

30 questions to ask at a house viewing

Take this printable guide to the viewing. Ask each question, note the answer and mark anything that needs evidence or follow-up before you offer.

PROPERTY CONDITION

1. Has the property ever had damp treatment?

If yes, when, and was a guarantee provided? Damp treatment guarantees are typically 10-20 years and are transferable to new owners.

Notes:

2. How old is the roof?

A tiled roof typically lasts 40-60 years. If it's approaching that age, budget £5,000-£15,000 for replacement.

Notes:

3. Has any structural work been done?

Underpinning, wall tie replacement, or lintel work - all indicate previous structural issues. Ask for documentation and building regulations sign-off.

Notes:

4. When was the property last rewired?

Wiring over 25 years old is approaching the point where a rewire should be considered. Full rewiring costs £3,000-£8,000.

Notes:

5. How old is the boiler?

Boilers over 15 years old are approaching end of life. Replacement costs £2,000-£4,000 installed.

Notes:

6. Is the property double-glazed throughout?

Check for any single-glazed rooms or failed sealed units (condensation between panes).

Notes:

7. Has there been any flooding or water ingress?

Check Environment Agency flood maps independently, but also ask the vendor directly.

Notes:

8. Is there asbestos anywhere in the property?

Common in properties built before 1990, particularly in Artex ceilings, floor tiles, and garage roofing sheets.

Notes:

EXTENSIONS AND ALTERATIONS

9. Were any extensions built with planning permission?

Ask for evidence - permitted development has limits, and unpermitted extensions can create serious legal problems at sale.

Notes:

10. Is there building regulations sign-off for all works?

Planning permission and building regs are different things. A loft conversion, for instance, needs both.

Notes:

11. Was any work done during COVID?

Quality control issues were widespread during 2020-2021 due to supply chain problems and reduced oversight.

Notes:

12. Has the loft been converted?

Check whether it has a completion certificate. An unconverted loft being used as a bedroom is a compliance issue.

Notes:

SERVICES AND UTILITIES

13. What type of heating does the property have?

Gas central heating is standard; electric storage heaters or oil-fired systems have different running costs and replacement implications.

Notes:

14. Is the property connected to mains drainage?

Properties with septic tanks or cesspits have maintenance responsibilities and costs.

Notes:

15. What is the broadband speed?

Check independently on Ofcom's broadband checker, but also ask the vendor about their actual experience.

Notes:

16. Is there a gas supply?

Some rural properties rely on LPG or oil, which have different cost profiles and storage requirements.

Notes:

17. Has the electrical installation been tested recently?

Ask for an EICR (Electrical Installation Condition Report). Required for rental properties; increasingly expected in sales.

Notes:

LEGAL AND OWNERSHIP

18. Is the property freehold or leasehold?

If leasehold: how many years remain on the lease? What is the annual ground rent and service charge? Lease extension costs increase dramatically below 80 years.

Notes:

19. Are there any restrictive covenants?

These can prevent extensions, commercial use, or even certain types of fencing. Your solicitor will check, but it's worth asking early.

Notes:

20. Is the property in a conservation area?

This restricts what alterations you can make, including windows, doors, and external finishes.

Notes:

21. Are there any disputes with neighbours?

Party wall issues, boundary disputes, or complaints - these must be disclosed but are worth asking about directly.

Notes:

22. Is the property listed?

Listed buildings have strict rules on alterations. Even internal changes may require listed building consent.

Notes:

THE SELLER AND THE SALE

23. Why are the sellers moving?

The answer tells you about urgency and potential negotiating room.

Notes:

24. How long has the property been on the market?

Properties listed for more than 8-12 weeks often have sellers who are more open to negotiation.

Notes:

25. Has the price been reduced?

Check Rightmove - it shows listing history. A price reduction signals that the original asking price was too high.

Notes:

26. Have there been any previous offers that fell through?

And why? If a previous buyer pulled out after a survey, ask what the survey found.

Notes:

27. What is included in the sale?

Fixtures, fittings, white goods, curtains - clarify before you offer to avoid surprises.

Notes:

28. Is the seller in a chain?

A chain-free seller can complete faster and with less risk of the deal collapsing.

Notes:

AFTER THE VIEWING

29. Did anything feel like it was being hidden or glossed over?

Trust your instincts. If the agent steered you away from a room or dismissed a question, investigate further.

Notes:

30. Would I buy this property at full asking price, knowing what I now know?

If not, what would need to change - and by how much?

Notes:

Found something that worries you?

Capture it in KeyWise free at your next viewing: getkeywise.com

Guidance only. Not a substitute for a RICS survey or legal advice.