

Movers & Shapers

Latest whispers from the world of property

@timesproperty

Alexa, please sell my house

Property sellers who have fallen out of love with estate agents can avoid speaking to them, with help from Alexa, (Hugh Graham writes).

Purplebricks, an online estate agency, is teaming up with Amazon's digital voice assistant so that from Monday clients with the Purplebricks app will be able to use simple voice commands to ask Alexa: "What viewings do I have today?"; "How is my property performing?"; "Any new messages?"

Purplebricks developed the app after a survey found that almost half of clients wanted updates on their house sale once or a few times a day while 59 per cent would prefer them through an app, rather than a human being.

Critics will say the voice app is another excuse for estate agents to be lazy, but Ed Hughes from "industry disruptor"

Purplebricks says it "keeps our customers in constant touch and frees up our property experts to get on with selling houses".

Traditional agents are not convinced. "It's a great marketing gimmick, but I don't believe you will get an intelligent response," says Trevor Abrahamsohn of Glentree International estate agency in north London. "If Alexa says there are no viewings, for instance, you might think your property is unsellable. But there might be a good reason — it might be half-term. The problem with online agents is the lack of human contact. Are you

Hot gossip

The Trump card

When Donald Trump had to go to Chandler's Cross, Watford, for the Nato summit this week, residents of the Hertfordshire town were prepared for the worst. Trump famously described the Nine Elms area of London as "horrible"; Chicago is "embarrassing to us as a nation" and Baltimore as a "disgusting, rat-infested mess". But it seems Watford has emerged relatively unscathed from Trumpian scorn. Perhaps he approved of the Grove Hotel, where the summit was held: it is beloved of football WAGS and has a spa offering "radiance-boosting serum" instead of fake tan.



Election projection

Some wealthy property buyers might balk at a Corbyn-led government, but one industry insider says that negotiations over "an ultra prime" property in Notting Hill, west London, faltered last week after a poll predicted a clear Tory majority (Carol Lewis writes). "The seller,

an international banker, immediately added £