



Guide to Conveyancing Searches



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LOCAL AUTHORITY SEARCH

The most important search to have carried out is what is commonly known as a Local Search. It is a search of the registers and other records kept by the local authority. The search is in two parts. First is the search of the Local Land Charges Register which contains details of any matters which are recorded or 'charged' against the property. They include planning enforcement notices, conditional planning permissions, tree preservation orders and listed building and conservation area orders.

The second part of the search deals with additional enquiries of the local authority and the replies to those enquiries will provide details of, amongst other things, unconditional planning permissions, building regulation approvals, local traffic schemes and road maintenance arrangements. The Home Information Pack for the property that you are buying will contain a Local Search but we may have to undertake a further search if the original is out of date or was not an official search.

PLANSEARCH AND PLANSEARCH PLUS

The one drawback with the Local Search is that it does not detail planning permissions which may have been granted in respect of adjoining property. Using Plansearch we can obtain details of all applications for planning for adjoining properties made since 1997. It also provides details of Local Development Plans and Local Development Frameworks which outline the planning strategy for the area. Plansearch Plus provides neighbourhood information in relation to council tax bandings, crime rates, school performance indicators, locations of telecom masts and details of local footpaths and rights of way.

CHANCEL SEARCH

An ancient obligation exists in various parts of the country for house owners to make a contribution towards the repair of the chancel of the local church. The liability does not arise very often but it can be extremely expensive if it does. If a Chancel Search reveals a potential liability, insurance may be available to cover that risk.

DRAINAGE & WATER SEARCH

This is a search which is required in every HIP and, unless there are unusual circumstances, the search will not need to be repeated. It contains very useful information dealing, amongst other things, with the ownership and location of sewers and water mains. It will tell you whether the property you are going to buy is connected to the public system and it will tell you where mains water and mains sewers actually lie. It will also tell you whether there are any drainage agreements or consents in force, it will warn you if there is any danger of the public sewer becoming overloaded and if there is any risk of low water pressure as well as dealing with an assessment of water quality and the location of nearby sewage treatment works.

ENVIRONMENTAL SEARCH

Is there contaminated land near the property? Is the house at risk of subsidence? These are two questions which we are sometimes asked by clients. If we carry out an Environmental Search we will obtain information about the environmental risks that could affect the property. The Environmental Search is in two stages. First, an opinion is provided by a leading firm of chartered surveyors offering clear guidance on the level of environmental risk associated with the property and the likelihood of there being any contamination. If there is any significant risk, that Report will suggest what steps need to be taken (including further reports) to ascertain whether the risk does actually exist. This search will also provide details of past and present industrial land use, the location of nearby landfill and waste management sites and it will show details of any storage sites for hazardous substances within 500 metres of the property. It will also show whether there are any consents to discharge in place, whether the area is affected by Radon gas and some basic information about flood risk.

FLOOD SEARCH

This search gives a detailed, property specific assessment of river and coastal flood risk, covering risk of flooding as well as 'insurability risk' according to a leading insurer's risk assessment, ensuring the property you intend to purchase is fully insurable. It also uses British Geological Survey (BGS) Susceptibility to Groundwater Flooding and Geological Indicators to assess flood risk. The report also assesses, based on Environment Agency data, whether the property is in, or within 250m of, an area affected by flooding or extreme flooding, and whether it is close to flood defences.

COMMONS REGISTRATION SEARCH

Some properties are subject to common rights. These are ancient rights which are recorded in registers kept by the local authority. The search will show whether there is any common land in the vicinity of the property and, more importantly, whether you need to cross any common land in order to get to the property. Common rights include the right to graze animals, the right to treat land as a village green as well as a number of even more abstruse matters.



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