

House Buying and Selling: Radon issues brought into context

Introduction

Since 2013, as part of any house sale, local council land searches have included a land search for radon. As sellers you will also be asked if you have measured for radon in your house, and if you have taken any action as a result. This fact sheet aims to help house buyers and sellers to overcome any barriers when the radon land search reveals there is radon in your property area (the 1km grid square associated with your property).

Local Authority Search Form and Sellers Property Information Form

When buying or selling a property you will come across two forms that may disclose information about radon. These forms are known as CON 29R and TA6.

Form CON 29R Local Authority Search

The form of standard enquiries of the Local Authority, agreed by the Law Society following relevant consultations, is known as CON 29R. These questions are considered to be relevant in every case and cover Planning and Building Regulation decisions, Road Adoption, Road and Traffic schemes, Statutory Notices, Enforcement, Conservation, Compulsory Purchase, Contaminated Land and Radon Gas.

Form TA6 Property Information

The TA6 form (Seller's Property Information Form) is a general questionnaire for property sellers. It must be completed by an individual or company when selling a residential property. Using this form the seller will provide as much information as possible to the buyer.

The form requires a seller to disclose information on matters such as disputes, alterations to the property, planning consents, property insurance, flooding, parking, energy efficiency and radon, to name but a few.



These forms may be the first time a buyer or seller sees any reference to radon gas, and this may be worrying. The Radon Council has therefore produced this document to help people understand what to do when radon becomes a subject of the buying and selling process, and aims to assist buyers and sellers through the stages required to bring the transaction to a successful conclusion. There are two stages: 1. Radon testing and 2. Finding a solution (should one be required).

Stage 1: Radon testing

If you are planning to sell or buy a property, then it is good practice to go to www.ukradon.org and order a search for £3.90, which will advise if your home should be tested.

For sellers: if you find out that your property needs a test then you should consider testing. If after testing, it is 200Bqm⁻³ or above (known as the 'radon action level'), consider remedial work – see stage 2.

For buyers: you may find that the property needs a test or has a previous radon test (from the TA6 form). It is advisable to do your own test after moving into the property. Discuss this with your solicitor and consider a radon retention (see over) if radon levels are 200Bqm⁻³ or above.



? Bqm⁻³ = Becquerels per cubic metre, the concentration of radon in the air.

Testing

Both The Radon Council and PHE (Public Health England), in their guidance notes for obtaining a radon report, state that the only way to find out whether a property is actually above or below the Radon Action Level is to carry out a radon measurement. A radon test can be done for around £50 or less through a Radon Council contractor or another validated radon detector supplier. The domestic test comprises placing two detectors in the property, one in the main living room, and one in the main bedroom.

A seven day test will give you an initial 'snapshot' of your radon levels, if you are in a hurry, but this test is not seasonally corrected (a correction that is applied to account for seasonal differences in radon levels).

A three month test provides a seasonally-corrected average which is accepted as a reflection of the property's annual average radon level. If the level of your three month measurement is above the radon action level of 200Bqm⁻³ then you should consider undertaking remedial work to reduce your radon levels, or consider using a radon retention during your house purchase/sale (see stage 2).

Bqm⁻³ = Becquerels per cubic metre, the concentration of radon in the air. 

Stage 2: Find a solution

When radon levels are 200Bqm⁻³ or above, then consider action to reduce your radon levels. There are two ways in which you can resolve any issues during the sale or purchase of a property. You can undertake remedial action prior to sale, or consider a Radon Retention (sometimes called a Radon Bond).

Remediation Work

Aim to reduce radon levels as low as possible below 200Bqm⁻³. Passive/natural radon remediation (not using a fan) could cost as little as £200, depending on radon levels, location and property type. Typical active radon systems (using a fan) for domestic dwellings could cost between £800 and £1,200 depending on radon levels, location and property type. We will be pleased to quote for this work. A radon retest measurement should be conducted after completion of the work, to make sure the radon levels have been reduced.



Radon Retention

If you do not wish to go through the process of remediation work, or time limits the completion of the house sale/purchase, then a Radon Retention may be a solution. This is where the buyer and seller agree on a sum of money that is likely to be enough to cover the cost of radon remediation work and associated re-testing. The money is taken out of the buyer's purchase price and held by a third party (for example, a solicitor) until any radon remediation work is completed and a radon test result is known. Both parties sign a contract that stipulates how the radon retention will work, and a period of time for the testing and remediation work can be set (probably between six months and a year). Any testing and remediation work is paid for by the retention money. A suggested figure for a radon retention on a single domestic dwelling might be in the region of £1,500 to £2,500, depending on the property. Please ask us for a quotation.



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