for leaks, draughts and damp.

 Look for evidence of disrepair or damage to the property or any contents provided. If you do decide to apply for a tenancy request that any issues identified are rectified as a condition to any offer you make.

 Look out for signs of damp including inside cupboards and wardrobes. If the property smells musty it probably has a damp problem.

 Check the signal strength on your mobile phone in all parts of the property. Signal strength could be important – particularly if you don't plan to have a landline or broadband.

 Check what type of heating the property has and ask how much it costs to run. A good system would include central heating – preferably with a combi boiler. A poor system would be, for example, plug-in fan heaters etc. All relevant information will be shown In the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

 Are the lounge, kitchen and bathroom big enough for the number of people sharing them?

 Is the property big enough for your furniture?

 Is there enough storage space for your belongings?

 Are there enough electrical sockets in the locations you will need them?

Health and Safety



Check whether the property has an intercom entry system or burglar alarm fitted.



Check that the property has carbon monoxide and smoke alarms fitted.



Are the doors and windows secure so that intruders cannot enter easily? Does the front door have a bolt or chain or a spyhole to check who's outside? Is there an entry phone system? Do the easily accessible windows have locks?



If the property is a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) look out for escape routes, a fire detection and warning system, emergency escape lighting, firefighting equipment and facilities and any associated signage.

Condition of Property, Fixtures, Fittings and Contents (if any)

Equipment and Appliances Provided



Check what appliances are provided as part of the tenancy (if any) and who will be responsible for repairing or replacing the appliances?



Make sure you know what furniture is included and if you are taking your own furniture, have the measurements with you to give yourself an idea of how it might fit.



If the water pressure of any shower is important to you, check it - do not leave this until you have moved in to the property.



If you watch TV, check if there is a TV aerial fitted and ask what the reception is like. If a TV aerial is not fitted ask for one to be fitted before the start of your tenancy. If terrestrial TV reception through an aerial is an issue then cable or satellite TV may be your only option.



If you watch satellite television, check if there is a satellite dish fitted. If a satellite dish is not fitted ask if you can fit one. Satellite dishes are not permitted in some areas or in the title deeds for some properties.

Questions for the Agent



Who is responsible for managing the property and tenancy - agent or landlord?



Who should you contact if there is an emergency in the property?



Ask for a complete breakdown of any fees payable.



If you pay a holding or reservation fee is it refundable if your application is rejected and how much would you lose if you were to withdraw your application before the start of the tenancy?

Questions for the Landlord



Ask to see proof of ID for the landlord and proof that the landlord owns the property or is acting in an official capacity on behalf of the owner. The person who says they are the landlord could in fact be the tenant or an illegal occupier trying to sub-let/let the property without authority to do so.

Questions for the Landlord or Agent

Health and Safety



If the property has a gas installation, ask to see the Gas Safety Record for the property. Also check carefully for any small red warning stickers stuck on gas appliances, this could mean there have been gas problems in the past.



Does the property have smoke and carbon monoxide alarms fitted? If alarms are not fitted ask for them to be fitted before the start of your tenancy.



Has the electrical installation been inspected and tested and have any electrical appliances supplied been tested? Is the paperwork available to view?



Does any furniture supplied comply with safety regulations? Items such as sofas and mattresses should have labels on them to show they pass the regulations.

Questions for the Landlord or Agent continued

Repairs



Ask how repairs and maintenance are reported and managed?

Other



Are curtains or blinds provided?



Are you allowed to change the decoration in the property?



How long is the tenancy and what happens afterwards? How much notice is required?



Ask how the deposit will be protected. Since April 2007 any deposit taken against an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (the default tenancy in England and Wales) must be registered with one of three government recognised schemes. Any reputable landlord should be able to tell you which scheme they plan to use.



Will an Inventory and Schedule of Condition report be compiled at the start of the tenancy?



Ask to see an example of the tenancy agreement that you could be offered.



What does the rent include and are there any other costs?



If you are sharing, ask whether the landlord has, or needs, a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licence for the property.

Questions for Existing Occupiers



If present talk to the current occupiers who will be able to tell you first-hand about the local area and property. It is worth asking how long they have lived at the property, why they are leaving, what the neighbours are like, if there is any history of anti-social behaviour in the area what they like/don't like about the local area and property and the costs of living in the property.



Ask for estimates of cost of utilities.

Questions for Existing Occupiers continued



If you plan to use broadband, ask how good the broadband speed is. Even if the property is in a broadband-enabled area, speeds will differ between addresses in the same street and will be dependent on many factors including who the provider is.

After



Re-visit the property at a different time - even the dream home can change significantly at certain times of day as a seemingly quiet street could turn into the local rat run at rush hour, or that the local pub could eject noisy revellers on your door step come closing time or the area is not well lit.

Letting Agent Warning! Avoid agents who have unfair terms of business or indulge in illegal practices such as:

- Do not publicise details of its fees at its premises and on its website.
- Advertise in commercial media (online and printed) property that includes cost information such as rent but do not include non-optional fees and charges.
- Do not make it clear when non-optional fees and charges, that could not be calculated in advance, were excluded from quoted prices, and do not provide enough information to allow the consumer to establish easily how further charges would be calculated.
- Advertise rent and other charges without including VAT.
- Do not publicise details of any ongoing or future fees or charges likely to be incurred by the tenant, for example, costs to extend, renew or terminate the tenancy and inventory check out fees.
- Have terms that make a pre-tenancy payment non-refundable in all circumstances. Pre-tenancy payments should, in principle, be refundable if the landlord decides not to let the property to the prospective tenant because the landlord decides the tenant's pre-tenancy checks are unsatisfactory.
- Are not members of a government approved redress scheme (this includes individuals acting on behalf of the landlord).
- Do not make available free of charge a valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) to any prospective tenant at the earliest opportunity (this includes landlords).
- Advertise in commercial media (online and printed) property but do not include the current energy efficiency rating (numerical indicator) of the property.

Making the Commitment



If you want the landlord to carry out any repairs, maintenance or improvements to the property or add/remove any contents such as furniture or appliances, ask as a condition to any offer you make. It will be harder to get agreement on these items after your tenancy has started. Get any agreement on repairs, maintenance or improvements in writing before committing to a tenancy.

Happy viewing

Tom Morgan

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