

The Level Three Survey

During a Smith & Garratt Level 3 survey we inspect every part of a building and detail our findings. Our reports are comprehensive and thorough. We tell you about the construction and the condition, the additions and alterations, the materials and the workmanship, the defects and the wants of repair. Our reports generally come with a flash-drive containing photographs of items referred to in the text, so you see what we see. Our reports are for you, for your building, your solicitor, your lender and your tradesmen.

The RICS suggests we say:

This level of service is for people who are seeking a professional opinion about the condition of a property, based on a detailed assessment. Our inspections are more extensive than for other levels of service and we will spend a considerable time at the property. We will closely inspect all parts of the dwelling and we will assess the interdependence of the different parts of the structure, especially the way in which the roof, walls and floors act together. Where concerned about a hidden problem or defect, we will try to identify these and explain the risk they pose and what action you should take. Recommendations for further investigations will usually be the exception. This level of service will suit any domestic residential property in any condition.

The Level Three Inspection

The extent of an inspection will depend on a range of specific circumstances (including health and safety considerations). The following critical aspects may help you distinguish this from inspections at other levels of service.

Roof spaces

We will carry out an inspection of roof spaces that are not more than three metres above floor level using a ladder if it is safe and reasonable to do so. We will enter the roof space if it is accessible and visually inspect the roof structure with particular attention paid to those parts vulnerable to deterioration and damage. Although we will not move thermal insulation, we will lift small corners if we consider it safe – so its thickness, type and the nature of the underlying ceiling can be identified and assessed. Where we have the permission of the owner, we will move a small number of lightweight possessions, so a more thorough inspection can take place. In recent years, the lofts of many homes have been insulated with thick layers of thermal insulation. Usually, it is not safe to move across this material and this may restrict what I can look at in the roof space.

Floors

We will closely inspect the surfaces of exposed floors and we will lift the corners of any loose and unfitted carpets and other floor coverings where practicable. We will assess all floors for excessive deflection. Where the boards are lifted, we will look in the space beneath by way of an inverted ‘head and shoulder’ inspection. If it is safe to do so, we will enter the under-floor area to carry out a more thorough inspection as long as the access panel is big enough, the space beneath the floor is deep enough, and it is safe to do so.

Windows

We will attempt to open the majority of the windows.

Furniture and occupiers’ possessions

We will move lightweight, easily moveable, non-fitted items where practicable and where the owner/occupier gives permission.

Services (for example, heating and hot and cold water)

We will not perform or comment on design calculations or test the service installations or appliances, but we will observe their normal operation in everyday use. This usually means:

- *operating lights and extract fans where appropriate;*
- *asking the owner/occupier to switch on the heating appliances/system;*
- *where we consider it appropriate to the assessment, we will turn on water taps, fill and empty sinks, baths, bidets and basins, and flush toilets to observe the performance of visible pipework;*
- *lifting accessible inspection chamber covers (where it is safe to do so), identifying the nature of the*
- *connections and observing water flow where a water supply is available. On dry days, this may involve pouring water into open gullies so drainage layouts can be identified.*
- *We will advise you that further tests and inspections will be required if the owner/occupier does not provide evidence of appropriate installation and/or maintenance, or the client requires assurance as to their condition, capability and safety.*

The grounds

We will carry out a thorough visual inspection of the grounds, and, where necessary and appropriate, from adjoining public property. Our assessment will include such external features as retaining walls, gardens, drives, paths, terraces, patios, steps, hard-standings, dropped kerbs, gates, trees, boundary walls, fences, non-permanent outbuildings, rights of way, and so on.

Our inspection will also include the inside and outside of all permanent outbuildings not attached to the main dwelling. This includes garages, summer houses, substantial greenhouses, follies and leisure buildings, but not the leisure facilities inside, for example swimming pools, saunas, fitness gyms, and so on.

Specific defective features and other matters associated with the grounds can be costly to resolve and may affect your purchase decision. Consequently, we will fully account for these. Examples include assessing retaining walls in danger of collapsing, deeply sunken paths or driveways, dilapidated boundary walls or fences and the legal and insurance implications.

The level Three Report

Our report will reflect the thoroughness and detail of the investigation and we will:

- describe the form of construction and materials used for each part of the building in detail and outline their performance characteristics; this is especially important for older and historic buildings;*
- describe obvious defects and state the identifiable risk of those that may be hidden;*
- outline remedial options and, if we consider it to be significant, explain the likely consequences if the repairs are not done;*
- propose a timescale for the necessary work including recommendations for further investigation prior to commitment to purchase (only where appropriate and necessary);*
- discuss future maintenance of the property and identify those elements that may result in more frequent and/ or more costly maintenance and repairs than would normally be expected;*
- identify the nature of risks of the parts that have not been inspected;*
- make it clear that you should obtain any further advice and quotations we recommend before you enter into a legal commitment to buy the property.*

If you need something beyond Level Three, visit our the Specialist Surveys page on our website.