

We never hedge our bets...
with our landlords properties



A step by step guide, to your next
'buy to let' property investment



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Stuart
Rushton

& COMPANY

Lettings &
Management

What we offer our Landlords

“our practices and client accounting systems are fully regulated”

We are specialists in the lettings and management of residential property, taking pride in our reputation for providing a professional yet personal service to landlords.

All of our staff are based in Knutsford and offer in depth knowledge of the local area, together with a clear understanding of the individual service requirements relating to every property and landlord.

We can provide our landlords with the peace of mind that their property is in safe hands whilst ensuring that they are receiving the maximum financial return on their investment. We are members of the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA), which means that our practices and client accounting systems are fully regulated. This in turn means that we are accountable and your money is protected and insured.

Why become a landlord?

Purchasing residential property to let can be a secure form of investment with returns comparable to many other kinds of investment.

The majority of our landlords let property for this reason although many others have chosen to let their property because they need to relocate and do not feel selling is the right option for them at the time. Letting a property offers the opportunity to maintain an income from a property with the option to either return or sell at a later date.

Which properties will provide the best investment and return?

The key to 'buy to let' is choosing the right property. This will change according to each area you are considering.

Knutsford is an affluent town with fantastic commuter links and an array of facilities and services therefore our typical tenants are professionals of all ages, looking for high quality well presented accommodation.

We can advise potential landlords of the gaps in the rental market, where we believe that there is most demand and most importantly, where maximum revenue can be achieved.

What needs to be done before the property can be let?

When applicants view properties, they compare condition and appearance as well as obviously location and practicality. Rental applicants are not looking for 'potential', as sales applicants might be, they want to see something that they can move into and live in comfortably as a home with no intention of making improvements – this is one of the many benefits of being a tenant. Presentation will affect both rental value and the speed with which a property is let:

- Decoration should be fresh, light and neutral
- Carpets need to be clean
- Kitchens and bathrooms should be reasonably modern
- Any obvious maintenance issues should be dealt with
- Most importantly, the property should be clean to the highest standards possible

Choosing an agent

Stuart Rushton Lettings & Management are licensed members of the Association of Residential Lettings Agents (ARLA).

ARLA leads the industry in setting and regulating the highest standards in the industry and demands certain levels of professionalism and commitment to customer service from its membership. ARLA members are required to work within a robust Code of Practice, which covers the key stages in letting and managing a property. There are comprehensive membership Byelaws which include compliance with such issues as handling and accounting for Clients' money; the mandatory ARLA Client Money Protection Scheme; Professional Indemnity Insurance; Dealing with Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures.

ARLA members are required to employ a minimum of at least one member of staff, in any office, who holds a suitable industry qualification, recognised by the Association.

ARLA keeps its members up to date with changes in legislation and provides wide-ranging training and guidance to help members understand and interpret all aspects of letting and managing a property.



Why use a licensed agent?

With a licensed ARLA agent you're as safe as houses

How am I better protected with an ARLA licensed agent?

A licensed ARLA agent is qualified and is required to keep up to date with the latest developments in the market and with the changing legislation affecting letting and property management.

Without this knowledge and expertise, whether you're a tenant or a landlord you may be badly advised or misled - or you may even suffer financial loss as a result. By choosing a licensed ARLA agent you are protecting your money because it is covered by a Client Money Protection Scheme. A licensed ARLA firm will also have Professional Indemnity Insurance in place for your protection.

A licensed firm also abides by a Code of Practice as well as Rules of Conduct. This means you can be assured that the service you receive is to the highest standard and your enquiry will be dealt with professionally and fairly.

In the unlikely event that things go wrong, a licensed ARLA Firm has a written complaints procedure. If you are not completely satisfied with the service you have received from a licensed ARLA Agent and cannot resolve the issue directly with the agent or Firm, you have the option of taking your complaint to independent adjudication and redress through the Property Ombudsman Scheme or Ombudsman Services: Property. ARLA Regulations can also consider a complaint and are able to instigate disciplinary sanctions.

Finding a Tenant

Letting a property is not just about finding a tenant that will make an acceptable offer, it is about finding the right tenant for your property.

As the landlord, you are perfectly entitled to dictate your preferences to us as regards pets, minimum length of tenancy, number of individuals that you consider acceptable to be living in the house etc.

We can then take your instruction and find the best tenant for your property. Once we have an acceptable offer, we use our experience as well as thorough referencing to endeavour to ensure that every potential tenant is going to meet the requirement of the tenancy agreement and treat your investment with respect whilst living in the property. Our practices and client accounting systems are fully regulated. This in turn means that we are accountable and your money is protected and insured.

Most importantly, we would never put a tenant in your property that we would not put in our own.

“we have landlords living all over the world”

Managing your property

Some landlords are happy to liaise with their tenants on a regular basis, collect rent and respond to repair and maintenance issues as they arise themselves.

Others prefer to remain ‘anonymous’ and for us to deal with all issues relating to the tenancy on their behalf. We have landlords living all over the world, from Australia, Hong Kong, America and Qatar, therefore we are used to taking responsibility for our clients investment.

- Monthly collection of rent and transfer to landlord by bacs and statement of account by email.
- Meter reading and referral to utility companies.
- Registering of the deposit with the Deposit Protection Scheme (DPS) as required by The Housing Act 2004.
- Quarterly property inspection and report to landlord to ensure that the condition of the property is being maintained satisfactorily.
- Co-ordination of any maintenance work that requires attention on a routine or emergency basis and settling accounts from Float, or pre-agreed monies received from the Landlord.
- Arrangement of any statutory testing that needs to be carried out e.g. electrical inspections, gas safety tests, energy performance certificate etc.
- Collecting and forwarding Landlord's mail if requested.
- Preparation of detailed Inventory and Condition Survey by professional inventory clerk.
- Tenant 'Check Out' at the end of the Tenancy utilising the Inventory and Condition Survey completed at the commencement of the Tenancy.

Do's and Dont's of Buy to Let

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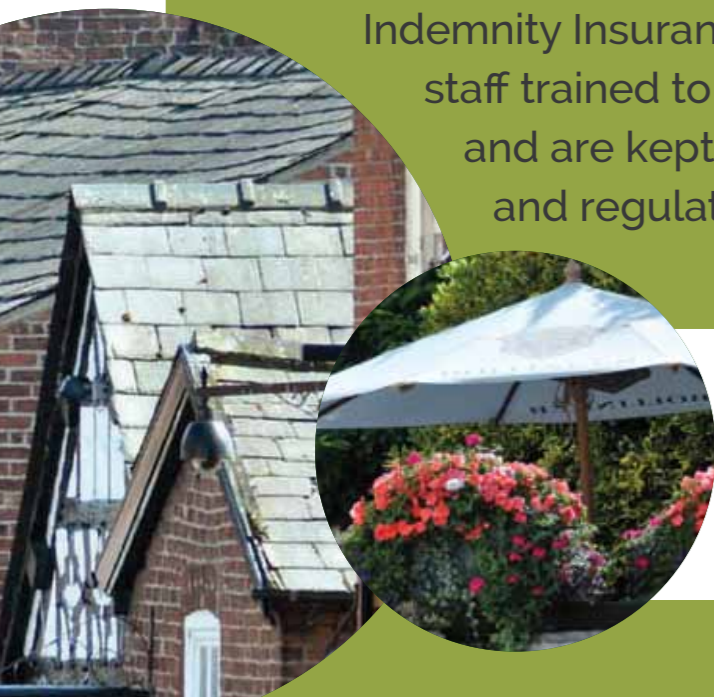
DO... think of buying to let as a medium to long term investment.

DO... seek advice from an ARLA letting agent on local market demands.

DO... get your sums right. Will the rent cover borrowings and costs, after allowing for void periods?

DO... decorate, fit out and furnish to high quality standards, especially kitchens and bathrooms, to attract the best tenants and let quickly every time.

DO... use an ARLA member as your letting agent. They have Client Money Protection, hold Professional Indemnity Insurance to required standards, have staff trained to ARLA's competency standards and are kept up to date with the latest legal and regulatory requirements.



Your quick guide



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DON'T... let personal taste cloud your judgement. Be sure the property you choose meets market requirements.

DON'T... purchase anything with potential maintenance problems like a lot of woodwork or large gardens. It will add nothing to the rental value and cost a lot to keep up.

DON'T... think that the running of an investment property to let can be left to friends or relatives in your absence. Tenants require a full management service.

DON'T... use off-the-shelf tenancy agreements from HMSO or law stationers, or forget to issue the right notices or fail to have a proper inventory and condition report made before a tenant moves in. Leave all documentation to a professional agent.

DON'T... furnish with second hand furniture or cast-off soft furnishings. These will probably contravene the Furniture and Furnishing Regulations.

Landlords & Tenant procedure

"we detail the condition of all aspects of the house"

A professional Inventory & Condition Schedule is an essential part of any tenancy.

This is a very detailed document that itemises the condition of every element of the house, together with photographs and is the only way to identify changes in property condition pre and post tenancy and hence be able to justify a deduction from the deposit where this is not due to 'fair wear and tear'.

At the end of every tenancy both landlord and tenant must agree on any deduction before monies can be returned from the Deposit Protection Service (DPS). The onus is on the landlord to demonstrate that damage or wear has been caused by the tenant. If this cannot be proved then there can be no deduction.

A detailed inventory is crucial to ensure that tenants can be held liable for any remedial works required after they vacate.

FAQ's answered?

What happens if the tenant doesn't move out after the end of the tenancy?

Try to quickly establish the reasons why. However, if a tenant does not move out after a tenancy has been lawfully terminated then the landlord can apply to the Courts for a possession order. Under the Accelerated Possession Procedure (which can be used where the tenancy was an Assured Shorthold) the process is usually fairly quick and inexpensive.

What kind of tenancy agreement will be used?

The most common form of tenancy agreement used is an "Assured Shorthold" (an AST) under the 1988 Housing Act (amended 1996). This type of tenancy offers the most flexibility to both landlord and tenant; has straightforward notice procedures for bringing the tenancy to an end and a special Accelerated Possession court procedure should tenants fail to vacate. If certain specific conditions are met relating to the proposed letting, a "contractual" non-housing act tenancy must be created. One example of this would be what is commonly referred to as a Company Let where the tenant is a bona fide registered company.

How much is the tenants deposit, and what happens to it?

Typically this is four to six weeks' rent and is payable upon the signing of the Tenancy Agreement. The deposit should then be registered with a tenancy deposit protection scheme within 14 days.

I am moving overseas, what should I do regarding my tax affairs?

If you are going to be overseas for 6 months or more of the tax year you must either gain approval from the Inland Revenue by completing an NRL1 form or by law we, as your agent, must withhold a percentage of your net rental income and pass it (on a quarterly basis) to the Inland Revenue.

Who is responsible for utility bills while my property is let?

The tenant becomes responsible for utility bills and council tax while the property is let. We advise the utility companies and the council tax office of the incoming and outgoing occupier and liaise with them throughout your property's management.

How do I know I am getting a good tenant?

We conduct identity checks on all applicants. We also obtain a credit reference and take up employer and current landlord references. For applicants who have a clean credit history but who are financially weak for the rental commitment we either ask for a guarantor or obtain full settlement of rent in advance for the tenancy term.