

## **SURVEYS AND MORTGAGE VALUATIONS**

It is up to you to satisfy yourself as to the structural state and condition of any property you are buying, and also the condition of the central heating, wiring, services (including private drainage), boundary walls etc. It is very important to consider having a property surveyed before committing yourself to buying it, and also conducting other specialist enquiries where appropriate.

If you are having a mortgage, your lender will require a basic survey, known as a **Mortgage Valuation** to ensure that the property is adequate security for the proposed loan it is giving. A Mortgage Valuation is not a full survey. It is only a limited check on the property that your mortgage lender carries out to ensure it's worth the money they're lending you.

In particular, you should also satisfy yourself that, in addition to the main structure, any extensions or alterations have been built to a satisfactory standard and comply, for example, with planning permissions, building regulation approval, listed building consent and conservation area consent.

There are generally two different types of survey available. These are the **Homebuyer Survey and Valuation** and a **Building Survey** (formerly known as a structural survey).

A **Homebuyer Survey and Valuation**, usually known as a **Homebuyer's Report**, is a survey done to a standard format set out by RICS – it's most suitable for conventional properties built within the last 150 years, which are in reasonable condition.

A Homebuyer's Report includes details of:

- The general condition of the property
- Any major faults in accessible parts of the building that may affect the value
- Any urgent problems that need inspecting by a specialist before you sign a contract
- Results of tests for damp in the walls
- Damage to timbers – including woodworm or rot
- The condition of any damp-proofing, insulation and drainage (though drains aren't tested)
- The estimated cost of rebuilding the property after a fire, for building insurance purposes
- The value of the property on the open market

It doesn't detail every aspect of the property, and only focuses on urgent matters needing attention. It's not usually suitable for properties in need of renovation, or if you're planning major alterations. The surveyor will usually inspect the main structure, including the roof-space if there is access to it. If buying a leasehold property, the report should include the common shared parts (such as a stairwell and entrance).

A **Building Survey** is a comprehensive inspection of a property. It's suitable for all properties, especially:

- Listed buildings
- Older properties,
- Buildings constructed in an unusual way, however old they are
- Properties you plan to renovate or alter in any way
- Properties that have had extensive alterations.

It examines all accessible parts of the property – and you can ask to have specific areas included, so it covers any particular concerns you have about the building. A Building Survey includes details of:

- Details of faults, both major and minor – and what they could mean
- The possible cost of repairs
- Results of damp testing on walls
- Damage to timbers – including woodworm and rot
- The condition of damp-proofing, insulation and drainage (though drains aren't tested)
- Technical information on the construction of the property and the materials used
- The location
- Recommendations for any further special inspections.

Further special inspections could be recommended, for example from a structural engineer or a drainage or water expert. We particularly recommend a report from a water engineer if the property has private (i.e. septic tank) drainage or a private water supply. As well as checking that the water supply will be adequate, the engineer can confirm that the supply of water or septic tank drainage meets all current environmental and health standards.