

Rightfocus

Latimer Hinks celebrates 60 years of proud priestgate heritage



Anne Elliott, Marketing Partner (2nd left) and the Latimer Hinks Team, past and present.

Established more than 120 years ago in 1892 and one of Darlington and County Durham's longest established law firms, Latimer Hinks is celebrating 60 years of serving clients from its Priestgate, Darlington offices.

In July they hosted an event for current long serving staff and for a number of staff from every decade since the move to Priestgate in 1953. More events are planned for later in the year.

Based in Priestgate since 1953, the original Priestgate offices expanded as the firm took over the neighbouring fish shop and the old Co-op confectionery shop, as well as taking space in the King's Hotel.

The firm originally practiced from premises on High Row, and became known as J.F. Latimer & Hinks in 1927 when the late Mr. Charles Hinks entered into partnership with Mr. Latimer.

The firm's name changed to Latimer Hinks in the late 1980s when the decision was made to shorten it from Latimer Hinks Marsham & Little.

Marketing Partner, Anne Elliott said: "Latimer Hinks has a long and proud history of delivering high quality legal services to the community of Darlington, County Durham and beyond.

"We are very much a "family firm" in the context of serving several generations of families, businesses and companies, some clients having been with us right from the very start. We believe that our success and longevity stem from our ethos of providing an excellent, professional, yet still personal and friendly service, delivered by a strong, loyal and dedicated team here at Priestgate.

"We aim to provide the best of both traditional and modern with a forward looking strategy. Proud of our history we are above all else ready and more than able to embrace the challenges of the future and the demands of today's business and private clients."

Welcome to the Latimer Hinks September edition of Rightfocus...

In this issue we celebrate 60 years at our offices in Priestgate, Darlington.

Inside we greet Adam Wood who is joining us to bolster our commercial property team. With a deadline looming for HMRC property sales we bring you timely advice on how to be prepared. We also look at employing staff for the first time and a Government red tape challenge.

News continues with a success story about how Latimer Hinks helped a local businesses woman achieve her life-long ambition..

Finally, on the back page Martin Williamson (our head of residential property) brings useful advice on how to ensure planning changes for listed buildings run smoothly.





Adam Wood, experienced solicitor and notary public joins Latimer Hinks

Latimer Hinks Solicitors has appointed an experienced solicitor to further bolster its commercial property team.

Adam Wood, 33, joins as a solicitor specialising in commercial, agricultural and residential property law within the Darlington-based firm.

Significantly, Adam is one of only two solicitors in Darlington who also practice as a notary public and one of merely 875 throughout England and Wales.

Being a notary public means that Adam can authenticate and certify signatures and documents for use anywhere in the world. This includes the witnessing of powers of attorney for use abroad and authenticating company documents and verifying the status of companies.

Born in the North East and currently living in the Wear Valley area, Adam read marine biology and obtained a masters degree in chemical engineering at Newcastle University before completing his law conversion course at Northumbria University and then studying to become a notary public at Cambridge University

After qualifying to practice law in 2005, Adam went straight onto a two-year

training contract with regional law firm BHP Law. Adam spent a further six years with BHP in its commercial property team at their Darlington office, before taking up his appointment with Latimer Hinks.

Speaking of his appointment, Adam said: "I am delighted to have joined such a client-focused firm. I work hard for my clients and my approach fits perfectly with Latimer Hinks' values and its established reputation of providing excellent quality of service."

"The move to Latimer Hinks was the obvious choice for me and I am looking forward to playing my part in the future direction of the firm"

Tim Haggie, head of commercial property at Latimer Hinks, commented: "We are very pleased to be adding Adam to our team and I'm sure this appointment will further strengthen our commercial property experience."

"In his relatively short law career, Adam has gained a great deal of experience and knowledge, and he will be an asset to the firm and our clients."

Deadline looming for HMRC property sales campaign

Latimer Hinks is urging people to be prepared for a review into residential property sales.

The Property Sales Campaign (PRC) will see HM Revenue and Customs reviewing the tax records of those who have sold residential properties but not reported them, to collect tax on undeclared gains.

Martin Williamson, Head of Residential Property, said: "From September HMRC will be reviewing tax records of anyone who has sold a property since at least April 2007 and has not declared any taxable gains,."

"It is understood that the tax authority will use National Insurance numbers on Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) forms to tie these in with income tax records of individuals.

"While the campaign is primarily focusing on second homes, HMRC also plans to investigate sales of properties which could have been used for reasons other than residential accommodation, for example where a claim has been made for a tax deduction for home running costs."

People who come forward by August 9 and calculate and pay the tax due by September 6 may receive preferential treatment.

Those who sold property on or after 6 April 2012 should not face scrutiny, on the basis that they have until 31 January 2014 to declare any taxable gains.

'Get it off your chest' with the Red Tape Challenge'

The Government's Red Tape Challenge website offers businesses the chance to highlight the general regulations businesses feel are particularly frustrating.

The site – at www.redtapechallenge.cabinetoffice.gov.uk – invites views on a wide range of regulations, from those covering health and safety, environment and equalities, to pensions, company law and employment. With some 30,000 comments left on the site at time of writing, red tape is guaranteed to get people talking.

Employing staff for the first time made easier

The Government's toolkit on employing staff has recently been updated at <https://www.gov.uk/employing-staff>

This latest edition of a resource first launched in 2012 helps potential employers make sense of important employment procedures and meet relevant legal requirements in the following six-step checklist: :

- Step 1: Understanding the National Minimum Wage and setting a wage appropriate for the business
- Step 2: Checking if someone has the legal right to work in the UK and carrying out other employment checks
- Step 3: Organising employer's liability insurance – including cover for at least £5m and underwritten by an authorised insurer
- Step 4: Sending written details of the job to the employee(s) – including terms and conditions
- Step 5: Registering employees with HMRC – up to four weeks before new staff are paid
- Step 6: Giving staff a pay statement – showing deductions such as tax, national insurance and student loans.

With around 300,000 businesses looking to take on staff each year, the toolkit should make hiring staff less of a daunting process – especially for those companies without in-house HR specialists.



Darlington business woman achieves life-long coffee shop ambition



Left: Maggie Lock serves Neil Stevenson with coffee and cake.

Neil Stevenson, Partner at Latimer Hinks, has helped a local woman fulfil a life-long dream of running her own coffee shop.

Maggie Lock, has opened Maggie's Place, a "proper coffee shop" in the town's Duke Street, which serves a growing number of customer's coffee, tea, cake and light lunches.

Latimer Hinks completed the lease arrangements which has enabled Maggie to set up her new business employing two members of staff.

Maggie, who has previously worked as a stewardess and an estate agent, said: "I'm very happy to be running my own coffee shop as it's been a long-standing ambition of mine.

"I've enjoyed a variety of careers, but for some time it's been a goal to set up on

my own business. Having worked at a local hotel for two years the experience has certainly helped me in setting up in these early days."

Mrs Lock, who has two teenage children at school in the town, added: "Latimer Hinks's Neil Stevenson was excellent. He was very supportive and professional and has helped me fulfil my ambition. Although it's very early days yet, Maggie's Place is already attracting a loyal customer base, and I'm very excited about the future."

Neil Stevenson, head of the commercial property department at Latimer Hinks Solicitors, who conducted the legal work on the lease deal, said: "We reviewed

and negotiated the terms of the lease to ensure that Maggie could start her business when she was in a position to do so. As a firm, we're very pleased to be involved in making someone's dreams a reality, and that Maggie's new venture is going so well."

Neil added: "It's vital that anyone seeking to lease a commercial property has the benefit of expert legal advice to review and negotiate the terms of the lease. Even when heads of terms have been agreed, a good solicitor will ensure that the lease is going to be an asset rather than a liability."

Money matters

16.8 million people feel stressed out by their finances every single day – according to research by MoneySupermarket.

The study, by the leading consumer website, showed that 'financial situation' is responsible for stressing out 34% of UK adults on a daily basis – up 4% on 2011.

Some 17% point to future financial situation as the main stress factor, with a similar figure highlighting current financial situation. Health and job are the two other main stress sources.

Government to bring forward married couple tax breaks

The Financial Services' new plans for married couple tax breaks are likely to be introduced as early as the autumn – enabling non-working wives and husbands to transfer part of their tax-free allowance to their partners.

The Chancellor, however, has refused to say whether or not the tax break would come in for the 2014/15 financial year, saying people should "wait for the Autumn Statement", due in November or December.

The tax break plan will apply as long as the receiving partner earns less than the basic rate of tax, currently set at £34,370 a year.

The proposed change comes in the wake of considerable pressure from Conservative backbenchers, but against a backdrop of a Lib-Dem 'opt out' on the issue and outright opposition from Labour. In fact the idea of rewarding married couples with a £150 tax break was mooted at the last general election, but condemned by Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg at the time as "patronising drivel that belong in the Edwardian age".

Other critics of the scheme claim that it is out of step with modern Britain and discriminates against single parents, widows and widowers, couples who both work, and those who choose not to marry.



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Ensure planning changes for listed buildings run smoothly

It is a great source of pride for many people that the property they live in is a listed building. Their home has been judged to be of national importance, in terms of architecture or historic interest, and it is often the case that the occupier has worked very hard to be able to own such a property.

Not surprisingly, when most people achieve this goal, they want to stay in that property for a long time, so it is natural that, at some point, changes or repairs will be desirable or necessary. When such a time comes, there really is no need to worry about the fact that the property is listed.

While not an exhaustive list, external changes which require planning approval include extensions, alterations, rebuilding, stonework, rendering and the removal or addition of features such as railings. Internally, this can include alterations to layout, such as floor levels and internal partitions, or changes to features of interest or value.

It is important to note that carrying out unauthorised work to a listed building is a criminal offence, which can lead to prosecution, and a local authority can insist on the reversal of all work. However, as with any other planning procedure, taking time to prepare in advance, be fully informed, and handle things correctly can make things run as smoothly, and as legally, as possible.

In England, there are more than 374,000 listed buildings, so it is no surprise that local authorities have conservation officers in place to help guide the process. Before making an application, it is wise to talk with these experts about your goals, get an outline of what is acceptable and any adaptations to proposals which might be required. This could not only speed up the application process, by making the first application more likely to be approved, but it will also save the cost of re-drafts and re-submissions.

It also helps to be aware of why the property is listed. This in itself can give a strong indication of what might or might



**Martin Williamson, Head of
Residential Property**

not be acceptable. For example, if the property in question is listed because it has the only chimney of its kind in the world, the idea to knock it out and replace it with an Aga can be scrapped completely before any time or money has been wasted.

Most important of all, due to the legal repercussions of unauthorised work, people should take the correct advice and get the relevant permissions – even for repairs – at the earliest stage possible. By doing things “by the book”, the process of making changes to a listed building need not be hugely complex or any more stressful than for a non-listed property.

Owning such a home is something which should be enjoyable, not a reason for concern.

For further information: www.latimerhinks.co.uk or call 01325 341 500.