



“Types of Building Survey”

Building surveys come in lots of different shapes and sizes and as you would expect come with different price tags, reflecting the amount of work and detail involved as well as the qualifications of the person undertaking the survey. This article focuses on the types of survey, rather than who undertakes them although the latter is equally, if not more important if it is to be money well spent. If you are interested in learning more about this aspect please read my article “Who should I get to undertake a house survey”

Surveys tend to fall into four main types, but many practitioners will tailor their reports to suit their own style of writing and incorporate what they feel are the most important aspects. The exception to this is the RICS Homebuyer report that has pre-determined headings and a set format, although even that can be embellished a little if the writer so chooses. In my view the most important aspect of a survey is; does it give the level of information and detail that a purchaser is expecting and looking for? Some will and some won't! Therefore it is important that you ask your surveyor to explain what is being offered and also ask if they have any sample documents that you can view. Anyone with professional experience should be able to provide you with a sample. If they can't, then you can take a gamble on the quality but I would avoid them like the plague. Most surveyors will be proud in the quality of their work and willing to show it to anyone who asks, if they are not, then it usually means that the quality does not compare favourably to their competitors. At A J Hodge Associates we provide sample documents on our website and let our clients judge for themselves.

The types of survey that are offered can generally be set out under the following four headings;

‘Full’ Building Survey (Often called a full structural survey) - This involves a detailed and comprehensive inspection of the property. The report will comment on condition of all those parts of the structure which physically can be inspected but it will, necessarily be subject of a number of limitations as set out in a scope of service for building surveys.

‘Main Elements or Major Defects’ Survey - The major parts of the structure (the main shell of the building) will be inspected and the report will concentrate on those areas: the roofs, main walls, floors, ceilings and windows. Whilst services and ancillary parts of the building such as fittings, doors and decorations are not included, dampness and timber decay will be.

‘Homebuyer Report’ - This is a standard form of survey designed by the RICS. The pre-printed format covers most aspects of the building but not in great detail. It is appropriate in many circumstances but equally inappropriate in others and you are

A J Hodge Associates

Chartered Building Surveyors



advised to discuss the merits of this beforehand. In the case of flats, access to parts of the building is likely to be restricted, thus surveys will be limited only to those areas where access is available.

Specific Survey – Sometimes, a previous ‘bad’ experience or personal knowledge of the type of property or locality will give a buyer concern over one or more particular elements of the building. In these circumstances a report can be submitted which deals specifically with that/those parts.

I would advise that if you are planning on appointing a surveyor to undertake a survey on your behalf, you discuss your requirements in detail with them to ensure that you are offered the survey that best suits your needs.

For more information contact: Andrew Hodge MRICS
0117 377 5860 or 07722 089 664
www.ajhodgeassociates.co.uk