



LETTINGS & PROPERTY
MANAGEMENT

INFORMATION PACK

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ABOUT US

Established in 1994 our success has been meteoric. Our unique style and professional approach have made us the most sought after Agent in the area. We now have six local offices handling all types of property from bijou seaside flats, commercial properties through to the finest country houses. Our partners are dedicated not only to ensuring that your property is let successfully but that afterwards you will happily recommend us to your friends. Over ninety per cent of our work is from recommendation and referral. With our national and international contacts there is nobody better placed to get your property let.

With over 40 dedicated staff to serve you, isn't it time you went with Rush Witt & Wilson?



GUIDE TO LETTING YOUR PROPERTY

Free Rental Appraisal

One of our dedicated team will meet you and carry out a free no obligation rental appraisal, along with discussing your needs and what Rush Witt & Wilson can offer you.

Marketing

Following your instructions we will market your property from our 6 local offices. Your property will be advertised in the Friday-Ad, Local Observer Newspaper and Wealden Advertiser, along with widespread internet coverage.

Tenant Referencing

Once a suitable tenant has been found, their application forms will be processed by our dedicated referencing team, and our experienced and professional staff will firstly discuss their details with you. Once you are happy to proceed we will run a credit check and apply for references. Once all of these have come back satisfactorily we will agree a move in date.

Move In

On the agreed move in date we will meet with the tenants to sign Tenancy Agreements and Condition Schedules, providing a copy for yourself and one for the tenants to keep. Meter readings will be taken and we will pass the new tenants details along with meter readings onto the relevant suppliers and the council tax office.

We will arrange for a standing order to be set up to pay the monthly rent, either to yourselves if you employ us on a let only service or directly to us if you opted for the full management package, we will then forward to you minus our monthly fee for which you will be provided with an invoice.

Management

If you opted for the Let Only Service, the landlord would take over the management from this point, we will provide all contact details for the tenant. If you opted for the Full Management Package the tenant will continue to contact us should there be any problems. We will carry out an initial 3 month inspection, followed by rolling 6 monthly inspections.



OUR SERVICES

Our dedicated Administrative and Property Management office, based in St Leonards, will guide you through the rental process, regardless of which service you choose:

Tenant Find Only:

- We will advertise your property from our 6 offices across the local area, along with regular adverts in the Friday-Ad, Local Observer Newspaper and Wealden Advertiser
- We will carry out all viewings and report to you regularly with feedback.
- Once we have found a suitable tenant we will obtain references and draw up an Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement.
- We will see the tenant into the property and arrange for a standing order to be set up for monthly rent payments.

Full Management Package:

The full management package includes all listed above in the tenant find only package plus:

- Collection of rent on a monthly basis and forwarding on to you less our commission
- Carry out an initial 3 month inspection, followed by rolling 6 monthly inspections
- We will act as first point of contact between the tenant and landlord.
- We will carry out specific requests from landlords with regards to the property
- We will carry out the "Move Out" Inspection and negotiate the return of the deposit monies.

Management of Maintenance Works:

Offered to all landlords on the Full Management Package:

- We will organise contractors to carry out the work.
- Agree a quote and supervise works carried out.
- Approve satisfactory completion and agree payment.



LETTING & MANAGEMENT FEES

The Let Only Service:

Please contact office for charges

The Full Management Package:

Please contact office for charges

Management of Maintenance Works:

Please contact office for charges

Condition Schedule Charges:

Please contact office for charges

Property	1 - 2 Bedroom Flats	2-3 Bedroom Maisonette	2 Bedroom House	3-4 Bedroom House	5 Bedroom plus House
Unfurnished					
Furnished (£50 surcharge)					

Resigning Tenancy Agreements:

On a 6 monthly basis: Please contact office for charges



The Benefits of Letting

You may be considering letting for a number of reasons. Perhaps you will be working overseas for a number of years and want to retain a stake in the UK housing market. Perhaps you have recently inherited a property or you may be one of a growing group of people who view property as a key element of their investment portfolio.

Whatever your reason for letting, the private rental sector has never been more attractive.

- Recent legislative changes have removed many of the uncertainties associated with letting, so that you should always be able to regain possession of your property at the end of a letting period.
- Financial returns from letting have significantly improved due to the return to real growth in house prices, the availability of 'buy to let' mortgage schemes, and the ability to offset most costs associated with letting against rental income for tax purposes. Letting can provide both Income and Capital Growth.
- Strong economic growth, an increasingly mobile professional workforce and corporate relocations combine to ensure a strong demand for rental property in this geographic region, thus ensuring that you have minimal periods when your property remains unlet. We trust that you will find this guide will be informative and helpful.

Assessment of the Property

Various factors need to be taken into account when advising a Landlord on how they should best proceed with their letting. The location, condition and size of the property, standard of contents and fittings provided and prevailing market forces are all factors which must be considered.

A Property Assessment will be carried out by an experienced Rush Witt & Wilson representative visiting the property to carry out an initial inspection, following which all relevant issues will be discussed in greater detail with you. This enables you to ask any questions that you may have and discuss any particular concerns. This service is provided free and with no obligation.



Should I Let Furnished or Unfurnished?

All properties should usually include carpets and curtains. Furnished properties will also include the furniture found in most homes (beds, tables, chairs, suites), cooker and fridge, kitchen crockery, cooking utensils and cutlery.

A major consideration for Landlords who have a choice whether to let a property furnished or unfurnished is that there are Regulations which must be adhered to specifically on furnished properties. This is discussed further under "Soft Furnishings - Fire Regulations".

Better presentation and quality of the property and furnishings will be reflected in the monthly rental achievable. Linen and towels are not normally included even in a fully furnished property, and we would strongly advise against leaving a television, video, hi-fi equipment etc., other than in executive lets.

The Inventory

As part of our comprehensive service to Landlords, we can arrange an Inventory and Schedule of Condition. Even if the property is unfurnished there should be a Schedule of Condition for the property itself. Carpets and curtains can be very expensive to replace and unless the condition of these soft furnishings and interior décor is properly documented, you will be unable to claim recompense for any damage at the end of the Tenancy.

Tips on Presentation

- Neutral décor works best
- Remove all "clutter"
- Painted surfaces are easier to maintain than wallpaper
- Gardens should be neat & tidy
- Professional cleaning is recommended



LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Gas Safety Regulations

It is the duty of the Landlord to ensure that all gas supplied appliances are maintained in a safe condition, inspected and checked for safety at least every 12 months by a Gas SAFE registered engineer. A Gas Safety Certificate should be issued by the Gas SAFE registered engineer and a copy given to both the tenant and managing agent. Appliances that typically need to be checked include Gas Central Heating Boilers, Ovens, Hobs, Water Heaters and Room Heaters.

As these provisions apply equally to the managing agent as well as the Landlord, you will understand that we must take a clear stance in this matter to the extent that we are unable to accept and/or retain a property on our books unless, in respect of all appliances, either:

- A current certificate is already in force OR
- The Landlord is obtaining a certificate which is given to us before we install a tenant OR
- The Landlord authorises Rush Witt & Wilson to take the necessary action and obtain a certificate via one of our authorised maintenance personnel.

Non-compliance with the Gas Safety Regulations is a criminal offence and could result in a heavy fine, imprisonment or both.

SAFETY TIP: Ensure that all instruction booklets and manuals for appliances are available at the property for the tenants' reference.

Electrical Safety

The landlord is responsible for ensuring that all electrical appliances supplied in the accommodation must be safe for use. We are happy to arrange for the necessary electrical inspections to be carried out on your behalf.

Smoke Detectors

The law requires that all new houses built after June 1992 have electronically linked, mains operated smoke detectors installed on each floor. Although older properties are exempt from this requirement, we strongly recommend that smoke detectors be installed on each floor in all rental properties.



Furniture and furnishings fire safety

The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amended) Regulations 1993 require that all upholstered furniture and furnishings in rented properties pass the "cigarette test". If any property is found not to comply the landlord faces fines or imprisonment, or both. Any Landlord placing a property on the rental market for the first time must comply with these regulations immediately, and any furniture not complying must be removed before the tenancy commences.

Similarly, if any items in a property subject to an existing rental are replaced, either during a tenancy or a void period, then those replacement items must continue to satisfy the requirements of these important Regulations.

Products covered by the furniture and furnishings regulations

- Furniture intended for private use in a dwelling, including children's furniture
- Beds, head-boards, mattresses
- Sofa-beds, futons and other convertible's
- Nursery furniture
- Garden furniture which is suitable for use in a dwelling
- Pillows, cushions & seat-pads
- Loose and stretch covers for furniture

Products usually not covered by the regulations

- Curtains, Carpets, Sleeping bags
- Bed-clothes (including duvets)
- Loose covers for mattresses and pillowcases
- Furniture made before 1950

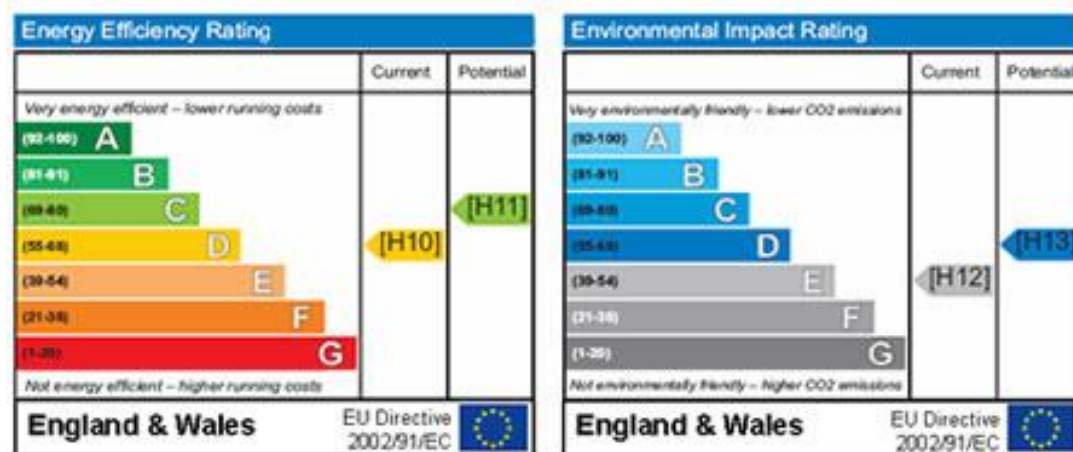
Energy Performance Certificates (EPC)

From 1 October 2008, all rental properties with a new tenancy in England and Wales will be required to have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). The energy efficiency and environmental impact of your property will be rated on a scale from A-G (where A is the most efficient and G the least efficient). Current running costs for heating, hot water and lighting will also be shown on the certificate, together with a list of recommended energy saving improvements. The certificates last for a ten year period, Rush Witt & Wilson have an appointed energy assessor and we can arrange for this to be done on your behalf.

What is an Energy Performance Certificate

EPCs look similar to the energy labels found on domestic appliances such as fridges and washing machines.

The energy efficiency and environmental impact of your property will be rated on a scale from A-G (where A is the most efficient and G the least efficient) as shown below. Current running costs for heating, hot water and lighting will also be shown on the certificate, together with a list of recommended energy saving improvements.



The energy efficiency rating is a measure of the overall efficiency of a home. The higher the rating the more energy efficient the home is and the lower the fuel bills will be.

The environmental impact rating is a measure of a home's impact on the environment in terms of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. The higher the rating the less impact it has on the environment.

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As your letting agent, we have access to an accredited DOMESTIC ENERGY ASSESSOR (DEA). They will visit your property to assess the age, construction and location of the property as well as its current fittings such as heating systems, insulation, double glazing etc. Alternatively DEAs can be found in local directories or via www.hcrregister.com/findassessorinspector if you wish to make your own



arrangements. We need to have an EPC on file when we begin marketing your property. Charges will be advised.

What can I do to make my energy rating as high as possible?

- Insulating your property is the most cost effective measure you can take. In most cases cavity wall insulation is straightforward, inexpensive and hassle-free. Installing new loft insulation in most properties is an easy DIY job and should be done to a depth of 270mm.
- If your boiler is over 15 years old it's probably time to replace it and you will get a better rating if you combine it with modern heating controls. If you need to save space, buy a combi boiler, which does not store hot water in a tank but heats water directly from cold water mains as it is used.
- Fit a hot water tank jacket
- While double glazing can be fairly expensive, it will reduce noise and lower heating bills
- When purchasing new appliances look out for the Energy Saving Recommended logo, and choose the most energy efficient in their category.

For free, impartial advice on energy efficiency improvements call 0800 512 012 or visit www.energysavingtrust.org.uk.

Are there grants to help cover installation costs

There are several grants available than can cut your costs by half or even to zero! Visit www.est.org.uk/myhome/gid to see if you are eligible.

If your tenants are in receipt of certain benefits you may be able to get your property insulated at a significant discount or even for free. Visit www.warmfront.co.uk (England) for further information.

If you have insulated your properties you can also reduce your income tax by claiming under the Landlords Energy Saving Allowance. Visit www.hmrc.gov.uk/budget2004/revbn31.htm for further information.

Why is the Government introducing EPCs?

Domestic energy use accounts for 27% of the UK's carbon dioxide emissions. The Government is introducing a number of energy saving initiatives, including EPCs, aimed at making all buildings more energy efficient. These measures are being applied across all European Union countries as per the European Directive for the Energy Performance of Buildings.



The Tax Position

You will be liable to pay income tax on your net income from the property, that is the gross income less allowable expenses, which are incurred in letting the property. If you live abroad permanently or are working abroad for an extended period you will still normally be required to pay income tax on the net income from any property letting.

There are some additional obligations on the part of the letting agent with respect to overseas landlords, which you should be aware of. We are required to withhold a proportion of rental income (equivalent to the basic rate of tax) and pay this directly to the Inland Revenue unless we receive specific written exemption from the Inland Revenue not to do so. The granting of exemption to withholding tax is at the discretion of the Inland Revenue and is likely to be withdrawn if you are subsequently delinquent in making the appropriate tax returns.

As can be seen just from these brief references, personal taxation is a complex area and one where, as with the letting itself, it is essential to take professional advice from a specialist.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I need permission from anybody to let my property?

Mortgage Consent - If your property is mortgaged you must advise your bank, building society or mortgagee that you propose letting your property and obtain their written consent. Sometimes an administration fee is charged for issuing a consent letter and it is possible that there may be a variation in the interest rate level.

Leasehold Consent - If your property is leasehold, your head-lease will state whether or not you require permission from the Freeholder to sub-let. You should find that your lease will contain a clause indicating that you must obtain consent from your head leaseholder (or freeholder) but that such consent should not be unreasonably.

Some of the expenses usually allowable against rental income

- Mortgage interest
(usually allowable to the full value of the mortgage)
- Managing Agent's fees
- The cost of providing services included in the rent e.g. gas, electricity, water rates.
- Legal and accounting fees
- Insurance for buildings and contents
- Ground rent
- Repairs and redecoration
- Wear & Tear allowance for furniture, fixtures & fittings

Will my money be safe?

It is essential for Landlords to ensure that they only entrust their properties and any rents, and maintenance funds to agents who operate to the highest professional standards. Rush Witt & Wilson maintains separate clients' accounts and operates these accounts to professional standards, which protect the interests of landlords and tenants. This basis of trust and confidence is the keystone of our success, and has generated many excellent referrals over the years.

Should I Let Furnished or Unfurnished?

All properties should usually include carpets and curtains. Furnished properties will also include the furniture found in most homes, A major consideration for Landlords who have a choice whether to let a property furnished or unfurnished is that there are Regulations which must be adhered to specifically on furnished properties. The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amended) Regulations 1993 require that all



upholstered furniture and furnishings in rented properties pass the "cigarette test". If any property is found not to comply the landlord faces fines or imprisonment, or both. Any Landlord placing a property on the rental market for the first time must comply with these regulations immediately, and any furniture not complying must be removed before the tenancy commences.

How do I know that the tenants will look after my property?

Depending on which service you require, if managed we regularly inspect the property during the tenancy and provide a written report to you. These inspections are usually carried out as an initial 3-month inspection, then six monthly. From our extensive experience we know that if the tenant understands that the property and their occupancy of it is being closely monitored they are more likely to maintain a higher standard of care in that property. The tenancy agreement makes reference to the fact that we have the right to visit the property at times acceptable to the tenant, provided reasonable notice has been given. If you want to visit the property yourself during the tenancy we will arrange this for you, but again the tenant is entitled to prior notice.

What if there is any damage?

On taking occupancy the tenant lodges a dilapidation bond. This bond is held by the **Deposit Protection Service**, a government run body, throughout the tenancy by Rush Witt & Wilson, as provision after allowing for the length of the tenancy against anything that could reasonably be regarded as fair wear and tear. When tenants are checked out of a property an assessment is made, by comparison against the original inventory, of any redecoration or minor repairs, which cannot reasonably be accepted as fair wear and tear. The **Deposit Protection Service** will negotiate and agree with the tenant and landlord the amount that will be withheld, obtain estimates by way of confirmation and the net deposit then remaining will usually be released to the tenant.

What about repairs and maintenance?

Repairs are of course necessary to each and every property throughout the length of the tenancy and Landlords must be prepared for this eventuality plus of course repair and/or replacement of major electrical items such as cookers, washing machines, fridges; freezers and boilers as they age.

Where there is an emergency repair, such as a burst pipe or a gas leak, there are different legal obligations on all parties and we may well need to instruct the work immediately to prevent any further damage to the property or health and safety risk to the tenants. In such circumstances we may need to act first and then report to you, and common sense has much to do with such decisions. However, it is also made clear to tenants that only in the most extreme of circumstances should they consider instructing their own contractor and that should they do so they may be liable themselves for the full costs.



What about the garden?

Before the Tenant moves into the Property arrangements should be made for the garden to be in good order. Tenants are generally responsible for the upkeep of the garden and you should provide sufficient gardening tools and a mower for their use, these items being included in the inventory. Alternatively, you may wish us to arrange for a regular gardener during the tenancy and reflect this cost in the rental charged.

How can I be sure that the rent will be paid?

The tenancy agreement is a legal contract and as such is enforceable by law. We do everything we can to ensure that the right tenant is selected, However there are odd occasions when problems can arise and unexpected difficulties such as redundancy, long term illness or a relationship breakdown can suddenly affect the best of tenants. We will always try to rectify problem situations, such as promptly sending reminder letters for any outstanding rental, visiting the property and discussing as far as possible the problems being experienced. We will of course provide all the help and information needed in supporting a Landlord, and there is also a range of insurance policies specifically designed to protect Landlords against the legal costs and potential loss of rent, which might arise in litigation cases.

What insurances can you refer me to?

We will be pleased to refer you to Rentguard who can provide any insurances you may feel you require to cover your buildings, contents, legal costs and rental income. Apart from the legal and rent protection policies, cover is also available for buildings and/or contents. You should exercise caution in assuming that an existing policy will continue unaffected by rental activity. In particular, do not assume that simply because consent to a letting has been granted by a lender that any cover effected through that lender will continue as before.

What Happens to the Utilities?

Gas, Electricity and Water

The gas, electricity and water companies etc should be advised whenever the property is empty so that meters can be read and accounts prepared. We will do this for you on the initial letting and also each time there is a change of tenant or the property is to be empty for some other reason. During these 'void' periods the utility services will be transferred back into your name. The tenant is obviously responsible for the gas, electricity and water/sewerage bills generated by their usage during the tenancy,



including standing charges, but their liabilities in this respect clearly finish on the date of their vacation.

Telephone

Generally speaking telephone companies will not deal with third parties. You must inform the telephone company that you are leaving the property and advise them what you want to do with your existing number. The tenants are responsible for arranging any line reconnections and meeting any costs associated with this.

Council Tax

Payment is not the Landlord's responsibility whilst the entire property is let. When an unfurnished property is unoccupied it is exempt for 6 months, then 50% of the Council Tax becomes payable. If empty and furnished then the 50% becomes payable immediately and throughout any void period between tenancies. If you still reside at the property whilst acting as a Landlord then you will remain responsible for the Council Tax charge. We will inform the Council Tax office of each and every change in occupancy. There is a clear legal obligation on a property occupier to register for Council Tax.

A Summary of Services

- Advice on letting your Property
- Advice & assistance with Property Regulations
- Marketing, Advertising and Showing your Property
- Arranging an Inventory & Schedule of Condition
- Thorough Tenant Referencing via specialist agency
- Preparation of all Tenancy Agreements & Notices
- Checks at the beginning & end of each Tenancy
- Notifying utilities of change of occupancy and meter readings
- Collection of Rent and pursuing any arrears
- Prompt payment of net rental income into your bank account
- Detailed monthly statements to yourself and your accountant
- Regular Property Inspections
- Arrangement of Maintenance and Repairs
- Arrangement of gardening and cleaning services
- Arrangement of Energy Performance Certificates

If you have any further questions which we haven't covered in the pack do please give us a call.