

Article by **Andrew Berry**, Partner and Head of Property at Payne Hicks Beach, first published online in Henry & James Estate Agents 9 May 2017 and is reproduced with kind permission

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Andrew Berry
Partner & Head of Property

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TOP 10 STEPS TO CHOOSING THE RIGHT SOLICITOR



Finding the right solicitor is one of the most important decisions when buying a new home. A good solicitor will guide you through the house-buying process, saving you valuable time, money and stress.

Andrew Berry of top London solicitors Payne Hicks Beach agrees. “Your property is probably your most significant asset,” he explains. “You need to choose your solicitor with due care and attention. Don’t be taken in by tempting-looking adverts. Find someone with a good reputation and proven experience.”

Here are our top ten tips to find the perfect solicitor for conveyancing.

1. Make sure that the solicitor you appoint does conveyancing on a regular, not an occasional, basis. It is a specialised field and calls for a specialist. “You need someone who understands the often very complicated tax-related issues involved,” adds **Andrew Berry**. “That is particular true of overseas clients buying multi-million properties in London.”
2. Get written quotes from more than one solicitor, but do not automatically go for the lowest quote. It could prove a false economy. Beware of hidden extras in any quotes you are given.
3. Personal recommendations, whether from friends, estate agents or others, are worth far more than paper qualifications. This is provided, of course, that you have faith in the person making the recommendation.

4. A solicitor with local knowledge is always preferable to one who lives fifty miles away. That local knowledge will stand them in good stead when they are dealing with estate agents, builders and planning authorities. “Horses for courses,” says Andrew Berry. “It is madness to try to save money by instructing an out-of-town solicitor if you are buying a prime central London property.”
5. Try to get a feel for whether the solicitor is good at dealing with paperwork quickly and efficiently. Probably the most common complaint about solicitors handling property transactions is the sluggishness with which they process documentation.
6. Satisfy yourself that your solicitor will be prepared to answer quick queries by telephone and respond promptly to short emails. The personal touch is always key. Never appoint a solicitor who robotically charges by the hour, with zero flexibility.
7. It is usually a good idea to appoint a solicitor whose offices you can visit personally, if need be, without undue inconvenience.
8. Some mortgage-lenders are only prepared to deal with solicitors from an approved list which they have drawn up for that purpose. Make sure there are good channels of communication between your mortgage-lender and your solicitor.
9. Beware of ‘one-man bands’ or solicitors who are part of such tiny partnerships that, when they go on holiday, things grind to a halt. You do not want a sale to fall through because the person responsible for processing vital documents is on a beach in Barbados.
10. Use a fully-qualified solicitor, accredited by The Law Society. Visit their website at www.lawsociety.org.uk.

When you find the right solicitor, someone who is responsive to your needs and processes the necessary paperwork quickly and efficiently, add them to your contacts or speed dial immediately.

- For more information on Payne Hicks Beach, visit phb.co.uk.
- Are you thinking of moving to London? For advice on letting, buying, selling, or moving, contact Henry & James at 1 Motcomb Street, London SW1X 8JX (020 7235 8861; belgraviaoffice@henryandjames.co.uk).