

## Your home is your castle

16 JANUARY 2020

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PARTNER | US

**CATEGORY:**

ARTICLE

**CLIENT TYPES:**

LUXURY ASSETS



We recently explained the [benefits](#) to high profile and high net worth individuals of using a “privacy trust” or “blind trust” through which to purchase a property and secure the privacy of the ultimate owner.

Knowing that to our clients, their home is their castle, we provide some other insights into how a home owner may protect the privacy of their home, themselves and their family without building an unsightly moat or bringing down the portcullis on their property.

Given the insatiable interest of the public into the lives of the “rich and famous”, popping out the shops let alone purchasing a home, are activities that the public are hungry to read about, and the media are happy to satisfy that hunger. That can lead to unhappy results from sellers pulling out of deals due to unwelcome publicity to swarms of fans hovering outside the property gates, to worrying issues of safety and security and risk of kidnap.

Those who make their living from being in the public eye, and those who wish to stay out of it altogether, need to be able to retreat to a place of solitude and security, peace and privacy from time to time. In addition to the privacy trust, there are a number of sensible ways to limit unwanted attention.

Our earlier article proposed the use of non-disclosure agreements for third party companies. Reputable professionals should readily agree to sign such confidentiality agreements to protect the your private and confidential information, and if they won't it may well indicate a propensity to trade in gossip and bragging rights, as well as property.

With sensible structuring the property purchase can go ahead absent the glare of the media spotlight, but privacy concerns remain once the paperwork is signed and the moving trucks have gone. There are better ways of protecting the privacy of what goes on inside your home than simply pulling down the blinds.

Non-disclosure agreements – supported by adequate consideration (i.e., payment) to be enforceable – should be entered into with any third parties providing assistance within the home. Professional and reputable nannies, drivers, security staff, gardeners will not bat an eyelid at being asked to confirm, on pain of termination, to sign such agreements. After all, their own reputations depend upon being trustworthy and trusted. A potential employee who refuses to agree to reasonable terms marks himself out as a future disgruntled employee prepared to tell tall tales or to spill the private family beans, if and when they are dismissed.

Similar precautions should be taken with anyone called upon and called in to perfect any rough edges around your new home. Contracts with architects, interior designers and contractors should be sure to limit their rights of publicity surrounding any work they do for you to avoid the haunting prospect of seeing your newly acquired home featured in a celebrity magazine, or on the service provider's own website.

When engaging contractors, check their confidentiality credentials; ask to see evidence of adequate insurance to cover reputational damages; consider, where possible, getting bank, criminal background or credit agency references to be sure the person they are dealing with is not motivated to trade on your personal secrets.

Finally, an important piece of the privacy puzzle is what you do with your own personal information. Posting pictures online of what goes on behind closed doors may seem like an obvious faux-pas. But parties with friends and family can lead to images being uploaded without your knowledge; children – much more au fait with technology and social media – have a nasty habit of living their lives online. Keep your social media accounts private, educate your children as to the dangers of posting where they live, with whom, and when – and importantly when they are not – at home; and when opening your doors to others, make them aware of your desire for privacy behind closed doors.

Of course, nothing is foolproof, and knowledge is power. So from time to time, monitor what is available in the public domain about you, your

private life, your home and your family, by seeking an online audit to research, assess and stress test the private information that is available in the public domain about you. By doing so, you can be as comfortable in your home as you can be, that your home is your castle, and that no one is going to siege your castle walls.


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