

Grey expectations for movers

By Deborah Stone

EVER wondered how the best-located family houses and prettiest holiday homes get snaffled before the For Sale sign goes up? Well it may not surprise you that it's down to the dark art of estate agency. Not that those selling are complaining, of course, but it means house hunters need to be more canny if they want to find a property before the record numbers of people now considering a move.

Post-lockdown restlessness and time-limited stamp duty or land tax holidays have created a property bunfight, with Nationwide reporting that house prices rose by two per cent in August alone.

The number of homes sold in July was the highest recorded since June 2007, before the financial crisis, and one-in-10 properties sold for more than the asking price in July according to NAEA Propertymark, which represents UK estate agents.

With demand up by a third compared with the same period last year, estate agents, many still working from home, have been overwhelmed and have turned to "the grey market" or quiet marketing, something usually only used for vendors who want to keep a low profile.

Anthony Pearce of Stacks Property



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Search (stacks.co.uk), which shortlists properties for clients, negotiates and organises the buying process, explains: “In today’s climate, where conducting viewings is time consuming and onerous owing to extensive protocols, selling agents are aiming to attract only the ‘hottest’ buyers.

“For the best properties, they are recommending quiet marketing so they’re

not inundated with requests for viewings. Agents will contact suitable buyers on their list and aim to sell the property without ever going to the open market.”

So buyers should not only register with estate agents for alerts and make them aware that funds are quickly available but they should also engage in a charm offensive, says Pearce.



HIDDEN GEM: Cor Anglais is a pretty three-bedroom cottage in the lovely fishing village of Port Isaac in North Cornwall. It’s close to the harbour, on Middle Street, and has an outdoor seating area with lockable storage. Beautifully refurbished, it has an open plan sitting, dining and kitchen area downstairs with three bedrooms upstairs open to the eaves – two double bedrooms and a bunkroom. Previously a holiday let, the property is for sale at £495,000 (01208 862601; johnbraysales.co.uk) including furniture.



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RURAL RETREAT: 11 Churchfield Court is a two-bedroom mid-terrace cottage in Girton, five miles north of Cambridge, with a private patio garden overlooking a communal courtyard garden. It has a sitting room with French doors to the patio, a separate kitchen and dining room, with two bathrooms on the first floor and a garage in a block nearby. For sale at £495,000, leasehold (01491 821170; cognatum.co.uk) the property is in a development for over-55s built around two landscaped courtyards on the edge of a village surrounded by open countryside.