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Quietly does it: Robert Bailey opens up about private sales



*To sell your property on the open market or not? That is the question... at least in prime central London, says **Robert Bailey**.*

Go back 20 years ago and while it was not unheard of to have a property listed quietly, it was nowhere near as commonplace as it is now. Of course, back then, property websites did not exist so nosy neighbours could not log on to see how much you are selling your house for, not to mention how you have it decorated or what the floor plans are.

People have every reason to be concerned about their privacy. I remember sitting in a meeting at a blue chip estate agency where they were debating whether or not to post the floor plans of houses on the website. The internet was relatively new then (yes, despite my youthful looks, I have been in this business a very long time) so getting to grips with its implications was a challenge. Several selling agents in this meeting were horrified at the prospect of providing such detailed information, labelling it a "burglar's charter". Even more recently, I had to ensure contracts and other documents were not sent to our clients using our standard franking machine lest the words "Robert Bailey Property" tip off our clients' household staff that their employers were considering moving house.

Whereas once a house was launched onto the market with a large advert in a glossy magazine, people's desire for discretion has put paid to this strategy. Vendors simply do not want a high profile campaign. They want to keep it under the radar and certainly do not want hoards of people trampling through their home.

Very recently I met with my clients who were also in the process of selling their home in Belgravia. They took my advice and listed it privately with a prominent estate agent in their area. A handful of brochures were produced to be distributed to a carefully screened selection of potential buyers. In the end, two potential buyers emerged and after the property went to sealed bids, my clients achieved a very good price for their home. It was simple, discreet and most of all, very effective.

Selling a house off-market is not appropriate for every property or every vendor but I do not think it puts vendors at a huge disadvantage. In fact, I think that it can often give a property an aura of exclusivity and therefore make it more desirable. With the internet now the primary way in which people begin their search for new properties, I can only imagine that selling this way will become the norm for higher value homes in prime central London.

Robert Bailey Property