

## The planner

I own a ground-floor flat in a converted house that I am in the process of selling. My neighbours, who own the adjoining flat, have just submitted plans to excavate a basement, build a patio and add a kitchen extension. I am concerned about being overlooked, and my sale being affected. What can I do?

*EM, by email*

Unfortunately, the fact that the construction work to your neighbours' flat may hamper the sale of your property is not a consideration that can be taken into account in determining the planning application. Your concern about being overlooked is primarily about the proposed patio, and whether people using it will be able to see into your own patio and garden. I suggest that you discuss this with your neighbours and ask them to agree that the new patio will be constructed at the same level as your own, and to erect a 6ft screen wall or fence along the mutual boundary.

If they will not agree, you can discuss your concerns with the planning case officer, object to the application and ask the council to impose appropriate conditions. You could also request that your windows be cleaned monthly at your neighbours' expense for the duration of the works. Engage a party-wall surveyor to ensure that the excavation would not affect the structural stability of your flat.

✉ *Michael Haslam is a director of Michael Haslam Associates: hmhaslam@btinternet.com*

## The lettings agent

My tenant sent me an email saying that someone tried to break into the property, and requested that my handyman repair the broken lock. He insists it is my responsibility to carry out the repair. Can you advise?

*A Francis, by email*

Any attempted break-in should have been reported to the police, so ask your tenant to provide the crime reference number. If there is a such a number, then your tenant is correct — the landlord is responsible for the upkeep of the structure and the cost of any repairs. Check with your buildings insurer to see whether the repair is covered under your policy (less any excess). You will be entitled to include the repair cost as part of your landlord "tax allowances".

✉ *Frank Webster is a director at the Oxford branch of the lettings agency Finders Keepers: finders.co.uk*

**Do you need help from one of our experts?**

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