

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Section 1

Q1) Do you think the Home Report is meeting its original objectives?

Yes No (partly achieved)

Q1a) If yes, please explain why

Comments

Q1b) If no, please explain why

The objectives of the home report were to (1) improve quality of housing stock – but I don't feel many owners carry out repairs before selling so not sure this is met; (2) to avoid multiple surveys – often a refresh is required or a lender needs a separate survey (also the problem of multiple surveys had ceased to exist with offers being made "subject to survey") and (3) to address the artificially low asking price – Home reports HAVE achieved this objective to the benefit of buyers.

Q2) Are the original Home Report objectives still appropriate?

Yes No

Q2a) If yes, please explain why

Comments

Q2b) If no, please explain why

See above re. multiple surveys. Asking prices are now more akin to valuation but that may have happened with the housing crash anyway – hopefully the current tactic of asking prices akin to valuation will remain though. Improving housing stock is a noble idea but not sure how effective this is in practice.

Q3) Should the Home Report play a more central role in promoting energy efficiency and property condition improvements among home owners?

Yes No

Q3a) If yes, please explain why

Energy efficiency is only going to become more important. This should be a focus in the future of home reports. Current EPC is not up to the job and needs improvement. At the moment it seems like a "box ticking exercise" on the part of the surveyor who is going through the motions. On home improvements, I don't see how you can force a seller, or a buyer for that matter, to carry out repairs but if Home Reports can improve standards then great.

Q3b) If no, please explain why

Comments

Q4) Should a national register of Home Reports be established?

Yes No

Q4a) If yes, please explain why including who should have responsibility for development and maintenance

A national (online) register would make accessing Home Reports much easier which would be in the interests of purchasers and solicitors as well as the market generally in encouraging people to look before they viewed a property. Organisations such as Pack Details, Onesurv etc already maintain databases and so should be consulted on maintaining the register. At the very least they provide a model for how it might work. A (very) small charge on top of the home report cost (not noticeable due to the cost of HRs anyway) could fund the database.

Q4b) If no, please explain why

Comments

Section 2

Q5) Do you think the upfront cost of Home Reports is preventing potential sellers from putting their property onto the market?

Yes No

Q5a) If yes, please provide details.

Comments

I answered no. I feel it might put some people who simply wish to “test the market” off but I don’t think it puts genuine sellers off. In that respect it may not be assisting in the market “taking off” but I don’t think it’s inhibiting the market to any great degree

Q6) Are you aware of any schemes available (e.g. deferred payment) to help potential sellers to pay for home reports?

Yes No

Q6a) If yes, please provide details

Some home report providers will offer instalment payments or deferred payments but there is a reluctance. Some form of approved scheme that providers could opt in to which doesn’t require undue admin on their part may assist – is there a govt. role here?

Q7) Are there any issues with the majority of Home Reports being commissioned through selling agents?

Yes No

Q7a) If yes, please explain why

Comments

Q7b) If no, please explain why

I think most people trust surveyors to be impartial. Sellers may opt for surveyors “known” to be generous with valuations but this is no different from buyers instructing “known” strict surveyors. In reality most are at the same level and any effects are mostly imagined in my opinion. Anything that can be done to enhance the image of impartiality would be useful.

Q8) Should other organisations be allowed to carry out the Single Survey (including valuation) and/or the Energy Report?

Yes No

Q8a) If yes, what other organisations and why

Comments

Q8b) If no, please explain why

I'm not really sure what the consultation is getting at here. What other organisations? It's critical to the success of HRs that the providers are seen as impartial and accountable. RICS membership surely provides this whereas opening the scheme to wider, less regulated companies could be the biggest mistake possible and would spell the end of trust in the HR

Q9) In your experience is the requirement for a home report before marketing a property leading to delays in properties coming onto the market?

Yes No

Q9a) If yes, please outline the implications of this.

Comments

No – home reports are available quickly and properties can be on the market in a week or two maximum

Q10) Are home reports a useful marketing tool for sellers?

Yes No

Q10a) If yes, please explain why

A good, clean home report is a good advertisement for the property. Showing that your property is marketed competitively in relation to valuation is too.

Q10b) If no, please explain why

Comments

Q11) Is the 12 week deadline for marketing a property after completion of a home report appropriate and reasonable?

Yes No

Q11a) If yes, please explain why

Comments

Q11b) If no, please explain why

I think it is too long. Home reports can be available within a couple of weeks and 12 weeks should be reduced to a couple of weeks maximum.

Q12) Is the 28 day provision for removing a property from the market without requiring a new home report appropriate and reasonable?

Yes No

Q12a) If yes, please explain why

This flexible enough to allow for changes in personal circumstances and other factors which contribute to properties being removed from the market – ie offers falling through etc. There may be an argument for extending the period of time in certain limited circumstance – ie where an offer has fallen

through at no fault of the seller.

Q12b) If no, please explain why

Comments

Q13) Are there any issues with potential buyers accessing home reports?

Yes x No

Q13a) If yes, please provide an overview and outline the implications of this

Often they are held only by selling agents and getting access before a viewing is difficult. As a buyer I would like to see the HR before I view. Central online database must surely be the way forward.

Q14) Is this the most appropriate way to enforce home report legislation?

Yes No x

Q14a) If no, please explain why and how this could be improved

There is a perception of lack of enforcement, lack of real "teeth". Whatever the mechanism for enforcement it must be seen to work action must be taken for obvious breaches of the rules.

Q15) What are your views on mortgage lenders' acceptance of home report valuations?

I find they are generally prepared to accept HR valuations. It is rare that a separate survey/valuation is required (I'm not counting refreshes here). At the moment (and I stress that) things seem acceptable. As I understand it however the position is purely down to lender's attitudes and they could change these at any moment without recourse. Lenders' acceptance of the HR is integral to its success. Without lender support the HR is worthless. With it, it is a good system. Work should be done to ensure lenders remain on board. I can't stress the importance of this enough.

Q16) Are the re-dress options available to buyers reasonable and appropriate?

Yes x No

Q16a) If no, please explain why and how these could be improved

Re-dress options for purchasers are really no more or no less than offered under the pre-HR system.

Q17) Do these exceptions need to be amended?

Yes No x

Q17a) If yes, please explain what amendments are required and why
Comments

Section 3

Q18) Does the single survey element of the home report provide an appropriate and useful level of information?

Yes No

Q18a) If no, please explain why and what information should be removed and/or added

I think in theory the sections are correct but I don't think enough detail is given in every case. It obviously varies depending on the surveyor but I feel often the minimum level of information is given. For the cost of the report I feel more detail in each section could be expected.

Q19) Should the repairs categories in the single survey be amended to make them consistent with the categories used in the Scottish House Conditions Survey?

Yes No

Q19a) If yes, please explain why

Comments

Q19b) If no, please explain why

I feel the repairs categories in the HR are adequate. They are simple enough to be understood beyond the realms of surveyors. Although they are quite broad they can be read in conjunction with surveyors comments to establish to what extent repairs are needed.

Q20) Is the valuation element of the single survey a useful element of the home report? Yes No

Q20a) If yes, please explain why

I think the valuation is useful to everyone. It is extremely useful as a solicitor to have the valuation to hand before putting in an offer. It is extremely useful for purchasers for obvious reasons and it takes the guesswork out of putting in an offer – the old system was too confusing for buyers who felt lost and disengaged with the offer process. Finally, it is helpful to sellers so they know what to reasonably expect as an offer on their property.

Q20b) If no, please explain why

Comments

Q21) Is the information provided in the energy report appropriate and useful?

Yes No

Q21a) If yes, please explain why

Comments

Q21b) If no, please explain why

The idea of the EPC is a good one and energy efficiency is only going to get more important. However, see comments above about box ticking and going through the motions. Time needs to be spent on getting the EPC to a standard where it is a useful tool for buyers. Too often the information is incomplete or inaccurate due to lack of information/unwillingness to find information out or possibly poor training. It needs to be more accurate and believable.

Q22) Is the information provided in the property questionnaire appropriate and useful? Yes No

Q22a) If yes, please explain why

It asks some questions that the survey doesn't address and which are useful for negotiating the contract. I feel there should be more emphasis on accuracy of comments of sellers and comeback on them for false or misleading information. The "don't know" culture should be discouraged. Either have it or don't, but don't allow people to circumvent it needlessly

Q22b) If no, please explain why

Comments

Q23) Should an additional question on land maintenance fees be added to the Property Questionnaire?

Yes No Don't know what land maintenance fees are

If by land maintenance fees you mean factoring or management fees then this information is already in the report and is very useful for purchasers. If this is not what is meant then I'm at a loss as to what land maintenance fees are