

South Coast Home Inspectors

Building Surveys Explained

What is a Building Survey and why would I need one?

It is an inspection and report commissioned to comment upon the property on the day of the inspection, rather like an MOT. The specific terms of what was inspected is included within the report so there can be no doubt as to what it does and does not cover, and for whose eyes the report is for as its contents are confidential. It can be a simple inspection of part of a property and for a particular purpose. Anything which is considered a bespoke survey is called a **building survey** and can be very detailed and invasive to the structure. Clients choose what survey service they want; it can be very specialised. Here we outline those more commonly available. At South Coast Home Inspectors we can arrange any of these survey types. Remember, a property in good condition with a good survey report will invariably command a higher price and sell more quickly. We recommend it prudent that a survey is carried out on properties for sale by auction.

Mortgage Valuation. *Commissioned by the lender.*

Note this is a valuation not a survey and is limited in scope. It is required by the mortgage lender upon the property and arranged by them. Its purpose is to evaluate the lenders risk compared to size of loan. The buyer ultimately pays for this and may not even see a copy, simply being told that it has passed for purposes of the mortgage. What this means is that for small loans on high value properties the loan is safeguarded even though the property may have defects and deficiencies. For large loans relative to property value the advice may come back that 'retention' is necessary which would indicate some defects or other matter which places the loan at greater risk. Buyers should not therefore take the view that it's a perfect property just because it has passed the lenders criteria.

Home Condition Report. *Commissioned by the seller and (optionally) included in the HIP.*

It is viewable to both seller and buyer. This inspection reports upon the property condition. The inspection is detailed, but not invasive and does not undertake any tests. It reports upon the condition of the functional elements from rating 1 to 3. It includes a rebuilding insurance evaluation. It does not include a market valuation. Some items may be referred for further investigation where necessary. It is generally accepted that buyers and sellers alike will more readily understand the condition ratings when compared to traditional surveys which do not use a scoring system.

Pre-Sale Inspection. *Commissioned and used only by the homeowner/seller*

If the homeowner is uncertain of the condition of their property prior to marketing its sale then this survey can prove useful. It follows the same criteria as the HCR described above though remains the homeowner's confidential document. The owner may choose to do this instead of an HCR.

Home Condition Survey. *Commissioned and used only by the buyer.*

This can be used when the seller has not provided an HCR in the HIP. It reports upon the condition in the same way as the HCR by rating elements 1-3. The buyer may choose this survey instead of the RICS Homebuyers Survey. See HCR above for details of the survey.

RICS Home Buyers Survey and Valuation. *Commissioned and used only by the buyer.*

It inspects the condition of the property. It is not invasive and does not undertake tests. The condition is reported upon, but does not use numerical ratings; instead it uses terms like satisfactory or inadequate. This survey includes a market valuation. This report focuses on urgent and serious matters only and permits the surveyor to provide an overall professional opinion upon the property relative to the agreed price and recommends taking actions and obtaining quotes for urgent repairs.

Building Survey. *Commissioned by homeowner/seller/buyer/lender*

These surveys can be commissioned at any time and are bespoke to address the particular concern or circumstance prevailing at the time. They can be very detailed and structurally invasive if required. Most likely used for much older, listed, or complex properties or those which perhaps have visible faults or those which are to undergo refurbishment. Client chooses the service required.

New Build Inspections *Commissioned and used only by the buyer.*

This specialised service checks site build progress over the build time and deal with problems before its too late so that the completed property is precisely what was ordered.

Specialised Surveys include rising damp, condensation dpc, timber rot and defects, wall tie and other building defects. Invariably companies offering these services also offer the repair. It's a good idea to have it surveyed by an independent surveyor first to avoid unnecessary expense.