

Client Information Sheet – Benchmarking of Survey Levels under the RICS HSS

RICS "BENCHMARKING" OF LEVELS OF SURVEY UNDER THE HOME SURVEY STANDARD WILL BE MANDATORY FOR ALL RICS MEMBERS FROM 1ST MARCH 2021). THESE ARE THE MINIMUM STANDARDS EACH SURVEY LEVEL SHOULD ACHIEVE.

Where possible we will exceed the minimum standards in areas **highlighted** and we are happy to provide anonymised copy examples of Reports at any of the Levels to help you decide which is the best for you.

Note – any of the Survey Levels can be provided as a standalone Report OR, at an additional cost, with a Valuation Appendix that will meet the requirements of the MANDATORY requirements of RICS Valuation – Global Standards 2022 (often referred to as The Red Book)

THE HSS DOES NOT REQUIRE REPORTS TO INCLUDE PHOTOS – ALL OUR REPORTS WILL INCLUDE PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAY ALSO INCLUDE DIAGRAMS, WEBLINKS, REFERENCE SHEETS, MAPS ETC

Survey Level 1 - Condition Report – and Level 1 Flat Buyer Report

This service is designed for clients (buyers, sellers and owners) seeking a professional and objective report on the condition of the property at an economic price. As a result, it is less comprehensive than Survey Level 2 and Survey Level 3. This level of service includes a visual inspection that is less extensive than for the other Survey Levels. No tests of the building fabric or services are undertaken. (We will, where possible, observe services in normal operation as under a Survey Level 2 and this will include lifting of covers to drainage inspection chambers. Roof voids are inspected on a “head and shoulders” basis. We will use a ladder to access single storey flat roofs where it is safe to do so and use a camera on a telescopic pole to view high level areas that cannot be seen from ground level). The report objectively describes the condition of the building, its services and the grounds. It highlights relevant legal issues and any obvious risks to the building, people or grounds. The report is succinct and provides an assessment of the relative importance of the defects and problems. Where the surveyor is unable to reach a conclusion with reasonable confidence, a recommendation for further investigation should be made. A Survey Level 1 report does not include advice on how to carry out repairs or on ongoing maintenance and this, combined with the less extensive inspection, usually means it is better suited to (* - see note below) conventionally built, modern dwellings in apparently satisfactory condition. It will not suit older or complex properties, or those in a neglected condition.

**Note – as a guide, but any property will be judged on its merits, a Level 1 Report will be suitable for houses that are less than, say, 20 years old and have not been greatly extended or altered (except perhaps by addition of a small conservatory or porch), of conventional style (typically on an estate rather than being a “one-off”) with upto 3 floor levels above ground. The Flat Buyer Report will generally be suitable for modern flats on managed developments.*

Survey Level 2 - Home Buyer Survey

This level of service is for clients who are seeking a professional opinion at an economic price. It is, therefore, less comprehensive than a Level 3 service. The focus is on assessing the general condition of the main elements of a property. This intermediate level of service includes a more extensive visual inspection of the building, its services and grounds, than a Level 1 but still without tests (we will, where possible, turn on taps, flush toilets and run water through drainage chambers as under the Level 3 service). Concealed areas normally opened or used by the occupiers are inspected if it is safe to do so (typical examples include roof spaces, basements and cellars). (We will, where possible, inspect sub-floor voids although physical entry will only be undertaken if the surveyor judges it to be safe). The report objectively describes the condition of the different elements and provides an assessment of the relative importance of the defects/problems. At this level, although it is concise, the report does include advice about repairs and any ongoing maintenance issues. Where the surveyor is unable to reach a



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conclusion with reasonable confidence, a recommendation for further investigations should be made. This level of service suits a broader range of conventionally built properties, although the age and type will depend on the knowledge and experience of the RICS member. This level of service is unlikely to suit:

- complex buildings, for example those that have been extensively extended and altered
- unique or older historic properties – although Survey Level 2 services may be appropriate for some older buildings, the decision will depend on the RICS member’s proven competence and knowledge and the nature of the building itself. For example, a Survey Level 2 report on homes with traditional timber frames or those built much before 1850 is likely to be inconclusive and be of little use to the client or
- properties in neglected condition.

Survey Level 3 - Building Survey

This level of service is for clients who are seeking a professional opinion based on a detailed assessment of the property. The service consists of a detailed visual inspection of the building, its services and the grounds and is more extensive than a Survey Level 2. Concealed areas normally opened or used by the occupiers are inspected if it is safe to do so (typical examples include roof spaces, basements and cellars). Although the services are not tested, they are observed in normal operation – in other words, they are switched on or off and/or operated where the occupier has given permission and it is safe to do so. 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

Where an RICS member feels unable to reach the necessary conclusions with reasonable confidence, they should refer the matter for further investigations. **However, at Survey Level 3 such referrals should be the exception rather than the rule.** A Survey Level 3 report should aim to provide the client with all the information they need to make a decision. This level of service will suit any domestic residential property in any condition depending on the competence and experience of the RICS member.

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