



# Residential Lettings

Working with Landlords & Tenants



Passionate about property since 1890



# Your Guide to Lettings

## A First Class Service

Over recent years, changes in both the housing market and social patterns have resulted in an unprecedented rise in demand for property within the private rental sector.

Investing in buy-to-let property is proving to be a prudent decision for many people looking for an alternative to stock markets or savings accounts.

Key to a successful investment are factors such as location and the type of property, but it is also important to consider achievable rent levels, tenant demand and expectations, maintenance and potential capital growth.

With so much to consider, Watsons will take the time to assist you from the start, by providing honest and reliable advice on potential investment opportunities. We recognise that this is likely to be your second biggest investment, after buying your own home. Whether you are a first-time landlord or an experienced investor you can trust our guidance.



## RICS Regulation

As a member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), we have to adhere to strict regulatory guidelines.



## Propertymark Protection

We are also regulated by ARLA Propertymark to ensure we work to a higher standard than the law demands. We offer you Propertymark Protection.





# Preparing Your Property for Letting

## Mortgages

Where the property to be let is subject to a mortgage, permission must be granted from the mortgagee in writing. It is sometimes appropriate to re-mortgage with a buy-to-let specialist. Our financial services partners can offer an across-the-market perspective and are happy to provide completely impartial advice.

## Insurance

It is essential that the property and your contents are adequately insured, both while the property is empty and while it is let. Your insurers must be told that the property is to be let since failure to do so may well invalidate cover.

You should ensure you have both buildings and contents insurance in place to cover your investment. Tenants are responsible for insuring their own contents and personal belongings.

Please also note that standard homeowner insurance policies will not suffice once a tenant is in residence and you are not an owner occupier. The policy will need to be specially designed for let property. We can also offer rent guarantee and legal expenses guarantee. A quote can be provided once the referencing of your tenants has been completed.

## Decorations and Carpets

We recommend these should be fresh and neutral in terms of colour and style. Higher quality properties

will always attract better quality tenants and therefore it is vital that a property is well presented to meet the expectations of a potential tenant.

## Furnished or Unfurnished?

By far the greatest level of demand from tenants is for properties that are available unfurnished. This traditionally includes just carpets, curtains and a cooker. This has the advantage, from the landlord's perspective, of avoiding the need for maintenance/replacement.

## Domestic Appliances

Any domestic appliance left for a tenants use should also be of good quality and condition and subject to regular servicing. It is important that full instructions for use are left on the premises to avoid the need to call in an engineer to demonstrate. Gas and electrical appliances must meet legal safety requirements and oil appliances should be tested annually.

## Cleaning

It is essential that the property is handed over in a clean condition. We very strongly recommend that the property be professionally cleaned throughout, including all carpets.

This creates a benchmark that will be recorded in the Inventory and Schedule of Condition, and will allow us to maintain a high standard through subsequent tenancies. We can provide the names of reputable and economical cleaning contractors.





### Council Tax

We always notify the local council tax office of a change of tenant occupier and of any void period between tenancies.

### Keys

Three complete sets of keys should be provided in all cases – two for the tenants and one to be retained at our office. We will be obliged to charge for key cutting if insufficient keys are supplied at the outset of the tenancy period.

### Telephone

If a telephone line is installed at your property you should instruct the provider to put a temporary stop on the line when you vacate and send you a closing account.

### Empty Properties

It is important that you comply with any insurance requirements during vacant periods.

### Gas, Electricity and Water

These must be left connected and we can arrange for their transfer into the tenant's name. Under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) tenants must be able to control and regulate heating systems.

### Gardens

Gardens should be left in good seasonal order so that the benchmark is set for the tenants, whose responsibility it will be to maintain to the same standard. We highly recommend that relevant gardening tools are provided by the landlord in order for the tenant to continue the upkeep of the outside areas.

If the garden is particularly large, or complicated to maintain, it may be appropriate for the landlord to retain responsibility for maintenance, which will be reflected in the rent.

As a landlord, you may already employ a gardener who regularly maintains the garden of the property. However, we will be happy to help find suitable gardeners for all of your gardening and landscaping needs, should they be on a regular garden maintenance programme or an occasional tidy each season.



*Highly recommend Watsons. We are first time landlords so had loads of questions. Very supportive and informative! Promptly answered all of our questions, worked around all our requirements and most importantly, helped to move the tenants in smoothly.*

*Mr K, Norfolk*

5 Star Google Review -

# Our Services

We provide two levels of service. Full details are within our Terms and Conditions

## Fully Managed

- Provide a rental valuation
- Advise on presentation of the property
- Advise on current legislation for letting a property
- Create lettings particulars with photos/floor plan
- Promote property on Rightmove and Watsons website
- Market property via our regional property hubs
- Organise gas and electric tests (costs involved)
- Obtain quotes and manage any work/repairs
- Accompanied viewings
- Find a tenant
- Reference prospective tenants
- Organise a detailed inventory
- Draw up Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement
- Collect the first month's rent and deposit
- Organise move in appointment for tenant
- Inform utilities of new tenant info and meter reads
- Hold funds to carry out work on your behalf
- Protect deposit and provide tenant with prescribed information in accordance with requirements
- Pay monthly rent into landlord's bank account
- Three property inspections within the first twelve months of a tenancy, then once a year
- 24 hour emergency number for tenants
- Keep you informed of current legislation changes
- Keep current legal requirements up-to-date
- Additional discounted property inspections
- Ongoing advice from a dedicated lettings team

## CONTACT US

**Tel: 01603 751555**

**Email: [letting@watsons-property.co.uk](mailto:letting@watsons-property.co.uk)**

- Easy to read monthly statements
- Annual rent review (rent increase documents can be served for additional cost)
- All landlord monies held in our client account
- Regulated by the RICS Client Money Protection Scheme

## Find a Tenant Only

- Provide a rental valuation
- Advise on presentation of the property
- Advise on current legislation for letting a property
- Create lettings particulars with photos and floor plan
- Promote property on Rightmove and Watsons website
- Market property via our regional property hubs
- Find a suitable tenant(s)
- Reference prospective tenant (s)
- Draw up Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement
- Organise Inventory to protect your interests (costs involved)
- Collect the first month's rent and deposit
- Organise move in appointment for tenant
- Inform utilities of new tenant information and meter reads
- Organise gas and electric tests (costs involved)
- Organise EPC (costs involved)



## Important Considerations

### The Tenancy Agreement

The Housing Act 1988 specifies different types of tenancy. Whilst there are several types, it is almost certain that the tenancy of your property will be an Assured Shorthold Tenancy.

### The Tenancy Deposit Scheme

At the outset of each tenancy we will collect a deposit from the tenant. The amount of the deposit is usually equivalent to five weeks rent. Since April 2007, in line with The Housing Act 2004, all deposits collected under an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (or any renewal thereof) must be protected in one of the Government's authorised custodial tenancy deposit schemes.

This security deposit is held by an approved protection scheme throughout the tenancy. Once damages, if any, have been agreed and copies of all receipted final invoices have been checked, the balance of the deposit will be returned to the tenant.

### Inventory and Schedule of Condition

It is essential to have an inventory/schedule of condition prior to each tenancy. We can arrange this using local independent inventory companies who we work with on a regular basis.

At the end of a tenancy the property is inspected against the inventory and any deterioration to its condition is noted. The tenant is responsible for the cost of rectifying any damage, over and above what is considered to be fair wear and tear caused by them at the property.

### Void Periods

Our management service does not include the supervision of the property when it is vacant, although this can be carried out for a small fee. In the normal course of showing it to prospective tenants, periodic visits may be made to the property by our lettings team.

### Instruction to Solicitors

You will be informed of any rent arrears or breaches of covenant brought to our attention. Should it prove necessary to employ the services of solicitors you will be responsible for instructing them, and for all fees involved (although we can provide you with recommendations for contacts).

We can recommend a local solicitor or alternatively we can provide a quote for rent guarantee and legal cover for peace of mind.

## Taxation of UK-Resident Landlords

Landlords who remain resident in the UK are required to declare rental income annually together with all other income, as it is assessable after allowance expenses for income tax.

## Taxation of the Non-Resident Landlords

Where the landlord of the property is resident abroad for six months or more and has not been approved under the Non-Resident Landlords Scheme, the Commissioners for Inland Revenue will, under UK income tax law, hold the managing agent (or the tenant where there is no managing agent appointed) personally liable for the payment of tax on income from rent collected on the landlord's behalf.

## Council Tax and Utility Bills

In addition to the rent, tenants are responsible for paying water charges, council tax, gas and electricity bills. We will put these into the tenants name from the commencement of the tenancy.

## Property Folder

Many landlords choose to make a property folder. This should include copies of manuals and guides. It is also advisable to leave a local guide and any other information that your tenants may find useful such as details on parking, refuse collections, etc.

## Value Added Tax

All our fees, and any other charges made by Watsons, will be subject to Value Added Tax at the prevailing rate.

## Safety Regulations and Precautions

### Housing Health & Safety Rating System HHSRS

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System was introduced under the 2004 Housing Act. It is a risk based evaluation tool, designed to identify potential hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings.

Common breaches of this legislation include a lack of extractor fans in bathrooms and kitchens, trip hazards such as uneven patio slabs and loosely fitted carpets, or staircases without handrails.

## Electricity

The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 require a Landlord to have a qualified person carry out an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) at least every five years. It is a legal requirement that an Electrical Installation Condition Report is provided to the tenant upon commencement of a tenancy.

## Gas Safety Regulations for Landlords & Agents

Since 31 October 1994, all gas equipment in rented properties must be serviced and safety checked before a tenancy, and then annually by a Gas Safe registered plumber. Landlords or their agents are responsible for keeping accurate records of works carried out on all appliances in their control, confirmed by an official safety certificate. It is a legal requirement that a Gas Safety Certificate is provided to the tenant annually. Failure to prove that a Gas Safety Certificate, along with an EPC, were given to the tenant can affect the ability to serve a Section 21/6A notice of eviction.

## Smoke Detectors & Carbon Monoxide Alarms

New regulations established in 2020 require landlords to have at least one smoke alarm installed on each floor of their properties. Furthermore, a carbon monoxide alarm must be fitted in any room containing a combustion appliance (excluding cooker). Landlords must ensure that the alarms are in working order at the start of each tenancy; this applies to all properties, not just to new tenancies.

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*Watsons were extremely helpful in helping us to support a Ukrainian family move into their first rental property in the UK. The legalities were tiresome but they helped us navigate through them and 2 weeks later we have the key! Thank you so much.*

*Mrs M, Norfolk*

— 5 Star Google Review



### **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**

From October 2006, a detailed fire risk assessment must be carried out to identify any risks or hazards, and any such findings should be eliminated or reduced. This applies to the common parts of blocks of flats and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).

### **Fire and Furnishing Regulations**

Under the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988 a landlord who is letting a property is responsible for ensuring that the furniture carries the appropriate fire resistance labels. Bedding, carpets and curtains and furniture manufactured before 1950 falls outside the regulations.

### **Energy Performance Certificate**

Since 1 October 2008, all rental properties with a new tenancy in England and Wales are required to have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). The EPC rates the energy efficiency of a property and its environmental impact. From April 2018, the minimum requirement is rating E.

The EPC survey must be completed prior to marketing a property, and a tenant is required to receive a copy of the report before entering into a Tenancy Agreement along with a copy of the Government produced "How to Rent" leaflet. Proof of issue is essential.

### ***Right to Rent Regulations 2016 (Right to Rent in the UK) part of the Immigration Act 2015***

From 1st February 2016, it is a requirement that checks are made on all occupiers over the age of 18 and undertaken before any tenancy commences.

These checks can be undertaken by either the Landlord or the Landlord's Agents and require validation of approved documents as advised by the Home Office. Checks have to be made face to face with documents verified, copied and retained. Landlords or Agents have an obligation to confirm that all tenants have the right to reside in the UK by inspecting their current passport or visa.

### **Section 21/Form 6A**

Since 2015, the Section 21 document has become a prescribed form and there are new rules which apply when serving notice. It should be noted that Section 21 is now only valid for six months and cannot be served before the first four months of the tenancy expiration. During a periodic tenancy, it is sufficient to serve two full months' notice, removing the need to serve in line with renewal dates.

### **Legionella Risk Assessment**

Landlords have a responsibility to undertake a risk assessment on any property they rent out and then have this reviewed on a regular basis. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recognise that whilst there is a duty to assess the risk from exposure to Legionella this does not always require a full in depth detailed assessment.

The HSE emphasise that Legionella tests/samples are generally not required for domestic hot water systems, and then only in exceptional circumstances. However, Landlords must ensure that the risk of exposure to tenants and visitors is properly assessed and controlled.

# Watsons Services

Watsons has a proven track record of providing the very best client care and the testament to this is the fact that a large percentage of our clients have been with us over many years.

Every member of the team is encouraged to 'go the extra mile', by delivering more, adding value and exceeding the expectations of our clients.

Watsons is a firm of independent property professionals. Established since 1890, Watsons is a multi-disciplined firm providing residential and commercial property services covering sales, management, lettings, valuations, surveys and a range of specialist professional services.

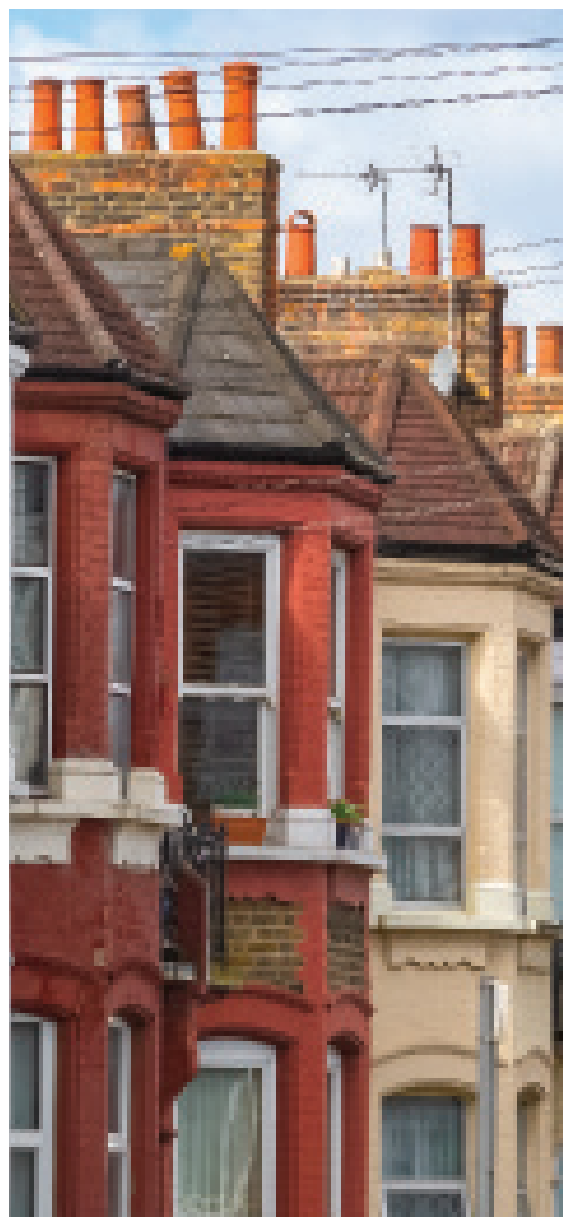
Our Head Office is Norwich based, but our services extend over a wider geographical area. It is through our local knowledge of the areas we operate in and our experience of property that we have built a positive reputation in the industry.

The firm and our employees are members of professional and regulatory bodies.

These include the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA), the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA), the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT), the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD), the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), the Institute of Residential Property Management (IRPM) and the Association of Residential Managing Agents (ARMA).

## **We offer a broad selection of property services:**

- Valuation & Survey
- Commercial Services
- Property Sales
- Lettings
- Block & Estate Management
- Building Services.



## **CONTACT US**

*We have a dedicated team who are available Monday to Friday from 9am to 5.30pm. Outside these hours we have a 24/7 out of hours team available to deal with any emergencies, to give you peace of mind throughout the night. We understand that your property is an important investment that deserves to be looked after:*

**0333 220 1234**

[www.watsons-property.co.uk](http://www.watsons-property.co.uk)



watsons



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