

WHAT IS A STRUCTURAL SURVEY?

GENERAL

There is often confusion as to what constitutes a structural survey and the difference between a structural survey and other building surveys.

These notes are intended as a brief summary of a structural survey carried out by David Symonds Associates.

A structural survey is carried out by a Chartered Civil or Structural Engineer to assess the building for signs of structural distress and movement and to prepare a report on the structural integrity of the building. At the same time, general comments on the condition of the building will be noted.

The report will set out in narrative form a brief description of the property, together with the principal observations of structural distress and other areas requiring maintenance. There will be a conclusion as to the current structural condition of the property, together with outline recommendations of the major areas of work required to ensure the structural stability of the property and any areas of significant maintenance work.

A structural report will not, in general, make comment on the operation of doors and windows, other fixtures and fittings, or minor cosmetic damage.

Carpets and other fitted floor coverings will not be lifted or floors opened up, unless specifically requested prior to the survey taking place. These can only be carried out with the building owner's full agreement and an indemnity to David Symonds Associates for any damage caused.

Electrical, water, gas/oil heating systems and drainage will be visually inspected but no detailed investigation undertaken. All these areas require specialist input and, if there are any concerns, we will be pleased to organise the necessary additional survey work by an appropriate specialist. No warranty that any such installation is operational will be given.

TIMBER

Observations of any exposed timber will be made to assess their structural integrity and their ability to support the loads that they are carrying. Any obvious signs of fungal or beetle attack would be reported. If there are concerns regarding any timber, we would recommend that a report is commissioned by a member of the Property Care Association (PCA), formerly British Wood Preserving and Damp-proofing Association, and we would be pleased to organise such a survey, if required.



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DAMP

Similarly, any obvious signs of damp penetration or rising damp will be noted. If there are any concerns regarding damp, a survey should be commissioned from a member of the Property Care Association (PCA) and we would be pleased to organise such a survey, if required.

CONTAMINATED LAND

There are growing concerns, particularly in urban areas, of past land use and how this has affected the ground on which properties are situated. The question of contaminated land is particularly important when redevelopment works are planned and, in general, there will be little concern for the domestic purchaser of a property. However, if you or your professional advisers have particular concerns, surveys can be undertaken to assess the risk of ground contamination. Such surveys are time-consuming and expensive.

ASBESTOS

Asbestos causes great concern to people, due to the adverse publicity received over the years. A structural survey will not specifically look for asbestos-based material but, where any such material is noted during the survey, it will be recorded in the report.

No warranty is given that this is the full extent of any asbestos within the property.

Whilst some forms of asbestos are highly dangerous and require specialist attention, the majority of asbestos within domestic properties is found in the form of asbestos cement and this contains a relatively low proportion of asbestos fibres. Providing asbestos cement sheets are in a good condition, current Health and Safety Executive advice is that, in general, asbestos cement sheets should be left in situ. Work on asbestos cement sheets should be kept to an absolute minimum and, where it is necessary, work should be carried out in accordance with current Health and Safety Executive guidance.