

RICS Building Survey...

1st edition, practice note



RICS
Home
Surveys



RICS Building Survey

RICS practice note

1st edition



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Status of this practice note

Surveyors accepting instructions to provide reports under the RICS Building Survey Service must comply with the conditions set out in this practice note.

It is necessary to use the specified forms, also described here, without variation. No departure from this mandatory practice note is permitted.

When an allegation of professional negligence is made against a surveyor, the court is likely to take account of any relevant practice notes in deciding whether or not the surveyor acted with reasonable confidence. Failure to comply with this practice note is likely to be judged to be negligent.

In the opinion of RICS, a surveyor conforming fully to the requirements of this practice note should have at least a partial defence to an allegation of negligence by virtue of having followed those requirements.

Those surveyors using the report forms must take out an RICS Building Survey Service copyright licence, which authorises them to use the RICS Building Survey Service material in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.



Introduction

The RICS Building Survey is the premium product in the RICS Home Survey range. Clients who want a clear, impartial and detailed assessment of any type of property will choose it, and their expectations will be higher than that for the RICS HomeBuyer and Condition Reports. To meet this, it is essential that the RICS Building Survey Service:

- is performed by a surveyor who has sufficient knowledge and competence necessary to carry out a detailed condition assessment of the property
- describes the identifiable risk of potential or hidden defects
- ensures that the surveyor establishes a relationship with the client in order to determine the client's precise requirements before providing the service, and to be able to discuss the report once it has been delivered
- includes an appropriate desk-top study carried out by the surveyor that provides a good working knowledge of the property in its locality
- ensures a thorough and detailed property inspection, and

- provides a report that is factual and unambiguous, is presented in a logical order and is written in plain language. The report must also clearly differentiate facts from the surveyor's opinion.

Unlike other Home Survey products, the RICS Building Survey Service is more flexible and may include a broader range of issues arising. However, where these fall outside the concept of the service, they must be covered by an 'extra service' agreement as defined in this practice note (see Part A, section 2.5).

The 1st edition of the *RICS Building Survey practice note* comprises the following parts:

- Part A: The practice note
- Part B: The documentation
- Part C: The report form and checklists
- Part D: Appendices

Standard terminology

Arranged in the following table are the full title, short form and initials of the main elements and documents of the service. These are to be used consistently and in all cases without variation.

| Full title | Short form | Acronyms |
|---|-----------------------|----------|
| Description of the RICS Building Survey Service | — | DBS |
| instructions to proceed | the instructions | — |
| RICS Building Survey | the survey | — |
| <i>RICS Building Survey practice note</i> | the practice note | PN |
| RICS Building Survey Service | the service | BSS |
| RICS Building Survey Service Copyright Licence | the copyright licence | — |
| RICS Home Surveys Information Sheet | — | HSIS |
| standard terms of engagement | — | STE |

Part A: The practice note

1 Professional obligations

1.1 Compliance

In the interest of maintaining the highest professional standards, every surveyor delivering the RICS Building Survey Service (BSS) must comply with the content of this practice note. A surveyor accepting instructions under the BSS must be an AssocRICS, MRICS or FRICS and must fulfil all instructions in full compliance with the following:

- practice note (PN)
- Description of the RICS Building Survey Service (DBS) and the standard terms of engagement (STE) that sits within it
- the RICS BSS Copyright Licence (see section 1.7), and
- all guidance published by RICS relating to the inspection of residential property (see www.rics.org).

1.2 Care and diligence

The surveyor has a duty of care and diligence. The BSS is founded on a set of commitments made to the client in the STE, which sits within the DBS. Both the DBS and STE are reflected throughout this practice note and include an obligation to give the client the benefit of the surveyor's judgment, in addition to the simple facts. They also set out clearly and unambiguously not only what will be provided in the service, but also what will not.

The surveyor alone must judge the exact extent of the inspection of a particular property and make the decision on whether or not to include particular items in the RICS Building Survey. The surveyor also has to determine with care:

- a) which matters are to be included for any of the reasons specified in the DBS
- b) which condition ratings to apply to the elements of the property.

These decisions are made on the basis of the surveyor's training, knowledge and experience. The surveyor must be prepared to stand by them,

and must record them in the survey and in the site notes.

The DBS requires that the surveyor makes best endeavours to speak to the client prior to the inspection in order to specify the exact requirements of the client and to avoid any possible misunderstandings. It is essential to remember that the client expects much more from the BSS than that from the RICS HomeBuyer or the RICS Condition Report. The surveyor is advised to provide a comparison between the various levels of service that are available so that the client may clearly understand the differences between them. The surveyor should also make clients aware that they can discuss the report with him or her after it is produced. It is considered good practice for the surveyor to initiate this post-inspection contact.

1.3 Competence

Inspection for the building survey is longer, more detailed and more extensive than that for the RICS HomeBuyer or the RICS Condition Reports (see the RICS Home Surveys Information Sheet (HSIS)). The degree of detail and extent of reporting is also substantially greater. The service requires a high level of competency in surveying the type of property in question.

The BSS requires the surveyor to have relevant experience in this field, have appropriate knowledge of building construction and be sufficiently skilled to inspect and report on the particular property concerned. If the surveyor cannot fulfil these requirements, then the instruction should be declined.

1.4 Sufficient knowledge

Both the DBS and STE indicate that the surveyor has sufficient knowledge of the construction type and the area in which the property is situated. Section 2.3 describes the types of property to which the service applies.

The surveyor must be familiar with the characteristics of the local area in order to understand how they may affect the condition of the property being inspected. Although this varies between regions, this knowledge typically includes:

- common and uncommon vernacular housing styles, materials and construction techniques
- general environmental issues where information about them are freely available to the public – including flooding, radon, aircraft noise, typical soil conditions, important landfill sites, etc.
- the approximate location of the main conservation areas/historic centres
- local and regional government organisations and structures
- an awareness of the socio-historical/industrial development in the area.

If any of this information is not known, the surveyor must use reasonable endeavours to fill in the gaps through research about the property and postcode areas by performing a desk-top study, making enquiries and using other means prior to, during and after the inspection. If this cannot be achieved within an appropriate timescale, the surveyor should not accept the instruction. The following paragraphs discuss these methods in further detail.

1.4.1 Desk-top study

The surveyor may consider the following information, if available:

- estate agent particulars
- relevant site information (e.g. the nature of the subsoil)
- particular exposure to wind-driven rain or frost attack
- details of previous works and permissions
- guarantees, warranties and any supporting reports, specifications and quotations
- conservation area or listed building status
- lease details (see section 4.9, Leasehold properties)
- any other technical reports relating to the property (for background information only, not for reliance), unless otherwise agreed.

This list of information is not exhaustive, and it is for the surveyor to determine local conditions and obtain any information relevant to the particular circumstances of the property.

Even where the surveyor has acquired a good working knowledge of the type of property concerned and its locality, the surveyor must carry out a desk-top study using a structured approach.

Sources of material may include the internet as well as traditional resources. It is recommended that the sources of all information provided are recorded within site notes and stated in the report.

1.4.2 Oral enquiries

Information about matters affecting the property may be available from the property owner, occupier or, where the property is vacant, the owner's agent, and may be obtained through oral enquiries. Such information should only be used as a guide, as it may not be entirely accurate. In addition, the surveyor should recommend that the client seek legal advice on any such information stated in the report.

The primary purpose of this procedure is to assist the surveyor in establishing matters of relevance and to follow a trail of prudent enquiry. For example, the following information (not given in any particular order) may be available from the owner or occupier:

- previous structural repairs (e.g. underpinning or strengthening), and past/current insurance claims
- list of improvements carried out (e.g. new bathroom, new kitchen, Velux, energy)
- structural alterations or additions
- redecoration or renewal of finishes
- local authority or statutory approvals
- age of the property
- length of occupancy at the property
- whether the property is listed or located in a conservation area
- guarantees or warranties (e.g. for timber or damp treatment, cavity wall tie replacement)
- neighbour or other disputes affecting the property
- availability of mains services (e.g. details of maintenance/service records, repairs and upgrading, especially for gas and electrical installations)
- details of private services
- status of roadways (adopted or private)
- known rights of way, or other rights that may exist over, or benefit, the property
- location of any concealed traps and hatches that may provide access to parts of the structure

- tenure
- specific details needed as a result of the surveyor following a reasonable trail of enquiry
- where the property is leasehold, lease term (original and unexpired), details regarding ground rent, service charge, insurance arrangements, responsibility for repairs and maintenance, and identity of the freeholders or superior landlord and the management company
- ownership of boundaries
- *Party Wall etc. Act* 1996 issues
- where there is private drainage, details on type of drainage and locations of holding tanks, plant and equipment, when and how it is serviced, capacity of holding tanks and frequency of emptying in relation to the number of people in the household
- whether the property or immediate locality has been affected by flooding, or an invasive species

If this cannot be achieved within an appropriate timescale, the instruction should not be accepted.

1.5 Energy Performance Certificate

If the property is being marketed for sale, an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) should be available.

The EPC contains the current energy-efficiency rating that the surveyor is required to state in section D of the report. It is recognised that energy/sustainability matters are changing rapidly and that the format of the information in the EPC is currently under regulatory review.

Recently, there has been a greater expectation from clients on matters relating to thermal efficiency and energy. Therefore the surveyor will be expected to comment on energy-efficiency issues in the report and to be familiar with programmes such as the Green Deal and/or other related government initiatives. Comment should be provided under sections G Services, I Issues for your legal advisers and K Energy efficiency, as appropriate.

1.6 Client's understanding of the contract

As mentioned in section 1.2, the surveyor must recognise that there is a greater expectation from clients for ongoing oral and written communication as part of the BSS, in comparison to the RICS HomeBuyer or Condition Report Services.

This must be established from the outset and before the contract is signed or otherwise accepted. The surveyor is advised to make every effort to speak to the client prior to the inspection in order to ensure that the client:

- a) is making the appropriate choice of survey
- b) has a clear understanding of the key elements of the service, what will be delivered and the approximate timescale for delivery.

In particular, these key elements concern the extent and limitations of both the inspection and the survey, as specified in the HSIS and the DBS (see also section 3).

1.7 Obligatory copyright licence

The RICS Building Survey is a product developed and owned by RICS, and **only** RICS members (as listed in section 1.1) may use its name, format and content. RICS surveyors wishing to reproduce this product **must** purchase the copyright licence, which is obtained from RICS (see www.rics.org). RICS can also supply all other necessary documents (for more details, see Appendix E).

1.8 Negligence

If the court is presented with an allegation of professional negligence against a surveyor, it will most likely consider any relevant practice notes in deciding whether the surveyor acted with reasonable competence. Failure to comply with the relevant practice note may result in an adverse finding against the surveyor.

A surveyor conforming to the requirements of this practice note should be better able to demonstrate competence in response to an allegation of negligence.

2 Requirements and scope of the RICS Building Survey Service

2.1 UK countries

This practice note is written to reflect the property law in England and Wales, although much of its content is equally applicable elsewhere.

2.2 Application

This practice note:

- a) describes and defines the service, in particular specifying those elements that are mandatory
- b) applies without exception where any surveyor enters into a contract with a client to provide the service.

To deliver the BSS, it is mandatory to use the specified format, without variation, and no departure is permitted. Guidance on the practical application of the practice note is given in section 4, Compiling the report – commentary and guidance.

2.3 Type of property

The service applies to all residential property. This typically includes properties that:

- are of any age
- have extensive outbuildings, grounds and leisure facilities
- are of unusual type
- have load bearing structures or simple frames, or use less common structures
- use new and developing technologies or materials
- use conventional or non-conventional building materials and construction methods
- have service and lifestyle systems not commonly found in domestic residential properties
- incorporate renewable energy and other sustainability features (e.g. grey water harvesting).

Although there is no restriction on the type of property, the surveyor must ensure that he or she has the particular technical skills and experience relevant to the property before accepting an instruction.

Even where the surveyor has specialist knowledge and expertise, the inspection and report must conform to the DBS. Any additional activities (for example, cost guidelines) must fit within the confines of the service as outlined in the DBS and be agreed in writing with the client. Otherwise, it is an extra service (as defined in section 2.5) and requires a separate contract.

2.4 Focus and scope of the inspection

The service is specifically designed for clients seeking an impartial and detailed assessment of

the property. The property is therefore condition reported at a level of thoroughness necessary to provide a balanced and informed opinion that is also clear and jargon-free and in compliance with the terms agreed in the DBS. As a result, the report is necessarily more comprehensive and the inspection more extensive than that for an RICS HomeBuyer or Condition Report.

The inspection of the building and grounds for the building survey is more extensive than that for the RICS HomeBuyer or Condition Report Service (see the HSIS). Consequently, the surveyor will spend a considerably longer time at the property.

The surveyor is responsible for carefully and thoroughly inspecting the property and recording the construction and defects that are evident. The surveyor is advised not to limit the time for inspection and should take the time required for the property in question.

The surveyor should carry out the inspection in a logical sequence, and it is essential that all relevant parts of the property are closely inspected. For example, the interdependence of the different parts of the structure should be assessed, especially the way in which the roof, walls (internal and external) and floors interact, so that each part is not considered in isolation. The mandate to follow the trail of suspicion should also be clearly demonstrated.

The extent of an inspection will depend on a range of specific circumstances, and the surveyor will have to judge each case on an individual basis. However, the following paragraphs may help the surveyor determine what is appropriate.

2.4.1 Roof space

The roof space is entered using a ladder through access hatches not more than 3m above floor level if the surveyor deems it is safe and reasonable to do so. Lightly secured panels are removed only where this does not take too much time and where there is the permission of the owner and/or occupier. However, this should not be done if removing the panels will damage the property and its finishes.

The roof structure is visually inspected in detail from within the roof space, although stored goods and other contents are not moved or lifted. Particular attention should be given to those parts vulnerable to deterioration and damage. In these

locations, a moisture meter, a pocket probe and a magnifying glass will be particularly useful. Thermal insulation is not moved, although small areas may be lifted to allow the thickness and type of insulation and the nature of the underlying ceiling to be identified.

2.4.2 Floors

Surfaces of exposed floors are visually inspected and, where covered, the corners of loose carpets and other floor coverings are lifted where practicable and with the permission of the owner and/or occupier.

All floors are assessed for excessive deflection by a 'heel-drop' test and using a spirit level. Lightly fixed floorboards are removed where there is owner consent, this does not take too much time and it does not damage the property.

Where the boards are lifted, the under-floor is inspected by way of an inverted 'head and shoulder' inspection at the access point. If safe to do so, the surveyor may enter the under-floor area to carry out a more thorough inspection.

2.4.3 Furniture and occupier's possessions

Generally, furniture and the owner's or occupier's possessions are not moved, but many clients would be disappointed if this was strictly applied. Therefore, the surveyor should consider moving lightweight, easily moveable, non-fitted items where practicable and where permission is granted.

2.4.4 Services

The inspection of services should be carried out without the risk of causing injury to the surveyor or damage to the property. The surveyor does not test service installations or appliances other than through their normal operation as would be expected in everyday use. This typically includes:

- switching lights on and off, and operating extract fans
- turning on water taps, flushing toilets and observing the performance of visible pipework
- lifting inspection chamber covers, identifying the nature of the connections and observing water flow where a water supply is available.

The surveyor is not expected to perform or comment on design calculations, or overall efficacy of the service systems. In respect of all services,

the client should be advised that further tests and inspections will be required by appropriate specialists if the client requires assurance as to the condition, capability and safety.

2.4.5 Limitations to inspection

In many properties, a full inspection will be prevented by physical conditions, such as fitted carpets, heavy furniture, and access hatches that are painted and fixed shut. In these cases, an explanation should be provided in the 'Limitations to inspection' box in the relevant sections of the report.

Clarity of reporting the limitations to inspection is required, as it has the potential to be a source of confusion to clients and result in a complaint at some future stage. The surveyor should assess the element on what can be seen, determine the risk of underlying defects that are present and report this appropriately.

There is therefore a risk that certain defects may not be found that would have been uncovered if a more substantial inspection had been undertaken. This is a risk that the client must accept. However, where there is a trail of suspicion the surveyor must take reasonable steps to follow the trail. In such case, the surveyor is likely to recommend further opening-up of the area for further investigation (see also section 4.7). The DBS does not preclude the giving of such recommendations, and section 4 specifies the way in which this should be handled.

2.4.6 Note-taking and reflective thought

The surveyor must keep a permanent record of the site notes made at the time of inspection. Any physical limitations present at the time of inspection should be noted on the site notes. In addition to written notes, the surveyor should include sketch plans, diagrams and photographs. The notes should record the construction, condition and circumstances of inspection. They should also log the checks made to the fabric and structure and what was found.

Before the report is written, the surveyor must allow sufficient time for reflective thought. The surveyor is reminded not to attempt to write the report during the inspection, but to prepare it using notes and evidence gathered after appropriate consideration.

To preserve the distinction between the building survey and the other Home Surveys reports, the surveyor must comply with the scope of the building

survey inspection. If the client wants something less than the standard BSS, then an RICS HomeBuyer or Condition Report Service should be offered instead, or the instruction declined.

2.4.7 Asbestos

The service does not include an asbestos inspection that may fall within the *Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012* (SI 2012/632). However, asbestos containing materials, if suspected, should be reported and cross referenced to section J3 Risks to people.

For personal safety reasons and informing clients, members should read the current edition of the RICS guidance note, *Asbestos and its implications for surveyors and their clients*. While the service does not include an asbestos survey, members should be aware of the common asbestos containing materials used and where they are frequently found in residential buildings.

2.4.8 Surveying safely

It is recommended that the surveyor is sufficiently fit to be able to undertake the tasks involved, particularly in relation to gaining access to voids that may be present within the property. The surveyor should also consider health and safety aspects, such as:

- keeping a record of the appointment either at the office or at home
- letting someone know the expected return time
- carrying a personal alarm
- carrying a mobile phone or pager
- using ladders and other equipment safely.

For personal safety reasons, the surveyor should be familiar with the current edition of the RICS guidance note, *Surveying safely*.

2.5 Extra services

Extra services are those that provide information or advice that is outside the scope of the BSS, and therefore must not be provided as part of the service. If a client requires information or advice of this kind concurrently with the service, the surveyor may provide this but only as a completely separate extra service, which requires a separate contract.

Note: RICS is looking at developing a range of specialist reports focused on individual issues

that may be offered by surveyors as an extra service.

3 The contract

3.1 Before making a legal contract

There is a general expectation that before a surveyor can accept a commission or give a legal commitment to provide the service for a particular property, the prospective client is first provided with the following (see the Introduction or section 1.1 for full term names):

- HSIS, or an equivalent document prepared by the surveyor
- DBS
- STE, which sits within the DBS (with particular attention being drawn to the section on liability)
- where applicable, a list of any particular circumstances for which the surveyor is not prepared to accept instructions to provide the service.

The DBS and STE form part of the contract between the surveyor and the client.

3.2 The contract letter

The surveyor must produce a written statement to the client (the 'contract letter') specifying all the necessary facts and required conditions that are not specified in the STE. These facts and conditions are:

- a) the name and address of the client, and the address of the property to be inspected
- b) any limits or exclusions of liability to others than the identified
- c) the proposed charge for the service, plus any exceptional charges to be incurred, together with the terms of payment
- d) a statement explaining that:
 - i) these charges will need to be revised if it is found on arrival that the property differs substantially from the description given to the surveyor
 - ii) it is outside the surveyor's experience, or
 - iii) it would be in the client's best interests to commission an RICS HomeBuyer or Condition Report Service (see the HSIS)

- e) a statement that the surveyor will not progress with the service until the signed 'instructions to proceed' have been received or otherwise agreed (see section 3.3)
- f) disclosure of any material involvement or conflicting interest, or a statement that none exists
- g) an agreement that the nature and source of any third-party information that the client has requested is to be relied upon in the report.

3.3 Attachments to the contract letter

If the surveyor has not already provided the client with the items listed in section 3.1, these are to be included with the contract letter.

The other necessary attachment to the contract letter is the client's 'instructions to proceed', which is prepared by the surveyor. This standard form may be either a statement on a separate sheet, or an appendix to the letter. It acknowledges receipt of the surveyor's contract letter and attachments, and that the contents are understood and accepted. It also specifically instructs the surveyor to proceed with the BSS and, where required, to proceed also with any additions to the service and/or any specified extra service requested by the client.

3.4 Client's further requirements

For any extra service (see section 2.5), it is a requirement that the surveyor establishes a separate contract outside the BSS.

4 Compiling the report – commentary and guidance

4.1 General

The report should:

- be clearly presented and written in such a way that it may be easily understood by the client, and avoid confusing the client with distractions, such as irrelevant and unhelpful details
- avoid surveyor jargon, which can be incomprehensible and off-putting to clients, and keep technical expressions to a minimum, but if they are necessary, explaining them in lay terms
- be factual and unambiguous

- differentiate between fact and individual opinion
- provide a balanced view of the property and describe individual elements in sufficient detail to identify their construction, condition and location.

The following sections aim to provide guidance to compiling the report. All sample paragraphs given here are offered only as examples of appropriate style. They are neither comprehensive nor intended to be copied verbatim.

4.2 Condition ratings and rules governing their use

All reports will include condition ratings on elements within sections E Outside the property; F Inside the property; G Services; and H Grounds (including shared areas for flats). These are identified by the inclusion of a condition rating box. The rules governing condition ratings are strict and must be followed in order to achieve a degree of consistency in their application.

Condition ratings must be based on the factual evidence seen or deduced. Where such evidence cannot readily be identified or is inconclusive, the surveyor must use his or her professional judgment in arriving at the appropriate condition rating.

The condition ratings are as follows:

3 Defects that are serious and/or need to be repaired, replaced or investigated urgently.

This rating must be used where the defect is of a serious nature, where immediate repairs are required or where the surveyor feels unable to reach the necessary conclusion with reasonable confidence. For more guidance regarding further investigations, see section 4.7. The test of a 'serious defect' is where the surveyor considers that:

- the defect compromises the structural integrity of the property
- the defect impairs the intended function of the building element.

The test for 'urgent' is:

- a defect that, if not immediately repaired/ remedied, will cause structural failure or serious defects in other building elements
- a defect that presents a serious safety threat

- where further investigation or opening-up works are required.

Examples of serious and/or urgent defects may include:

- urgent and/or significant defects concerning the site (e.g. repair of defective retaining wall)
- ‘essential repairs’ that are typically mentioned in a mortgage valuation report (e.g. structural issues, problems of rising/penetrating damp, dry rot)
- any other repairs necessary to restore the normal functioning of an element of the property (e.g. replacement of slipped and missing slates/tiles, unsecured and cracked ceilings, blocked drains)
- safety matters (e.g. a visible broken power point, missing/broken stair handrail).

2 Defects that need repairing or replacing but are not considered to be either serious or urgent. The property must be maintained in the normal way.

This rating must be used where repairs are required, but the defect is not considered to be serious or urgent.

Questions that will help determine whether to apply this condition rating to the defective element are as follows:

- Is it a ‘serious defect’ that compromises the structural integrity of the property?
- Is it ‘urgent’ where the repair cannot be deferred until the next anticipated period of regular maintenance, without allowing the defect to develop into a structural failure, or lead to a ‘serious’ defect in another element of the building?

If the answer to both is **no**, then this rating applies.

Examples include:

- repairs to timber fascia boards or timber window frames that are dated in appearance and beginning to show signs of deterioration
- weathered ridge tile pointing needing attention
- moss or lichen that need to be cleared from roof surfaces
- a flat roof showing early signs of breakdown, but that is not leaking internally at present

- weathered pointing or frost damage to brickwork that will require attention soon.

1 No repair is currently needed. The property must be maintained in the normal way.

This rating must be used when there are no indications of present or suspected defects that require the undertaking of a specific repair. Normal maintenance must not be treated as a repair for the purpose of the building survey.

Questions that will help determine whether to apply this condition rating to the element are as follows:

- Is there a repair or a replacement required for the element?
- Is the work required more than normal maintenance?

If the answer to both is **no**, then this rating applies.

NI Not inspected.

This rating must be used when it is not possible to inspect any parts of the dwelling usually covered.

If the surveyor is concerned about these parts, a recommendation must be given for any further investigations that are needed. A present or suspected defect that requires further investigation must be reported with a condition rating 3. In such cases, enough evidence to justify suspicion must be present and explained in the report. Section 4.7 provides guidance regarding the recommending of further investigations.

4.3 Guidance on assessing condition ratings

Giving careful and consistent condition ratings will enable clients to judge the importance (seriousness or urgency) of defects. The surveyor should apply personal knowledge of building construction and pathology to the inspection required to decide condition ratings and explain their justification. To arrive at a condition rating, the surveyor should:

- consider any detrimental effect on other building elements
- refer to condition only and not to purely cosmetic issues that have no effect on performance or the longevity of the element’s life expectancy
- reflect performance

- compare 'like with like' (e.g. not the life expectancy of a flat, felted roof with a pitched, tiled one)
- assume that regular 'normal maintenance' – work of a recurring nature required for certain building elements in order to preserve their integrity and functionality – will be undertaken in the future
- be consistent
- follow generally accepted building practice
- be reasonable (perfection is not the norm)
- disregard differences in product quality, unless performance and life expectancy are seriously impaired
- disregard individual taste or fashion
- take safety aspects into account.

Because all buildings are complex structures comprising many different interacting elements, defects in one element will usually have an impact on others. It is therefore not enough to analyse defective building elements in isolation; the surveyor should also consider the consequences that may have followed from an obvious defect.

Very few older buildings remain as they were originally constructed. The surveyor should be vigilant over any works or alterations that may have been undertaken which may now impact the performance and function of the original parts of the structure and other components. The surveyor should also fully consider any impact those works and alterations may have on condition and future building performance.

The performance of each building element will vary, and perfection should not be expected, nor should the element be measured against such a standard. The surveyor should consider only whether a building element performs the function that is intended, while also being aware that in some cases the function may be redundant.

Cosmetic and minor defects that do not impair the performance of a building element, but may concern the client, may be reported and given a condition rating 1. The surveyor may do the same for normal wear and tear that does not impair the performance of the building element. In any case, the surveyor should consider and comment where the future lifespan diverges from what would normally be expected for building elements of a similar age and type.

4.4 Applying the condition ratings

Condition ratings can be allocated either at the discretion of the surveyor to each element as an entity, or to sub-elements within each element in sections E, F, G and H. However, only the worst rating identified is carried forward to the front of the report in the summary of the condition ratings tables in section C.

The surveyor should use the following methodology to establish the condition rating for each element or sub-element.

4.4.1 Step one: identifying the elements and sub-elements

The surveyor inspects the property, identifies all the elements and sub-elements, and makes notes on the condition in the site notes. Where an element consists of one or more distinct parts, it should be divided into appropriate 'sub-elements'.

For example, a typical semi-detached, interwar dwelling may have the following:

- three roofs – the main hipped and pitched roof, a front bay roof and a rear 'back addition' roof
- two chimneys – the larger chimney at the ridge serving the main rooms and a single chimney from the kitchen area
- two external walls – cavity walls to the main house and solid walls to the back addition
- two types of windows – the original single-glazed casement windows to the rear and PVC double glazed replacements to the front and side.

All of these parts can be considered as sub-elements. While the surveyor should ensure the report does not become complex, the property can be subdivided at the surveyor's discretion.

4.4.2 Step two: condition rating the elements and sub-elements

After sufficient reflection, the surveyor should apply a condition rating to all the elements and sub-elements in accordance with the methodology in described in sections 4.2 and 4.3.

4.4.3 Step three: establishing the element and sub-element rating

The condition rating to be shown in the elemental condition rating box for each element must be the

worst one identified by this process. The following examples illustrate this procedure:

- Where the element has only a single part, then the condition rating will be given for that element and must be included in the elemental condition rating box.
- Where there are some parts or sub-elements, condition ratings can be given individually.
- Where some of the sub-elements are in the same condition and have the worst condition rating of all the sub-elements, then that condition rating must be shown in the elemental condition rating box.
- Where all of the sub-elements have the same condition rating, this will be the one that is shown in the elemental condition rating box.

The condition rating shown in the elemental condition rating box will be the one that goes into the condition rating table in section C.

4.5 Report writing

The elemental text box must be used to provide the necessary evidence that supports the surveyor's judgment of the condition rating reported, as well as the condition ratings of individual sub-elements. The following procedure should be observed:

- The worst rated sub-element should be described first, and the best last.
- Where several sub-elements have the same worst rating, the surveyor must choose the one that presents the greatest problem to the property owner and report this before the other sub-elements with the same rating. (For example, where the main hipped roof, bay roof and rear single-storey extension are all given a condition rating 2, the surveyor may choose to include the main roof in the summary because it is higher and larger, and may be more expensive to repair.)
- To simplify the report, elements that have the same rating could be reported together, especially if they have all been given a condition rating 1.

The surveyor can include guidelines on the cost of any work to correct defects or how repairs should be carried out within the scope and purpose of the

report (see section 4.6), as long as this is confirmed at the outset with the client.

Consideration of ordinary future maintenance is also within the scope of the report. The surveyor should comment when the design and/or materials used in the construction of a building element will result in the need for this element to be maintained more frequently or at a higher cost than normally expected, or if access is unusually complex.

Software producers are likely to market a variety of report writing packages that will generate standard phrases. However, the surveyor will always be able to produce the reports using his or her own text and phrases without the use of specialist software.

When writing the report, the surveyor should follow this format, in respect of each element of the construction and services:

- describe the form of construction and materials used for each element
- outline the performance characteristics of the material or construction
- describe obvious defects
- state the identifiable risk of potential or hidden defects
- outline remedial options
- if considered to be significant, explain the likely consequences of non-repair
- make general recommendations in respect of the likely timescale for necessary work
- include, where appropriate, recommendations for further investigation prior to commitment to purchase
- cross-refer to the surveyor's overall assessment
- identify the nature of risks in areas that have not been inspected.

There is no prescription for the length of the building survey. The surveyor should use non-technical terms throughout, although the inclusion of some defined technical words can occasionally help towards clarification. In this case, surveyors should provide the laypersons' explanation first, followed by the technical term. Figure 1 provides some general advice, along with some sample paragraphs, for completing the report regarding each sub-element.

Where structural movement, dampness or timber defects are found, these should be reported in the elemental text box for the affected element(s) and cross referred to section J, where these risks must be reported.

Note that the client is given the following advice in the 'What to do now' section of the report: 'You should consult your legal advisers before entering

into any binding contract or purchase'. As this is stated in this section of the form, there is no need to include it in the box.

Table 1 provides useful guidance as to where issues can be reported in the building survey. This is not exhaustive and does not cover every eventuality. The surveyor must use personal judgment regarding where to report issues.

Figure 1: Example of reporting using sub-elements

E2
Roof coverings

The sloping roof over the bungalow is covered with profiled concrete tiles laid over a secondary waterproof barrier (usually called roofing felt). There are a number of problems:

- The half round ridge tiles along the apex of the roof are loose.
- The surface of many tiles is covered with moss.
- The amount of ventilation to the roof space should be increased.

These are defects that need repairing or replacing but are not considered to be serious or urgent (**condition rating 2**).

On the whole, this roof is in a similar condition to those of a similar age and type, but it now requires a number of repairs to make sure it remains in a satisfactory condition. I will describe these in more detail below.

The ridge tiles

The half round ridge tiles that run along the very top of the roof are usually bedded in mortar, but on this roof the mortar is beginning to deteriorate. Although this is not urgent, these should be taken off and rebedded soon as loose ridge tiles can be dislodged during stormy weather. When this repair is being carried out, safe access equipment should be used (for example, a scaffold) and care should be taken not to damage adjacent roof tiles. This is likely to cost in the region of *[insert cost estimate, where agreed]*.

Moss on the roof tiles

This is a common problem on roofs of this type, and although not serious this growth should be removed from time to time (I would recommend every two years). Although a variety of chemicals treatments are available, I would recommend that the moss is removed by light brushing only, to avoid damage to the roof tiles. Because some of the moss growth will inevitably become lodged in the gutters and rainwater downpipes, it is important to make sure these are cleared out every year (see also E3 Rainwater pipes and gutters). If this is not done, the gutters may overflow and cause dampness in the dwelling below. This is likely to cost *[insert cost estimate, where agreed]*. Please also note that defects to tiles may be uncovered during the cleaning process.

Ventilation to the roof space

This is discussed in more detail under F1 Roof structure. To avoid possible dampness in the roof space, a number of ventilating roof tiles will have to be fitted in each roof slope. This is likely to cost in the region of *[insert cost estimate, where agreed]*.

2

Table 1: Guidance on where to report issues

| Issue | Examples of where to report |
|---|--|
| Orientation | D About the property, type of property box |
| Movement | E4 Main walls F2 Ceilings F3 Walls and partitions F4 Floors F7 Woodwork (for example, staircase and joinery) J1 Risks to the building (cross reference, bullet point only) |
| Timber defects | E5 Windows E6 Outside doors (including patio doors) E8 Other joinery and finishes E9 Other F1 Roof structure F4 Floors F6 Built-in fittings (e.g. wardrobes) F7 Woodwork (e.g. staircase and joinery) F8 Bathroom and kitchen fittings J1 Risks to the building (cross reference, bullet point only) |
| Dampness | E1 Chimney stacks F2 Ceilings F3 Walls and partitions F5 Fireplaces, chimney breasts and flues F6 Built-in fittings (e.g. wardrobes) F7 Woodwork (e.g. staircase and joinery) F8 Bathroom and kitchen fittings G3 Water G5 Water heating J1 Risks to the building (cross reference, bullet point only) |
| Condensation/mould growth | F1 Roof structure F2 Ceilings F3 Walls and partitions F5 Fireplaces, chimney breasts and flues F6 Built-in fittings (e.g. wardrobes) F8 Bathroom and kitchen fittings J1 Risks to the building (cross reference, bullet point only) J3 Risks to people (cross reference, bullet point only) K4 Ventilation |
| Asbestos | E2 Roof coverings E8 Other joinery and finishes F2 Ceilings F3 Walls and partitions F6 Built-in fittings (e.g. wardrobes) G4 Heating G5 Water heating J3 Risks to people (cross reference, bullet point only) |
| Insulation: flat roof pitched roof cold water cistern/pipework central heating pipework/header tank hot water cylinder | K1 Insulation E2 Roof coverings F1 Roof structure G3 Water G4 Heating K2 Heating G5 Water heating K2 Heating |
| Damp proof course | E4 Main walls |
| Rising damp | E4 Main walls F3 Walls and partitions F4 Floors J1 Risks to the building (cross reference, bullet point only) |

(Table 1 continued)

| | |
|---|---|
| Penetrating damp through wall around frame | E4 Main walls E5 Windows J1 Risks to building (cross reference, bullet point only) E6 Outside doors (including patio doors) J1 Risks to the building (cross reference, bullet point only) |
| Ventilation flat roof pitched roof subfloor | E2 Roof coverings K4 Ventilation F1 Roof structure J1 Risks to the building (cross reference, bullet point only) F1 Roof structure J1 Risks to the building (cross reference, bullet point only) F4 Floors J1 Risks to the building (cross reference, bullet point only) |
| External decoration | E Outside the property (by element) |
| Internal decoration | F Inside the property (by element) |
| Cellar | F9 Other K5 General |
| Roof space conversion | F9 Other K5 General |
| Conservatory | E7 Conservatory and porches K5 General |
| Porch | E7 Conservatory and porches K5 General |
| Radon | D About the property, local environment J3 Risks to people (cross reference, bullet point only) |
| Electromagnetic field (EMF) | D About the property, local environment J3 Risks to people (cross reference, bullet point only) |
| Mining | J1 Risks to the building (cross reference, bullet point only) J2 Risks to the grounds (cross reference, bullet point only) |
| Other environmental issues | D About the property, local environment J2 Risks to the grounds (cross reference, bullet point only) |
| Mundic | D About the property, construction E1 Chimney stacks E4 Main walls F4 Floors J1 Risks to the building (cross reference, bullet point only) |

4.6 Cost guidelines (where agreed)

These cost guidelines are for use only where the BSS includes cost guidelines as agreed with the client.

It is undoubtedly of value to a client to receive a cost estimate of recommended remedial works. However, if this is given the surveyor is advised to state very clearly all reservations and limitations attached to such advice. In addition, the client should be informed that formal quotations need to be obtained prior to a legal commitment to purchase the property.

There are various sources of independent housing repair cost information available to the surveyor,

such as resources provided by the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS).

4.7 Further investigations

Recommendations for further investigations, such as the testing of services or structural movement, should be included in the building survey only when the surveyor feels unable to reach necessary conclusions with reasonable confidence.

The surveyor's knowledge of building construction and pathology will, at times, lead to a suspicion that a visible defect may affect other concealed building elements. Other times, the extent of a visible defect is not possible to ascertain within the confines of a building survey inspection. In either

case, the surveyor must recommend that a further investigation is undertaken and a condition rating 3 is applied to the element under consideration (see also sections 2.4).

However, the surveyor should not recommend a further investigation just because a given building element is inaccessible within the confines of a normal inspection. For example, it should not be advised if the covering of one roof slope cannot be seen from any reasonable vantage points, but there is no evidence of defect in the roof void. In such case, the surveyor should note the restriction for the building element and apply an NI condition rating.

The surveyor should exercise professional judgment and must not call for further investigations only to cover him or herself against future liabilities, especially if the surveyor does not have the competence to undertake the BSS (see section 1.3).

4.8 Surveyor's overall assessment

The surveyor's overall assessment is an important element of the service for the following reasons:

- It sets the client off on the right road in the front of the report by providing a brief, simple and clear signpost that will help orientate the client before embarking on the body of the report.
- It clearly addresses the three important issues that generally cause clients concern: structural movement, dampness and timber infestation.
- It focuses on helping the client to make the most important decision of all: whether or not to proceed.
- It is the only place in the report for key observations, including a colour coded summary of the condition ratings of elements of the property.
- It provides the client with a summary of the information needed in order to take the next crucial steps.
- It enables the surveyor to put the summary of the condition ratings in the context of the overall condition of the property. This will be important, for example, if there is an abundance of condition rating 2s or 3s relating to sub-elements shown in the summary table, when most of the other elements are condition rating 1s. Without context, the ratings

list may give the client an unbalanced view about the property.

This is given in the surveyor's overall assessment box in section C. Although it is placed before the element tables for the convenience of the client, it should be the last section the surveyor writes and should only be provided after fully reflecting on the whole report.

4.9 Leasehold properties

Any survey of a leasehold residential property raises separate and additional factors arising from shared responsibilities and the wide variety of repairing covenants that are in common use. Particularly onerous repairing liabilities may exist independently from the property, for example, where the lease imposes a liability upon the property owner/occupier to pay a proportion of the total estate repair costs.

If the lease is not available before the inspection, the surveyor is advised to set out the limitations of any advice given.

The surveyor is recommended to:

- give advice on relevant matters affecting the client's responsibility for effecting repairs, and liability to pay towards their cost (whether potential or in respect of existing wants of repair)
- recommend that the client obtains independent legal advice on the interpretation of the lease
- make clear that the surveyor is not responsible for advising on the true legal effect of the lease, which is the exclusive responsibility of the client's legal advisers
- advise that the possible rights and implications of lease renewal or enfranchisement will not be considered.

The Leasehold properties advice (LPA) sheet is an integral part of the BSS documentation for all leasehold properties, except for leasehold houses.

The LPA is to be attached to all reports on such properties. The surveyor should bring the LPA to the attention of the client by referring to it in I3 Other matters in section I Issues for your legal advisers.

Any specialist advice with regard to leasehold property matters must be provided as an extra service (see section 2.5).

Part B: The documentation

This part reproduces the documents that the client will receive. These are:

- HSIS
- DBS and STE that sits within the DBS
- What to do now
- LPA
- Maintenance tips.

Sets of the official documents are available from RICS. See Appendix E for contact details, as well as for information and documentation on the copyright licence.

Commentary on particular elements of the DBS is also included to clarify the scope of the inspection.

RICS Home Surveys Information Sheet

Helping you choose the right survey

1

Why do you need an RICS Home Survey? Because forewarned is forearmed. Choosing the right survey will help highlight any serious problems and advise you of the specific risks before you commit to the process of buying or selling a property.

RICS has three different types of survey (outlined overleaf). These can only be conducted by an RICS qualified surveyor. Reliable and cost effective, these reports carry the full weight of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors – the industry's most respected authority on surveying.

Buying a home

It's important to remember that your mortgage lender's valuation report is not a survey. It merely tells your lender whether or not the property is reasonable security for your

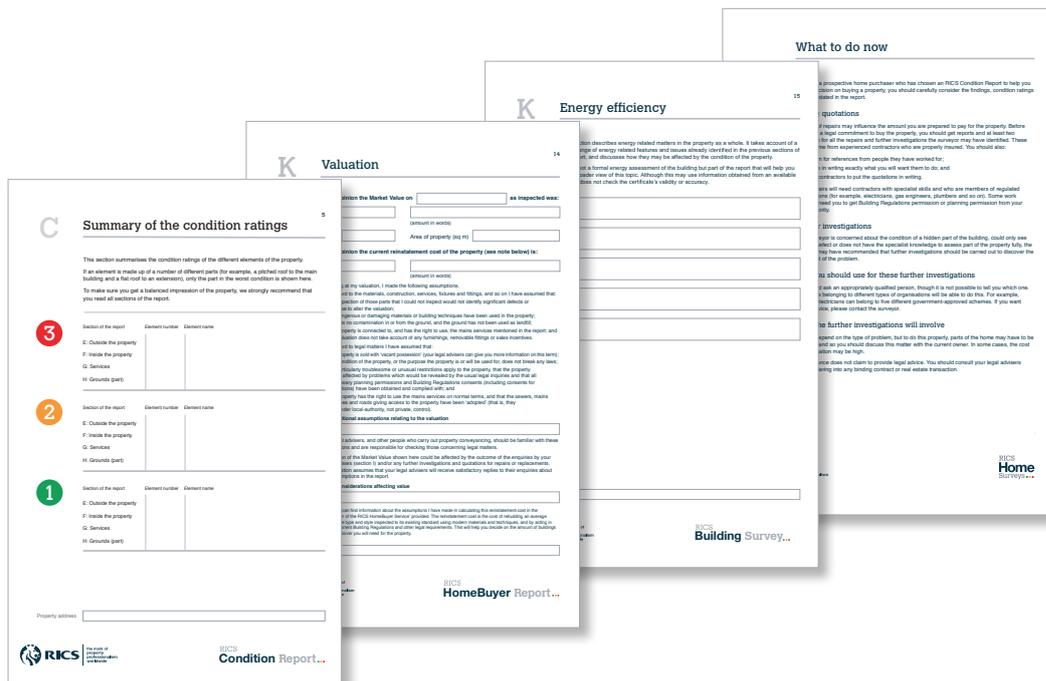
loan. An RICS survey will tell you the actual condition of the property. That's vital information that can be invaluable during price negotiations, and will also help you avoid expensive surprises after you've moved in.

Selling a home

An RICS survey can be an aid to selling your home. It will show you any problems that may delay your sale or cause price reductions later in the process.

Staying at home

A survey of the current condition of your home will warn you of defects and help you avoid escalating repair and maintenance costs in the future.



RICS Home Surveys Information Sheet

Buying or selling? Survey your options

2

The RICS Condition Report

Choose this report if you're buying or selling a conventional house, flat or bungalow built from common building materials and in reasonable condition. It focuses purely on the condition of the property by setting out the following:

- clear 'traffic light' ratings of the condition of different parts of the building, services, garage and outbuildings, showing problems that may require varying degrees of attention;
- a summary of the risks to the condition of the building; and
- advice on replacement parts guarantees, planning and control matters for your legal advisers.

An RICS Condition Report is straightforward and does not include a valuation, but your surveyor may be able to provide this as a separate extra service.

Ask your surveyor for a detailed 'Description of the RICS Condition Report Service' leaflet.

The RICS HomeBuyer Report

Choose this report if you need more extensive information whilst buying or selling a conventional house, flat or bungalow, built from common building materials and in reasonable condition. It costs more than the Condition Report but includes:

- all of the features in the Condition Report;
- the surveyor's professional opinion on the 'market value' of the property;
- an insurance reinstatement figure for the property;
- a list of problems that the surveyor considers may affect the value of the property;
- advice on repairs and ongoing maintenance;
- issues that need to be investigated to prevent serious damage or dangerous conditions;

- legal issues that need to be addressed before completing your purchase; and
- information on location, local environment and the recorded energy efficiency (where available).

Ask your surveyor for a detailed 'Description of the RICS HomeBuyer Service' leaflet.

The RICS Building Survey

Choose the Building Survey (formerly called a structural survey) if you're dealing with a large, older or run-down property, a building that is unusual or altered, or if you're planning major works. It costs more than the other RICS reports because it gives detailed information about the structure and fabric of the property.

The RICS Building Survey uses the same traffic light ratings as the Condition and HomeBuyer Reports. It also includes:

- a more thorough inspection and detailed report on a wider range of issues;
- a description of visible defects and potential problems caused by hidden flaws;
- an outline of repair options and the likely consequences of inactivity; and
- advice for your legal advisers and details of serious risks and dangerous conditions.

The RICS Building Survey does not include a valuation, but your surveyor may be able to provide this as a separate extra service.

Also the surveyor may be able to provide an estimate of costs for identified repairs if agreed with you in advance. Ask your surveyor for a detailed 'Description of the RICS Building Survey Service' leaflet.

RICS Home Surveys Information Sheet

3

At-a-glance survey comparisons

This table will help you choose the most appropriate survey, but if you have any particular requirements, remember to discuss them with your surveyor before they inspect the property. The surveyor may be able to provide you with extra services, under separate contracts.

| Service features | RICS Condition Report | RICS HomeBuyer Report | RICS Building Survey |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Describes the construction and condition of the property on the date of the inspection. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Aims to identify any problems that need urgent attention or are serious. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Aims to identify things that need to be investigated further to prevent serious damage. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Aims to tell you about problems that may be dangerous. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Aims to show up potential issues and defects, before any transaction takes place. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Aims to help you decide whether you need extra advice before committing to purchase. | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Aims to enable you to budget for any repairs or restoration. | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Aims to advise you on the amount of ongoing maintenance required in the future. | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Provides a reinstatement cost to help you avoid under or over-insurance. | | ✓ | |
| Provides a market valuation. | | ✓ | |
| Aims to establish how the property is built, what materials are used and how these will perform in the future. | | | ✓ |
| Aims to describe visible defects, plus exposing potential problems posed by hidden defects. | | | ✓ |
| Aims to outline the repair options and give you a repair timeline, whilst explaining the consequences of not acting. | | | ✓ |
| Where practical and agreed, provides an estimate of costs for identified repairs. | | | ✓ |
| Provides specific comments on energy efficiency. | | | ✓ |

Note: Extra services can be provided with all surveys but will require a separate contract.

For more information, visit www.rics.org/homesurveys

Commentary on particular elements of the Description of the RICS Building Survey Service

1 Scope of the inspection

This commentary aims to clarify aspects of the inspection by the surveyor as described in the DBS.

If the inspection reveals a cause for concern, no wording in the DBS prevents the surveyor from examining or commenting on any matter that needs to be pursued, as judged by the surveyor. Such matters may include:

- important considerations other than the repair or replacement of defective elements and their future maintenance (e.g. insurance)
- any inherent problem concerning the site, location or environment that the property owner can do nothing to resolve it (e.g. dangerous access, pollution)
- forewarning of any potentially significant problem (e.g. flooding).

The inspection includes examination from staircases and within accessible roof voids and subfloor areas. Exposed timbers should be examined. The surface of floors that are not covered with fixed floor coverings should be inspected. In the case of timber floors, loose boards should be raised to enable the construction to be identified and their condition to be checked. Where access is available, the surveyor should inspect the subfloor area. Secured panels should be removed.

In all cases, the surveyor should judge whether it is practicable, permitted and safe to carry out the inspection. If it is not possible then this should be clearly reported. It is particularly important to remember when inspecting flats that there may be general access issues for common and service areas, as well as roof sections (for example), which consequently cannot be inspected.

The surveyor is responsible for carefully and thoroughly inspecting the property and recording the construction and defects that are evident. It is therefore recommended that the surveyor accepts responsibility, within the limits of the agreed instructions, to see as much of the property

as is physically accessible. For most properties, however, a full inspection is prevented by physical conditions. If it is not possible to inspect any parts of the property where condition ratings are to be applied, a 'not inspected' (NI) rating must be given and an explanation is to be provided.

2 Services to the property

All building service installations (whether mains or privately supplied) are visually inspected sufficiently enough for the surveyor to form an overall opinion on the type of installation, the materials used, its apparent age, its visible condition and whether there is a need for further investigation. The surveyor is not expected to carry out testing of the installations or appliances other than through their normal operation in everyday use, or perform or comment on design calculations. The inspection should be carried out without the risk of causing injury to the surveyor or damage to the property.

It is advised that hot water installations, boilers, control equipment, space heating and other service installations are inspected visually.

Where access is limited, this should be explained to the client in the 'Limitations to inspection' box in section G. In respect of all services, the client should be advised that any further tests would need to be carried out by appropriate specialists if assurance on the condition or capability is required.

3 Equipment

The surveyor should ensure that he or she has all the equipment necessary to carry out the survey required. It is recommended that the following equipment (given in no particular order) should be available as a minimum requirement:

- recording instruments, e.g. personal recorder, paper, pens or pencils
- tape measures and a measuring rod
- binoculars or a telescope
- compass
- surveyors' 3m ladder
- hard hat and protective footwear
- spirit level
- plumb bob
- crack gauge or ruler

- boiler suit, latex gloves, mask (particularly for loft spaces and inspection chambers where there is a greater likelihood of contaminants)
- inclinometer (basic)
- electronic moisture meter
- torches
- digital camera with flash
- claw hammer and bolster
- lifting equipment for standard inspection chamber covers
- screwdriver, bradawl or hand-held probe
- mirror
- meter cupboard key
- first-aid kit
- personal identification.

A variety of optional equipment should also be considered (e.g. where extra services are being offered):

- moisture meter accessories, such as a surface temperature probe, a humidity sensor or an air temperature sensor
- thermal imaging camera
- deep insulated probes
- additional screwdrivers
- hand-held metal detector
- marble
- adjustable set square
- boroscope
- magnifying glass
- spare batteries/in-car charger and bulbs.

Care should be taken to ensure that moisture meters and other electronic/digital equipment are maintained in a good working condition. In addition, calibration checks should be made in accordance with manufacturers' requirements and noted on the survey inspection sheet.

4 Inspection, note-taking and reflective thought

The scope of the building survey requires the surveyor to thoroughly inspect the property and record the construction and defects that are evident.

As mentioned in Part A, section 2.4, the surveyor should develop a logical sequence of inspection. It is essential that all relevant parts of the property are inspected closely and their inter-relationship is considered.

The surveyor must keep a permanent record of the site notes made at the time of inspection, which may include sketch plans, diagrams and photographs. The record should include the construction, condition and circumstances of inspection. It should also document the checks made to the fabric and structure, and the findings of those checks.

There is no time limit for inspection, as the surveyor should take sufficient time required for the property concerned. The surveyor must also allow sufficient time for reflective thought before issuing the report.

5 Flats

In the case of flats the inspection excludes the roof space and a flat roof of the building, unless it is directly accessible from inside the flat itself.

Description of the RICS Building Survey Service

The service

The RICS Building Survey Service includes:

- a thorough **inspection** of the property (see 'The inspection'); and
- a detailed **report** based on the inspection (see 'The report').

The surveyor who provides the RICS Building Survey Service aims to:

- help you make a reasoned and informed decision when purchasing the property, or when planning for repairs, maintenance or upgrading the property;
- provide detailed advice on condition;
- describe the identifiable risk of potential or hidden defects;
- where practicable and agreed, provide an estimate of costs for identified repairs; and
- make recommendations as to any further actions or advice which need to be obtained before committing to purchase.

Any extra services provided that are not covered by the terms and conditions of this report must be covered by a separate contract.

The inspection

The surveyor carefully and thoroughly inspects the inside and outside of the main building and all permanent outbuildings, recording the construction and defects (both major and minor) that are evident. This inspection is intended to cover as much of the property as physically accessible. Where this is not possible an explanation is provided in the 'Limitations to inspection' box in the relevant sections of the report.

The surveyor does not force or open up the fabric without owner consent, or if there is a risk of causing personal injury or damage. This includes taking up fitted carpets, fitted floor coverings or floorboards, moving heavy furniture, removing the contents of cupboards, roof spaces, etc., removing secured panels and/or hatches or undoing electrical fittings. The under-floor areas are inspected where there is safe access.

If necessary, the surveyor carries out parts of the inspection when standing at ground level from adjoining public property where accessible. This means the extent of the inspection will depend on a range of individual circumstances at the time of inspection, and the surveyor judges each case on an individual basis.

The surveyor uses equipment such as a damp-meter, binoculars and a torch, and uses a ladder for flat roofs and for hatches no more than 3m above level ground (outside) or floor surfaces (inside) if it is safe to do so.

The surveyor also carries out a desk-top study and makes oral enquiries for information about matters affecting the property.

Description of the RICS Building Survey Service

Services to the property

Services are generally hidden within the construction of the property. This means that only the visible parts of the available services can be inspected, and the surveyor does not carry out specialist tests other than through their normal operation in everyday use. The visual inspection cannot assess the efficiency or safety of electrical, gas or other energy sources; the plumbing, heating or drainage installations (or whether they meet current regulations); or the internal condition of any chimney, boiler or other flue. Intermittent faults of services may not be apparent on the day of inspection.

Outside the property

The surveyor inspects the condition of boundary walls, fences, permanent outbuildings and areas in common (shared) use. To inspect these areas, the surveyor walks around the grounds and any neighbouring public property where access can be obtained. Where there are restrictions to access, these are reported and advice is given on any potential underlying risks that may require further investigation.

Buildings with swimming pools and sports facilities are treated as permanent outbuildings and therefore are inspected, but the surveyor does not report on the leisure facilities, such as the pool itself and its equipment internally and externally, landscaping and other facilities (for example, tennis courts and temporary outbuildings).

Flats

When inspecting flats, the surveyor assesses the general condition of outside surfaces of the building, as well as its access and communal areas (for example, shared hallways and staircases) and roof spaces, but only if they are accessible from within the property or communal areas. The surveyor also inspects (within the identifiable boundary of the flat) drains, lifts, fire alarms and security systems, although the surveyor does not carry out any specialist tests other than through their normal operation in everyday use.

Dangerous materials, contamination and environmental issues

The surveyor makes enquiries about contamination or other environmental dangers. If the surveyor suspects a problem, he or she recommends further investigation.

The surveyor may assume that no harmful or dangerous materials have been used in the construction, and does not have a duty to justify making this assumption. However, if the inspection shows that these materials have been used, the surveyor must report this and ask for further instructions.

The surveyor does not carry out an asbestos inspection and does not act as an asbestos inspector when inspecting properties that may fall within the *Control of Asbestos Regulations* 2012. With flats, the surveyor assumes that there is a 'dutyholder' (as defined in the regulations), and that in place are an asbestos register and an effective management plan which does not present a significant risk to health or need any immediate payment. The surveyor does not consult the dutyholder.

Description of the RICS Building Survey Service

The report

The surveyor produces a report of the results of inspection for you to use, but cannot accept any liability if it is used by anyone else. If you decide not to act on the advice in the report, you do this at your own risk. The report is aimed at providing you with a detailed understanding of the condition of the property to allow you to make an informed decision on serious or urgent repairs, and on maintenance of a wide range of issues reported. Purely cosmetic and minor maintenance defects that have no effect on performance might not be reported. The report is not a warranty.

The report is in a standard format and includes the following sections.

| | |
|---|--|
| A Introduction to the report | G Services |
| B About the inspection | H Grounds (including shared areas for flats) |
| C Overall assessment and summary of the condition ratings | I Issues for your legal advisers |
| D About the property | J Risks |
| E Outside the property | K Energy efficiency |
| F Inside the property | L Surveyor's declaration |
| What to do now | |
| Description of the RICS Building Survey Service | |
| Typical house diagram | |

Condition ratings

The surveyor gives condition ratings to the main parts (the 'elements') of the main building, garage and some outside elements. The condition ratings are described as follows:

Condition rating 3 – defects that are serious and/or need to be repaired, replaced or investigated urgently.

Condition rating 2 – defects that need repairing or replacing but are not considered to be either serious or urgent. The property must be maintained in the normal way.

Condition rating 1 – no repair is currently needed. The property must be maintained in the normal way.

NI – not inspected.

The surveyor notes in the report if it was not possible to check any parts of the property that the inspection would normally cover. If the surveyor is concerned about these parts, the report tells you about any further investigations that are needed.

The surveyor may report on the cost of any work to put right defects (where agreed), but does not make recommendations on how these repairs should be carried out. However, there is general advice in the 'What to do now' section at the end of the report.



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Description of the RICS Building Survey Service

Energy

The surveyor has not prepared the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) as part of the RICS Building Survey Service for the property. If the surveyor has seen the current EPC, he or she will provide the Energy Efficiency Rating in this report, but will not check the rating and so cannot comment on its accuracy. Where possible and appropriate, the surveyor will include additional commentary on energy related matters for the property as a whole in the K Energy efficiency section of the report, but this is not a formal energy assessment of the building.

Issues for legal advisers

The surveyor does not act as 'the legal adviser' and does not comment on any legal documents. If, during the inspection, the surveyor identifies issues that your legal advisers may need to investigate further, the surveyor may refer to these in the report (for example, check whether there is a warranty covering replacement windows).

The report has been prepared by a surveyor ('the Employee') on behalf of a firm or company of surveyors ('the Employer'). The statements and opinions expressed in the report are expressed on behalf of the Employer, who accepts full responsibility for these.

Without prejudice and separately to the above, the Employee will have no personal liability in respect of any statements and opinions contained in this report, which shall at all times remain the sole responsibility of the Employer to the exclusion of the Employee.

In the case of sole practitioners, the surveyor may produce the report in his or her own name unless the surveyor operates as a sole trader limited liability company.

To the extent that any part of this notification is a restriction of liability within the meaning of the *Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977* it does not apply to death or personal injury resulting from negligence.

If the property is leasehold, the surveyor gives you general advice and details of questions you should ask your legal advisers. This general advice is given in the 'Leasehold properties advice' document.

Risks

This section summarises defects and issues that present a risk to the building or grounds, or a safety risk to people. These may have been reported and condition rated against more than one part of the property or may be of a more general nature, having existed for some time and which cannot reasonably be changed.

Description of the RICS Building Survey Service

Standard terms of engagement

- 1 **The service** – the surveyor provides only the standard RICS Building Survey Service ('the service') described here, unless you and the surveyor agree in writing before the inspection that the surveyor will provide extra services. Any extra service will require separate terms of engagement to be entered into with the surveyor. Examples of extra services include:
 - plan drawing;
 - schedules of works;
 - re-inspection;
 - detailed specific issue reports;
 - market valuation and re-instatement cost; and
 - negotiation.
- 2 **The surveyor** – the service is to be provided by an AssocRICS, MRICS or FRICS member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, who has the skills, knowledge and experience to survey and report on the property.
- 3 **Before the inspection** – this period forms an important part of the relationship between you and the surveyor. The surveyor will use reasonable endeavours to contact you regarding your particular concerns about the property and explain (where necessary) the extent and/or limitations of the inspection and report. The surveyor also carries out a desk-top study to understand the property better.
- 4 **Terms of payment** – you agree to pay the surveyor's fee and any other charges agreed in writing.
- 5 **Cancelling this contract** – you are entitled to cancel this contract by giving notice to the surveyor's office at any time before the day of the inspection. The surveyor does not provide the service (and reports this to you as soon as possible) if, after arriving at the property, the surveyor decides that:
 - (a) he or she lacks enough specialist knowledge of the method of construction used to build the property; or
 - (b) it would be in your best interests to have an RICS HomeBuyer Report or an RICS Condition Report, rather than the RICS Building Survey.

If you cancel this contract, the surveyor will refund any money you have paid for the service, except for any reasonable expenses. If the surveyor cancels this contract, he or she will explain the reason to you.
- 6 **Liability** – the report is provided for your use, and the surveyor cannot accept responsibility if it is used, or relied upon, by anyone else.

Complaints handling procedure

The surveyor will have an RICS-compliant complaints handling procedure and will give you a copy if you ask.

Note: These terms form part of the contract between you and the surveyor.

What to do now

If you are a prospective or current home owner who has chosen an RICS Home Survey, you should carefully consider the findings, condition ratings and risks stated in the report.

Getting quotations

You should obtain reports and at least two quotations for all the repairs and further investigations that the surveyor has identified. These should come from experienced contractors who are properly insured. You should also:

- ask them for references from people they have worked for;
- describe in writing exactly what you will want them to do; and
- get the contractors to put the quotations in writing.

Some repairs will need contractors with specialist skills and who are members of regulated organisations (for example, electricians, gas engineers or plumbers). Some work may also need you to get Building Regulations permission or planning permission from your local authority. Your surveyor may be able to help.

Further investigations

If the surveyor is concerned about the condition of a hidden part of the building, could only see part of a defect or does not have the specialist knowledge to assess part of the property fully, the surveyor may have recommended that further investigations should be carried out (for example, by structural engineers or arboriculturists) to discover the true extent of the problem.

Who you should use for these further investigations

Specialists belonging to different types of organisations will be able to do this. For example, qualified electricians can belong to five different government-approved schemes. If you want further advice, please contact the surveyor.

What the further investigations will involve

This will depend on the type of problem, but to do this properly, parts of the home may have to be disturbed. If you are a prospective purchaser, you should discuss this matter with the current owner. In some cases, the cost of investigation may be high.

This guidance does not claim to provide legal advice. You should consult your legal advisers before entering into any binding contract or purchase.

Leasehold properties advice

The advice contained here is for both current and prospective owners of leasehold properties. Depending on which RICS Home Survey you have chosen, market value and reinstatement cost may be included as standard, or is usually available as an extra service.

Before you buy a leasehold property, you need to pay particular attention to the terms of the lease. Other than in Scotland, most flats and maisonettes and a few other properties are leasehold.

Your legal advisers are responsible for checking the lease for you, but they do not normally see the property. The surveyor may note specific features that may have legal consequences. These matters will be set out in section I of your report and you should give a copy to your legal advisers immediately.

Unless it says otherwise, when deciding on the market value (where included) of the property, the surveyor assumes that all the terms of the lease which might have an effect on the value are standard and that only a small ground rent is payable.

The surveyor also assumes that:

- if there are more than six properties in the building, the property is managed either directly by the freeholder or by a professional managing agent;
- if there is more than one block in the development, the lease terms apply (except for upkeep of common roads, paths, grounds and services) only to the block the property is in;
- you have the right of access over all shared roads, corridors, stairways, etc., and the right to use shared grounds, parking areas and other facilities;
- all the leases are the same in all important respects if there is more than one leaseholder;
- there is no current dispute, claim or lawsuit relating to the lease;
- the lease has no particularly troublesome or unusual restrictions;
- the unexpired term of the lease is 70 years (that is, the lease has at least 70 years still to run); and
- the property is fully insured.

When calculating the reinstatement cost (where included), the surveyor assumes that the property is insured under a satisfactory policy covering the whole building. (The 'reinstatement cost' is the cost of rebuilding an average home of the type and style inspected to its existing standard using modern materials and techniques and in line with current Building Regulations and other legal requirements.)

Your legal advisers should check the full details of any lease. You should also ask your legal advisers the following questions.

- (a) Are the other flats occupied by owners or tenants?

Leasehold properties advice

- (b) Is there a management company or a managing agent (or both) correctly set up to deal with running and maintaining the block the property is in?
- (c) Who is the 'dutyholder' under the *Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012*? Your legal advisers should also get confirmation that an asbestos register and current management plan are in place, and confirmation of any associated costs that you may have to pay.
- (d) Is there a suitable maintenance and replacement fund, with suitable reserves, to deal with:
- general cleaning;
 - maintaining and repairing the shared parts;
 - repairs to the main structure;
 - shared heating systems; and
 - repairing and maintaining lifts?
- (e) How much is the ground rent?
- (f) How much was the last paid maintenance or service charge and what period did it cover?
- (g) Are the service charge accounts satisfactory and up to date?
- (h) Are there any existing or likely management problems or disputes, or any known repairs or programmed work still to be carried out, which would affect the level of the maintenance or service charge to be paid?
- (i) Are services regularly and satisfactorily maintained and are there satisfactory and current certificates for:
- any lifts;
 - the fire escapes and fire alarms;
 - the security systems;
 - any shared water and heating systems; and
 - other shared facilities?
- (j) Is the liability clearly set out for repairs to the property, to the shared parts and the main structure?
- (k) Is the liability for repairs shared equally between leaseholders and is there a suitable process for settling any disputes which may arise in this area?
- (l) Is it the management company or each individual leaseholder who is responsible for the building insurance, and is there a block insurance policy?
- (m) Are there any unusual restrictions on the sale of the property?

If the property is a leasehold house, it is not likely to share responsibilities with other building owners, and so may not involve management companies, service charges, etc. You should ask your legal advisers to confirm this. You may also want them to investigate the possibility of buying the freehold (which might be complicated).

Your surveyor may also be able to advise you on extending the lease under the provisions of the *Leasehold Reform Housing and Urban Development Act 1993* as an extra service.

Maintenance tips

Your home needs maintaining in the normal way, and this general advice may be useful when read together with your report. It is not specific to this property and does not include comprehensive details. Problems in construction may develop slowly over time. If you are concerned contact an RICS qualified surveyor for further advice.

Outside the property

You should check the condition of your property at least once a year and after unusual storms. Routine redecoration of the outside of the property will also give you an opportunity to closely examine the building.

- **Chimney stacks:** Check these occasionally for signs of cracked cement, split or broken pots, or loose and gaping joints in the brickwork or render. Storms may loosen aerials or other fixings, including the materials used to form the joints with the roof coverings.
- **Roof coverings:** Check these occasionally for slipped, broken and missing tiles or slates, particularly after storms.

Flat roofing has a limited life, and is at risk of cracking and blistering. You should not walk on a flat roof. Where possible keep it free from debris. If it is covered with spar chippings, make sure the coverage is even, and replace chippings where necessary.

- **Rainwater pipes and gutters:** Clear any debris at least once a year, and check for leaks when it is raining. You should also check for any loose downpipe connectors and broken fixings.
 - **Main walls:** Check main walls for cracks and any uneven bulging. Maintain the joints in brickwork and repair loose or broken rendering. Re-paint decorated walls regularly. Cut back or remove any plants that are harmful to mortar and render. Keep the soil level well below the level of any damp proof course (150mm minimum recommended) and make sure any ventilation bricks are kept clear. Check over cladding for broken, rotted or damaged areas that need repairing.
 - **Windows and doors:** Once a year check all frames for signs of rot in wood frames, for any splits in plastic or metal frames and for rusting to latches and hinges in metal frames. Maintain all decorated frames by repairing or redecorating at the first sign of any deterioration. In autumn check double glazing for condensation between the glazing, as this is a sign of a faulty unit. Have broken or cracked glass replaced by a qualified specialist. Check for broken sash cords on sliding sash windows, and sills and window boards for any damage.
 - **Conservatories and porches:** Keep all glass surfaces clean, and clear all rainwater gutters and down pipes. Look for broken glazing and for any leaks when it's raining. Arrange for repairs by a qualified specialist.
 - **Other woodwork and finishes:** Regularly redecorate all joinery, and check for rot and decay which you should repair at the same time.
-

Maintenance tips

Inside the property

You can check the inside of your property regularly when cleaning, decorating and replacing carpets or floor coverings. You should also check the roof area occasionally.

- **Roof structure:** When you access the roof area, check for signs of any leaks and the presence of vermin, rot or decay to timbers. Also look for tears to the under-felting of the roof, and check pipes, lagging and insulated areas.
- **Ceilings:** If you have a leak in the roof the first sign is often damp on the ceiling beneath the roof. Be aware if your ceiling begins to look uneven as this may indicate a serious problem, particularly for older ceilings.
- **Walls and partitions:** Look for cracking and impact damage, or damp areas which may be caused by plumbing faults or defects on the outside of the property.
- **Floors:** Be alert for signs of unevenness when you are moving furniture, particularly with timber floors.
- **Fireplaces, chimney breasts and flues:** You should arrange for a qualified specialist to regularly sweep all used open chimneys. Also, make sure that bricked-up flues are ventilated. Flues to gas appliances should be checked annually by a qualified gas technician.
- **Built-in fittings:** Check for broken fittings.

Services

- Ensure all meters and control valves are easy to access and not hidden or covered over.
- Arrange for an appropriately qualified technician to check and test all gas and oil services, boilers, heating systems and connected devices once a year.
- Electrical installations should only be replaced or modified by a suitably qualified electrician and tested as specified by the Electrical Safety Council (recommended minimum of a ten year period if no alterations or additions are made, or on change of occupancy).
- Monitor plumbing regularly during use. Look out for leakage and breakages, and check insulation is adequate particularly as winter approaches.
- Lift drain covers annually to check for blockages and clean these as necessary. Check any private drainage systems annually, and arrange for a qualified contractor to clear these as necessary. Keep gullies free from debris.

Grounds

- **Garages and outbuildings:** Follow the maintenance advice given for the main building.
- **Other:** Regularly prune trees, shrubs and hedges as necessary. Look out for any overhanging and unsafe branches, loose walls, fences and ornaments, particularly after storms. Clear leaves and other debris, moss and algae growth. Make sure all hard surfaces are stable and level, and not slippery or a trip hazard.

Part C: The report form and checklists

This part reproduces the report form, which consists of the following sections:

- A Introduction to the report
 - B About the inspection
 - C Overall assessment and summary of the condition ratings
 - D About the property
 - E Outside the property
 - F Inside the property
 - G Services
 - H Grounds (including shared areas for flats)
 - I Issues for your legal advisers
 - J Risks
 - K Energy efficiency
 - L Surveyor's declaration
- What to do now
- Description of the RICS Building Survey Service
- Typical house diagram

This part also supplies checklists for sections B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K and L, along with specific guidance for each of them. These checklists include items that should be considered by the surveyor at each inspection, as well as their description and some instruction.

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Property address

Client's name

Date of inspection

Contents

- A Introduction to the report*
 - B About the inspection
 - C Overall assessment and summary of condition ratings
 - D About the property
 - E Outside the property
 - F Inside the property
 - G Services
 - H Grounds (including shared areas for flats)
 - I Issues for your legal advisers
 - J Risks
 - K Energy efficiency
 - L Surveyor's declaration
- What to do now
Description of the RICS Building Survey Service
Typical house diagram

* Please read the entire report in order.

RICS is the world's leading qualification when it comes to professional standards in land, property and construction.

In a world where more and more people, governments, banks and commercial organisations demand greater certainty of professional standards and ethics, attaining RICS status is the recognised mark of property professionalism.

Over 100,000 property professionals working in the major established and emerging economies of the world have already recognised the importance of securing RICS status by becoming members.

RICS is an independent professional body originally established in the UK by Royal Charter. Since 1868, RICS has been committed to setting and upholding the highest standards of excellence and integrity – providing impartial, authoritative advice on key issues affecting businesses and society.

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A

Introduction to the report

2

This Building Survey is produced by an RICS surveyor who has written this report for you to use. If you decide not to act on the advice in the report, you do this at your own risk.

The Building Survey aims to:

- help you make a reasoned and informed decision when purchasing the property, or when planning for repairs, maintenance or upgrading of the property;
- provide detailed advice on condition;
- describe the identifiable risk of potential or hidden defects;
- where practicable and agreed, provide an estimate of costs for identified repairs; and
- make recommendations as to any further actions or advice which need to be obtained before committing to purchase.

Section B gives an outline description of what the inspection covers. A more detailed description is contained in the 'Description of the RICS Building Survey Service' at the end of this report.

Any extra services provided that are not covered by the terms and conditions of this report must be covered by a separate contract.

After reading this report you may have comments or questions. If so, please contact the RICS surveyor who has written this report for you (contact details are given in section L).

If you want to complain about the service provided by the RICS surveyor, the surveyor will have an RICS-compliant complaints handling procedure and will give you a copy if you ask.

Property address



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B About the inspection

Surveyor's details

The surveyor provides his or her name, RICS membership number and company name in the boxes provided, which will also be re-supplied in section L. However, contact details are to be provided in section L only.

Date of the inspection and report reference number

The date that the property was inspected is provided in the box to the left, and the allocated report reference number is given in the box to the right.

Related party disclosure

The surveyor declares any potential conflicts and how these are to be managed in accordance with the RICS Rules of Conduct.

For example, where the surveyor and the estate agent selling the property are within the same group of companies, a managed conflict is permitted where they are separately constituted companies with different directors.

Full address and postcode of the property

The full address and postcode of the property should be included.

Weather conditions when the inspection took place

This should include what the weather conditions were like:

- at the time of inspection
- in the preceding period (briefly).

The status of the property when the inspection took place

In this field the surveyor states only major limitations, such as:

- occupied/furnished/floor coverings
- construction not apparent
- restrictions to access (e.g. locked rooms/windows/doors/garage)
- overgrown grounds
- other exceptional circumstances
- extent of external inspection permitted (for flats).

B

About the inspection

3

Surveyor's name

Surveyor's RICS number

Company name

Date of the inspection Report reference number

Related party disclosure

Full address and postcode of the property

Weather conditions when the inspection took place

The status of the property when the inspection took place

Property address



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B

About the inspection (continued)

4

We inspect the inside and outside of the main building and all permanent outbuildings. We also inspect the parts of the electricity, gas/oil, water, heating, drainage and other services that can be seen, but these are not tested other than through their normal operation in everyday use.

To help describe the condition of the home, we give condition ratings to the main parts (the 'elements') of the building, garage, and some parts outside. Some elements can be made up of several different parts.

In the element boxes in parts E, F, G and H, we describe the part that has the worst condition rating first and then outline the condition of the other parts. The condition ratings are described as follows.

| | |
|----|--|
| 3 | Defects that are serious and/or need to be repaired, replaced or investigated urgently. |
| 2 | Defects that need repairing or replacing but are not considered to be either serious or urgent. The property must be maintained in the normal way. |
| 1 | No repair is currently needed. The property must be maintained in the normal way. |
| NI | Not inspected (see 'Important note' below). |

Important note: We carry out a desk-top study and make oral enquiries for information about matters affecting the property.

We carefully and thoroughly inspect the property using our best endeavours to see as much of it as is physically accessible. Where this is not possible an explanation will be provided.

We visually inspect roofs, chimneys and other surfaces on the outside of the building from ground level and, if necessary, from neighbouring public property and with the help of binoculars. Flat roofs no more than 3m above ground level are inspected using a ladder where it is safe to do so.

We inspect the roof structure from inside the roof space if there is safe access. We examine floor surfaces and under-floor spaces so far as there is safe access and permission from the owner. We are not able to assess the condition of the inside of any chimney, boiler or other flues. We do not lift fitted carpets or coverings without the owner's consent. Intermittent faults of services may not be apparent on the day of inspection.

If we are concerned about parts of the property that the inspection cannot cover, the report will tell you about any further investigations that are needed.

Where practicable and agreed we report on the cost of any work for identified repairs and make recommendations on how these repairs should be carried out. Some maintenance and repairs that we suggest may be expensive. Purely cosmetic and minor maintenance defects that have no effect on performance might not be reported. The report that we provide is not a warranty.

! Please read the 'Description of the RICS Building Survey Service' (at the end of this report) for details of what is, and is not, inspected.

Property address



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C Overall assessment and summary of condition ratings

The main function of this section of the report is to enable the surveyor to:

- provide an overall opinion of the condition of the property
- highlight areas of concern
- provide a summary of repairs
- indicate if further investigations are needed
- if agreed with the client, give an overall budget cost guide
- identify condition ratings applied to the elements.

Overall opinion

The aim of this section is to provide the client with a clear summary of the property and its main positive and negative features. This comprises an overview of the key issues, such as:

- nature of the property, its construction and design
- adequacy of services
- comparison of the condition of the property with others of a similar age and style
- conformity with modern requirements
- likely scale of maintenance required and, where agreed, a clear reference to cost advice contained within the report
- special client requirements.

Evidence suggests (from both clients and surveyors) that there are three main issues that clients generally wish to have addressed clearly and unambiguously. These are:

- structural movement
- dampness
- timber defects.

These three issues (covered in further detail in the following sections) should be addressed in summary format in this section, with further detailed advice contained within the report and cross-referenced under the relevant elements sections. If the surveyor feels that further investigations are needed, then he or she should

also cross-reference this information into the subheading 'further investigations'.

Any other main areas of concern other than that regarding condition should be reported in this section, noting any defects that could be the subject of a claim under a buildings insurance policy. Such issues may be related to:

- site location
- environmental factors
- energy performance
- design
- structural framework
- fabric or services
- nature of construction
- planning.

Structural movement

Individual manifestations of structural movement are described -under each element affected. The surveyor should summarise, in the overall assessment in section C, the advice given regarding structural movement in elemental sections of the report.

Evidence of structural movement affecting the property or individual components is reported, including cracking, deflection, bulging, bowing and verticality. The surveyor describes the evidence available for each case and provides an opinion as to the most likely cause of the movement. In addition, the surveyor states whether the movement seems to be recent or of long standing, and if it is thought to be continuing. Advice is given as to whether or not repairs are necessary.

The surveyor may also need to consider past remedial work and whether it has been effective.

Dampness

Individual manifestations of dampness are described for each element affected. Dampness can occur for a variety of reasons (including rising damp, penetrating damp, trapped and displaced moisture, salt contamination, service leaks and condensation). Moisture may be on the surface of the fabric or concealed in the structure. The surveyor should check methodically for dampness both visually and with a moisture meter at pertinent locations. The surveyor should also be mindful of

how such readings may sometimes be affected by salts, metals or other conductive material.

The likely origin of any dampness is provided and advice is given on how to overcome dampness that is considered to be a problem (in the context of the building type) to the building fabric and living conditions.

The surveyor is not expected to conduct tests for salts or perform calcium carbide tests, unless this service is considered necessary and has been agreed in writing with both the client and the property owner. The surveyor should warn the client of any risk that the presence of dampness may cause, such as rot in concealed timbers.

Timber defects

Individual manifestations of timber defects are described for each element affected. Exposed timbers are inspected for signs of rot or insect attack. All aspects of the construction and condition, including dampness, are taken into account to assess the potential for damage to hidden timbers.

Similarly, the surveyor may need to examine exposed timbers for the presence of active infestation of wood-boring insects and determine the likelihood of infestation in the hidden structure. In both instances, the surveyor provides advice about remedial works in this section.

Condition rating table

The table shows the worst condition ratings given in the elemental condition rating box for each element in sections E, F, G and H (part). The table must also correctly identify each element.

Summary of repairs (and cost guidance)

The surveyor summarises the main repair items, giving full attention to the worst condition ratings, and cross-references these comments to the main body of the report. When cost guidance is given, the surveyor states the reservations and limitations of such advice, and recommends that formal quotations should be obtained prior to a legal commitment to purchase the property.

The surveyor should use accurate and independent guidance, such as the current BCIS publication, *Housing Repair Cost Guide* (see Part A, section 4.6, for further details).

Further investigations

This section provides the client with advice on any further investigations that the surveyor thinks appropriate, for example:

- referral for a structural engineer to comment
- concerns regarding ground contamination
- CCTV examination of drains
- damp and timber specialist investigations.

If the surveyor considers it necessary for areas of the property to be opened up to establish their true condition, this is to be stated clearly in the report.

Recommendations for specialist tests (for example, for service installations, exposing foundations, uncovering the extent of fungal decay) should only be made where the surveyor is uncertain of the true condition and may suspect a possible underlying issue. If such tests should be undertaken before legal commitment to purchase, the surveyor should state this in the report.

C

Overall assessment and summary of condition ratings

This section provides our overall opinion of the property, highlighting areas of concern, and summarises the condition ratings of different elements of the property (with only the worst rating per element being inputted in the tables). It also provides a summary of repairs (and cost guidance where agreed) and recommendations for further investigations.

To make sure you get a balanced impression of the property, we strongly recommend that you read all sections of the report, in particular the 'What to do now' section, and discuss in detail with us.

Overall opinion

3

| Section of the report | Element number | Element name |
|-------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| E: Outside the property | | |
| F: Inside the property | | |
| G: Services | | |
| H: Grounds (part) | | |

2

| Section of the report | Element number | Element name |
|-------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| E: Outside the property | | |
| F: Inside the property | | |
| G: Services | | |
| H: Grounds (part) | | |

1

| Section of the report | Element number | Element name |
|-------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| E: Outside the property | | |
| F: Inside the property | | |
| G: Services | | |
| H: Grounds (part) | | |

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Overall assessment and summary of condition ratings (continued)

Summary of repairs (and cost guidance)

Formal quotations should be obtained prior to legal commitment to purchase the property

| Repairs | Cost guidance (where agreed) |
|---------|------------------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |

Further investigations

Further investigations should be obtained prior to legal commitment to purchase the property (see 'What to do now')

Property address



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D About the property

Type of property

A description of the type of property and its features is provided, including the number of storeys.

If it is a flat or maisonette, the surveyor states this here and then provides further information in the box called 'Information relevant to flats and maisonettes', given later in this section.

The approximate compass point direction that the front of the property faces is also given here.

Approximate year the property was built

The surveyor states the year or approximate year the home was built.

Approximate year the property was extended

The surveyor reports whether the home has been extended, as well as the year or approximate year the extension(s) was built, if present.

Approximate year the property was converted

The surveyor states whether a home has been converted, along with the year or approximate year it was converted, if applicable.

Information relevant to flats and maisonettes

The surveyor indicates if the flat or maisonette is in a converted or purpose-built building and specifies:

- the floor of the block
- number of flats in the block
- separate blocks in the development
- access
- limitations to access at the time of inspection.

Accommodation

The surveyor lists all parts of the accommodation in brief, showing the current use of the main rooms and the circulation areas broken down by floor levels.

As part of the inspection protocol the surveyor reviews:

- the accommodation and its layout
- modernisations and alterations
- the building in respect of general habitability.

Detailed measurements are not usually reported, but during the inspection the surveyor notes any design features or dimensions that are important to the use and enjoyment of the property, and includes them in the relevant sections of the report.

Construction

The surveyor describes the main structure, how the structural parts of the building were originally built to work together, and where any failures have occurred. The surveyor also reports where later alterations have affected structural performance, as well as any defects due to age, time and decay that are causing structural difficulties and need attention.

It is important to make it clear to the client that older buildings were designed and constructed differently to modern buildings. This is not just applicable to 'historic' buildings, but to all older buildings.

Works causing changes to the intended performance of a traditional building can have detrimental consequences on its condition. For example, certain works can cause the entrapment of moisture by impervious materials used in repair and maintenance, such as cement-based renders, pointing, plasters and modern paints. Understanding how a building was intended to perform and how works may disrupt that performance is necessary to successfully determine a building's existing and future condition. The surveyor should make full use of this section in order to explain the intended and existing performance of the building.

Structural frame

This is an optional heading that can be used if the building has a load-bearing frame (e.g. in historic timber houses), or some forms of precast reinforced concrete (PRC). This may not be appropriate to modern timber-framed construction, where the stud framework is best described as part of the wall structure.

Hazardous materials

The surveyor provides advice under this optional heading where there is visual evidence of, or

reasonable grounds to believe that, a material used in the construction that, when worked upon, is known to be hazardous to living conditions (e.g. lead, asbestos or timber treatment). This can be cross referenced to the element(s) concerned in section J Risks.

Means of escape

The surveyor inspects the size and height of the opening lights to all upper floor windows, as well as access routes from all rooms and whether the access routes are closed or open. This is particularly of concern with open-plan layouts and properties more than two storeys high.

The adequacy of methods of protection to the means of escape in loft conversions and houses of three or more storeys is reviewed. The surveyor may also need to provide advice in respect of fire resistance standards, for instance, in large, older houses within this category.

The provision of smoke detectors outside kitchens and in circulating areas at each floor level should be recommended.

Security

The surveyor reports basic security aspects affecting the property, for example, the presence or lack of adequate window locks, door locks and alarm system.

Energy

The surveyor obtains the details of the current Energy Efficiency Rating, as stated on the EPC, and enters it in the box provided. No further comment is given here. The surveyor must ensure the potential ratings are not mistakenly entered instead, as they are also stated on the EPC. If no EPC is available, 'Not available' is inputted in boxes.

The surveyor comments on the overall energy related matters for the property in more detail in section K Energy efficiency.

Services

Mains

The surveyor marks the boxes to indicate which services are present and reports in more detail in section G Services.

Other

The surveyor notes any other services present at the property, such as:

- septic tank
- private water supply (e.g. well).

Central heating

The surveyor marks the box to indicate which type of system is available, or chooses 'None' if there is no central heating, and reports in more detail in section G.

Other services or energy sources (including feed-in tariffs)

This box is used to state any other service or energy source present at the property, such as:

- wind turbine
- solar panel(s)
- heat pump(s)
- any others.

The surveyor comments in more detail in section K Energy efficiency.

Where the surveyor is aware of feed-in tariffs, these should be commented on here and cross referred to section I3 Other matters for the client's legal advisers to confirm all liabilities and obligations.

Grounds

This section requires a brief general description only. Full details can be given in section H on the following:

- garage(s) – position (state if none)
- gardens
- outbuildings (type and location)
- leisure buildings (type and location).

Location, facilities, local environment and other local factors

Comments here are to be based on the surveyor's desk-top research, along with the inspection and the surveyor's local knowledge.

Location

Comments on location should not include reference

to grounds, which are covered in section H. Instead, the surveyor should focus on:

- situation
- accessibility
- type of area
- character of neighbourhood
- source(s) of inconvenience or disturbance (e.g. school traffic, crowds, industry, public house)
- road(s)/paths (adopted/private and traffic volume).

Facilities

The surveyor reports on nearby facilities, such as:

- shops
- bus routes/railway station
- schools.

Local environment

Physical factors such as flood risk, radon, electromagnetic fields, mining, the presence of invasive species in the area and clay sub-soils must be reported here and cross referred to section J Risks.

Enquiries need to be made to determine whether a building is listed or located within a conservation

area. If the surveyor is aware that the property is so classified, this must be reported here and reference made to this in section I Issues for your legal advisers.

Other local factors

The surveyor considers the general condition, construction, design and perceived use of adjoining properties, in order to identify and report any special factors (e.g. significant disturbance) that may have an adverse effect on the property.

The surveyor also takes account of the effect of external noise on living conditions within the property and its grounds. Noise from aircraft, rail, traffic and other sources are noted if they are significant at the time of inspection, or could reasonably be anticipated to be significant.

If the surveyor is instructed to consider a specific issue (e.g. aircraft noise), the extent of the enquiries required should be made clear to the client and agreed beforehand. The sound insulation qualities of party structures may also need to be considered.

Any other possible nuisances, for example smells that are known or have become apparent to the surveyor while carrying out the inspection, are included in this section.

D About the property

Type of property

Approximate year the property was built

Approximate year the property was extended

Approximate year the property was converted

Information relevant to flats and maisonettes

Accommodation

Construction

Means of escape

Security

Energy

We have not prepared the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). If we have seen the EPC, then we will report the 'Current' rating here. We have not checked this rating and so cannot comment on its accuracy. We are advised that the property's current energy performance, as recorded in the EPC, is:

Energy Efficiency Rating

Property address



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D

About the property (continued)

8

Services

Gas

Mains Other

Electricity

Mains Other

Water

Mains Other

Drainage

Mains Other

Please see section K for more information about the energy efficiency of the property.

Central heating

Gas Electric Solid fuel Oil None

Other services or energy sources (including feed-in tariffs)

Grounds

Location

Facilities

Local environment

Other local factors

Property address



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E Outside the property

Outside the property relates to the external elements of the building. The client will clearly recognise this from the headings within the section.

The surveyor should inform the client and the client's advisers of any limitations to inspection of the property and give reasons for this in the text box at the top of the page. For example, where an element(s), or parts thereof, would normally be inspected within the terms of conditions but could not due to various reasons (e.g. roof covered in snow, chimney stack hidden from view), the surveyor reports this here. If further comment is required, it can be included within the appropriate element text box.

For the flats, the outside surfaces of the building containing the property are visually inspected only to the extent that the surveyor is able to give an opinion on the general condition. Where visual inspection is not possible, this should be reported in the relevant section of the report.

External decorations are considered as part of the element and its normal maintenance. Therefore, the surveyor comments on them in the elemental text box as appropriate.

Risk and safety issues/hazards should be cross referred to section J.

The surveyor must apply a condition rating to each element and report on the following checklist items. These checklists are meant to be helpful during the inspection as prompts, but they are not exhaustive.

E1 Chimney stacks

They are visually inspected with the aid of binoculars where appropriate.

- flaunching
- pots
- type and condition of stacks (leaning and sulphate attack)
- pointing, render and other finishes
- aerials and satellite dishes
- flashings and soakers at the junction with the roof covering (but not including the roof covering)

- any party wall issues arising from chimney condition
- evidence of suitable linings for new solid fuel installations
- hazards.

E2 Roof coverings

Pitched roof

This is visually inspected with the aid of binoculars where appropriate.

- type of covering and condition, including the angle/slope of the roof and fixing of tiles/slates
- suitability of covering for roof slope
- roofing felt – presence, type, condition
- ridges and hips tiles
- verge and eaves details
- open valleys
- valley gutters ('butterfly' roofs), parapets gutters and their lining, and outlets
- lead flashings to up-stands, dormers, etc. (but not the chimney flashings)
- roof lights
- dormers (usually including the flat or pitched roof over the feature)
- any party wall issues arising from the roof condition
- hazards – e.g. loose slates that could result in injury.

Flat roof

This is visually inspected from vantage points within the property and/or using a ladder externally, where there is safe and reasonable access to a flat roof(s), not more than 3m above ground level.

- type of covering and condition, including the falls on the roof
- lead flashings to up-stands (but not the chimney flashings)
- verge and eaves details
- any integral gutters
- roof lights
- any party wall issues arising from flat roof condition.

E3 Rainwater pipes and gutters

They are visually inspected with the aid of binoculars where appropriate.

This element includes:

- gutters and gutter supports (valley and parapet gutters to be included in E2 Roof coverings)
- hopper heads
- rainwater downpipes, bends, swan necks, off-sets
- rainwater shoes.

This element ends:

- where it joins foul pipework and becomes a combined system
- where it discharges into, or over, a gully
- over the ground.

Issues include:

- type and condition
- illegal connections to foul water drainage systems, septic tanks, etc.
- any party wall or legal issues arising from shared rainwater pipes and gutters
- hazards – e.g. loose cast iron sections that could result in injury
- general comment on adequacy, including
 - falls to gutters
 - position of outlets, hopper heads, etc.
 - numbers of downpipes.

Where there are concerns about the adequacy of the installation, the surveyor may have to use manufacturer's information to determine this.

E4 Main walls

They are visually inspected with the aid of binoculars where appropriate, although foundations and concealed parts are not exposed or inspected.

- type, thickness and general condition of the wall(s)
- wall ties
- pointing
- rendering/external finishes
- cladding:

- where it is integral to walling (e.g. part of a sandwich construction), it is reported here
- where it is 'surface' fixed to the walling, then it should be included in E8 Other joinery and finishes

- insulation – type (cross refer to section K)
- type and condition of the lintels, jambs and sills
- parapet walls and copings, including party up-stand walls
- timber frame
- level of insulation to the wall
- any party wall issues arising from wall condition
- hazards (e.g. loose stones, parapets close to collapse and unstable bulges).

Damp proof course

Issues include:

- type, position and condition
- presence of dampness to the inside face of the outside wall, including that from rising and penetrating dampness and condensation
- airbricks (cross refer section F4 Floors).

E5 Windows

Where practicable, all windows are opened and closed, but not forced open, and vulnerable areas are closely examined. The surveyor should make notes and advise the client whether it is possible to operate the window transoms/openings satisfactorily.

- type and general condition
- single/double/secondary glazing
- draughts/damp penetration
- seals to double glazed units
- replacement window issues, such as:
 - quality
 - support to construction above
 - Fenestration Self-Assessment Scheme (FENSA), Certass, Building Regulations, etc.
- escape in the case of fire
- safety glass
- security – locking mechanisms or externally beaded where there could be insurance implications

- hazards – e.g. defective openers/low window cill threshold that could result in a fall from height/accident.

E6 Outside doors (including patio doors)

Outside doors are to be opened and closed where keys are available, but not forced open.

- type and condition
- glazing and safety glass issues
- security
- draughts/damp penetration
- seals to double glazed units
- threshold, if level access, exclusion of water, etc.
- replacement door issues such as quality, support to construction above, FENSA, Certass, Building Regulations, etc.

E7 Conservatory and porches

They are visually inspected.

- type and condition
- Building Regulation and/or planning approval (e.g. for a conservatory, an extension, or a sun room)
- inappropriate use (e.g. kitchen, bedroom)
- safety hazards (e.g. low level glass, escape from upper storey windows).

E8 Other joinery and finishes

They are visually inspected with the aid of binoculars where appropriate.

- type and condition
- fascias, soffits and eaves details generally

- bargeboards and verge details generally
- ornamental joinery (e.g. finials, mock Tudor panelling)
- timber and PVC cladding fixed to main walling
- condition of decorations to all joinery elements
- possible asbestos components.

E9 Other

This category is used for external elements that require reporting but do not sit comfortably elsewhere in section E. These elements should be visually inspected with the aid of binoculars where appropriate.

Typical examples include:

- roof terraces or useable flat roof areas over other accommodation
- balconies
- bay windows, but only where distinctive and different in nature to the construction of the main walls
- external stairways or fire escapes
- hazards (e.g. loose handrails or steps/ copings that could result in injury).

To give a complete assessment of the feature, this section should cut across other elements, but only where appropriate. For example, a section on a balcony may report on:

- structural aspects (e.g. fixings, support)
- walls and floor to the balcony
- railings and handrails.

Rather than trying to fit these within the elemental structure of the report, it may be clearer to include all aspects here.

E

Outside the property

9

Limitations to inspection

1 2 3 NI

E1
Chimney stacks

E2
Roof coverings

E3
Rainwater pipes
and gutters

E4
Main walls

E5
Windows

E6
Outside doors
(including patio doors)

E7
Conservatory
and porches

E8
Other joinery
and finishes

E9
Other

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F Inside the property

Inside the property relates to the internal elements of the building. The client will clearly recognise this from the headings within the section.

The surveyor should inform the client and the client's advisers of any limitations to inspection of the property and give reasons for this in the text box at the top of the page. For example, where an element(s), or parts thereof, would normally be inspected within the terms of conditions but could not due to various reasons (e.g. room full of stored items, door to room locked, no access hatch to roof space), the surveyor reports this here. If further comment is required, it can be included within the appropriate element text box.

Internal decorations are considered as part of the element and its normal maintenance. Therefore, the surveyor comments on them in the elemental text box as appropriate.

Risk and safety issues are cross referred to section J.

The surveyor must apply a condition rating to each element and report on the following checklist items. These checklists may be helpful during the inspection as prompts, but they are not exhaustive.

F1 Roof structure

The roof space is entered using a ladder where there is safe and reasonable access via hatches not more than 3m above floor level or by other means. The roof structure is visually inspected from within the roof space. Lightly secured panels are removed when safe to do so, stored goods and other contents are not moved or lifted but small areas of thermal insulation may be lifted where safe access allows. In all cases, the surveyor should judge whether it is practicable or permitted and safe to carry out the inspection.

This element includes:

- design, construction and condition
- alteration of the roof structure to create useable space (included here when the owner has partially altered the roof space for limited use, e.g. providing flooring for additional storage, but a complete room-in-a-roof conversion should be reported in F9 Other)

- roof strengthening and lateral restraint
- use and misuse of the roof space
- wood rot and wood boring beetle – a detailed inspection of vulnerable timbers is required
- party walls – lack of fire breaks, gaps between dwellings
- flooring in, and access into, the loft
- ventilation in roof space – check for type and amount of ventilation to the roof space and compare to current standards
- level of insulation
- birds, bats, vermin, insects
- unsupported chimney breast(s) (report in F5 Fireplaces, chimney breasts and flues).

Flats

This is inspected as above, but only if access can be gained from inside the flat or from communal area (where access is permissible).

F2 Ceilings

They are visually inspected from floor level and are gently pressure tested for underlying defects (such as detachment of plaster from laths).

- type and condition
- dampness to surfaces, including condensation and mould growth
- safety and cracking
- cornices or centrepieces (and implications for listed buildings)
- finishes, including decorations
- asbestos containing materials.

F3 Walls and partitions

Both are visually inspected from floor level. Using a damp meter, walls are randomly tested for dampness where considered appropriate.

- type and condition
- loading or non-load bearing
- structural movement, cracking, distortion, binding doors
- non-robust partitions
- possible asbestos content
- finishes, including decorations

- wall tiling (including splash back wall tiling)
- dado panelling
- structural alterations – through lounge, new door openings
- dampness to internal walls, including condensation and mould growth
- hazards.

F4 Floors

The surface of floors not covered with fixed floor coverings and subfloor areas are inspected as far as practicable. In the case of timber floors, loose boards are raised to enable the construction to be identified and their condition to be checked. The surveyor also carries out a 'heel-drop check'.

The surveyor may need to comment if joists are likely to be undersized or defective, and on excessive deflections and general levels. Where necessary, advice can be given separately for each floor level (e.g. ground floor and upper floors).

- type and condition (floor by floor)
- solid floor:
 - cracking
 - settlement
 - swelling
- suspended timber floor:
 - stamp test
 - ventilation to subfloor void
- floor finishes and their construction
- dampness to all floor types
- wood rot and wood boring insects
- insulation (cross refer to section K)
- hazards.

F5 Fireplaces, chimney breasts and flues

These are visually inspected, but no testing of flues or fittings is carried out. Gas and oil heaters/fires are to be included in G4 Heating, and so are balanced flues attached to, or extending a short distance from, the heating appliance.

This element includes the chimney breast from the lowest level in the house, through all rooms and any roof space, and finishes at the underside of the roof covering. It changes to E1 Chimney stacks

once it reaches above the roof covering, where it becomes an external element.

- types and condition
- open, solid fuel fireplaces:
 - flue/chimney maintenance, sweeping, lining, etc.
 - fixed external ventilation hearth
- chimney breasts:
 - open or blocked off
 - ventilation of flue (if blocked)
 - top of flue at chimney level
 - condition of them in roof space
 - structural alterations, unsupported
 - dampness to base and face of them
- flues:
 - traditional chimney breasts or built-in prefabricated flues
 - vertical open flues not contained within a chimney, including description, fixing, condition, terminal position, proximity to combustible materials, etc.
- possible asbestos materials and other hazards.

F6 Built-in fittings (e.g. wardrobes)

Built-in cupboards and wardrobes are examined, and with permission from the owner/occupier, stored items are moved.

- description, adequacy and general condition
- dampness affecting the features described throughout section F (attention will need to be given to fittings near damp areas, solid floors, kitchen and sanitary fittings)
- wood boring insects affecting features
- operation – operable drawers, damaged hinges
- dampness, wood boring insects, etc.
- hazards.

F7 Woodwork (e.g. staircase and joinery)

Visually inspected, with internal doors to be opened and closed where keys are available, but not forced open.

- description and general condition
- exceptional cost items (e.g. listed buildings)

- internal parts of windows – jamb linings, sill boards, architraves, shutters, etc.
- built-in cupboards (e.g. within chimney alcoves, meter cupboards)
- skirtings, dado rails, picture rails
- finishes, including decorations
- dampness affecting the features
- wood rot and wood boring beetle affecting features
- hazards.

Staircase(s)

- treads and risers, strings, balusters, handrails, newel posts
- safety hazards (e.g. missing balusters, broken treads, lack of safety glass)

Doors and architraves

- internal doors, frames/linings, architraves, etc.
- asbestos containing backing to cupboard/older fire doors
- glazing problems/hazards.

F8 Bathroom and kitchen fittings

These are examined and, with permission from the owner/occupier, stored items are moved. The surveyor provides a description of the adequacy and general condition.

Bathroom fittings

- baths
- bidets
- wash hand basins, their taps and slotted wastes
- shower trays
- shower cubicles
- water closets (WC), their cisterns and overflows, including the actual junction between the WC outgo and the drainage pipe, but not the drainage pipe itself
- bath panels and other built-in fittings associated the sanitary appliances
- sealant between the appliance and the adjacent surfaces
- wall tiling/splashback tiles
- wood rot and wood boring insects

- hazards.

Kitchen units

- kitchen units, cupboards and worktops, including waterproof sealant, but not the splashback tiling (see F3 Walls and partitions)
- kitchen sink, including the taps, but not the water pipes to them (see G3 Water)
- slotted wastes, but not the trap or the waste pipe (see G6 Drainage)
- description, adequacy and condition
- kitchen units, which are visually inspected excluding appliances (such as hobs, oven, grills, etc.)
- dampness/wood boring insects affecting any features
- operation (e.g. operable drawers, damaged hinges)
- backing panels
- sealant between the appliance and adjacent surfaces
- hazards
- wood rot and wood boring insects.

The inspection does not include:

- water pipes that connect to the taps, mixing valves, etc. (see sections G3 Water and G5 Water heating)
- water traps and waste pipes that drain them (see section G6 Drainage)
- any electric showers or instant electric water heaters (see sections G3 Water and G5 Water heating)
- wall tiling/splashback tiles (to be reported in F3 Walls and partitions)
- leaks and dampness caused by the bathroom fittings.

F9 Other

This category is used for internal elements that require reporting but do not sit comfortably elsewhere in section F. These elements should be visually inspected. The following headings give suggestions of what may typically be included here.

Roof space conversion

Although this can be reported in F1 Roof structure, this section should be used where a total conversion has been carried out. To give a complete appraisal of the conversion, this section should cut across other relevant elements. For example, issues to be considered and reported on may include:

- structural aspects – alteration of roof, strengthening of ceilings and other floors
- access to room – adequacy and safety of staircase, etc.
- thermal insulation – ventilation to roof spaces
- fire escape route – fire resistance of partitions, ceilings, doors, etc.
- regulation and permissions – Building Regulations, planning permission, etc.
- safety issues, hazards and any asbestos containing materials (cross refer to section J)
- legal/other permission issues, including planning Building Regulations and party wall issues (cross refer to section I).

Cellars and basements

They require a similar approach to roof space conversion. To make reporting clearer, where the

cellar/basements are used for habitable purposes, this section should cut across other relevant elements.

This might typically include:

- structural aspects – removal of partitions, strengthening of ceilings and other floors
- access to room – adequacy and safety of staircase, etc.
- fire escape and fire safety – additional fire resistance to ceiling, inner rooms issues, etc.
- daylight and ventilation to rooms and spaces
- dampness
- safety issues, hazards and asbestos containing materials (cross refer to section J)
- legal/permission issues, including planning, Building Regulations and party wall issues (cross refer to section I).

Flats

Where access is available (if it is not, this should be clearly reported), the inspection includes those internal common parts of a block, such as:

- internal hallways, landings and stairs
- doors
- built-in cupboards, meter cupboards, etc.
- asbestos containing materials (cross refer to section J).

F

Inside the property

10

Limitations to inspection

1 2 3 NI

| | | |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|
| F1 Roof structure | <input type="text"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| F2 Ceilings | <input type="text"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| F3 Walls and partitions | <input type="text"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| F4 Floors | <input type="text"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| F5 Fireplaces, chimney breasts and flues | <input type="text"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| F6 Built-in fittings (e.g. wardrobes) | <input type="text"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| F7 Woodwork (e.g. staircase and joinery) | <input type="text"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| F8 Bathroom and kitchen fittings | <input type="text"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| F9 Other | <input type="text"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

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G Services

All building service installations, whether mains or privately supplied, are visually inspected. The inspection should be sufficient enough for the surveyor to form an overall opinion on the type of installation, the materials used, its apparent age, its visible condition and the need for further investigation.

The surveyor is not expected to carry out testing of the installations or appliances other than through their normal operation in everyday use, or perform or comment on design calculations. For all services, the surveyor advises the client that further tests will be necessary by appropriate specialists if assurance as to condition or capability is required. The inspection should be carried out without the risk of causing injury to the surveyor or damage to the property.

The surveyor should inform the client and the client's advisers of any limitations to inspection of the property and give reasons for this in the text box at the top of the page. For example, where an element(s), or part(s) thereof, would normally be inspected within the terms of conditions but could not due to various reasons (e.g. meters inaccessible, drain cover not present or could not be lifted), the surveyor reports this here. If further comment is required, it can be included within the appropriate element text box.

Risk and safety issues should be cross referred to section J Risks.

If any services are turned off, the surveyor states this in the report and does not turn them on. A condition rating must be applied to each of the services and comments made on the following elements. These checklists may be helpful during the inspection as prompts, but they are not exhaustive.

G1 Electricity

Accessible parts of the wiring are visually inspected without removing or undoing fittings.

The surveyor reports on:

- location and type of incoming supply, meter and switchgear
- nature of visible wiring

- availability of socket outlets
- nature of artificial lighting.

Concerning the demands of computer equipment, the surveyor should not turn off the main electrical supply or test residual current devices (RCDs), except with the express permission of the owner/occupier.

The following statement is printed at the start of G1:

Safety warning: The Electrical Safety Council recommends that you should get a registered electrician to check the property and its electrical fittings at least every ten years, or on change of occupancy. All electrical installation work undertaken after 1 January 2005 should have appropriate certification. For more advice contact the Electrical Safety Council.

Subsequent reporting should not contradict this.

The surveyor describes the installation and its general condition, including:

- mains supply
- RCDs or miniature circuit breakers (MCB)
- on-peak/off-peak
- location of the meter and consumer unit/fuse board
- supplementary bonding in the usual places
- condition of visible wiring
- condition of a sample of the range of light fittings and switch gear
- fixed electrical appliances, including heaters, storage radiators, electric showers, instant water heaters, etc. (see also G5 Water heating)
- nature of electrical fittings in bath and shower rooms
- external installations, such as garages, outbuildings, external sockets, garden lighting, water feature pumps, etc.

The surveyor checks if the following documentation is available:

- Part P Building Regulation certification where rewiring/alterations to the installation have been carried out post 1 January 2005
- a recent Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR).

Microgeneration

The surveyor reports the presence of any form of microgeneration at the property and describes its condition. The following questions should be considered when inspecting photovoltaic (PV) panels, wind turbines or any other type of microgeneration.

PV panels

General

- Have the panels been fitted by member of the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS)?
- Is all the appropriate certification in place (e.g. MCS, Part P)?
- Does the owner benefit from the Feed-In Tariffs (FITs) scheme? If yes, when was this set up and what generating rate applies?
- Are the panels owned or leased?
- Do the panels meet permitted development requirements?

Externally

- Are the panels in satisfactory condition? Are they cracked, damaged or covered in lichen, debris, etc.?
- Do the panels face south or southwest?
- Do large trees or adjacent buildings overshadow the panels? Are younger trees likely to overshadow the panels eventually?
- What condition is the roof covering in, beneath and around the panels?
- Can you see any signs of distortion or dishing of the roof slopes?

Internally

- Does the roof structure appear robust, or are the structural members relatively small and/or widely spaced?
- Are there signs of water penetration around the fixings of the PV panel framework, or on the ceilings of the rooms and spaces below?
- Do all the components of the PV electrical system appear to be adequately and neatly fixed, or do they have that DIY feel about them?

Wind turbines

General

- What type of wind turbine is it, building or mast mounted?

- Has the wind turbine been fitted by a member of the MCS? (If not, the system may not receive any future government subsidy.)
- Is all the appropriate certification in place (e.g. MCS, Part P)?
- Does the owner benefit from any type of subsidy (e.g. the FITs scheme)? If yes, when was this set up and what generating rate applies?
- Does the wind turbine meet permitted development requirements?

Externally

- Is the turbine in a satisfactory condition? If fixed to a building, are there any signs of damage near the fixing points? If mast-mounted, do the mast and any guy-wires look corroded? Is there space to lower the mast if required?
- If it needs maintenance, is it easy to access?
- Is the turbine overshadowed by large trees, buildings and other tall obstacles? This may reduce its effectiveness.
- Is it particularly close to neighbouring properties where the noise generated by them may cause a problem?

Internally

- If the turbine is fixed to the building, are the internal surfaces close to the turbine location damaged?
- Do all the components of the wind turbine electrical system (e.g. the various junction boxes, the inverter, export meter and the connection to the grid and so on) appear to be satisfactorily and neatly fixed?

G2 Gas/oil

Accessible parts of the system(s) are visually inspected without removing or undoing fittings. No tests whatsoever are carried out to the system(s) or appliances.

The following statement is printed at the start of G2:

Safety warning: All gas and oil appliances and equipment should be regularly inspected, tested, maintained and serviced by a registered 'competent person' and in line with the manufacturer's instructions. This is important to make sure that all the equipment is working correctly, to limit the risk of fire and carbon

monoxide poisoning, and to prevent carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from leaking into the air. For more advice contact the Gas Safe Register for gas installations, and OFTEC for oil installations.

Subsequent reporting should not contradict this.

The surveyor reports:

- description and general condition
- mains gas installations
- evidence of installation/alteration certification and annual inspections.

This section covers the gas and oil supply pipework from the utility company's supply (or the storage vessel) through to the heating appliance itself.

However, all matters relating to the appliance are to be reported in G4 Heating. The following questions should be considered when inspecting mains gas, liquid petroleum gas and oil installations.

Mains gas installations

- Does it have a mains supply and is it connected?
- What is the meter location and condition?
- Is the meter positioned on an escape route?
- What are the route, nature and condition of the pipework?
- Have there been alterations?
- Are they properly certified?

Liquid petroleum gas installations

- Storage cylinders: Is the location suitable?
 - boundaries
 - proximity to buildings (especially basements)
 - other storage tanks
 - condition
 - foliage.
- What are the route, nature and condition of the pipework?
- Have there been alterations?
- Are they properly certified?

Oil installations

The surveyor reports on oil storage facility details, including:

- siting

- nature of the tank
- internal or external bunded
- condition of tank
- proximity to dwelling, boundaries, watercourses, drains, etc.

G3 Water

Accessible parts of the system are visually inspected without removing or undoing fittings. The surveyor notes and reports on the nature of the installation, including:

- pipework
- entry point of supply
- locations of internal and external stopcocks
- method of storage
- condition of sanitary fittings.

The taps are turned on and toilets flushed to check for general operation in everyday use. The surveyor describes the general design and constructional aspects.

This element does include:

- piped water supply from the boundary of the property (of the whole of the private water supply)
- supply pipe and stop valves where the pipe enters the building
- rising main supply to combination boilers, water heaters, feed and expansion tanks, but not beyond them
- rising main supply to cold water storage tanks, direct to kitchen and sanitary appliances, including the taps to which they connect
- cold water storage tanks (possible asbestos containing materials to be cross referred to section J), lids, bases, associated overflows and vents
- cold water distribution pipes from storage tanks to appliances.

This element does not include:

- hot water system (see G5 Water heating)
- hot water cylinder, expansion pipe, immersion heaters, cylinder thermostats and all distribution pipework between cylinder and the appliances
- distribution pipework between the water heating appliances and the various appliances.

Main issues to include are:

- description and general condition
- source of supply
 - mains supply
 - mains and private supply combined
 - private supply only (If present, has it been checked and certified as wholesome?)
- shared supply with neighbours (cross refer to section I)
- position of external stop valves/water meter
- position of internal stop valve
- pipe insulation in unheated areas
- presence of lead pipework (cross refer to section J)
- nature of the pipework, dissimilar materials
- storage tanks, overflow pipes, etc.
- use of asbestos containing materials (cross refer to section J)
- backflow prevention
- garden supply
- irrigation system.

Private water supply

If there is a private water supply, the following may need to be considered:

- storage capacity
- location
- pumping and piping arrangements (and access thereto)
- a laboratory check for potability:
 - Water must be fit for drinking, be free from contamination and not contain a sufficient quantity saline material to be regarded as a mineral water.
 - Potable water must be free of pathogens (disease causing organisms) and have a desirable taste, odour (smell), colour and turbidity (cloudiness), and contain no harmful chemicals.

G4 Heating

To check its physical operation, the owner or occupier is asked to activate the system. The report should note that the purpose of activating

the system is to check basic operation and to test its efficiency or safety.

This element includes:

- main heating source
- boilers (and combination boilers that also provide hot water)
- gas and oil fires, and heaters
- electric heating
- heat pumps
- heat distribution pipe-work and associated heat emitters (e.g. under-floor heating), and the possible use of asbestos containing materials (cross refer to section J)
- ancillary equipment
- heating controls/thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs)
- expansion vessels and safety controls
- ventilation issues for heating appliances (where there are concerns, cross refer to section J)
- solid fuel heating source should be covered in fireplaces, chimneys and flues. Any distribution pipework should be covered here for this element.

Most heating appliances are subject to regulations governing installation of gas, oil, solid fuel and electric appliances previously described. These should be cross referred to the appropriate section where certification is required.

G5 Water heating

The water heating system is visually inspected, apart from communal systems which are not inspected. To check its physical operation, the owner or occupier is asked to activate the system. The report should note that the purpose of activating the system is to check basic operation and not to test its efficiency or safety.

If the surveyor has safety concerns based on the visual inspection, these should be recorded with reasonable prominence. In addition, further investigations and suspension of use should be recommended.

This element includes:

- hot water heating appliances providing hot water only (e.g. gas water heater, multi-point

water heater, electric under-counter heater, etc.), while combination heating and hot water boilers are included in G4 Heating

- hot water cylinder, expansion pipe, immersion heaters, cylinder thermostats and all distribution pipework between cylinder and the appliances (but not the taps)
- distribution pipework between the water heating appliances and various other appliances, and the possible use of asbestos containing materials (cross refer to section J).

Heat pumps

The surveyor reports the presence of heat pumps at the property and describes their condition. The following questions should be considered during inspection.

- What type of heat pump is it?
- Has the heat pump been fitted by member of the MCS? (If not, the system may not receive any future government subsidy.)
- Is all the appropriate certification in place (e.g. MCS, Part P)?
- Does the owner benefit from any type of subsidy (e.g. Renewable Heat Incentive)? If yes, when was this set up and what generating rate applies?
- Does the heat pump meet permitted development requirements?
- Is the dwelling well insulated, and does it have a high thermal mass (e.g. thick solid walls and floors)? If not, the heating system is unlikely to generate enough heat on cold days.
- Does the property have access to mains gas or oil heating? If so, the financial benefits of the heat pump may be marginal.

If system pre-dates the MCS (before July 2009), the surveyor should consider recommending that an appropriately qualified person assesses the performance of the system, if the owner wants assurances of its performance.

Solar thermal

If a solar thermal system is present, the surveyor reports this here and describes its condition. The following questions should be considered during inspection.

General

- Have the thermal panels been fitted by member of the MCS?
- Is all the appropriate certification in place (e.g. MCS, Part P for electricians or new hot water tank)?
- Does the owner benefit from government subsidy? If yes, when was this set up and what generating rate applies?
- Do the panels meet permitted development requirements?
- What type of system is it – flat panel/evacuated tubes, separate water tank or dual coil? How is it controlled?
- Has the connection to the hot water system been properly designed to accommodate and take full advantage of the solar heated water?
- Concerning the hot water tank, is there a separate tank or one with a dual coil? Is it big enough and appropriately insulated?

Externally

- Are the panels in satisfactory condition? Are they cracked, damaged or covered in lichen, debris, etc.?
- Do the panels face south or southwest?
- Do large trees or adjacent buildings overshadow the panels? Are younger trees likely to overshadow the panels in later years?
- What condition is the roof covering in, beneath and around the panels?
- Can you see any signs of distortion or dishing of the roof slopes?

Internally

- Does the roof structure appear robust, or are the structural members relatively small and/or widely spaced?
- Are there signs of water penetration around the fixings of the solar panel framework, or on the ceilings of the rooms and spaces below?
- Do all the components of the solar panel system appear to be adequately and neatly fixed, or do they have that DIY feel about them?

G6 Drainage

The surveyor opens all reasonably accessible, lightweight inspection chamber covers within the

curtilage of the property. The assumed routes of the drain runs and their general condition are reported based on a visual inspection. Where a water supply is available and turned on, the surveyor may also run water through the system as part of the inspection.

The surveyor must attempt to identify the means of foul and surface water disposal. There have been recent changes to legislation with which the surveyor should be familiar before undertaking the inspection.

This element includes:

- above ground drainage:
 - traps and wastes from kitchen sinks, washing machines, dishwashers, sanitary appliances, bidets, WCs, showers, etc.
 - soil and vent pipes, and the possible use of asbestos containing materials (cross refer to section J)
 - stub stacks
 - air admittance valves, etc.
- below ground drainage:
 - gullies
 - rodding access points
 - inspection chambers
 - main drainage – separate system (foul and surface water), or combined system
 - private drainage – cess pit, septic tank, small sewerage treatment system
 - other types – soak away, reed beds, composting toilets
- other issues:
 - shared drainage with neighbouring properties (cross refer to section I)
 - permit to discharge to local water courses, etc.
 - misconnected drains (see www.connectright.org.uk)
 - pitch fibre drainage pipes identified in inspection chambers
 - sustainable drainage systems (SUDS).

Private drainage systems

If the property has a private drainage system, the surveyor considers the following:

- type of system
- location relative to watercourses and buildings
- capacity relative to size of current building
- pumping and piping arrangements (and access thereto)
- emptying and maintenance arrangements
- implications for replacement or repair relative to current criteria.

G7 Common services

The surveyor does not inspect the common services and gives general comment only. This covers services that are specific to flats, including:

- refuse chutes, bin stores, etc.
- lifts for passenger and goods
- entry-phone systems
- CCTV
- lighting and heating in common areas
- automatic opening gates.

G8 Other services/features

Other service installations may occasionally be found, and are visually inspected without testing. These may include:

- security alarms
- smoke detectors
- vacuum cleaning system
- stairlift/disability hoist
- remote control garage doors
- electrically controlled gates
- warden call systems in sheltered developments
- entry-phone system
- CCTV
- lifts
- private electrical supply generators
- TV and radio installations
- broadband and cable supplies.

The surveyor should note that electrical installations to swimming pools, plant and equipment require specialist inspection and testing. Therefore, they are normally specifically excluded from this service.

G

Services

Services are generally hidden within the construction of the property. This means that we can only inspect the visible parts of the available services, and we do not carry out specialist tests. The visual inspection cannot assess the services to make sure they work efficiently and safely, or meet modern standards.

Limitations to inspection

1 2 3 NI

G1 *Safety warning: The Electrical Safety Council recommends that you should get a registered electrician to check the property and its electrical fittings at least every ten years, or on change of occupancy. All electrical installation work undertaken after 1 January 2005 should have appropriate certification. For more advice contact the Electrical Safety Council.*

Electricity

G2 *Safety warning: All gas and oil appliances and equipment should regularly be inspected, tested, maintained and serviced by a registered 'competent person' and in line with the manufacturer's instructions. This is important to make sure that the equipment is working correctly, to limit the risk of fire and carbon monoxide poisoning and to prevent carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from leaking into the air. For more advice contact the Gas Safe Register for gas installations, and OFTEC for oil installations.*

Gas/oil

G3
Water

G4
Heating

G5
Water heating

G6
Drainage

G7
Common services

G8
Other services/features

Property address



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H Grounds (including shared areas for flats)

The surveyor should perform a visual inspection only of the grounds by walking around, where necessary, from adjoining public property.

The surveyor should inform the client and the client's advisers of any limitations to inspection of the property and give reasons for this in the text box at the top of the page. For example, where an element(s), or parts thereof, would normally be inspected within the terms of conditions but could not due to various reasons (e.g. garage door locked, garden overgrown), the surveyor report this here. If further comment is required, it can be included within the appropriate element text box.

The surveyor outlines the construction and design of elements in this section, and reports any defects revealed by visual inspection. Where agreed, any special client requirements in respect of anticipated usage are reported here.

Where the principal building is listed, reference is made to the condition of all outbuildings and structures (including garden walls) likely to have been built before 1 July 1948.

H1 Garage(s)

The garage(s) is identified and condition rated here, and so are all related elements and services. Elements of integral garages (i.e. part of the structural framework of the dwelling) can be included in sections E or F.

Typical issues are:

- type and general condition
- functionality
- unauthorised use (cross refer to section I)
- services – type and condition (cross refer to G1 Electricity)
- planning/listed building/conservation area issues
- asbestos containing materials (cross refer to section J).

H2 Permanent outbuildings and other structures

This section normally includes other permanent outbuilding(s) that are not attached to the main

dwelling. These must be condition rated and reported here. Examples include:

- summer houses
- substantial greenhouses
- follies
- leisure buildings, but not the leisure facilities inside (e.g. swimming pools, saunas, fitness gyms, etc.).

Other issues could include:

- listed building/conservation areas (cross refer to section I)
- safety issues (cross refer to section J)
- invasive species, e.g. Japanese knotweed (cross refer to section J)
- automatic gates (cross refer to section J).

H3 Other

This section is normally reserved for the grounds and/or garden, where a defective external feature that will have an impact on the property is reported. In addition, a sub-element can be included and condition rated in section H2 to emphasise its seriousness.

For example, if a retaining wall is in danger the surveyor must outline the construction and design, consider the consequence of failure and draw attention to any implications for household insurance and rebuilding cost. Any defects revealed by visual inspection should be described.

Other examples include:

- drives, paths, terraces, patios, steps (e.g. deeply sunken paths or driveway)
- gardens
- hardstanding
- dropped kerbs
- gates
- trees
- invasive species (for example, Japanese Knotweed) within the boundaries of the property or on directly adjacent sites
- boundary walls, fences (e.g. dilapidated boundary wall or fence)
- non-permanent outbuildings
- rights of way.

Where risks such as contamination or flooding are found within the boundaries of the property or on directly adjacent sites, these should be reported and cross referred to section J, where more detail of these should be provided.

Flats

The inspection includes common external areas, such as:

- external staircases
- outbuildings
- garages
- parking provision
- roads and paths
- boundaries
- retaining walls
- asbestos containing materials (cross refer to section J).

The surveyor describes the extent of inspection carried out in shared areas and their general condition.

Comments in respect of common services should be made in section G Services.

H

Grounds (including shared areas for flats)

Limitations to inspection

1 2 3 NI

H1
Garage(s)

H2
Permanent outbuildings
and other structures

H3
Other

Property address



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I Issues for your legal advisers

The legal advisers are responsible for checking relevant documents. As legal advisers will not normally see the property, the subheadings in this section are intended for the surveyor to identify apparent and specific items with possible legal implications.

In addition to the legal advisers' usual pre-contract enquiries, legal issues may arise from the inspection itself. In such cases, the surveyor alerts the client or the client's legal advisers to physical issues or other matters that could affect the property and may need investigation or clarification. Where the inspection reveals that there are areas of particular concern, these are appropriately highlighted in this section.

Issues reported elsewhere can be cross-referenced here. The checklists provided give examples of issues that may arise. These checklists may be helpful during the inspection as prompts, but they are not exhaustive.

I1 Regulations

Where the surveyor suspects or knows that a property is listed or is located in a conservation area (see section D), the surveyor establishes the status of the property, obtains a copy of any listing and discusses the implications of ownership with the client and/or the client's legal advisers. If repair work is required, the surveyor advises the client to consult someone with appropriate specialist knowledge. If significant repairs or alterations are being contemplated, the client should seek advice from the conservation officer.

Other examples might include:

- FENSA or Certass certificate
- planning permission and Building Regulation approval for an extension or loft conversion
- original compliance and/or consent for conversions, extensions, alterations or change of use, and any particular works evident on inspection for which planning permission may have been required
- where trees are present that might be the subject of such orders, the existence and extent of any Tree Preservation Orders
- environmental matters, which may include enquires as to:

- whether a remediation certificate exists for the site (e.g. new-build on a previously contaminated site)
- whether the property is likely to be affected by adjacent, significant public or private developments, which can be investigated through local authority searches
- whether a mining search is required.

I2 Guarantees

The surveyor reports on the availability and transferability of guarantees in respect of:

- underpinning, lateral restraint and chimney stabilisation works
- timber and damp treatment works
- wall ties and cavity wall tie replacement works
- double glazing
- cavity wall insulation
- remedial works to service installations, including re-lined drains, recent rewiring, replacement boilers, etc.
- recent significant building repairs
- possible advantage of taking over existing insurance.

If there is National House-Building Council (NHBC), Foundation 15 or Building Professional's Certificate for a new-build or conversion, it is reported here. The surveyor establishes the type of warranty offered and verifies the age of the property. The surveyor also draws the client's attention to the fact that builders' warranty schemes have limitations and that the terms should be carefully inspected by the client's legal advisers.

I3 Other matters

Tenure

The surveyor reports this here and, where practicable, includes issues that may impact the property and require further investigation.

Freehold: sample paragraph

Sample wording for a freehold property is given here:

I have been told by *[source of information]* that the property is freehold. You should ask your legal advisers to confirm this and explain the implications.

If the surveyor has cause to suspect the property is not a freehold and this later turns out to be the case, it should be advised that this may have an impact on the survey and the matter may be referred back to the surveyor.

Leasehold

The LPA document is an integral part of the report for all leasehold properties and is to be attached to any report for such properties. The only exception to this rule is that of leasehold houses (see Part A, section 4.9).

Leasehold: sample paragraph (for all except houses)

Sample wording that can be used for all leasehold properties (except leasehold houses) is given here:

I have been told by *[source of information]* that the property is leasehold *[details]*. Your attention is drawn to the attached Leasehold properties advice (LPA) document. You are advised to ask your legal advisers to supply the information set out in this document.

This may have an impact on the survey and, if so, the matter may be referred back to the surveyor.

Leasehold house: sample paragraph

Sample wording for leasehold houses is given here:

I have been told by *[source of information]* that the property is leasehold *[details]*. The Leasehold properties advice (LPA) document is not attached because, in this case, the lease is not likely to be common to other building owners. It may therefore not involve the usual complications of management companies, service charges, etc. Your legal advisers should be asked to check this assumption. If this is the case, they should also be asked to confirm the level of rent and the unexpired term of the lease, and that the lease contains no unusual or troublesome terms. You may also wish them to investigate the possibility of purchasing the freehold (which might be complicated).

Commonhold: sample paragraph

Sample wording for commonhold properties is given here:

I have been told by *[source of information]* that the property is commonhold *[details]*. You should ask your legal advisers to confirm this and explain the implications.

Examples might include:

- flying freeholds or submerged freeholds
- evidence of multiple occupation, tenancies or holiday lettings
- signs of possible trespass
- evidence that suggests possible rights of way
- arrangements in respect of private services
- adoption status of all abutting roads/footpaths
- where private access roads or footways are present, the status of the rights of way and all maintenance/repairing liabilities
- availability and status of all service connections:
 - rights of light
 - restrictions to occupation
 - tenancies/vacant possession
 - roads, drives and footpaths (unadopted or shared access)
 - drains/sewers liability
 - easement, servitudes or wayleaves
 - shared drainage
 - water
 - leisure facilities
- ownership of, and responsibility for, maintaining property boundaries.

Boundary matters might include:

- evidence of poorly defined site boundaries
- repairs of party walls, or party wall agreement in accordance with the *Party Wall etc. Act 1996*
- any known proposed works, extensions or repairs to the property
- works in progress on adjacent land
- the need for the legal advisers to establish the existence of any party wall agreements and/or schedules of condition and, where appropriate, referring back to the surveyor
- parking permits
- status of any known planning permission for major local development
- Green Deal measures, Feed-In Tariffs or roof leases.

Other matters may also be used to cover any matter that does not sit comfortably anywhere else in the report.

I

Issues for your legal advisers

13

We do not act as the legal adviser and will not comment on any legal documents. However, if during the inspection we identify issues that your legal advisers may need to investigate further, these will be listed and explained in this section (for example, check whether there is a warranty covering replacement windows). You should show your legal advisers this section of the report.

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 11 Regulations | <input type="text"/> |
| 12 Guarantees | <input type="text"/> |
| 13 Other matters | <input type="text"/> |

Property address



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J Risks

The purpose of section J is to summarise defects and issues that present a risk to the building or the grounds, or a present a particular safety risk to people.

Risks may include the defects that have caused them, or hazards reported elsewhere the report. They also might be issues that may have existed for a long time and cannot reasonably be changed but still may present a safety risk.

The method of reporting under each heading will typically be:

- originating element/issue
- title of defect/risk/hazard
- very brief description of the problem (maximum one line).

The checklists provided here give examples of issues to consider under each heading.

J1 Risks to the building

Defects should be identified, described, condition rated, reported in the appropriate sections in E, F and G, and emphasised here as a cross-referenced headline. Typical categories are:

- structural movement
- dampness
- timber defects.

Other defects that are present in certain properties may include:

- mundic
- non-traditional construction.

J2 Risks to the grounds

This section includes risks to property and people that are associated with the ground beneath the property. In the case of contamination or landfill, there is a general assumption that there are no hazardous or damaging materials, that there is no contamination in or from the ground and that the ground has not been landfilled. The surveyor only reports if he or she observes, has reason to suspect or otherwise becomes aware of any contamination.

Where appropriate hazards are identified, they should be described here.

Typical issues include:

- radon
- flooding
- mining
- invasive species, e.g. Japanese knotweed (cross refer to section H)
- trees
- electromagnetic fields.

J3 Risks to people

This section focuses on those hazards that pose a direct threat to the users of the dwelling. The risk is clearly identifiable and not too remote. Typical examples include:

- asbestos
- vermin (birds droppings, rats, waste, etc.)
- lack of emergency escape
- inadequate fire precautions
- absence of safety glass
- falls from height
- loose slates
- lead water pipes (cross refer to section G)
- lack of safety rails, steep stairs
- gas leaks
- carbon monoxide poisoning
- dangerous electrics
- unsafe parts of building
- absence of test certificates for services/appliances/water supply
- inappropriate use of accommodation (e.g. non-conforming roof space conversion, bedrooms in damp basements)
- overhead power lines (EMFs)
- high radon levels
- serious and significant tripping hazards
- unprotected garden ponds.

J4 Other risks or hazards

This section is used to cover risks or hazards that may have an impact on the property, but do not sit within other sections. Some examples are:

- location beneath a flight path
- impact of planning proposal
- proximity to source of intrusive noise or smell.

J

Risks

14

This section summarises defects and issues that present a risk to the building or grounds, or a safety risk to people. These may have been reported and condition rated against more than one part of the property or may be of a more general nature, having existed for some time and which cannot be reasonably changed.

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| J1 Risks to the building | <input type="text"/> |
| J2 Risks to the grounds | <input type="text"/> |
| J3 Risks to people | <input type="text"/> |
| J4 Other risks or hazards | <input type="text"/> |

Property address



K Energy efficiency

The purpose of this section is to draw together the following topics:

- level of fabric insulation
- nature of the heating system
- type of ventilation system
- condition related matters that may affect the overall level of energy efficiency (e.g. dampness, mould growth and other related issues).

The surveyor also visually inspects the property and looks at the EPC to draw together the following topic:

- **K1 Insulation:** describes the thermal shell of the building including external walls, windows, roofs, exposed floors and ground floors, taking into consideration the layout, location and orientation of the property and any porches or external lobbies, as well as the level of fabric insulation
- takes into consideration any retrofitted insulation installed, cross referencing this to guarantees/British standards present (e.g. the Cavity Insulation Guarantee Agency).

- **K2 Heating:** determines the nature of the heating system and heating controls, as well as the level of fabric insulation
- **K3 Lighting:** considers the nature of natural and artificial lighting and, where appropriate, advises on the use of energy efficient bulbs
- **K4 Ventilation:** describes provision and nature of ventilation throughout the building
- **K5 General:** comments on any Green Deal measures, Feed-In Tariffs or roof leases (cross reference to section I Issues for legal advisers).

Under each heading, the surveyor must consider condition related matters that may affect the overall level of energy efficiency or performance of the building (e.g. dampness, mould growth and other related issues).

The surveyor also provides advice on practical methods of:

- improving energy efficiency, including any technical or lifestyle measures to reduce any associated risk of problems
- upgrading insulation and reducing any associated risk of condensation.

K

Energy efficiency

This section describes energy related matters for the property as a whole. It takes account of a broad range of energy related features and issues already identified in the previous sections of this report, and discusses how they may be affected by the condition of the property.

This is not a formal energy assessment of the building but part of the report that will help you get a broader view of this topic. Although this may use information obtained from an available EPC, it does not check the certificate's validity or accuracy.

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| K1 Insulation | <input type="text"/> |
| K2 Heating | <input type="text"/> |
| K3 Lighting | <input type="text"/> |
| K4 Ventilation | <input type="text"/> |
| K5 General | <input type="text"/> |

Property address

L Surveyor's declaration

The surveyor must complete all boxes and sign the declaration in the signature box.



Surveyor's declaration

"I confirm that I have inspected the property and prepared this report."

Signature
Surveyor's RICS number Qualifications

For and on behalf of

Company
Address
Town County
Postcode Phone number
Website Fax number
Email
Property address
Client's name Date this report was produced

RICS Disclaimers

1. This report has been prepared by a surveyor ('the Employee') on behalf of a firm or company of surveyors ('the Employer'). The statements and opinions expressed in this report are expressed on behalf of the Employer, who accepts full responsibility for these.

Without prejudice and separately to the above, the Employee will have no personal liability in respect of any statements and opinions contained in this report, which shall at all times remain the sole responsibility of the Employer to the exclusion of the Employee.

In the case of sole practitioners, the surveyor may produce the report in his or her own name unless the surveyor operates as a sole trader limited liability company.

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Please read the 'Description of the RICS Building Survey Service' (at the end of this report) for details of what is, and is not, inspected.

Property address



RICS

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RICS
Building Survey...

What to do now

If you are a prospective or current home owner who has chosen an RICS Home Survey you should carefully consider the findings, condition ratings and risks stated in the report.

Getting quotations

You should obtain reports and at least two quotations for all the repairs and further investigations that the surveyor has identified. These should come from experienced contractors who are properly insured. You should also:

- ask them for references from people they have worked for;
- describe in writing exactly what you will want them to do; and
- get the contractors to put the quotations in writing.

Some repairs will need contractors with specialist skills and who are members of regulated organisations (for example, electricians, gas engineers or plumbers). Some work may also need you to get Building Regulations permission or planning permission from your local authority. Your surveyor may be able to help.

Further investigations

If the surveyor is concerned about the condition of a hidden part of the building, could only see part of a defect or does not have the specialist knowledge to assess part of the property fully, the surveyor may have recommended that further investigations should be carried out (for example, by structural engineers or arboriculturists) to discover the true extent of the problem.

Who you should use for these further investigations

Specialists belonging to different types of organisation will be able to do this. For example, qualified electricians can belong to five different government-approved schemes. If you want further advice, please contact your surveyor.

What the further investigations will involve

This will depend on the type of problem, but to do this properly, parts of the home may have to be disturbed. If you are a prospective purchaser, you should discuss this matter with the current owner. In some cases, the cost of investigation may be high.

This guidance does not claim to provide legal advice. You should consult your legal advisers before entering into any binding contract or purchase.

Description of the RICS Building Survey Service

The service

The RICS Building Survey Service includes:

- a thorough inspection of the property (see 'The inspection'); and
- a detailed report based on the inspection (see 'The report').

The surveyor who provides the RICS Building Survey Service aims to:

- help you make a reasoned and informed decision when purchasing the property, or when planning for repairs, maintenance or upgrading the property;
- provide detailed advice on condition;
- describe the identifiable risk of potential or hidden defects;
- where practicable and agreed, provide an estimate of costs for identified repairs; and
- make recommendations as to any further actions or advice which need to be obtained before committing to purchase.

Any extra services provided that are not covered by the terms and conditions of this report must be covered by a separate contract.

The inspection

The surveyor carefully and thoroughly inspects the inside and outside of the main building and all permanent outbuildings, recording the construction and defects (both major and minor) that are evident. This inspection is intended to cover as much of the property as physically accessible. Where this is not possible an explanation is provided in the 'Limitations to inspection' box in the relevant sections of the report.

The surveyor does not force or open up the fabric without owner consent, or if there is a risk of causing personal injury or damage. This includes taking up fitted carpets, fitted floor coverings or floorboards, moving heavy furniture, removing the contents of cupboards, roof spaces, etc., removing secured panels and/or hatches or undoing electrical fittings. The under-floor areas are inspected where there is safe access.

If necessary, the surveyor carries out parts of the inspection when standing at ground level from adjoining public property where accessible. This means the extent of the inspection will depend on a range of individual circumstances at the time of inspection, and the surveyor judges each case on an individual basis.

The surveyor uses equipment such as a damp-meter, binoculars and a torch, and uses a ladder for flat roofs and for hatches no more than 3m above level ground (outside) or floor surfaces (inside) if it is safe to do so.

The surveyor also carries out a desk-top study and makes oral enquiries for information about matters affecting the property.

Services to the property

Services are generally hidden within the construction of the property. This means that only the visible parts of the available services can be inspected, and the surveyor does not carry out specialist tests other than through their normal operation in everyday use. The visual inspection cannot assess the efficiency or safety of electrical, gas or other energy sources; the plumbing, heating or drainage installations (or whether they meet current regulations); or the internal condition of any chimney, boiler or other flue. Intermittent faults of services may not be apparent on the day of inspection.

Outside the property

The surveyor inspects the condition of boundary walls, fences, permanent outbuildings and areas in common (shared) use. To inspect these areas, the surveyor walks around the grounds and any neighbouring public property where access can be obtained. Where there are restrictions to access, these are reported and advice is given on any potential underlying risks that may require further investigation.

Buildings with swimming pools and sports facilities are treated as permanent outbuildings and therefore are inspected, but the surveyor does not report on the leisure facilities, such as the pool itself and its equipment internally and externally, landscaping and other facilities (for example, tennis courts and temporary outbuildings).

Flats

When inspecting flats, the surveyor assesses the general condition of outside surfaces of the building, as well as its access and communal areas (for example, shared hallways and staircases) and roof spaces, but only if they are accessible from within the property or communal areas. The surveyor also inspects (within the identifiable boundary of the flat) drains, lifts, fire alarms and security systems, although the surveyor does not carry out any specialist tests other than through their normal operation in everyday use.

Dangerous materials, contamination and environmental issues

The surveyor makes enquiries about contamination or other environmental dangers. If the surveyor suspects a problem, he or she recommends further investigation.

The surveyor may assume that no harmful or dangerous materials have been used in the construction, and does not have a duty to justify making this assumption. However, if the inspection shows that these materials have been used, the surveyor must report this and ask for further instructions.

The surveyor does not carry out an asbestos inspection and does not act as an asbestos inspector when inspecting properties that may fall within the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. With flats, the surveyor assumes that there is a 'dutyholder' (as defined in the regulations), and that in place are an asbestos register and an effective management plan which does not present a significant risk to health or need any immediate payment. The surveyor does not consult the dutyholder.

The report

The surveyor produces a report of the results of inspection for you to use, but cannot accept any liability if it is used by anyone else. If you decide not to act on the advice in the report, you do this at your own risk. The report is aimed at providing you with a detailed understanding of the condition of the property to allow you to make an informed decision on serious or urgent repairs, and on maintenance of a wide range of issues reported. Purely cosmetic and minor maintenance defects that have no effect on performance might not be reported. The report is not a warranty.

The report is in a standard format and includes the following sections.

- A Introduction to the report
- B About the inspection
- C Overall assessment and summary of the condition ratings
- D About the property
- E Outside the property
- F Inside the property
- G Services
- H Grounds (including shared areas for flats)
- I Issues for your legal advisers
- J Risks
- K Energy efficiency
- L Surveyor's declaration
 - What to do now
 - Description of the RICS Building Survey Service
 - Typical house diagram

Condition ratings

The surveyor gives condition ratings to the main parts (the 'elements') of the main building, garage and some outside elements. The condition ratings are described as follows:

Condition rating 3 – defects that are serious and/or need to be repaired, replaced or investigated urgently.

Condition rating 2 – defects that need repairing or replacing but are not considered to be either serious or urgent. The property must be maintained in the normal way.

Condition rating 1 – no repair is currently needed. The property must be maintained in the normal way.

NI – not inspected.

Continued...



Description (continued)

The surveyor notes in the report if it was not possible to check any parts of the property that the inspection would normally cover. If the surveyor is concerned about these parts, the report tells you about any further investigations that are needed.

The surveyor may report on the cost of any work to put right defects (where agreed), but does not make recommendations on how these repairs should be carried out. However, there is general advice in the 'What to do now' section at the end of the report.

Energy

The surveyor has not prepared the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) as part of the RICS Building Survey Service for the property. If the surveyor has seen the current EPC, he or she will provide the Energy Efficiency Rating in this report, but will not check the rating and so cannot comment on its accuracy. Where possible and appropriate, the surveyor will include additional commentary on energy related matters for the property as a whole in the K Energy efficiency section of the report, but this is not a formal energy assessment of the building.

Issues for legal advisers

The surveyor does not act as 'the legal adviser' and does not comment on any legal documents. If, during the inspection, the surveyor identifies issues that your legal advisers may need to investigate further, the surveyor may refer to these in the report (for example, check whether there is a warranty covering replacement windows).

The report has been prepared by a surveyor ('the Employee') on behalf of a firm or company of surveyors ('the Employer'). The statements and opinions expressed in the report are expressed on behalf of the Employer, who accepts full responsibility for these.

Without prejudice and separately to the above, the Employee will have no personal liability in respect of any statements and opinions contained in this report, which shall at all times remain the sole responsibility of the Employer to the exclusion of the Employee.

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To the extent that any part of this notification is a restriction of liability within the meaning of the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977 it does not apply to death or personal injury resulting from negligence.

If the property is leasehold, the surveyor gives you general advice and details of questions you should ask your legal advisers. This general advice is given in the 'Leasehold properties advice' document.

Risks

This section summarises defects and issues that present a risk to the building or grounds, or a safety risk to people. These may have been reported and condition rated against more than one part of the property or may be of a more general nature, having existed for some time and which cannot reasonably be changed.

Standard terms of engagement

1 The service – the surveyor provides only the standard RICS Building Survey Service ('the service') described here, unless you and the surveyor agree in writing before the inspection that the surveyor will provide extra services. Any extra service will require separate terms of engagement to be entered into with the surveyor. Examples of extra services include:

- plan drawing;
- schedules of works;
- re-inspection;
- detailed specific issue reports;
- market valuation and re-instatement cost; and
- negotiation.

2 The surveyor – the service is to be provided by an AssocRICS, MRICS or FRICS member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, who has the skills, knowledge and experience to survey and report on the property.

3 Before the inspection – this period forms an important part of the relationship between you and the surveyor. The surveyor will use reasonable endeavours to contact you regarding your particular concerns about the property and explain (where necessary) the extent and/or limitations of the inspection and report. The surveyor also carries out a desk-top study to understand the property better

4 Terms of payment – you agree to pay the surveyor's fee and any other charges agreed in writing.

5 Cancelling this contract – you are entitled to cancel this contract by giving notice to the surveyor's office at any time before the day of the inspection. The surveyor does not provide the service (and reports this to you as soon as possible) if, after arriving at the property, the surveyor decides that:

- (a) he or she lacks enough specialist knowledge of the method of construction used to build the property; or
- (b) it would be in your best interests to have an RICS HomeBuyer Report or an RICS Condition Report, rather than the RICS Building Survey.

If you cancel this contract, the surveyor will refund any money you have paid for the service, except for any reasonable expenses. If the surveyor cancels this contract, he or she will explain the reason to you.

6 Liability – the report is provided for your use, and the surveyor cannot accept responsibility if it is used, or relied upon, by anyone else.

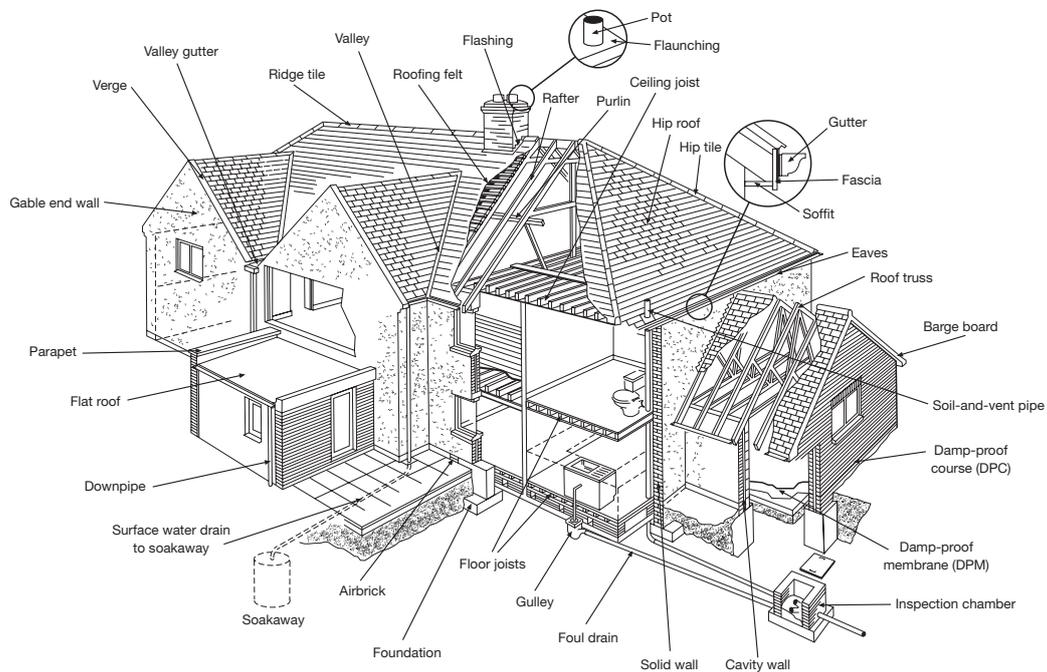
Complaints handling procedure

The surveyor will have an RICS-compliant complaints handling procedure and will give you a copy if you ask.

Note: These terms form part of the contract between you and the surveyor.

Typical house diagram

This diagram illustrates where you may find some of the building elements referred to in the report.



Property address

Part D: Appendices

The following appendices include useful aides-memoires for surveyors. Appendix E also details the terms of the RICS Building Survey Service Copyright Licence Scheme. Any surveyor providing this service must hold a current copyright licence.

The appendices are:

Appendix A: Definitions of the RICS Building Survey Service key terms

Appendix B: The RICS Building Survey Service – checklist of professional obligations

Appendix C: Relevant RICS guidance sources

Appendix D: The contract – checklist for each commission

Appendix E: The RICS Building Survey Service Copyright Licence Scheme

Appendix A: Definitions of the RICS Building Survey Service key terms

Accessible

Those parts of the property that are visible and readily available for inspection from ground and floor levels on the basis of an invasive inspection where possible, without risk of causing damage to the property or injury to the surveyor (see DBS), or from a surveyor's ladder to a height of 3m above ground level or a firm level and safe surface.

Condition ratings

An assessment of the condition of elements of the building, the services and any garages or permanent outbuildings, and can be any of the following:

- **Condition rating 3** – defects that are serious and/or need to be repaired, replaced or investigated urgently.
- **Condition rating 2** – defects that need repairing or replacing but are not considered to be either serious or urgent. The property must be maintained in the normal way.
- **Condition rating 1** – no repair is currently needed. The property must be maintained in the normal way.
- **NI** – not inspected.

Contract letter

A written statement to the client, which the surveyor must produce, specifying all the necessary facts and conditions (see Part A, section 3, and Appendix D).

Extra services

Information and/or advice that is outside the scope of the standard service, which can of course be provided, but requires a separate contract (see the DBS and Part A, section 2.5).

Inspection

An examination of those parts of the property which are accessible (see the DBS). ('Accessible' is defined earlier in this appendix. See also Part A, section 2.4.)

Normal maintenance

Work of a recurring nature that certain building elements routinely require in order to preserve their integrity and functionality.

Report

The RICS Building Survey, a standard format report form in which the surveyor provides a detailed assessment and applies condition ratings to elements of the property. It focuses on matters which, in the opinion of the surveyor, need repair, replacement and/or maintenance (see the DBS).

Service

The BSS, which is specifically designed for clients seeking an impartial, detailed assessment of the property. The property is therefore condition reported in the level of detail and style necessary to provide a balanced and informed, though jargon-free, opinion within the scope of the DBS and as agreed with the client. As a result, the report is necessarily more comprehensive and the inspection more extensive than that for the RICS HomeBuyer or Condition Report Service.

Serious defects

Those defects which compromise the structural integrity of the property and/or impair the intended function of the building element.

Urgent defects

Defects which, if not repaired/remedied immediately, will cause structural failure or serious defects in other building elements and/or present a safety threat.

| Always use | Always avoid |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| the property | the subject property |
| legal advisers | conveyancer/lawyer/solicitor |
| serious and urgent defects | significant or urgent matters |

Appendix B: The RICS Building Survey Service – checklist of professional obligations

| Acronyms | Full title | Acronyms | Full title |
|----------|---|----------|---|
| BSS | RICS Building Survey Service | PN | <i>RICS Building Survey practice note</i> |
| DBS | Description of RICS Building Survey Service | STE | standard terms of engagement |
| HSIS | RICS Home Surveys Information Sheet | | |

Elements of the PN are listed in alphabetical order, and the PN references apply to the subsections in Part A.

| Element | Description | PN ref |
|--|---|---------|
| Application | No departure from this mandatory PN is permitted. It is mandatory to use specified forms, without variation. | 2.2 |
| Attachments to the contract letter | Items in 3.1 are to be provided before sending, or included with, the contract letter. The client's instructions to proceed is also a necessary attachment. | 3.3 |
| Before making a legal contract | Before accepting commission and giving legal commitment to provide the service, it is essential that the surveyor immediately gives the client the HSIS (or equivalent), DBS and STE, and a list of any particular types of property the surveyor is not prepared to undertake. | 3.1 |
| Care and diligence | The surveyor must comply with the relevant PN, DBS and STE when fulfilling every BSR commission. The surveyor must make a decision on whether or not to include particular items in the report and which are to be condition rated. | 1.2 |
| Client's further requirements | If the client wants an extra service and/or advice outside the DBS, a separate contract is mandatory. | 3.4 |
| Client's understanding of the contract | The surveyor must assist the client in making the appropriate choice, based on a clear understanding of key elements of the building survey. | 1.6 |
| Competence and sufficient knowledge | The DBS demands an adequate level of competence in surveying the types of property for which service is suitable. The surveyor must also have sufficient knowledge of the area in which particular property is situated. | 1.3/1.4 |
| Contract letter | The surveyor must produce a written statement to the client specifying all necessary facts and other required conditions not specified in the STE. | 3.2 |
| Extra services | Extra services, outside the scope of the BSS, must be provided only as a completely separate service for which a separate contract is essential. They can be additional modules developed by RICS. | 2.5 |
| Focus and scope of the inspection | Service priorities are assessing the general condition of property, expressed in terms of condition ratings. Surveyor must not report defects outside the specifications in the DBS. | 2.4 |
| Further investigations | The client is to be advised of further investigations only where the surveyor feels necessary conclusions cannot be reached with reasonable confidence. | 4.7 |
| Obligatory copyright licence | Service name, format and content must only be used by an AssocRICS, MRICS or FRICS member of RICS, who must also hold a current BSS copyright licence. | 1.7 |
| Type of property | The BSS is suitable for all residential properties. Although there is no restriction on the type of property, in accepting an instruction the surveyor must ensure that he or she has particular technical skills and experience relevant to the property. | 2.3 |

Appendix C: Relevant RICS guidance sources

Part A, section 1.1, in the PN requires that surveyors accepting instructions under the BSS must fulfil such commissions in full compliance with all directly available material published by RICS. By way of example this includes the following.

Practice statements and notes

Under RICS Bye-law 19(5) and Conduct Regulation 5 it is the duty of every member to comply with the contents of RICS practice statements in the interest of maintaining the highest professional standards.

In addition, practice statements are relevant to professional competence in that each surveyor should be up to date and should have informed him or herself of practice statements within a reasonable time of their promulgation.

Practice statements and notes are available as part of a subscription to isurv and can also be purchased from RICS.

Mandatory practice standards are the highest category of technical information produced by RICS. They are obligatory for all RICS members to follow when providing a service covered by such a standard.

These are often collectively referred to as practice statements, though there are some other instances of mandatory status standards which you will need to be aware of.

More information about RICS guidance relevant to the RICS Building Survey Service can be found at www.rics.org/homesurveys.

Appendix D: The contract – checklist for each commission

| Acronyms | Full title |
|----------|---|
| BSS | RICS Building Survey Service |
| DBS | Description of the RICS Building Survey Service |
| HSIS | RICS Home Surveys Information Sheet |
| LP | Leasehold properties advice |
| PN | <i>RICS Building Survey practice note</i> |
| STE | standard terms of engagement |

- 1 Before preparing and submitting the contract to the client:
 - a) the surveyor needs to be satisfied that the BSS is appropriate:
 - i) for the client's requirements
 - ii) for the property itself
 - b) the surveyor must ensure that the client is given full opportunity as soon as possible to study the key standard documents (see Part A, section 3.1), which are:
 - i) HSIS, or the surveyor's own equivalent leaflet
 - ii) DBS
 - iii) STE (within the DBS)
 - iv) where applicable, details of the types of properties for which the surveyor is not prepared to provide the service.
- 2 The surveyor then composes the contract, incorporating:
 - a) the contract letter on the surveyor's letterhead, including:
 - i) client's name and address
 - ii) address of the property being inspected
 - iii) proposed charge for the service, plus any exceptional charges to be incurred and terms of payment
 - iv) need for revision of charges if, on arrival at the property, it is found to differ substantially from client's description
 - v) disclaimer stating that the surveyor will not report until the instructions to proceed (prepared by the surveyor for the client) is signed and returned (see Part A, section 3.3)
 - b) any of the HSIS, DBS or STE documents not already supplied and discussed
 - c) the client's instructions to proceed and the proposed dates for the inspection and submission of the report (see Part A, section 3.3)
 - d) arrangements for possible cancellation (including provision for withdrawal if on arrival at property, it is found to be beyond surveyor's capabilities, or that it would be in the client's best interest to commission an RICS HomeBuyer or Condition Report)
 - e) disclosure of any material involvement or conflicting interest, or a statement that none exists
 - f) an agreement that the nature and source of any third-party information that the client has requested is to be relied on in the report.

Appendix E: The RICS Building Survey Service Copyright Licence Scheme

The RICS Building Survey Service (BSS) is a product developed and owned by RICS. Only AssocRICS, MRICS or FRICS members of RICS, in compliance with this PN, may apply for a copyright licence to deliver the BSS.

Surveyors will, on request, be required to provide copies of their format to RICS. For more information on delivery options, please visit www.rics.org/homesurveys.

An individual, a firm or a company wishing to reproduce the BSS must purchase a copyright licence, which authorises the licensee to reproduce the service material for use in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

The material embraces the current report headings and descriptions, forms and documents provided

to potential clients: HSIS, DBS and STE (within the DBS).

For details of the copyright licence fees, please see the terms and conditions available online at www.rics.org/homesurveys or contact Customer Services on +44 (0) 870 33 1600 (option 2), or via email at licence@rics.org.

RICS recommends that reports should be presented to the client in the official RICS Home Surveys folder, which can be ordered via the copyright licence application form or online at www.rics.org.

The copyright licence scheme is available exclusively for RICS members. Anyone delivering the DBS without a current copyright licence would be in breach of RICS copyright.

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RICS is **the world's leading qualification** when it comes to professional standards in land, property and construction.

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RICS is an **independent** professional body originally established in the UK by Royal Charter. Since 1868, RICS has been committed to setting and upholding the **highest standards of excellence and integrity** – providing **impartial, authoritative advice** on key issues affecting businesses and society.

RICS is a **regulator** of both its individual members and firms enabling it to **maintain the highest standards** and providing the basis for **unparalleled client confidence** in the sector.

RICS has a worldwide network. For further information simply contact the relevant RICS office or our Contact Centre.

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