

Guide

# Buyer Searches



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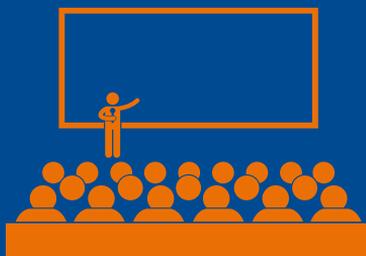
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# Introduction.

When buying a property, conducting the required searches is an essential part of the conveyancing process. Searches provide critical information about the property you are buying—information that may not be obvious during a viewing or even a survey.

They can protect you from potential issues and ensure that you're fully informed before making such a significant investment.

This guide aims to explain searches in conveyancing, explaining what they are, why they're important, and the role they play in the property-buying process.



# What Are Searches?

Searches are enquiries made by your solicitor to relevant organisations to gather essential information about the property you're planning to purchase.

These searches uncover issues that could impact your decision to proceed with the purchase or affect your long-term experience as a homeowner.

For instance, a search might alert you to plans for a major new development nearby, existing disputes over the land, or environmental hazards such as flood risks.



# Why Are Searches Important?

Property searches are crucial because they provide transparency. You might think the house you're buying is perfect, but underlying issues could significantly affect its value, usability, or desirability.

Searches also ensure that key legal risks are flagged before you exchange contracts. Without this information, you could face costly surprises down the line, such as major infrastructure changes or hidden environmental risks.

Importantly, if you're using a mortgage to buy the property, your lender will almost certainly require certain searches to ensure the property represents secure collateral.

# Common Types of Property Searches.

## **Local Authority Search**

This search checks for any planning permissions, restrictions, or enforcement notices that might affect the property. It's one of the most essential searches.

## **Land Registry Search**

A Land Registry search ensures that the seller has legal ownership of the property and that there are no unknown restrictions or issues related to its title.

## **Environmental Search**

This search determines whether the property is at risk of environmental issues such as flooding, contamination, or subsidence. These factors could impact your safety and property value.

## **Water and Drainage Search**

This looks at water connections to the property and confirms whether it has access to public drainage systems. It can also check who is responsible for maintenance of drains and water supply.

## **Chancel Repair Search**

Certain properties are subject to an old law in England and Wales that obliges homeowners to contribute towards the upkeep of a local church—this search will identify any such liabilities.

## **Additional Specialist Searches**

If your property is in a specific area, additional searches might be necessary. Examples include mining searches (common in former coal mining areas) or searches for planned infrastructure projects like HS2 or Crossrail.

# The Conveyancing Process and Searches.

Searches are only one part of the broader conveyancing process, but they play a critical role. Here's how they fit into the wider timeline:

## Instructions and Agreement

After appointing your solicitor, they will confirm their terms of engagement and explain the conveyancing process, including the searches that will be required.

Note: Make sure you **pay any fees for searches promptly** so your solicitor can proceed without delays.

## Property Searches

Searches should ideally be applied for shortly after your solicitor is instructed or, at the latest, when the draft contract is issued by the seller's solicitor.

Tip: Follow up with your solicitor to ensure search requests are sent on time.

## Search Results and Review

Once the results of the searches arrive, your solicitor will review them and advise you of any issues or risks uncovered.

## Decision and Contracts

Search results may confirm you're ready to proceed or lead to further negotiations with the seller if concerns surface. After resolving any outstanding issues, contracts can be signed and exchanged.

# Do You Really Need Searches?

If you're purchasing with a mortgage, your lender will require searches to minimise their financial risk.

Even if you're a cash buyer, having searches conducted is highly recommended. They will provide crucial insights into the property's history and any potential red flags that could cost you in the future.

Skipping searches could expose you to unnecessary risk, from unexpected construction projects to flood damage.



# Common Challenges.

While searches are straightforward in concept, delays or mismanagement can cause frustrating setbacks.

Here are some common issues and tips to overcome them:

## **Not Paying the Solicitor's Search Fees**

Without the search fee, solicitors cannot submit your search requests. Avoid delays by paying this fee promptly when instructing your solicitor.

## **Solicitor Delays**

Solicitors should apply for searches as soon as possible, ideally upon instruction or when the draft contract is issued. If you're concerned about timelines, don't hesitate to check in with your solicitor to ensure this is done.

## **Local Authority Timeframes**

Local council delays in processing searches can slow down the process, sometimes taking weeks or even months, depending on backlog. A good solicitor will pre-emptively manage this by setting realistic expectations.

# Actions to complete:

## Buyer:

Pay Solicitor for Searches

Update SBK on when Searches  
are due back

## Buyers Solicitor:

Applied for Searches

Searches Back

## Update Milestones:

Mark the milestone as complete in your portal  
to notify everyone.

Tick it off your checklist.

# Important Disclaimer.

The materials in this guide are provided for general information purposes only and do not constitute legal or financial advice. Whether express or implied, no warranty is given, nor shall Sheldon Bosley Knight be liable for errors, omissions, or content on associated weblinks.

For personalised advice, consult your legal or financial advisor.

We look forward to assisting you every step of the way! If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to reach out.



# Final message from the team.

Searches are a vital step in the property-buying process. They provide transparency, uncover risks, and ensure you're making an informed investment.

By understanding the types of searches and how they fit into the conveyancing process, you can avoid unnecessary delays and frustrations.

A professional, proactive solicitor is key to guiding you through this process smoothly. Remember to pay any search fees promptly and keep communication lines open.

Got any ideas how we can improve this guide? Please share them - [marketing@sheldonbosleyknight.co.uk](mailto:marketing@sheldonbosleyknight.co.uk)

MIKE AND THE  
SHELDON BOSLEY  
KNIGHT TEAM

