HOLDENS
Chartered Surveyors & Building Consultancy

LISTED BUILDINGS SURVEYS EXPLAINED



RICS
Regulated by RICS

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Why This Matters?

Buying a listed property can be incredibly rewarding. From charming country cottages and Georgian townhouses to Victorian villas and historic farmhouses, listed buildings offer character, craftsmanship and architectural significance that modern homes often cannot match.

However, owning a listed building also comes with unique responsibilities. Unlike a standard Property Survey, a Listed Building Survey requires an experienced Chartered Surveyor who understands traditional construction methods, heritage materials and conservation requirements.

Whether you are purchasing a Grade I, Grade II* or Grade II listed property, a comprehensive Building Survey can identify hidden defects, maintenance requirements and alterations that could affect both value and future repair costs.







Why This Matters?

Key Things Every Buyer Should Know About Listed Building Surveys

- **Every listed building is different**

Historic properties were constructed using traditional materials and techniques that require specialist knowledge. A standard Home Survey may not identify defects unique to older buildings.

- **Traditional materials behave differently**

Solid stone walls, lime mortar, timber frames and slate roofs perform very differently from modern cavity wall construction. An experienced Building Surveyor understands how these materials should perform.

- **Repairs can be significantly more expensive**

Many repairs require specialist craftspeople and traditional materials. Identifying issues before purchase can help you budget accurately.

- **Unauthorised alterations can create problems**

Previous owners may have undertaken works without Listed Building Consent. A thorough Building Survey can identify alterations that should be investigated further.

- **Maintenance is essential**

Historic buildings require ongoing maintenance rather than reactive repairs. Small defects left unattended often become major structural issues.

When Should You Arrange a Listed Building Survey?

Not every historic property requires the same level of inspection, but whenever you are purchasing a listed building we strongly recommend instructing an experienced RICS Building Surveyor.

Grade II Listed Buildings
The majority of listed properties fall into this category. Although alterations are often possible, they usually require Listed Building Consent and careful consideration.

Grade II* Listed Buildings
These buildings are particularly important and usually contain significant historic features requiring specialist conservation.

Grade I Listed Buildings
Only a small percentage of listed buildings receive Grade I status. These nationally important buildings require extensive knowledge of traditional construction and heritage conservation

Properties Over 100 Years Old
Even where a property is not listed, many period homes benefit from a full Building Survey rather than a basic Home Survey.

Common Defects Found in Listed Buildings

Historic buildings naturally develop defects over time. An experienced Chartered Surveyor understands which issues are expected and which require immediate attention.

Common defects include:

- Damp caused by inappropriate cement pointing or modern renders
- Timber decay and beetle infestation
- Roof spread and movement
- Structural cracking
- Defective chimneys
- Deteriorating stonework
- Weathered brickwork
- Failing lime mortar
- Poor ventilation
- Historic movement
- Outdated electrical installations
- Older plumbing systems
- Inadequate insulation
- Previous inappropriate repairs

Many of these defects are perfectly repairable when identified early.

What happens next?

Following your inspection, your RICS Surveyor will provide a detailed report explaining:

- The overall condition of the property
- Significant structural concerns
- Urgent repairs
- Future maintenance requirements
- Defects affecting value
- Safety concerns
- Areas requiring further investigation
- Advice regarding Listed Building Consent where appropriate

Your report enables you to make an informed purchasing decision and, where appropriate, renegotiate the purchase price.

For many buyers, the survey fee represents a very small investment compared with the cost of unforeseen repairs.



How a Chartered Surveyor Can Help

Purchasing a listed building is very different from buying a modern property.
An experienced Chartered Surveyor understands not only the building itself, but also the legislation surrounding historic buildings.

Identifying Traditional Construction

Our surveyors understand timber framing, solid masonry, lime mortar, traditional roofing systems and historic detailing.

Recognising Heritage Defects

Many defects are unique to historic buildings and require specialist knowledge to diagnose correctly.

Protecting Your Investment

A professional Building Survey provides reassurance that you fully understand the property's condition before exchanging contracts.

Property Valuation

Where required, our experienced Valuation Surveyors can also undertake Property Valuations for purchase, probate, taxation, matrimonial proceedings and other purposes.

Commercial Heritage Buildings

Our experienced Commercial Surveyors also inspect listed commercial premises including churches, offices, public buildings, agricultural buildings and retail properties.

Common Mistakes Buyers Should Avoid

Assuming a Mortgage Valuation is a Survey

A lender's valuation is carried out for the benefit of the lender and is not a detailed inspection.

Choosing the Wrong Type of Survey

Older and listed buildings almost always benefit from a comprehensive Building Survey rather than a basic Home Survey.

Ignoring Maintenance

Historic buildings require regular maintenance using appropriate traditional materials.

Using Modern Repair Techniques

Inappropriate cement renders, waterproof coatings or incorrect replacement materials can accelerate deterioration.

Failing to Budget

Older buildings often require higher maintenance costs than modern homes.

Buying Without Specialist Advice

A qualified RICS Surveyor with experience of listed buildings can identify issues that may otherwise remain hidden.

Frequently Asked Questions About Listed Building Surveys

Do I need a Listed Building Survey?
If you're purchasing any listed property, a full Building Survey is strongly recommended.

What is included?
Your survey includes a detailed inspection of accessible elements, identification of defects, photographs, recommendations and advice regarding future maintenance.

Can a survey identify unauthorised alterations?
Often yes. An experienced Building Surveyor can identify alterations that may warrant further enquiries with the Local Planning Authority.

Should I have a Property Valuation as well?
Many purchasers instruct both a Building Survey and an independent Property Valuation, particularly where the property is unusual or of significant value.

Are listed buildings expensive to maintain?
Maintenance costs are often higher than modern homes, but regular preventative maintenance usually reduces long-term expenditure.

Can Holdens survey commercial listed buildings?
Yes. Our experienced Commercial Surveyors inspect listed offices, industrial buildings, churches, schools and other heritage assets throughout the North West.

Which areas do you cover?
Our Chartered Surveyors regularly undertake surveys throughout Lancashire, Cumbria, the Lake District, Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Merseyside and Yorkshire.

Contact Us



Whether you're buying a charming Grade II cottage, a Georgian townhouse or a substantial country estate, our experienced Chartered Surveyors can provide the advice you need.

At Holdens Chartered Surveyors & Building Consultancy, our experienced RICS Surveyors regularly inspect historic properties throughout Lancashire, Cumbria, the Lake District, Greater Manchester and across the North West.

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