

PROPERTY NEWS

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Moving to a new area – what to consider before buying a house

Data from Santander reports that two-thirds of recent first-time buyers bought in a neighbourhood they had never been to before, and half of all buyers move to unchartered territory. Whether relocating for work, family or lifestyle reasons, moving to a new area and buying a home is a major financial and emotional commitment.

For buyers considering moving to a new area, here are some key steps to assist with making an informed decision:

1. Spend time in the area

Really spend time exploring an area in person. Take the time to sit outside the property you have viewed to get a sense of the road and neighbourhood by who is coming and going from neighbouring properties. You should also spend time in local coffee shops, or pubs, to again get a feel for the demographic and way of living. Talk to people whilst there; you may be lucky to find the vocal shop worker who will give you the warts and all low down on any issues in the area.

Visit the road or neighbourhood at different times of the day and night, and on the weekends. This is particularly important if a property is near to a school as you will want to get a sense of how congested it feels around school drop off and collect times.

2. 'Skip watch'

When viewing a property in a new area, take the time to look at neighbouring houses and the extent to which recent works have been done. Whilst builders' vans and skips may look unsightly, it's a really good sign of investment in an area and people improving their homes.

Always get details from the selling agent as to any local housing regulations and whether the property falls within a Conservation Area.

3. Safety

Review the online 'police crime map' that will show the crime figures for a specific road and surrounding areas. This will give a sense of hot spots of crime in the local area, and the types of crimes. It's always however advised to exercise a certain air of caution in looking at a crime map: it's worthwhile comparing the area you are looking at, to an area you know well and feel comfortable in, as it may be whilst there are reports of crime, it's not too inconsistent with the levels in an area that you know and feel safe in. It can however be useful if you are considering buying a house to see if any neighbouring properties are particular 'hot spots' for anti-social behaviour.

4. Schools and education

With the scrapping of OFSTED grades that often provided parents an instant snapshot of how well a local school is performing, and influenced decisions around where to live, more time will now be required of buyers to really get to know the local schools.

If you are buying in a new area and the draw is to get into the local school, always make a point of calling the admissions team and finding out about the likely levels of intake for your child's school year.

5. Look at investment in the area

Always take time to look at what chains are investing in an area. As well as the Waitrose/M&S effect, hospitality is also a key indicator. If sites such as The Loungers Group, for example, are opening in an area, it's a real seal of approval for an area with hospitality groups often spotting the 'right' area long before the general public does.

6. Talk to a local buying agent

A local buying agent will be on the ground, live locally and be in a position to give a buyer an unfiltered view of an area.

By taking the time to research and evaluate all aspects of a new location, a buyer is more likely to find a home that fits their needs and makes it a smooth transition.

Whatever stage you are at in the search for your perfect home or investment property, we'd love to chat.

Lili Oliver

Oliver Roth Property Consultants

T: 0117 9877 828 | E: home@oliverroth.co.uk