

ADAPTABLE

# PERFECTING YOUR DIGITAL ESTATE AGENCY OFFERING

Every sector has been transformed by digitisation  
— and real estate is *no exception*.



# GOVERNANCE

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# INTRODUCTION

Every sector has been transformed by digitisation - and real estate is *no exception*. The emergence of digital-first disruptors including the likes of Purplebricks has shaken up the sector, and is creating an increasing need for estate agents to reinvent themselves and review their operational models.

More and more people are using online estate agents and their platforms to research prospective new homes, and therefore waiting until later in the buying journey to engage the services of an agent. The success of Rightmove underlines that: in March 2021, their website recorded **8.5 million hits in a single day**, and over 2021 as a whole, generated nearly **750,000 video or physical viewing appointments**.

Increasingly, home hunters want the same kind of easy, fast online retail experience that they get when buying food, clothes, or other consumer goods. They also want ad-free services, and the ability to make purchasing decisions without feeling like they're being overly influenced or 'pushed' by an estate agent.

Because of this, it's clear that to stay relevant and competitive, every estate agent must have a strong digital strategy and presence that enables them to compete with their peers as well as digital-first alternatives. Those that don't will continue to lose market share to their digital competitors who can better connect with those looking to find their next home. But with so many approaches, solutions and functions to explore, it can be difficult to know exactly where traditional, experienced estate agents should start when digitalising their customer experience.

**This guide will explore key ways in which estate agents can transform their digital offering to compete in a changing real estate landscape.**



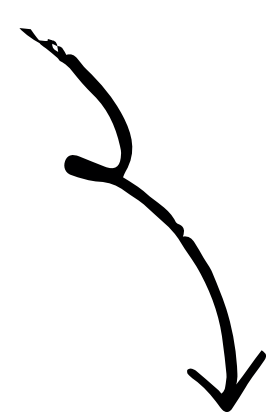
# LEVERAGING NEW TECHNOLOGY



With so many listings to manage, and the status of available properties changing every day, estate agent websites can be difficult and time-consuming to keep up to date. But there is plenty of technological support available that can make it a faster and easier process, as well as make listings more **flexible and eye-catching** at the same time.

Firstly, it's important not to neglect the challenges around back-end development in favour of all the shiny stuff at the front end.

That's because *good* back-end processes are the underlying technology that power improved user experiences and estate agency operations:







## INTEGRATION

Makes it much faster and easier to add listings, complete with all the information a prospective buyer or lessor would want. A great example of this is the Property Hive extension for WordPress, which encompasses search forms, listings pages, details pages, and other add-ons, bringing highly advanced functionality within reach of every estate agency. Integration can also be applied with platforms such as Zoopla and Rightmove to maximise visibility and exposure. If you have an existing CRM such as Reapit, data from this can also be sent into Property Hive which can then populate your listings on the front-end of your website.



## IMPROVED SEARCH

Enabling more detailed and nuanced searches makes it far more likely that the right buyers will view the right properties, without wasting time scrolling through listings and abandoning their search before they do.



## PROCESS AUTOMATION & ANALYTICS

Using all the technology available can enable smarter operations, whether it's responses to new leads, suggesting related properties, or continually improving experiences based on user interaction.



## BETTER LEAD GENERATION VISIBILITY

A good back-end set-up makes it possible to understand where leads come from, how they interact with the site before making an enquiry, and generate insight that agents can use for better targeting and customisation.



# IMPROVING WEBSITE PERFORMANCE WITH HEADLESS

Of course, that's not to say that the front-end experience isn't also important. One area of innovation to pursue is a headless website, where the front-end of the website is *separate* from the content management system.

This separation means that content can be sent to display in many different places much more easily and quickly, and allows for better structuring of content which comes with other benefits that improve **efficiency, security and stability**.

It also means that estate agents can break out of predefined website setups, and explore more creative options with their technology. This can enhance the user's browsing experience, allow for a more *performance-driven site*, and open up options for connecting different data sources without any platform bottle-necks.



64%

OF ENTERPRISE ORGANISATIONS ARE CURRENTLY USING A HEADLESS APPROACH\*

\*Oct 2022 | <https://wpengine.co.uk/resources/the-state-of-headless-global-research-report>



WHILE A STANDARD  
CMS SETUP MIGHT  
SEEM PERFECTLY  
ACCEPTABLE,  
THEY CAN BECOME  
RESTRICTIVE AS  
COMPANIES GROW  
& EXPAND IF  
NOT SET UP IN A  
CERTAIN WAY.

Large amounts of data can overwhelm a front-end and slow it down, so decoupling it from the front-end gives you much more **flexibility** to restructure things to handle increased data requests and complex functionality. A headless website allows you to create a more responsive, faster loading and *future-proof* digital product with improved security and platform independence.

Ultimately, a good front-end from an estate agency's perspective should all be about flexibility and agility. This means enabling the flexibility to develop microsites and promote premium listings with ease, through a user-friendly CMS which supports rich media content such as photos, videos and floorplans - all helping to best sell your offering.

.....

98%

DID YOU KNOW THAT 98% OF  
HOME BUYERS BEGIN THEIR  
SEARCH ONLINE?



# USING A CUSTOMER-FACING PORTAL TO DELIVER A SEAMLESS EXPERIENCE



Having a great front-end website is **critical** to drawing in potential customers and displaying your offering. However, your point of *differentiation* should always be customer service delivery.

That's because the renting, selling, or purchasing process can often be **chaotic**, with information spread across multiple email threads, phone calls, portals, and WhatsApp messages. Where you can stand out (and also improve your operational efficiency) is in the *digital journey* you can take your customers on when they opt to sell, buy or rent their property through you. Whilst traditional estate agencies have strong market knowledge and a massive database of contacts, the digital experience tends to be lacking compared to digital-first competitors such as Strike, Purplebricks and Yopa.

Creating an overarching portal that contains most or all of the following elements can help estate agencies compete digitally:





## MANAGING RECEIVED OFFERS

The portal can enable a quicker and smoother process with more human interaction, and more control for the seller. It can encompass chat messaging between buyers and sellers, and the ability to view submitted offers, and then either accept or reject them.

## MANAGING VIEWINGS

Sellers can better manage their time and ensure viewings take place at times that suit them by managing viewing appointments. And, by collecting feedback on viewings through the portal, they can get vital insights that can improve their chances of getting a sale.

## COMMUNICATIONS

A portal can act as a means of streamlining and coordinating communications, so sellers get peace of mind and reassurance about the quality of the team they're working with. SMS and email alerts, online performance stats, and team profiles can all be hosted within the portal providing fully connected communication channels.

## MANAGING RENTAL PORTFOLIOS

Property owners with a small or large portfolio of rental properties can see all their listings being managed by your agency. They can have a clear overview of the services you're providing for each property through a single dashboard. This can help them feel cared for, and give them confirmation that they're receiving everything you promised them.

## UPSELLING

The portal can be used to recommend third-party services or partners that can aid their selling or buying journey, further improving their perception of you as a trusted estate agency. These recommendations could include services like conveyancing and removal vans: services that are vital to a successful completion process.



# MORE WAYS TO LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY

Headless websites and a more comprehensive approach to your portal are two important ways of overhauling your digital real estate, and improving the experiences you deliver to buyers and sellers alike.

However, there are plenty of *other measures* you can explore to upscale your technology offering:





# LEAD GENERATION, TRACKING & NURTURING

The kind of detailed, data-driven customer journeys that have become commonplace in consumer retail now can (and should) be replicated within real estate. There are many things that estate agents can explore to join the dots of the buying journey together, so that it's faster, less stressful, more intuitive to buyer needs, and makes more use of technology:

## LEAD GENERATION & INSTANT VALUATIONS

One of the keys to strong online real estate sales is converting initial browsers into solid leads, whether they're sellers, renters or buyers. An excellent example of this is ValPal, (which can be seamlessly integrated into your website) allowing homeowners and landlords to generate instant automated valuations of their properties in exchange for some basic contact details.

## LEAD NURTURING THROUGH WHATSAPP

Using the business version of WhatsApp opens up huge opportunities for direct customer contact throughout the customer journey. WhatsApp can be used for qualifying leads, sending property information, agreeing on appointment times, and even sharing documents. Additionally, chatbots can be deployed to answer general questions and organise appointments, freeing up an agents time even further.

## LEAD TRACKING FROM FORM DATA

Starting lead tracking from initial form-filling onwards enables optimisation of the customer journey, helping agents contact prospective buyers with the right communications at the right time. UTM tags can also help you understand what's driving certain activities.



# DEVELOPING MICROSITES



Microsites can be used by estate agents to promote a specific listing, which may be for a particular flagship property or a development of multiple properties that they are involved in promoting. At face value, it may seem that putting together microsites is more trouble than it's worth, but they can make a major difference:

## MORE RELEVANT LEADS

When buyers can get more detailed and relevant information, then they can start the buying journey with confidence that the property is right for them. This helps agents know they're dealing with solid interest.

## BETTER CUSTOMER INSIGHTS

Analytics can be applied to microsites in terms of page hits, areas on the page that gain the most interest, and the geographical spread of visitors. This information can all be used to devise marketing that resonates best with potential buyers.

## IMPROVED SEO SEARCHABILITY

Microsites are so specific to a property or a development that even just a few well-placed keywords can make a major difference to the overall SEO ranking of a page.

## MORE BUYER FOCUS

Microsites tend not to have many outgoing links, meaning that buyers' attention remains on the specific property for longer, and doesn't wander onto other links or listings.

## VENDOR UPSELLING

The ability to apply a more detailed, dedicated approach to a sale can be incredibly appealing to a vendor. Many are willing to make the investment into additional video, photography and copywriting that goes far above and beyond what they would normally get in a regular listing.



# MARKETING PREMIUM LISTINGS



At the end of the previous section, we highlighted vendor upselling as one of the reasons why property-specific microsites can be so beneficial. But microsites represent just one of a number of ways that listings can be developed further, so that they stand out from the crowd:

## ADVANCED MICROSITE DEVELOPMENT

A microsite will always give a property a more premium effect, as having a site dedicated to it will portray an image of importance. This effect can be amplified through further media being created for the property and hosted on the microsite, such as digital story books or brochure requests, that can build emotional attachments in buyers and increase engagement as a result.

## VIRTUAL TOURS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Many buyers (especially younger ones) will use social media as a means of researching properties, but there will be many properties and agents fighting for their attention. Posting virtual tour videos on social platforms can make listings stand out from the crowd and pique buyer interest.

## LISTING ANCHORING

The importance or premium nature of a listing can be emphasised by anchoring it to the top of search pages, where it will generate larger volumes of interest from a wider cross-section of buyers.

## LISTING SHOWCASES ON THE HOMEPAGE

For the same reasons as the previous point, picking out listings for prominent display on the homepage - or as a 'listing of the week', for example - can give engagement an extra boost.



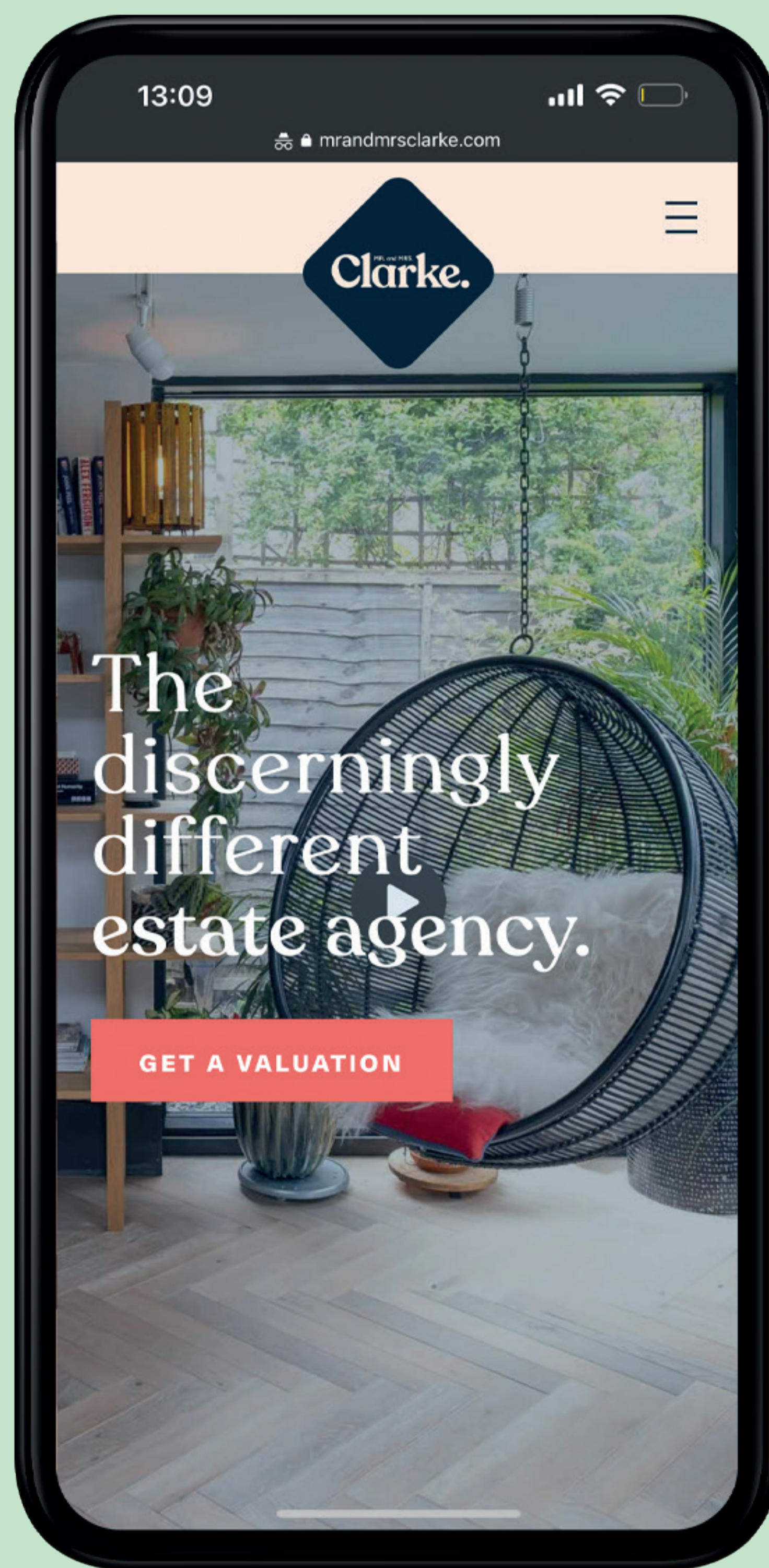
# AGENTS LEADING THE WAY



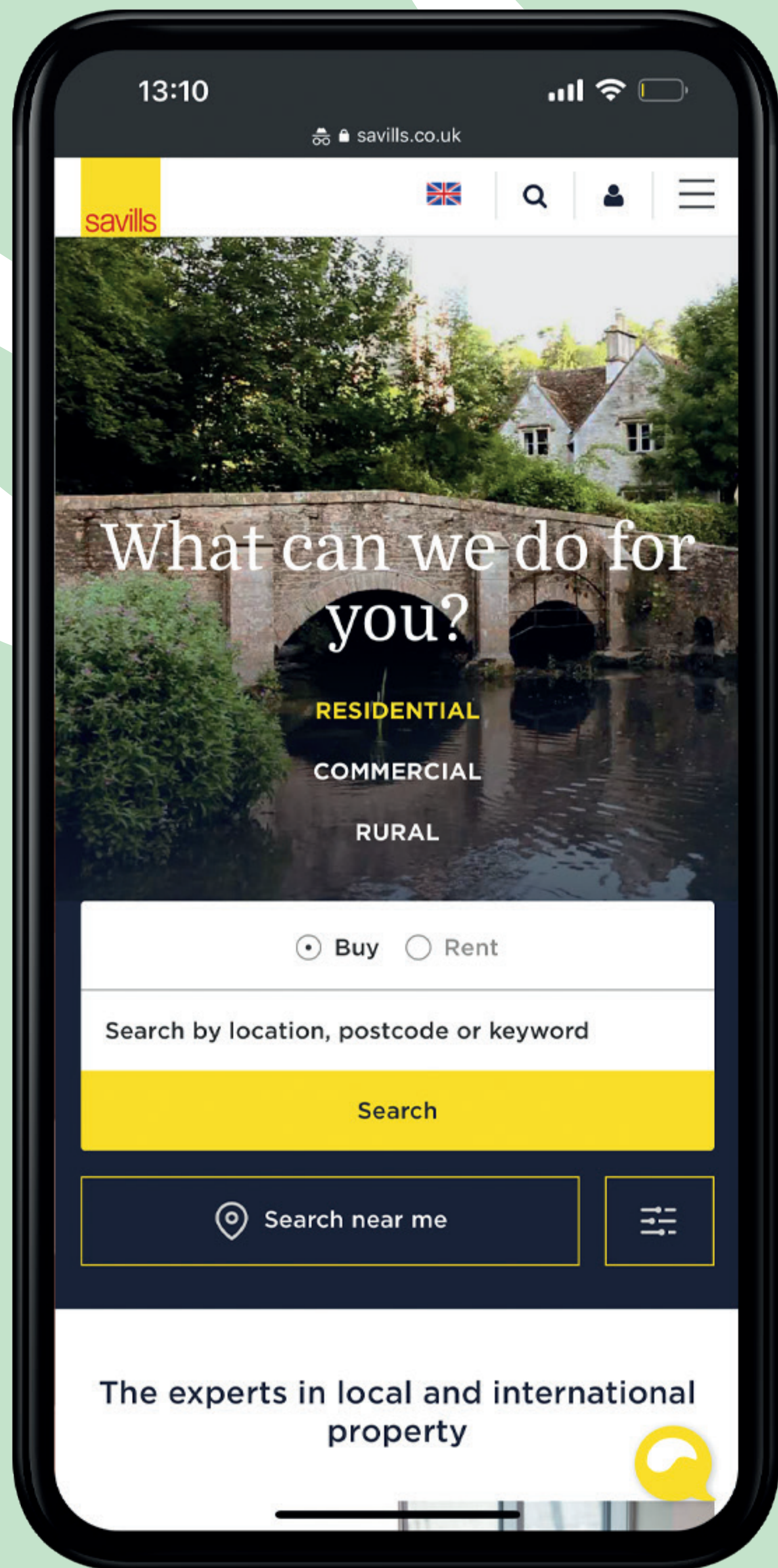
Many estate agents have already **embraced** the possibilities that an improved, innovative digital offering can give them. These examples are some of our favorites that demonstrate the scale of the *potential* by having invested in their digital presence and challenging the normal ways of doing things:

## MR AND MRS CLARKE

The website represents a substantial departure from traditional estate agent websites, focusing on the ‘soul’ of properties rather than by more tangible characteristics. The digital experience plays a big part in enabling this, with a stripped back UI that gives the properties listed space to breathe on each page. A major focus on lifestyle runs through the property listing and Mr & Mrs Clarke brand.





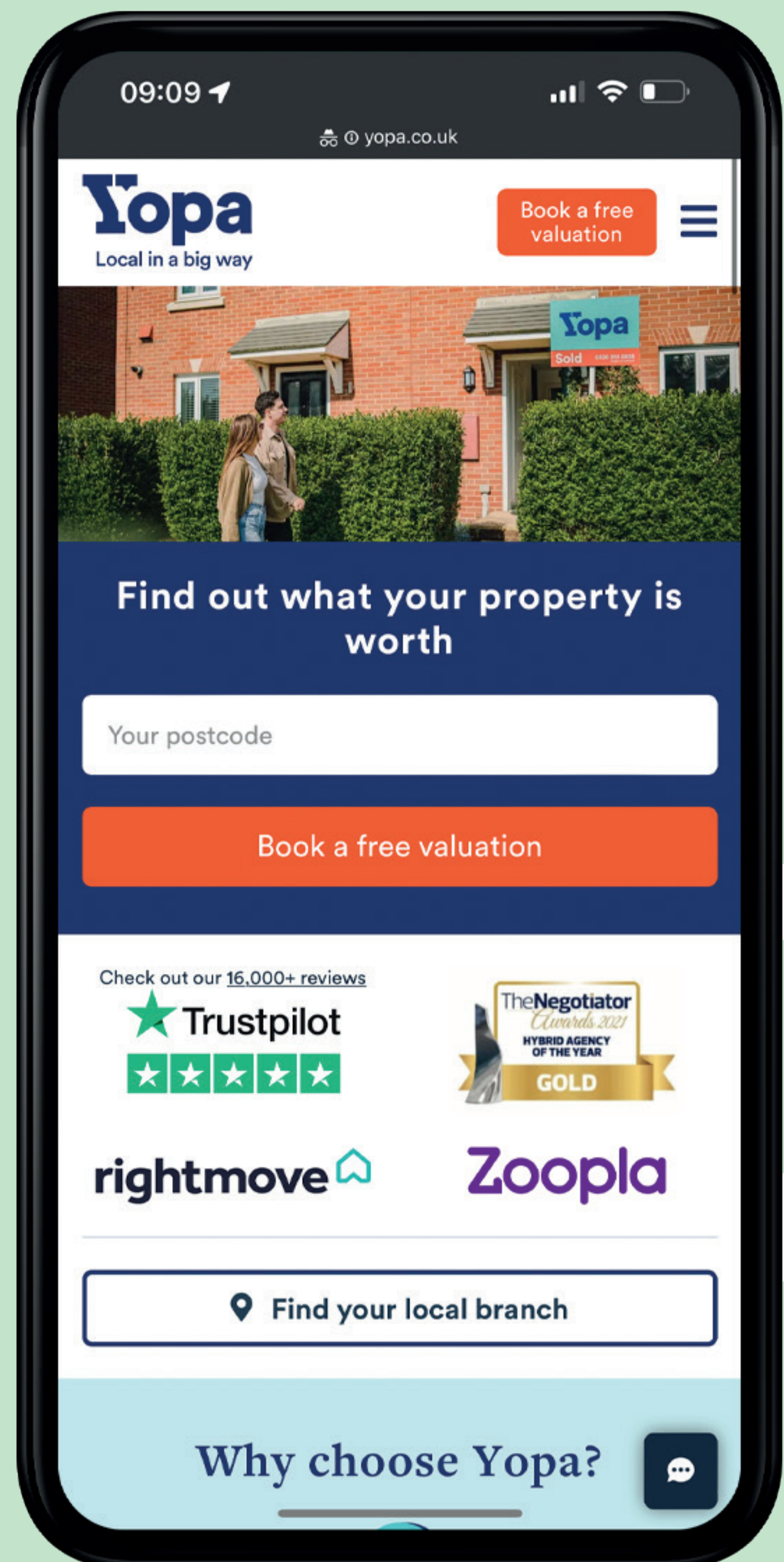


# SAVILLS

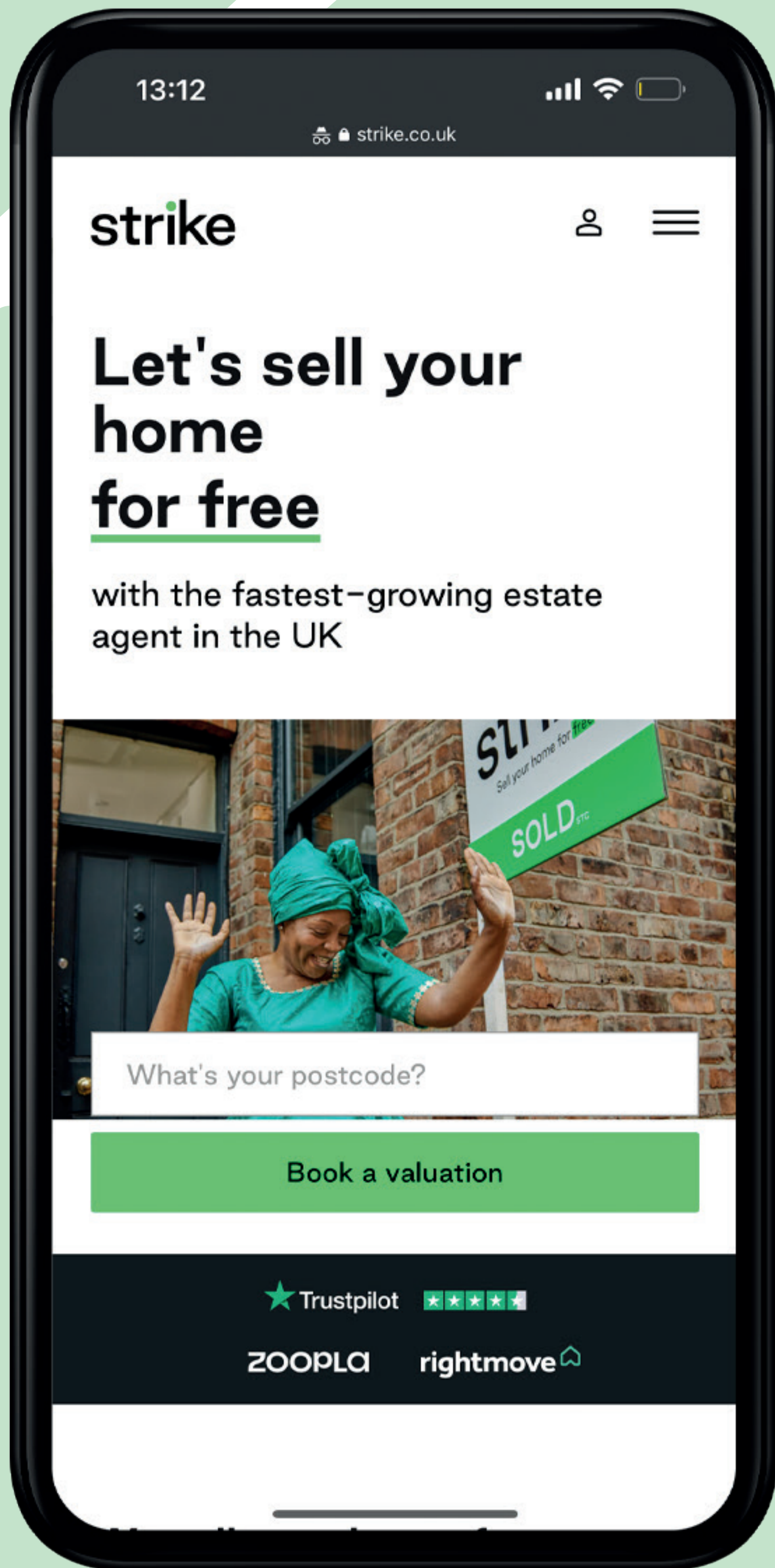
This nationwide agent has an innovative search function that goes into fine detail so that customers can find their ideal property quickly. Customers can search by region, price point, number of bedrooms, keyword, commercial/development land, and a host of other variables.

# YOPA

This hybrid estate agency combines a digitally-driven experience with a focus on the local expertise of their individual agents to deliver a streamlined but highly personalised service. They also offer an instant valuation tool powered by ValPal, which gives you an initial estimate of the value of your property, kick starting the lead generation process.





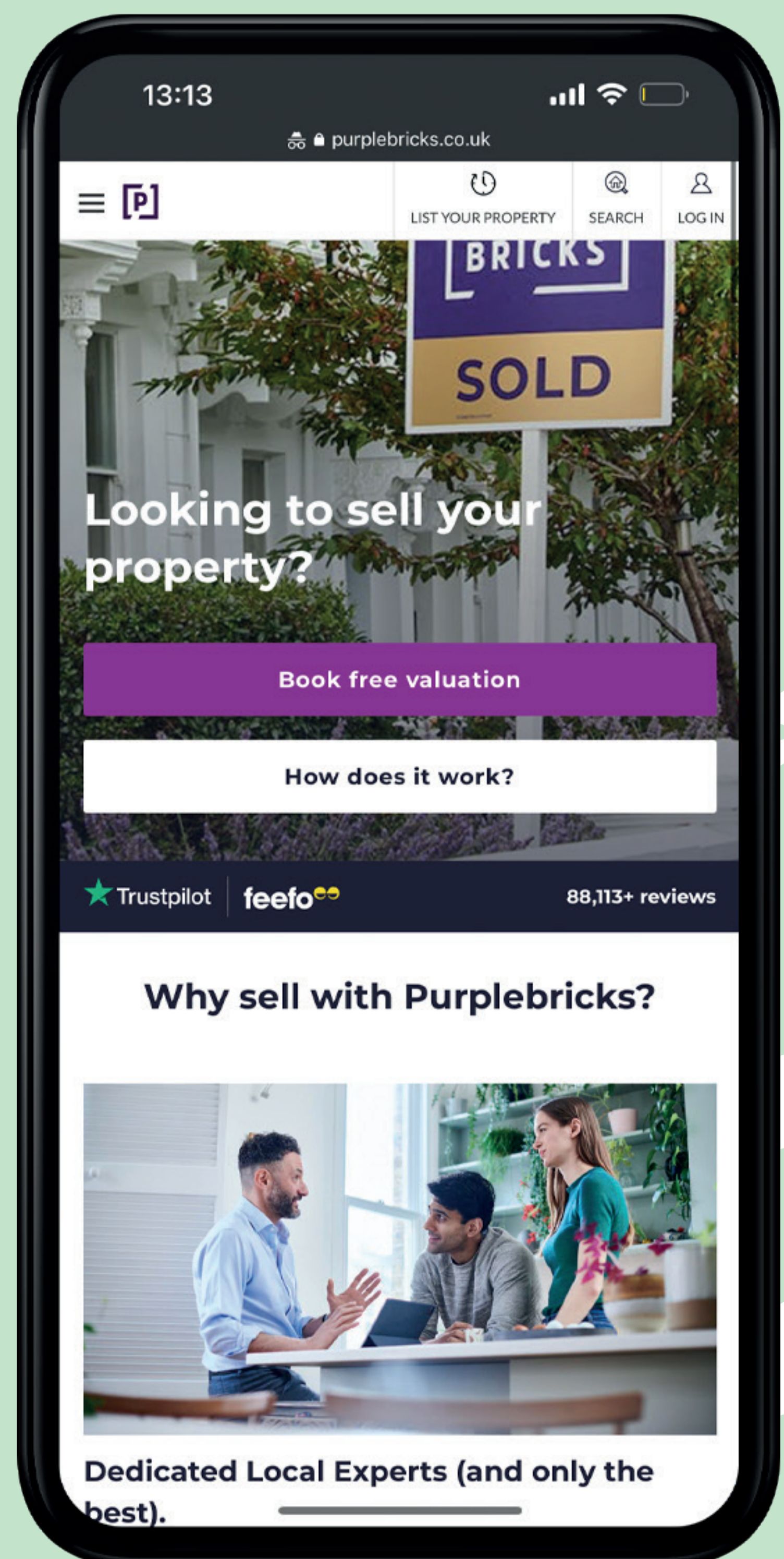


# STRIKE

Positioning themselves as a digital-first estate agent, Strike leverages their digital offering as a way to make things easier for buyers and sellers. They emphasise the control and data-driven approach that they take to strip out much of the complexity and stress that people can sometimes feel when going through the buying/selling/renting process.

# PURPLEBRICKS

Having established themselves as one of the most recognisable names in the property industry, Purplebricks' seller-centric app is core to their success. It helps sellers manage their sale, accept offers, get buyer feedback and even offer virtual tours and valuations, all from a single platform.





# THE SUMMMMARY

Creating a seamless digital experience is vital to ensuring competitiveness in a fast-paced, changing property landscape. A **strong website experience** will help attract new buyers and sellers, as well as exciting existing ones - but it's important to remember that *solid back-end processes* are just as important as front-end look and feel.

Understanding how to tackle digital transformation like this can be tricky at first, but a discovery sprint with us can help you understand how digital products can be deployed to solve problems for your customers and help you operate more efficiently.



# DIGITAL THAT WORKS.

ADAPTABLE

Founded in 2013, adaptable started life as a humble duo. Fast forward to today, and our talented team are delivering **effective digital products** for a growing list of clients around the world.

We partner with forward-thinking businesses that know their digital can work *harder* for them, but need help to get there. Let's talk.







# GET YOUR DIGITAL PRODUCT OFF THE GROUND

Whether you're an estate agent developing something from scratch, or want to improve on an existing application, we can help you get your technology to *where you want it to be*.



## LET'S TALK ABOUT HOW WE CAN HELP.



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