

SURVEY

The property is sold in its current state of repair and condition, and the onus is on you as the Buyer to discover any existing physical faults and potential future problems. We therefore recommend in all cases that you have the property surveyed by your own surveyor to identify any structural or other defects likely to give rise to problems and expenditure in the future. The survey will also confirm the value of the property to ensure the price you are paying is fair and reasonable.

Types of Survey

Domestic property surveys normally fall into the following categories:-

- **Lender (Building Society, Bank etc) valuation** – If you are purchasing with a mortgage, the Lender will commission a valuation to check that the property is adequate security for the loan. This is not a building survey and will not necessarily provide detailed information about the property's condition, or reveal physical defects. You may be provided with a copy of the valuation but in any event you should not rely upon it.
- **Level 1 Survey (previously the RICS Condition Report)** – This is a basic level report carried out by a qualified surveyor, who will describe the condition of the property and flag any obvious risks, but will not carry out detailed inspections or tests. The survey report will not usually provide advice about future repair and maintenance issues. Level 1 surveys are a lot less costly than Level 2 or 3 surveys, but may only be appropriate for modern, conventionally built properties in good condition.
- **Level 2 Survey (previously the RICS HomeBuyer Report)** – A Level 2 survey is more comprehensive than a Level 1 survey and will include more extensive inspection of the property and its services. However, it will not include any structural tests or advice on future repairs/maintenance.
- **Level 3 Survey (previously the RICS Building Survey)** - This is a full structural survey carried out by a qualified surveyor, and will include an extensive inspection of the property. The surveyor will provide a detailed assessment of the property's condition and any potential defects, and check the normal operation of the property's services. The surveyor will also advise on the likely cause of any defects and appropriate remedial works. A Level 3 survey is the most expensive option, but will provide the most comprehensive information, and is particularly useful for high-value, complex or historical properties, or buildings of a non-standard construction.

Arranging a Survey

We would strongly advise you to instruct a surveyor to carry out a survey of the property before you exchange contracts for the purchase. You may wish to check whether your Lender is using an external firm of surveyors to do their valuation, as they may be willing to prepare a separate report for you at reduced cost.

It is important that your survey is arranged as soon as possible before exchange of contracts. Once contracts have been exchanged, you will not be able to withdraw from your purchase on the basis of any physical defects discovered. You are also highly unlikely to have any claim for defects later revealed.

New Build Properties

New properties are often covered by a new home warranty and insurance scheme such as a National House Building Council (NHBC) agreement. These tend to cover major structural items for 10 years and faulty workmanship of the builder for 2 years. You should, however, still consider

whether you wish to have a survey, or instruct a surveyor to review the building plans. If the property is not fully complete by exchange of contracts then you should, before exchange, inspect the plans and specifications with care. It will also be very important that you inspect the property thoroughly both a day or two before completion and (if necessary) early on the day of completion to ensure all is in order and to your satisfaction.

Leasehold Properties

If you are buying a leasehold flat or maisonette then you will almost certainly be obliged under the lease to contribute to repairs and renovations of the whole block. It is therefore important that your survey includes the structure of the block as a whole and any common parts. This may prove more expensive but will give you the chance to assess the cost of your obligations under the lease. Remember that with a leasehold property the landlord is often in charge of dealing with repair and maintenance and you may find yourself having to pay contributions to the cost of major items (such as roof repairs or external decoration) at a time when it is least convenient to you financially. This contrasts with a freehold house where, save in emergency, you can decide when you wish to carry out the necessary repair or maintenance.

The Survey Report and Next Steps

You must read the survey report with care and arrange to have carried out any suggested specialist reports. Do check for any items that have not been inspected and so are excluded from the report.

If defects are noted on any valuation or survey, you should take care to ascertain the likely cost of repairs (including obtaining specialist quotations etc) and, if necessary, renegotiate the price with the Seller or the selling agents. This is not something we can carry out on your behalf, but please let us know immediately of any price change or agreement by the Seller to carry out works of repair.

We do not normally receive a copy of any Lender valuation or any survey report prepared for you privately. Accordingly, if the report contains any items which the surveyor suggests should be referred to us or other points which you feel we should consider, please do forward a copy to us. Although we are not qualified to comment or advise you on the contents of a survey report, we are able to assist with points of a legal nature including:

- Legal title
- Rights of way and road adoption
- Liability for shared services
- Boundary discrepancies (should your inspection of the physical boundaries against the title plan for the property reveal any inconsistencies)
- Local authority notices, evidence of Planning Permission and Building Regulations compliance
- New home warranties and/or guarantees that may benefit the property
- Coal/tin mining searches