

CARVERS

10 Questions to Ask an Estate Agent

Before Signing Anything



Ethical Agent
Network

#AgentsYouCanTrust

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Contents

Page 3	Why These Questions Matter
Page 4	Question 1: How will you ensure I achieve the best price?
Page 5	Question 2: What does the first four weeks of marketing look like?
Page 6	Question 3: What kind of contract will I be tied into?
Page 7	Question 4: Who will actually handle my sale?
Page 8	Question 5: How do you handle potential conflicts of interest?
Page 9	Questions 6 & 7: Buyers, demand and your launch plan
Page 10	Questions 8 & 9: Viewings, availability and your main contact
Page 11	Questions 10 & Final Thoughts
Page 12	About the Ethical Agent Network

This guide is designed to help you ask the right questions before choosing an estate agent. The answers you receive will tell you more than any valuation figure ever could.

Why These Questions Matter

Hello

We are James and Henry Carver, Directors at Carvers.

Choosing an estate agent is one of the most consequential decisions you will make in the sale of your home.

Get it right, and you will have a trusted guide who communicates clearly, negotiates effectively, and works tirelessly to achieve the best possible result for you.

Get it wrong, and you may find yourself locked into a contract with an agent who overvalues your property to win the instruction, underdelivers once it is on the market, and leaves you frustrated, stressed, and worse off financially.

The problem is that many agents are highly skilled at winning business. They are practised at the valuation appointment, confident in their pitch, and persuasive in the room. In that environment, it is difficult to distinguish genuine capability from a polished presentation.

The 10 questions in this guide are designed to cut through the sales performance and get to what really matters: process, evidence, accountability, and values.

They are not trick questions or adversarial challenges. They are the questions that any professional, ethical agent should be able to answer clearly and with confidence.

Some of these questions will feel uncomfortable to ask. Ask them anyway.

Each one is designed to reveal something important about how an agent operates, what they prioritise, and whether they are truly working in your best interests.

And if you have **any** questions for me, feel free to get in touch.



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We're proud to be the only local estate agent approved by the Ethical Agent Network.

Question 1:

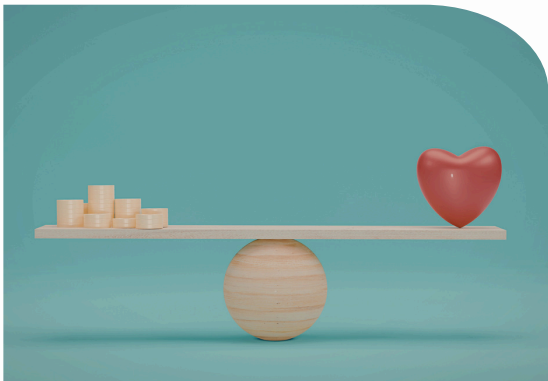
How will you ensure I achieve the best price?

This is the most important question you can ask, and the answer reveals more than any other.

Every agent will claim they achieve the best results, but the best agents can prove it.

Ask for their average sale price as a percentage of the asking price, and how that compares to the local market average. Ask how many sell at or above the asking price and how long they typically take to sell. A capable agent should answer these without hesitation.

Beyond the numbers, ask about their negotiation process. Do they create competitive situations between buyers? Do they qualify buyers properly before accepting offers? Do they know how to attract the strongest possible interest rather than simply the first offer that comes in?



A weak agent will respond with vague reassurances. A strong one will walk you through their actual process, from pricing and building early momentum, to handling negotiations and managing the journey to exchange.

Be particularly wary of agents who lead with a high valuation figure.

Overpricing damages a sale. Properties that sit on the market generate fewer viewings, attract lower offers, and become harder to sell. An agent who tells you what you want to hear rather than what you need to hear is not acting in your best interests.

The best price comes from the best strategy, and that starts here.



What to listen for

Specific data, a clear negotiation strategy, and honesty about pricing – not just a high number and a confident handshake.



Question 2:

What does the first four weeks of marketing look like?

The opening weeks of your sale are the most valuable period you will ever have. Buyer interest is highest when a property first appears on the market. First impressions form quickly. Momentum, once lost, is very hard to recover.

A good agent knows this and plans accordingly. Ask them to walk you through exactly what happens between instruction and going live. Who prepares the photography, a professional, or a member of staff with a camera phone? Will there be a floor plan or video tour? How will the listing copy be written, and who reviews it?

Ask how they generate interest before the property goes to market. The best agents build a pipeline of registered buyers ahead of the launch date, so viewings are booked from day one rather than trickling in.



Ask what happens if the first two weeks produce few enquiries.

- Do they have a structured review process?
- Will they contact you proactively, or wait for you to call?
- How quickly will they respond to viewing requests?

A professional agent will have clear, structured answers to all these questions before you even ask. If they seem to be making it up or offer only vague assurances, that should concern you.

A strong launch is the result of deliberate planning and preparation.

What to listen for

A week-by-week plan with specifics on photography, launch strategy, buyer outreach, and what happens if early activity is slow.

Question 3:

What kind of contract will I be tied into?

Before you sign anything, make sure you understand exactly what you are agreeing to. The contract between you and your estate agent is a legally binding document, and the terms will define your relationship, including how easy or difficult it is to make a change if things are not working.



The most important thing to ask about is the tie-in period, how long you are contractually obliged to stay before you can switch. Some agents insist on 12, 16, or even 20 weeks.

During this time, even if the service is poor and your property is sitting stale on the market, you may have no legal recourse.

Ask also about the notice period. Many contracts require 28 or more days' notice after the tie-in before you can terminate, meaning you could be stuck for far longer than anticipated.

Ask whether the contract is a sole agency or multi-agency, and what the implications are if you find a buyer through your own efforts or a different agent.

A confident, ethical agent does not need a long contract to keep your business. Short, fair, and transparent terms are a sign of an agent who backs themselves to perform, not one who needs contractual protection in case they don't.

Read everything before you sign. If anything is unclear, ask for it to be explained in writing.



What to listen for

Short, flexible tie-in periods, clear notice terms, and transparency about what happens in every scenario, including if you're unhappy.

Question 4:

Who will actually handle my sale?

One of the most common frustrations in the home-selling experience is the gap between who you meet at the valuation and who manages your sale day-to-day.

The person who came to your home and built your confidence may hand you over to a junior member of staff the moment you sign the paperwork.

Ask directly:

- Who will conduct my viewings?
- Who will handle offer negotiations?
- Who will be my main point of contact?

If a team is involved, ask how they communicate internally about your property and preferences.



Consistency is not a luxury; it is a practical necessity. Selling a property involves dozens of conversations and decisions that build on each other. An agent who knows your situation and remembers previous conversations will make better decisions on your behalf than one seeing your file for the first time.

Ask what happens if your main contact goes on holiday, falls ill, or leaves the company.

Does the agency have a system for covering these situations, or will your sale drift? Also, ask how you will receive updates. Will the agent call proactively after every viewing? Will they send written feedback? How quickly do they respond to messages? Communication is one of the most common complaints sellers have, so establish your expectations early.

The right answer is a named person, a clear process, and a commitment to proactive communication throughout.



What to listen for

A named individual with clear responsibility, a defined communication process, and a plan for what happens if that person is unavailable.

Question 5:

How do you handle potential conflicts of interest?

Estate agents operate in an environment where conflicts of interest can arise more often than sellers realise.

Understanding how an agent navigates these situations tells you a great deal about their professionalism and the extent to which they will genuinely prioritise your interests.

One of the most common conflicts involves referred services.

Many agents receive referral fees or commissions when they refer clients to mortgage brokers, solicitors, or surveyors. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, but you should be aware of it.

Ask whether the agent has financial arrangements with any third-party services they may recommend, and whether your freedom to choose your own professionals will ever be restricted.

A related issue is conditional selling, where an agent implies that the sale will go more smoothly if you use their recommended services. This practice is both unethical and, in many cases, illegal.

Another conflict arises when your buyer also has a property to sell. Some agents will represent both parties. Ask how they ensure your interests are protected when they also have a financial stake in the other side.

Finally, ask how they handle competing offers.

What is their process for managing multiple buyers? How do they ensure you receive accurate, unbiased advice about which offer is strongest?

An ethical agent will answer all these questions openly and without defensiveness. Any reluctance to discuss them is itself informative.



What to listen for

Transparency about referral arrangements, a clear policy on conditional selling, and a defined process for handling competing interests.

Questions 6 & 7:

Q6. Do you already have buyers for my home?

This is one of the oldest techniques and questionable tactics in estate agency sales.

When an agent tells you they have buyers ready and waiting, it is worth understanding what that really means.

A good agent maintains a database of registered applicants, so it may sometimes be partially true. But the claim is frequently a tactic to win instructions. In practice, most 'ready buyers' do not materialise or are not as committed as implied.

The more important question is how they create and sustain demand. Real demand comes from professional marketing and strategic planning, not a list of names on a database.

What to listen for

A focus on how they create demand and qualify buyers, not a list of names used as a selling tool.



Q7. What's your plan for launching my property?

The way a property launches to the market has a profound impact on the outcome. A poorly planned launch can make a property appear unwanted. A well-executed one creates urgency, generates competition, and can result in multiple offers within days.

Ask about timing: Do they hold back the listing while contacting registered buyers first? Ask about the quality of the photography and whether the listing copy is written by someone who understands how to sell a home, not just describe one.

Ask what their plan is for the first 48 hours. A proactive, clear launch plan is essential.

What to listen for

A structured launch plan with specifics on timing, materials, buyer outreach, and a clear response plan if early results are disappointing.

Questions 8 & 9:

Q8. When are you available for viewings?

Viewings are not an administrative inconvenience; they are sales opportunities, and the agent conducting them directly impacts how buyers feel about your home.

Ask about evening and weekend availability. Many motivated buyers work full-time and can only view outside office hours, which immediately limits your potential audience.

Ask whether viewings are accompanied. A skilled agent can build rapport, highlight features, and gather immediate feedback. An empty house with a set of keys tells you nothing.

Ask how they handle feedback after viewings. Will they contact every viewer within 24 hours and share that feedback, even when it is negative?



What to listen for

Consistent evening and weekend availability, accompanied by viewings as standard, and a clear process for gathering and promptly sharing buyer feedback.

Q9. Will I be dealing with you throughout the process?

The person who conducted your valuation should not be a stranger once you have signed. Yet in many agencies, the valuer and the negotiator are different people, and the person managing your sale may have little context for decisions made at the outset.

Ask: Will you be my main point of contact from instruction to completion? If not, who will be, and how will they be briefed on my priorities?

Ask what happens when your contact is unavailable. Is there a named colleague who covers? The best agents treat every sale as if it were the only one they are handling and have processes in place to ensure you're well looked after.



What to listen for

A clear commitment to a named point of contact, a defined handover process, and genuine continuity from instruction to completion.

Question 10:

What results can you show from your recent sales?

Every estate agent will tell you they are the best in the area. Few will show you the evidence.

Ask for their average sale price as a percentage of the original asking price, not the final figure after reductions.

Ask for their average time on market, and how many listings are withdrawn without selling.

Ask for recent testimonials from sellers in similar circumstances and check their Google review score.

A high rating based on many reviews is far more meaningful than a perfect score based on a handful of reviews.

An agent who truly delivers will welcome this conversation.



What to listen for

Verified data on sale price achievement and time on market, recent client testimonials, and specific examples of comparable local sales.



Final Thoughts

Choosing the right estate agent is about more than a good first impression.

By working through these ten questions, you will gain a much clearer picture of how each agent operates.

Listen not just to the content of their answers, but to how they respond. Do they welcome scrutiny or become defensive? Do they offer evidence or rely on enthusiasm?

The right agent will not just answer these questions; they will be glad you asked.

Taking the time to choose well can save weeks of frustration and add a significant sum to your final sale price.

Our Promise to You

We're proud to be the only local agency approved by the Ethical Agent Network (EAN).

Agencies can't just buy their way in; it's not 'pay to play' but a network with strict entry criteria to ensure clients receive the highest level of ethical service.

Part of the joining criteria involves signing up to a clear, simple, but powerful code of ethics called the Member Promises.

Here's what it means to you.



We promise to always act in our clients' best interests



We promise to always tell the truth and answer all questions openly & honestly



We promise to do the right thing, even if it costs us time, money or both



We promise never to criticise our rival agents, as it undermines our profession



We promise to support our local community whenever and wherever possible



We promise to respect and invest in our team's learning and development so that they can provide exceptional levels of service

To find out more, visit: ethicalagentnetwork.co.uk



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