

A buyer's guide to Video Viewings

Video Viewings are used by many people to secure a property to buy or rent when they are unable to view it in person and are sometimes the most practical option, especially for people based overseas.

However, for some people using video viewings for the first time, making such a big decision without visiting the property can seem a little daunting and risky.

To help you make a sensible and informed decision, we have put together the following guide on how to use Video Viewings.

Advantages of Video Viewings.

The two great advantages of Video Viewings are **speed** and **practicality**.

– Video Viewings allow interested buyers to view a property quickly – often without the need to make an appointment – meaning they can get ahead of other buyers who are waiting to view the property physically. During lock-down this means that they can look at properties whilst there are fewer people to compete with.

– Because video viewings can be done on any device, at any time, and from anywhere, they are incredibly practical for people who are not based in London, or for those who do not have time to spend hours physically viewings multiple properties.

Viewing a property is just one part of the process.

Although seeing a property before you decide to place an offer on it is important, the viewing is just one part of a wider process.

Think about what the most important things are for you when looking for a property. Do you need to physically view a property to check these things, or could they be done remotely?

Chestertons conducts regular surveys and has consistently found that the three most important things buyers consider when placing offers on properties are **Location**, **Size** and **Price**.

All of these things are much easier to check online than they are on a viewing:

Location

- Use Google Maps to check the exact location.
- Explore the area at street level with Google Street View and see what shops are nearby.
- An app Like CityMapper will show you how long it would take to get from the property into work and give you the routes to anywhere in London.
- If you are unable to access the property but can get to the area, you may find it useful to walk or drive past the property and around the area.

Size

- All properties now have floorplans which show the layout of the property and the sizes of each of the rooms. Check the size of the rooms and compare to what you currently have to give you an idea of the space.

Price

- All property sales are registered with the UK's Land Registry so you can visit www.landregistry.gov.uk to see how much nearby properties have been sold for, and can even see how much the property you are interested in was last bought for.
- Most UK properties for sale or rent are listed on Rightmove.com, Zoopla.com or Onthemarket.com so you can see what other properties are currently on the market.
- If you are considering a purchase for rental investment, contact some local estate agents to give you an idea of how much the property could rent for. Most agents will be able to give you a relatively accurate price range without having to visit the property.

How to use a Video Viewing.

What do you look for when you are viewing a property?

Most people use physical viewings to check the condition of the property and see how much work will be required – if any – to make it fit for purpose. This can be done relatively effectively with video viewings, although it is always advised that you get a full survey before committing to a purchase.

When looking at a video of a property, take note of the following:

- The age of the kitchen and bathroom, as this will give an ideas as to when the property was last refurbished.
- Is there gas or electric central heating?
- Whether the property is currently lived in will tell you whether it is habitable.
- Any visible cracks in the walls or ceiling.
- Any signs of dampness on the walls.
- If the property has been recently painted, this could be covering up underlying issues.
- Whether there is storage space, especially in the kitchen and bedrooms.
- The view from the windows.
- Condition of the windows and whether they are single or double-glazed.

If you can't see it, ask about it.

There are some details that you may not be able to see on a video, but a few quick questions to your agent should provide you with the answers you need.

For example:

- The structural condition of a property is hard to see on a video, but a good starting point is to ask your agent whether any structural work has been undertaken or advised over the past 10 years.
- Ask when the major items were installed, including kitchen, bathroom, boiler, flooring and glazing.
- Most older properties in London are susceptible to damp and although this is generally not too expensive to address, it is worth asking if there has been any damp proofing done recently and, if so, whether there is a guarantee.
- If the property was bought by the current owner relatively recently, it is worth asking your agent if they can provide a copy of the survey that was done at the time of purchase.
- If you can't see the view from the windows, use Google Street View to work out what the property is looking out onto or, if possible, walk/drive past the property yourself to see what it overlooks.
- If you want to see a specific room or feature in more detail, ask the agent if it is possible to get an additional video or images of it. In some cases, the current owner or occupier may even be able to give you a live video walk through using a video conference tool.
- Ask whether any works to the building or common areas are planned, as these could create noise or other disturbances.
- Likewise, it is also worth asking whether there are any major construction works underway nearby which may affect your enjoyment of the property.

Your agent will understand that you will need to ask more questions after a Video Viewing than a physical viewing and will always be happy to answer any queries you have. There is no such thing as a silly question, so don't be afraid to ask!

Get to know your agent.

In order to secure the right property for you, it is essential that your agent fully understand everything about your search, including your property requirements, any relevant personal circumstances, timeframe and budget.

Likewise, it is very important that you have a good relationship with your agent and can trust them to assist you with your search. To help with this, why not have a video call with your agent to help you feel more comfortable with who you are dealing with? Most agents would be more than happy to arrange this with you.