

Project brief

For a UX challenge, I was tasked with performing a UX review of an Irish property website, [proper.ie](https://www.proper.ie). The brief was quite open ended and left to interpretation.

After familiarising myself with the main user journeys and flows, I chose to focus on usability issues within the website. The following slides are a summary of this process, my findings and recommendations for improving the websites usability and UX.

Audit Overview

Business Objective:

“Our aim is to make it easier for home buyers in Ireland to assess the value of a house they are interested in, based on nearby sales.”

Taken from About section

Audit Process:

1. Cognitive Walkthrough
2. Heuristic Analysis
3. Accessibility Audit
4. Summarise Issues
5. Design solutions
6. Prioritise solutions

1. Design Inconsistencies

Problem

Image 1: The arrow is appropriately beside the % increase. However, in Image 2 the arrow makes it look like the price has increased by €440,000.

Image 3: The arrow follows a different pattern in just showing the price increase, while being a different colour, blue, to the other two examples.

Image 2: Also makes a reference to sales in the past 12 months, while Image 1 does not.

This violates Nielsen's internal usability heuristic of consistency across a website, making it difficult for users to interpret data quickly and effectively



Image 1

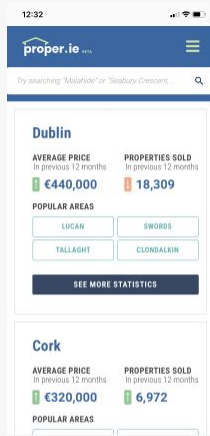


Image 2



Image 3



Image 4



Image 5



Image 6

Solution

Image 4: I included, "in the past 12 months" below Average Price to clarify the time frame and also for consistency with Image 2. I also removed the plus next to 18% as it was redundant with the arrow and condensed the price increase to make the section more scannable.

Image 5: I placed the average price below the text to make it clearer and create consistency with Image 4. I included the increase % below instead.

Image 6: I removed price fluctuation and included percentage and amount increase instead while turning the arrow from blue to green for consistency. I also changed the colour of the button for consistency.

2. Properties sold section

Problem

Image 1: Does not contain a time frame for properties sold. Also does not include common pattern of how many properties sold in this time frame.

Image 2: Contains uncommon pattern of “Load 20 more properties”. Also does not show feedback of how many properties have been loaded and are left to load.

Image 3: Contains what looks like a button for “All properties loaded”. When clicked, this does nothing.

While violating Nielsens external consistency heuristic in relation to other sites, it also contains no visibility of system status for loaded and remaining properties.

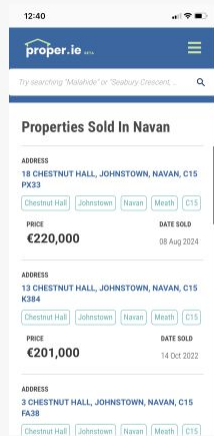


Image 1

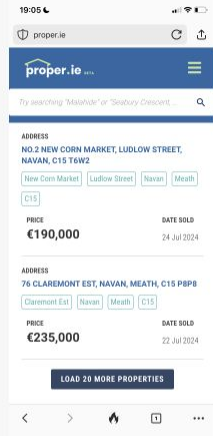


Image 2

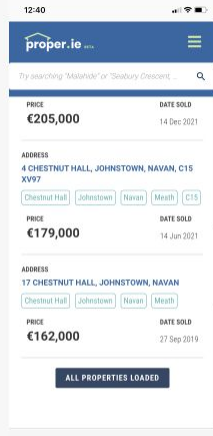


Image 3

Solution

Image 4: I included the number of properties sold and the time period for sales. I believe that the creator of the site may have assumed that people would remember the time period from the header on the site below, but this is insufficient. It also violates Nielsen's heuristic of recognition over recall.



Image 5: Replaced button text with more familiar “See more” & inserted “showing” status below that to give the user greater feedback.

Image 6: Confusing button removed and replaced with “showing” status.

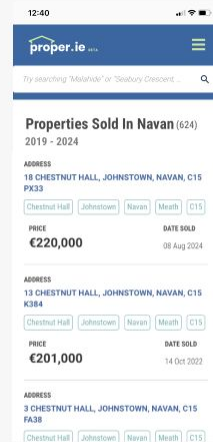


Image 4

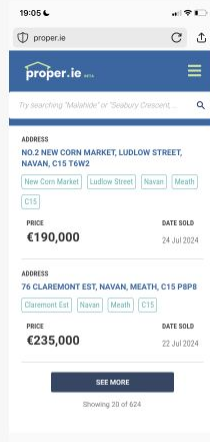


Image 5

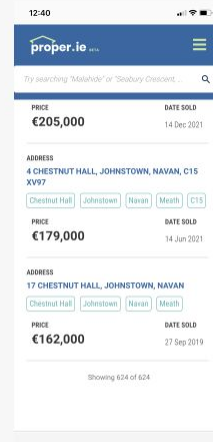


Image 6

2. Properties sold section 2.0

Problem

Image 1: After redesigning the previous section, it's clear that an issue still exists in that there are 624 properties for the user to scroll through, which is far too much. There has to be a convenient way for the user, in line with user goals stated in the about section, to filter through this section to reduce options presented.

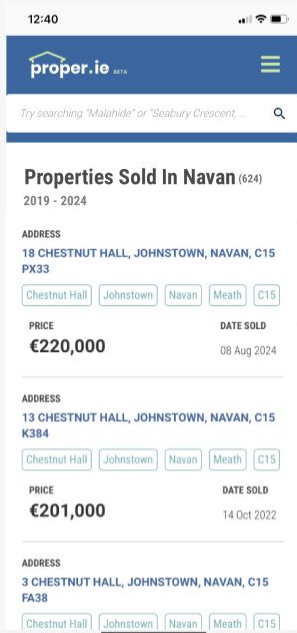


Image 1

Solution

Image 2: I included two filters here, one for prices and one for the time frame. These seem to be the two features based on the data points available which users would be interested in refining to find more specific information about houses sold in areas to assist in benchmarking.

Image 3: This shows the price filter being clicked with a min and max price to refine the search. This is a common pattern used on many housing websites, including Daft.ie, Ireland's most popular platform, so users would be familiar with it.

Image 4: This shows the year filter being clicked, allowing the user to choose one.

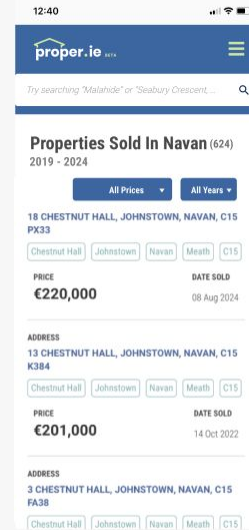


Image 2

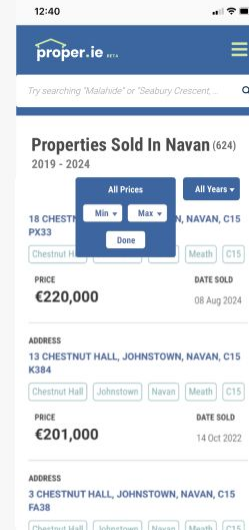


Image 3

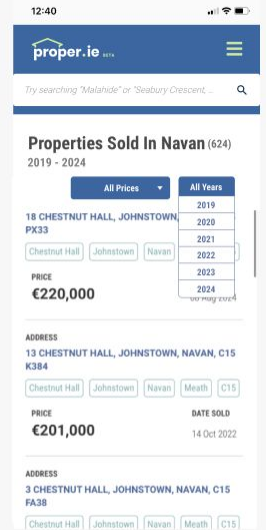


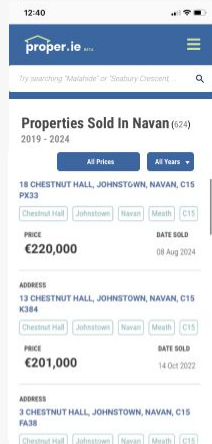
Image 4

2. Properties sold section 3.0

Problem

After redesigning the properties sold section again, I realised that it was missing key components that users judge property value with; namely beds, bathrooms and property size.

Without these elements, the user is lacking the ability to sufficiently compare the value of one house to another and the site isn't as useful as it could be, in line with business objectives.



Redesigned Sold section



Myhome.ie



Daft.ie

Solution

Image 1: I included two icons, one for a bed and bath along with the area of the home. Icons were preferable to text as there is a lot of text on the page already, so it's more easily scannable. This is a pattern already used on housing websites, so should be recognisable. I also deleted some unnecessary elements, text like "price" and "address" while adding a beds filter.

Image 2: As the page looked quite cluttered, I also deleted the address tags, as these don't seem essential, but this would need to be done after consultation with the client & users about whether they are used or not.

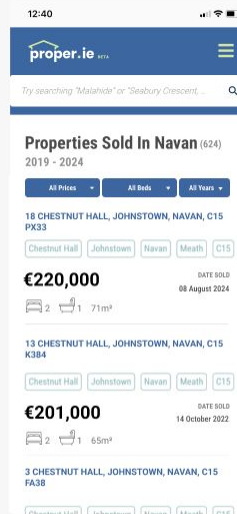


Image 1

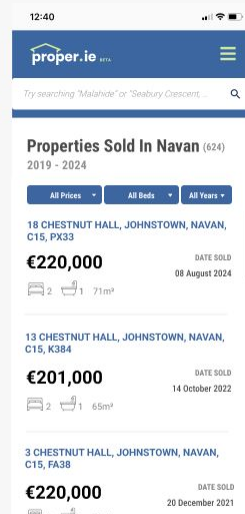
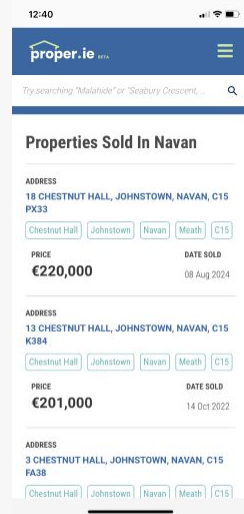


Image 2



Original Section

3. Not Mobile optimised

Problem

Image 1: The desktop version of the Current Average prices section.

Image 2: In mobile form, “Second Hand” stretches onto two lines instead of one like the “New” section, with it’s corresponding colour block also misaligned.

Image 3: Counties Roscommon and Westmeath stretch over two columns, due to box size issues in relation to text. This throws off the corresponding price sections.

Solution

Image 4: I made the “New” and “Second Hand” text slightly smaller so that they were in alignment, as well as aligning the “Sort Chart By” section, which was also out of alignment. I also included the year for the prices next to the text as though it’s in the paragraph below, this may not be read. It makes it more easily scannable and understandable as a whole.

Image 5: I briefly considered just reducing the size of the text in the boxes. However, I felt this would not work, as the boxes were already crowded enough and if extra houses were sold in the future, it would make the solution redundant, so I increased the size of the boxes and graph instead.



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

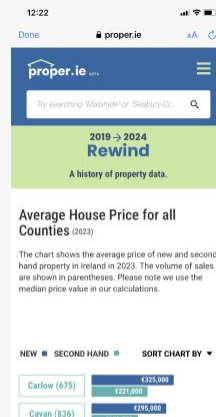


Image 4

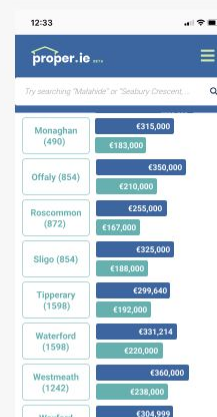


Image 5

4. Uncommon Icon

Problem

Image 1 + 2: Both images, mobile and desktop respectively, contain an unfamiliar star icon, representing a new home which includes VAT in the price.

This violates Jakob's Law, in that users spend most time on websites other than yours and thus, icons and elements used should be familiar to them. The button has to be clicked to understand it, which is inconvenient.

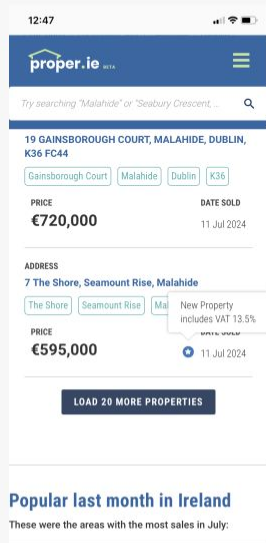


Image 1

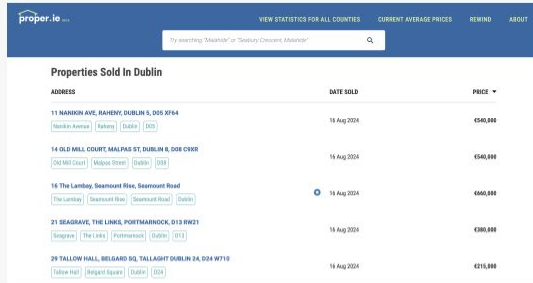


Image 2

Solution

Image 3 + 4: I included a button which would be more intuitive without needing to click on it. I also placed it next to price instead of Date Sold, as this is the element that it's related to, so it makes more sense.

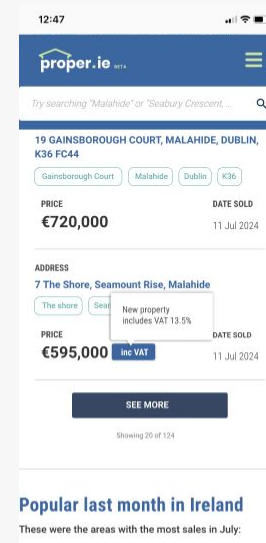


Image 3

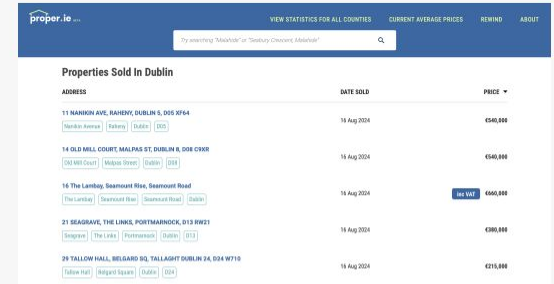


Image 4

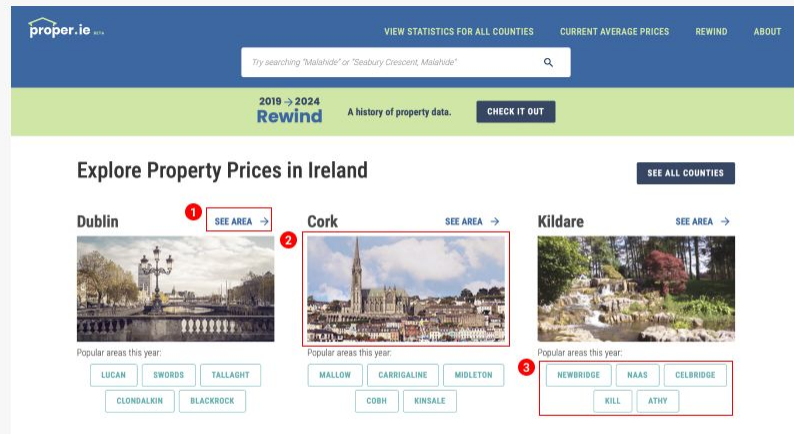
5. Accessibility issues

Problem

Issue 1: “See Area” as a link may provide difficulty to individuals who have vision issues who are using screen reading technology as it’s not descriptive enough. There is also no alternative text associated with the code.

Issue 2: Similarly, there is no alt text in the code associated with the images, making it difficult for screen readers.

Issue 3: The colour contrast isn’t sufficient on the buttons and would provide difficulty for individuals with low vision and colourblindness.

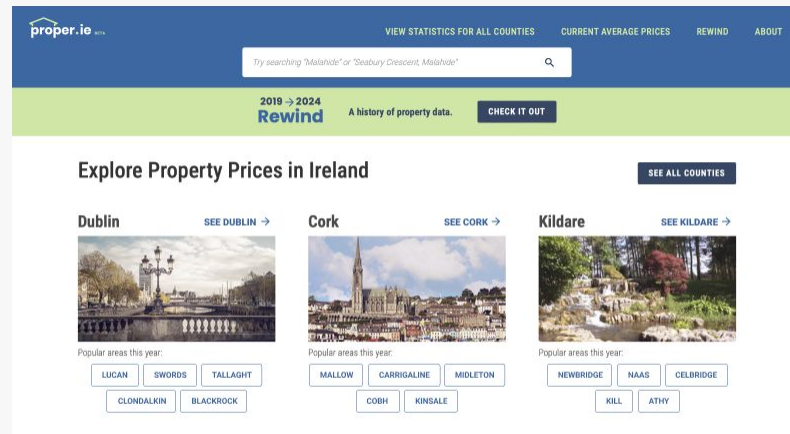


Solution

Issue 1: Aria labels can be inserted into the code to provide more context to screen readers. Alternatively, more descriptive text could be used in the link, like below.

Issue 2: Alternative text must be used in the code for each image.

Issue 3: I made the boxes and text a darker shade of blue from the palette in order to be more easily visible.



6. Mobile Data Viz

Problem

Image 1: in the “Rewind” section, a data visualisation is shown for sales volume and price for all counties. The mobile version is particularly poor, as it does not show price on the left and volume on the right as the desktop version does. The only way to discern this is through clicking on elements.

Image 2: In addition to this, the graph is done over uneven periods, with it gauging two year periods until the last one, which is only a year.

Image 3: When a particular area is clicked on, like Dublin, it also shows this graph, but again, the data on the left and right is missing.



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

Solution

Image 4: Since there is very little room on mobile screens, I decided to break the chart up into two, with buttons for switching between Sales volume and Average Price. Sales Volume is shown in this image. I also split the time frame into even year intervals, with a drop down on the right hand side to switch between years. This is more common and efficient than the previous “back” & “next” button iteration.

Image 5: Average Price is selected in this image.

Image 6: Shows the year drop down.



Image 4



Image 5



Image 6

Prioritise Solutions

MoSCoW Analysis

I performed an analysis to prioritise solutions for the client based on what was essential and difficulty of implementation using a variation of MoSCoW framework. The framework is as follows:

Must Have: These are essential needs that are simple to implement.

Should Have: These are important but more difficult to implement.

Could Have: These are nice to have but not essential.

Will not Have: These are elements which are not needed.

Accessibility is in the top right as it is easy to implement & absolutely essential for UX. The Mobile Data Viz should be much the same. The icon switch is less essential but easy to implement. Other elements in the same quadrant are all essential but some may be more difficult to implement than others.

This leads to properties sold section 3.0 which is more difficult to implement but still would be an important part of crafting a great user experience. It would be difficult to get the beds, bathrooms and area data for over 200,000 homes as it is not available in the Property Price Register database and would likely need to be done manually.

