

Which level of survey is right for you and when to use Smith & Garratt

For a conventional house, flat or bungalow – built from common building materials and in reasonable condition – the RICS recommends pro-forma surveys for a basic Condition Survey (Level 1), for the Home-Buyer Service (Level 2) and for the Scottish Single Survey. The RICS recommends a Level 3 Building Survey for larger, older or run-down property, buildings that are unusual or altered, or where you are planning major works. Below is a summary of RICS Guidance note ‘*Surveys of Residential Property*’ 3rd edition, May 2016.

Survey Level One (a simple tick-box exercise suitable for a Home-Buyer Report) – *This level of service includes a visual inspection that is less extensive than for survey levels two and three. ... Where the surveyor is unable to reach a conclusion with reasonable confidence, a recommendation for further investigation may be necessary. ... A survey level one report does not include advice on repairs or ongoing maintenance and this, combined with the less extensive inspection, usually means it is better suited to conventionally built, modern dwellings in satisfactory condition. It will not suit older or complex properties, or those in a poor condition.*

Survey Level Two (a more comprehensive tick-box exercise) – *This intermediate level of service includes a more extensive visual inspection of the building ... concealed areas normally opened or used by the occupiers are inspected if it is safe to do so. ... The report objectively describes the condition of the different elements and provides an assessment of the relative importance of the defects/problems. ... Where the surveyor is unable to reach a conclusion with reasonable confidence, a recommendation for further investigations may be necessary. This level of service suits a broader range of conventionally built properties, although ... [it] is unlikely to suit:*

- *complex buildings, for example those that have been extensively extended and altered*
- *unique or older historic properties ... for example ... homes with traditional timber frames or those built much before 1850 ... [are] likely to be inconclusive and be of little use to the client*
- *properties in poor condition; or*
- *those where the client is planning to carry out extensive repair and refurbishment work.*

In such cases, a survey level two service will often result in numerous referrals for further investigations: an outcome that many clients find disappointing.

Survey Level Three - *This level of service consists of a detailed visual inspection of the building, its services and the grounds that is more extensive than survey level two. Concealed areas normally opened or used by the occupiers are inspected if it is safe to do so (typical examples include roof spaces and underfloor areas). Although the services are not tested, they are observed in normal operation – in other words, they are switched on and/or operated where appropriate. The report objectively describes the form of construction and materials used for different parts of the property. It describes the condition and provides an assessment of the relative importance of the defects/problems. Additionally, it should:*

- *describe the identifiable risk of potential or hidden defects in areas not inspected*
- *propose the most probable cause(s) of the defects based on the inspection*
- *outline the likely scope of any appropriate remedial work and explain the likely consequences of non-repair*
- *make general recommendations in respect of the priority and likely timescale for necessary work*
- *identify and describe the legal implications of ownership in detail; and*
- *[may] give an indication of likely costs (The terms and conditions must make this choice clear).*

A survey level three report should aim to provide the client with all the information they need to make a purchase decision. This level of service will suit any domestic residential property in any condition.

Smith & Garratt offer surveys at Level 3

We do not offer surveys at Level 1 or Level 2. Where, at Levels 1 and 2, recommendations are made for further investigations, Smith & Garratt will provide those investigations.

To understand the extent of a Level 3 survey and the inspection and report provided by Smith & Garratt, download our Level Three Survey guide.