



Condition surveys are rather like giving a building a health check and they provide an important and valuable report on the physical shape of a property at the time of inspection. They are usually commissioned prior to the purchase of a building, before the signing of a lease or as part of an ongoing maintenance programme. CRGP would strongly recommend to anyone who is in this position to have a condition survey carried out. Apart from establishing the state of a building it will highlight existing defects and can even include repair costs. Justifiable and reasonable repairs can be carried out before commencement of the lease, and a prospective owner/tenant is in a better position to understand the condition of a building before finalising any agreement.

"To avoid disputes at a later stage it is imperative to have a condition survey carried out," says Stewart Hamilton of CRGP. "Whether the property is for commercial, industrial or retail use it will provide a snapshot of its condition, which can be incorporated into any agreement between landlord and tenant. The survey will, for example, highlight the condition of external and internal walls, floor coverings, ceilings, and roof."

Developers will also find this type of survey useful especially if the site is adjacent to, for example, existing buildings. Before demolition, site clearance and piling work starts, it is in all parties interests to have the adjacent buildings surveyed. This will provide the developer and the residents with a record of the condition of the property. It will highlight defects, such as cracks, that are present before work starts and reduce the likelihood of spurious claims at a later date. It is quite simply a mechanism that aids the developer and the owners of property should a claim arise.

At a basic level, the survey will provide a snapshot of the condition of the property and will not recommend or be concerned about maintenance work that should be done. CRGP has, however, gained much expertise in working with local authorities and for them the condition survey has an entirely different meaning.

"We currently have North Lanarkshire Council as a client where we, among other things, inspect and prepare a report on the condition of office premises and industrial units that are to be let," says Stewart. "From this survey we can estimate the likely future maintenance costs of the fabric of the building."

"Recently we surveyed a selection of industrial units and offices, wear and tear was beginning to show up defects and it was necessary to prepare a schedule of the likely costs of repair and maintenance for each building. Such surveys are very much more in depth and sound judgment is required to establish how long individual elements will last before they have to be replaced or repaired."

Clearly it is important to keep track of the condition of council properties, since everyday wear and tear, weather and time all take their toll. That is why it is important for them to have an accurate, consistent and up-to-date picture of what major repairs are needed now and in the future, to allow programming and budgeting for future works.

As well as providing a report on the fabric of North Lanarkshire Council's estate, CRGP uses a consultant services engineer to appraise the status of electrical, gas and mechanical installations. The council is then presented with a complete and accurate evaluation from which it can put budgets in place to ensure necessary works have finance.

"Our condition surveys follow an agreed standard format and they provide the council with specific information. We can also calculate the cost of certain repairs such as new windows, re-roofing or replacing cladding using a standard schedule of rates provided by the council. The completed survey is entered into the council's database," says Stewart.

Over the years, CRGP has had its term contract with North Lanarkshire Council renewed many times. The company's building surveyors have also gathered a great deal of experience about how local authorities work and fully understand the demands put on their estates department. Consequently it is well placed in this sector to provide a condition surveying service.