

MARKET INTELLIGENCE

# Neighbour selling at the same time? How to make your house stand out

Gain the upper hand with these tips

Martina Lees

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In St John's Wood, northwest London, this house has consent for a basement (£9.5 million, Arlington Residential)

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Whether they are stucco-fronted townhouses, Victorian red-brick terraces or pastel-painted cottages, the homes on Britain's most popular streets have one thing in common: they look like those next door. So if you're selling at the same time as your neighbour, how can you make your property stand out?

Naomi Edmondson, 29, put her three-bedroom mews house in Notting Hill, west London, on the market last April and found herself competing with her neighbour, Simon Grantley, 59, who had converted one large property on the same cobbled street into a trio of three-bedroom mews houses. In Edmondson's home sunlight cascades down four floors through a large roof light atop a glass staircase. "That's why I first fell in love with mine. We get sun for the whole day," says Edmondson, who had her first child last year and is selling to upsize. Yet she admits that her initial asking price was too high at £2.9 million. Last month she dropped it to £2.5 million, having bought it for £2.45 million in 2013.

On the opposite side of Princes Mews, Grantley, who has done up a handful of London mews houses, has combined minimalist oak and exposed brick with crisp white interiors. Priced from £2.25 million, his three projects were shortlisted for the London

Design Awards 2019. As a “sweetener”, Grantley is offering a parking space. Short of a £400,000 price cut or a design award, how can you get ahead of your neighbours?

### **Use the same estate agent**

James Robinson of Lurot Brand, which is marketing Grantley’s and Edmondson’s homes, says: “A buyer will want to compare all the houses before making a decision, so you will get more viewings.” However, if your neighbour’s house is more modern, choose a different agency. “Otherwise your property will be shown in parallel to upsell the other one,” says Thea Carroll, a property consultant. Listing with more than two agencies can seem desperate and put off buyers who are already wary amid Brexit uncertainty.

### **Don’t delay**

Last year the owner of a flat in Marylebone, central London, waited for the near-identical flat upstairs to sell before marketing hers, “so to not flood the area and help her neighbour out”, Carroll says. The neighbour sold for £1.295 million, but it took the other owner a year to find a buyer, in which time the market dipped. She eventually accepted an offer of £1 million.

### **Price it right**

A third of inquiries are generated in the first week of a home being on the market, according to Zoopla, a property portal. Its online price estimate can be a starting point to see what your house is worth, but always get a mix of four or five local, national and international estate agencies to value it. Check the portals' price brackets and list below the nearest cut-off. "If you think your house is worth £2.05 million, you will likely lose a quarter of the portal traffic that doesn't want to search over a £2 million budget," Carroll says.

In Bristol, Knight Frank, an estate agency, recently sold a house for 7 per cent over its £1.1 million guide price, after 25 viewings and seven offers in two weeks. Now the neighbours are selling. "Although we suggested the same guide price of £1.1 million, they insisted on asking £1.17 million — the sold

price of their neighbour's house," says Troy Budd, a senior negotiator at the branch. "It's been a slow start, which highlights how important the initial price is for getting people through the door."

### **Style your home for its most likely buyer**

Ascertain whether you need a play garden and reading nook for young families, or modern decor and a low-maintenance garden for young professionals. An empty home will struggle against neighbours' lived-in interiors and create the impression that you are under pressure to sell, so rent a furniture package if you have moved out.

This five-bedroom house in Bath, Somerset, is on the market for £2 million through Knight Frank

### **List in early spring**

This is the time of year when there is less competition, with images of your garden taken at its best. "If your neighbour launches with wintry pictures, you may just get one up

on them,” says Harry Gladwin of the Buying Solution, a buying agency.

### **Get planning permission to extend**

For improvements that won't need this, secure a certificate of lawful development to give buyers certainty of what can be achieved, says Michael Holmes, a property expert for the London Homebuilding & Renovating Show. For £100, [Resi.co.uk](https://www.resi.co.uk) can create a 3D interactive model to show what this would look like.

After living in their detached house in St John's Wood, northwest London, for more than 40 years, its owners are selling it with consent for a basement and ground-floor extension that would increase floor space by 60 per cent. The property is on sale for £9.5 million through Arlington Residential.

### **Prepare paperwork for any completed works and engage a solicitor**

“A buyer will sense an organised seller and will engage more rapidly,” says William Tremlett of Sotheby's International, an estate agency. “For example, it only costs about £10 and takes a week to get a Fensa certificate for new windows, but little things like that delay a sale.”

### **Be chain-free**

This way your sale does not depend on your

next purchase going through, says Liza-Jane Kelly, a residential director at Savills. Even if you have to rent for a while, being willing to move when it suits your buyer can make a difference.

## The London Homebuilding & Renovating Show is at the Excel centre in east London from October 4-6

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