

Meet the property consultant

Tim Page-Ratcliff is the owner of TPR Property Solutions Ltd – a specialist Sussex property search company who find exclusive, high-end homes for prospective buyers

How long have you been in the property business?

My estate agency career began in 1981, when I joined Mann & Co. I was assigned to their Weybridge office, which had responsibility for all higher value sales over £200,000 (how times have changed!). I covered the privately owned estates including St George's Hill in Weybridge and Burwood Park and Ashley Park in Walton-on-Thames. In 1987, after six years, I joined Strutt & Parker in Lewes as a senior negotiator. In 1992, I was promoted to associate partner and head of the country house department, later becoming an equity partner in the firm and regional chairman of the southeast. I left in 2020 to establish TPR Property Solutions.

What is your business USP?

Our USP is 'knowledge'. You can't buy it. You gain it by experience. During my career with Strutt & Parker, I sold plenty of houses twice, a dozen or so I sold three times, and there's one property I was lucky enough to sell on four occasions. This knowledge, which others have described as encyclopaedic, is invaluable to an effective search agent.

Can you explain your role as a specialist property search agent?

We act for a limited number of clients at any one time. These tend to be buyers who are moving to Sussex from outside the area, or they might have relocated already and be living in rented accommodation. They know what type of property they want, where they want it and when they want it. They are motivated and genuine buyers, who engage us to do their house-hunting for them. Using our inside knowledge, we are sometimes able to unlock opportunities other buyers wouldn't know about. In fact, 60 per cent of the last five properties purchased by our clients have been sourced off-market.

What services do you offer consultancy in?

All property-related advice covering negotiation: how much value might be added by converting a barn or adding an extension, advice on the possible acquisition of land adjoining a property and recommending the right professionals.

Do you specialise in a particular type of property or area?

We specialise in upper-end residential



above: Tim Page-Ratcliff has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the Sussex property market

property, which is the sector of the market I know best. We focus almost exclusively on East and West Sussex.

What is the current state of the property market in Sussex?

The market is proving remarkably resilient to the current economic uncertainty, cost-of-living crisis, rising interest rates and the dreadful conflict in Ukraine. The first nine months of 2022 saw one of the strongest markets I can recall, so it's good that things have settled down this year. There is still strong demand for best-in-class property, with competitive bidding sometimes in evidence. Overall, however, the market has become more price-sensitive.

What do you think the market in Sussex will do in the next two years?

Barring global economic meltdown, I believe the market in Sussex will buck the trend of any potential national downturn. Over the years, I've seen plenty of highs and lows. It boils down to supply and demand; but our

proximity to London, our plethora of good schools, our relatively unspoilt countryside and the coastal resorts make Sussex a highly attractive destination for those seeking the best of all worlds.

What advice would you give to someone considering moving to Sussex?

Think carefully about where you want to live and don't buy in a hurry. It can be a very costly mistake. I've seen it so many times in the past. Unless you already have good local knowledge, it can be prudent to rent in the first instance. It buys you time, while you familiarise yourself with the area.

What are your favourite areas of Sussex?

The downland villages between Lewes and Eastbourne are very special, even more so now they're protected by the South Downs National Park. I also find the area between Petworth and Midhurst, going south towards the coast and the Chichester Harbours particularly attractive.

And, of course, I am very fortunate to live in Waldron, a wonderful rural village just outside the old market town of Heathfield. ●