



26 Market Place
Wantage
Oxfordshire
OX12 8AE

T: **01235 766222**

E: **lettings@douglasandsimmons.co.uk**

LONDON

The London Office is an incorporation of 37 leading estate agents with 228 offices throughout the UK. It also has an International Department dealing with all aspects of overseas property.

T: **020 7839 0888**

E: **enquiries@tlo.co.uk**

OUR GUIDE TO **LETTING** YOUR PROPERTY

www.
the
londonoffice.co.uk
40 ST JAMES'S PLACE SW1

douglasandsimmons.co.uk

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Introduction

Letting your property means making some important decisions on a hugely valuable asset. To help you choose the right path, it is advisable that you take good honest advice from proven resources. This involves a great deal of hard work, preparation and organisation to arrive at the best outcome possible for you. It pays to talk to the right people to achieve this.

As the area's leading estate agent we are confident that you can count on us. We know how to make the process run smoothly, and we're not just saying it! Apart from our reputation for sustained results our performance is continuously monitored by independent market research companies and national online property portals who measure our market share, activity and success on a number of levels.

We have been successfully letting homes in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Wiltshire and Buckinghamshire for over 30 years and we understand how a Landlord can maximise the value of their property ensuring that both the investment for capital growth is assured and also a steady increase in rental yields. We have an ethos for 'going the extra mile' and will strive to exceed your expectations, whilst retaining the personal touch that can only be found from an independent agent. In doing so we use the best people, skills, technologies, processes and promotional campaigns in our approach to reaching these goals.

From valuers, property managers and negotiators to marketers, and friendly customer service personnel, our people are given everything they need to help you succeed with your investment property.

As voluntary members of The Property Ombudsman and a licensed ARLA agent we adhere to the industry codes of practice ensuring your property is fully compliant to the latest regulations.

This guide contains some tried and tested tips for a successful let, so wherever you are in our area, we know you will find them useful.



“we only use the best people, technologies and promotional campaigns, it pays to talk to the right people”



Valuing your property

Our property valuations are carried out by our senior, highly experienced ARLA qualified valuers with a wealth of expertise in the property market spanning many years. Taking into account market conditions and the current demand for your property, our valuers will be able to demonstrate clearly comparable evidence of properties currently on the market and those which have secured Tenant(s), ensuring the right interest would be reflected in your property.

Accurate valuations help us to win trust, leading to more clients trusting us to let their property than any other estate agent.

“our accurate valuations
help us to win trust”

How to prepare for letting

As part of the organisation process, in coming to the market there are several key areas to be addressed. We're here to guide you step by step through it too.

1. Paperwork

- An **EPC** (Energy Performance Certificate) is a requirement by law before your property can be placed on the market. We are able to arrange this for you with a reputable assessor at a nominal cost. The EPC certificate remains the property of the Landlord and is current for 10 years.
- **Appliances and manuals** It is essential all appliances including the boiler have the manufacturers operating instructions. All appliances should be in a clean state and have been regularly serviced to ensure legal obligations are met. Details of any warranties or insurance policies should be supplied.

2. Property presentation and condition

The decoration and fixtures of the property make a big difference if they are modern and in good order, ensuring the property is let within a short space of time and maximising the rental income. We can offer advice on improving properties and can also provide excellent local contractors who are able to give free estimates on improving the presentation.

3. Leasehold properties

It is important to check the requirements of your lease for leasehold properties to ensure both you and us, your agent, understands the rules of the management company.

4. Insurance

Landlords are required to ensure the property is fully insured for both its building and contents. We can obtain a quote for you. We will also be able to help with 'Rent Protection', as part of our management fee.

5. Legal ownership

Providing proof of legal ownership is important before letting out your property and consent from all owners will be required.

6. Tax

All income from rental properties are subject to UK Tax Laws, whether the Landlord lives in the UK or not. Non UK resident Landlords are required to apply to HMRC and fill out an NRL1 form. It is important that if you do have any tax questions you refer to a qualified tax accountant; again we may well be able to help with this.

7. Utilities

The Tenant(s) is usually responsible for paying all utility bills including Council Tax. We ensure the utility's companies are notified of the Tenant's details and meter readings at the beginning of a Tenancy. MIA connections are organised by the Tenant(s).

“more people trust us to let their property than any other letting agent”



“first impressions count.”



Preparing your property for viewings

Some good advice in creating the right first impression for a potential Tenant(s)

1. First impressions

A clear, clean and tidy path and entrance to the property gives the right first impression. Ensure that the entrance is free of rubbish, bins and garden debris.

2. Lighting

Lighting is important and cleanliness of windows to maximise natural light will appeal to potential Tenant(s). If the property is vacant make sure the mains electricity is on and all the light bulbs are working.

3. Temperature

Depending on the time of year, airing the property prior to a viewing ensures a Tenant feels comfortable in your property. Likewise if the viewing is taking place in the winter, ensure the heating is on in regular bursts to ensure the Tenant(s) feels comfortable walking round the property. This also helps with the prevention of damage from frost.

4. Freshness

Good ventilation sometimes with the aid of a de-humidifier ensures that the property stays free from damp smells and other odours.

5. Cleaning

Frequent thorough cleaning is essential. If you need a hand with a regular or spring cleaner we are very happy to recommend someone to you.

6. Garden

If applicable, gardens should be presented in a tidy and seasonal state.

Marketing to generate interest

At Douglas and Simmons we only use the best people, processes and promotional campaigns in our approach in order that we can generate as much interest in your property as possible.

To achieve the best possible results our proven comprehensive marketing package is constantly evolving.

We target our communications so that they reach the most appropriate Tenant(s) for your property.

90% of Tenant(s) start their property search online, therefore we have a number of digital marketing strategies to ensure your property is being targeted at the right audience.

We adopt various pricing strategies which take on board market conditions and your requirements. These include encompassing our latest technologies, along with more traditional marketing methods ensuring that we are 'all things to all people'.

“we ensure that your property is being targeted at the right audience”





An overview of our key marketing initiatives

“our brand presence puts Douglas & Simmons at the foremost of the mind of anyone looking to rent property”

1. We invest heavily in the successful Douglas and Simmons brand. Our brand presence puts Douglas & Simmons at the foremost of the mind of anyone looking to rent property.
2. Your property listed on our latest fully responsive website.
3. Online national portal search engine advertising with Rightmove, Zoopla, Primelocation and Fish 4 Homes.
4. Prominent central lettings office open 6 days a week.
5. We accompany all of our property viewings 6 days a week.
6. Targeted postal marketing campaigns using the most comprehensive market research technology.
7. Regular communication to numerous Tenant(s) registered within our extensive cloud based database.
8. High quality brochure tailored to your property with full colour photography, comprehensive descriptions and colour floorplans on request.
9. Full colour local, regional and national newspaper and media advertising.
10. Social media networking and quarterly property newsletter.
11. In-house full colour LED lit A3 window displays and rotating TV displays.
12. Your own Douglas & Simmons 'To Let' board.
13. Regular marketing updates on your property from our experienced team.
14. Meaningful, prompt viewing feedback.
15. Expert negotiation. Our experienced lettings negotiators know exactly how and when to close the deal.
16. Tenant(s) qualification. We validate Tenant(s) diligently. It is vital to check the Tenant's financial status is in place and to understand their circumstances and timescales.
17. Our management services provide you with a comprehensive property management service and personal property manager.
18. Our services include full management, part management, property investment advice, Tenant(s) find and rent processing.

Services

We offer a number of different services to satisfy the individual needs of our clients, ranging from full management of your property to a let only service where we would find you a suitable Tenant(s). We are here to help you choose the right service for your needs too.

Introduction only/find a Tenant service

- Visit the property and advise upon rents, furnishings and related matters.
- Actively promote and market the property on all the major internet portals, through local media advertising, our fully responsive website, targeted postal marketing campaigns, our prominent high street offices, through our extensive cloud based applicant database and the association of our highly respected brand.
- Erect a 'To Let' marketing board and a 'Let By' board when a Tenant(s) is found.
- Arrange and carry out accompanied viewing appointments for prospective Tenant(s) and provide timely feedback to the Landlord.
- Negotiate and agree between the Landlord and the Tenant(s), subject to contract, a rent and length of Tenancy.

Letting with Tenancy set-up service

- To perform the "Introduction only/find Tenant(s) service".
- Provide full professional referencing.
- Provide and execute Tenancy Agreement and to serve all relevant statutory notices.
- Collect one month's rent in advance, together with a deposit in respect of non-performance of the Tenant(s) Tenancy obligations.
- To register the deposit to comply with the Tenancy Deposit Protection legislation.
- Arrange Inventory/Gas Safety Certificate/Electrical Safety Certificate/Energy Performance Certificate (**all charged to the Landlord at cost; invoices will be provided**).
- Forward balance of monies received after deduction of fees or invoice additional fees owing.

Let and rent supervision with Tenancy set-Up

- To perform the "Let only with Tenancy set up service".
- Arrange to receive the rent from the Tenant(s) and forward it to the Landlord on a monthly basis.
- Payment will be made to the Landlord within 10 clear working days following receipt of the rent. Payment will be sent directly to the Landlord's bank or building society account, unless otherwise directed.
- Provide a monthly statement of rent showing income, expenditure and balance.
- Provide an annual statement showing income, expenditure and balance if required.
- Take all reasonable steps to demand the rent but not to be responsible for issuing proceedings for the recovery of rent on your behalf.

Let and rent supervision with Tenancy set-up and full management

- To perform the "Let only with Tenancy set up service".
- Visit the property whilst Tenant is in occupation up to four times a year where possible; a report will be sent detailing any observations or maintenance that need addressing to the Landlord. N.B. General repairs, maintenance and visits will only be carried out during tenancies and not during void periods whilst the property is not occupied although this service can be offered by arrangement.
- Deal with any matters arising during the Tenancy in connection with general repairs and maintenance.
- Deduct payment for repairs and maintenance from the rent.
- Instruct tradesmen to carry out any maintenance, repairs and other work on your behalf.
- Try to arrange a mutually convenient time for contractors to meet the Tenant(s) when attending the premises to undertake work on your behalf.
- Deal with Tenant(s) daily enquiries.
- Recording and preparing for safety certificate renewal dates and Tenancy renewal dates, among other periodic events.
- Arranging payment of all outgoings such as service charge and ground rent regular payment of ground rents and service charges.
- Change of occupancy notification to utilities and Council Tax.

“we offer a number of lettings services to satisfy your individual needs”



Management only service

- Visit the property whilst Tenant(s) is in occupation up to three times a year where possible; a report will be sent detailing any observations or maintenance that need addressing to the Landlord. N.B. General repairs, maintenance and visits will only be carried out during Tenancies and not during void periods whilst the property is not occupied although this service can be offered by arrangement.
- Deal with any matters arising during the Tenancy in connection with general repairs and maintenance.
- Deduct payment for repairs and maintenance from the rent.
- Instruct tradesmen to carry out any maintenance, repairs and other work on your behalf.
- Try to arrange a mutually convenient time for contractors to meet the Tenant(s) when attending the premises to undertake work on your behalf.
- Deal with Tenant(s) daily enquiries.
- Recording and preparing for safety certificate renewal dates and Tenancy renewal dates, among other periodic events.
- Arranging payment of all outgoings such as service charge and ground rent regular payment of ground rents and service charges.

Renewal service

- Contact the Landlord towards the end of the initial fixed term to establish if the Tenancy is to be renewed.
- Review the rent and period of extension.
- Contact the Tenant(s) to establish if they wish to extend or renew the Tenancy advising of any proposed change in rent.
- Prepare extension/renewal documents for both parties.
- Try to ensure that both parties sign the documentation by the start date of the new period of Tenancy.

“we are here to help
you choose the
right service too”

Viewings

Quite literally we know it pays to present your property in its very best light. Landlords who take time to think about their property's appearance and presentation are the most successful ones. If you can follow our advice on how to achieve this, then congratulations - you are well on your way to achieving a very satisfactory let. And don't forget those all-important finishing touches we mentioned.

Whether or not your property is in top order, clearing out and tidying up doesn't have to cost the earth and you can really benefit from maximising on your property's best assets.

We provide accompanied viewing services 6 days a week. It is important that whilst we are marketing your property that we are clear as to when and how viewings can take place. Holding a key is essential to this service. Rest assured we always confirm each viewing, allowing at least 24 hours' notice to prepare, if necessary.

To expedite the Tenancy process, we hold comprehensive information on anyone stepping through the door of your property. Viewing feedback is vital to measuring the success of the marketing and within 48 hours of the viewing we endeavour to communicate this feedback to you, so that you are kept fully up to speed with your property's performance.

“Landlords who take time to think about their property's appearance and presentation are the most successful ones”



Receiving and negotiating offers

Receiving an offer on your property is the result of a great deal of effort and team work and is therefore the beginning of much anticipation and excitement.

Our experience in negotiation is second to none. Using the market as our talisman by carefully monitoring the interest leading up to this moment, our property professionals know exactly how and when to close the deal. At this point the expertise and liaison skills of your Douglas & Simmons letting agent will be vital in order to achieve the very best price and terms for you. All offers are handled fairly, ethically and with our client's best interests at heart.

All our property transactions are voluntarily regulated by The Property Ombudsman, so you can be assured of a professional and effective service of the highest order.

1. Agreeing the Tenancy

Once we have found a suitable Tenant(s) and negotiated suitable terms for you and you are in agreeance with the Tenancy, we ask the Tenant(s) to pay a fee as well as complete an application form. One application form is completed per Tenant.

2. Accepting an offer

In the interim time we would have confirmed a potential start date for the Tenancy and will liaise with you if there are any outstanding works to be completed on the property prior to the commencement of the Tenancy. At this point the property is 'Let in principle'.

3. Referencing

We use a third party referencing company to check references, employment and Landlord (if applicable) and a comprehensive credit check is also carried out. We will communicate regularly with yourself and the Tenant(s) during this time and once the reference is complete we can send you a summary report on each individual Tenant for your approval.

“our expertise and liaison skills are vital in order to achieve the very best price and terms for you”

The Tenancy Agreement

A Tenancy Agreement is a legally binding contract between you and your Tenant(s) and once your Tenancy is agreed in principle, we will draw up an appropriate agreement for you. In this agreement we will set out clearly the contractual obligations both parties will be bound by, including any special conditions which may apply.

There are two types of Tenancy that can be created when letting out a property:

- Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST)
- Contractual Tenancy

Drawing up a suitable Tenancy Agreement

There are different criteria that apply for each type of Tenancy depending on whether the Tenant is an individual or a company. We will of course advise you to protect your position. It is extremely important that the Tenancy Agreement is professionally drawn up; it includes all the necessary provisions and is up-to-date in terms of the latest legislation. We can supply you with a draft copy of the Tenancy Agreement prior to the Tenancy commencing and you may retain a signed copy for your reference if you so wish.

Inventory

To validate the condition of the property and to avoid any dispute over the deposit at the end of the Tenancy, it is advised that a comprehensive inventory is carried prior to the commencement of the Tenancy. This will ensure the property is handed back to you in the same condition, allowing for 'fair wear and tear' at the end of the Tenancy. We engage a reputable third party company to undertake this to ensure impartiality. This detailed report has embedded colour photos in the document as well as detailed descriptions of each room. We also recommend that a property be professionally cleaned, including the carpets and oven, ensuring the same standard is adhered to at the end of the Tenancy.

Tenancy Deposit Scheme

Since April 2007 it is a legal requirement for a deposit on the property to be registered with a Government scheme. Douglas & Simmons register and send the deposit monies to the Deposit Protection Scheme. The deposit can only be released at the end of the Tenancy if all parties are in agreement.

“a legally binding contract between you and your Tenant”



Commencement of Tenancy

Before the Tenancy commences, we collect the initial monies from the Tenant(s) including the first instalment of rent and the deposit.

Once these have been paid and the funds are cleared the Tenancy can be actioned and the keys can be handed over to the Tenant(s) on commencement of the Tenancy.

We ensure both you and the Tenant(s) are given signed contracts and any additional documentation appertaining to the Tenancy.

Congratulations, your property is now successfully let.

“congratulations,
your property is now
successfully let”

Safety Regulations

Gas safety

In accordance with the **Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998** it is the Landlord's responsibility to ensure that all gas appliances, installations and pipework have been checked by a registered gas safety engineer prior to the commencement of a Tenancy, and annually afterwards. You will need to provide us a copy of a Gas Safety Certificate (GSC) carried out no more than twelve months previously. As part of the service we provide we are able to arrange this for you, so please ask for details. We need to give your Tenant(s) documentary proof of your compliance with these Regulations at the commencement of the Tenancy and within twenty eight days of the GSC being renewed. For more information please visit www.gassaferegister.co.uk.

Fire

1. Electrical

Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994 place a legal responsibility on Landlords to ensure that all electrical appliances within the premises comply with the above Regulations. The Landlord should also ensure that all electrical installations are safe and check them regularly. Instruction books for all items of electrical equipment should also be made available.

2. Upholstery

This also applies to upholstered furniture of soft furnishing which cannot be proven to comply with the above Regulations. Any items without a fire label attached would need to be removed from the property. The Regulations state that upholstered furniture must be match resistant, cigarette resistant and carry a permanent label.

3. Qualified engineers

Part "P" Building Regulations (Electrical Safety in Dwellings). From January 2005 the above Regulations came into force requiring qualified personnel to carry out certain electrical work at premises. To ensure compliance with the Regulations we will only use a competent suitably qualified person to carry out any electrical work at your property.

4. Smoke alarms and Carbon Monoxide alarms

Under current legislation (The Building Regulations 1991) from June 1992 all tenanted properties must have mains fitted smoke alarms with a battery back up fitted. Legislation insists that the same criteria apply to a House in Multiple Occupation. From October 2015 all rental properties are required by law to have smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms fitted. It is a Landlord's responsibility to ensure that all alarms are in working order at the start of a Tenancy.

Water meters

The Tenant(s) has the legal right to have a water meter installed under the Water Act 2003. The Landlord cannot object.

Control of Legionella

It is the Landlord's responsibility to ensure the property is safe from bacteria found in water systems. Particularly in systems that have become stale or stagnant through lack of use or irregular use. Most commonly found in air conditioning systems, humidifiers, whirlpool spas, hot water systems, showers, freshwater ice making machines and freshwater ponds, streams and ornamental fountains externally. A risk assessment should be carried out by the Landlord to assess whether the conditions are right for bacteria to flourish in water temperatures from 20 to 45 degrees C and areas of stagnant water, infrequently used outlets, debris in the system and thermostatic mixing valves should also be inspected.

Steps which can be taken:

- To raise the temperature of warm water – but not to cause scalding
- Disinfect the system
- Insulate pipework

- Keep water systems covered and free from debris
- Flush through rarely used showers and taps

It is now law that Landlords carry out an assessment on all hot and cold water systems every 2 years or at the change of a Tenancy. There is a large fine which can be imposed of upto £20,000 for not doing so.

Safety checks

As part of the service we provide we can arrange for gas and electrical safety checks including PAT (portable appliances testing) to be carried out by a qualified engineer on your behalf. Please ask us for details.

Additional services

'We also offer a number of other services to enable you to let your property in the appropriate condition. These include a fully documented inventory, house or appliance cleaning, redecoration, general maintenance or gardening works, through our panel of carefully selected local maintenance providers and suitability accredited tradespersons. Please ask us for further information'.

“we can arrange for a number of safety checks and maintenance works to be carried out by suitably qualified tradespersons”

Lettings Offices

Full Management, Property Management,
Property Investment, Tenant Find and
Rent Processing

26 Market Place
Wantage
Oxfordshire
OX12 8AE

T: 01235 766222
E: lettings@douglasandsimmons.co.uk

Mortgages and Financial Planning

J Finance Ltd
6A London Road
Newbury
Berkshire
RG14 1JX

T: 01635 521300
E: jonathan@jfinance.co.uk
W: jfinance.co.uk

London and Overseas

40 St James's Place
London
SW1A 1NS

T: 020 7839 0888
E: enquiries@tlo.co.uk
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