

SNAGGING YOUR PROJECT

By **Graham Kinnear**

Over the past few months I've been involved with the snagging on a variety of building projects including both refurbishments and new builds. I think some valuable lessons have come from this that might help those of you who are embarking upon more significant projects.

What is snagging?

The first thing to bear in mind is that the word snagging does not appear to have any formal meaning nor is it a valid contractual term. Instead, as far as I can make out, it is a slang term for the inspection and identification of minor defects (and some not quite so minor!) at the end of a project.

Keep it short. Key to your objectives is to ensure the list of defects is as small as is possible. One way to achieve this is to undertake regular site visits throughout the life of your building project. It is doubtless preferable to deal with issues as you go along than for them to have to be rectified at the end. On that basis, carry out thorough visits during the build of your project, comparing the work being done to the specification provided at the outset. Ask questions if you don't understand any facet of the work – most builders will actually be pleased that you are taking an interest in the project.

Also remember that snagging does not give you the ability to change the specification, generally change your mind or retrospectively rectify a poor quality build. These aspects can only be achieved if they are attended to at the start of the project rather than the end.



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During-construction inspection. This is key because some items will not be evident at snagging stage. For example, you will not know whether sub floor pipework is in copper or plastic if you only visit the site at the end of the project. Similarly you will be clueless as to whether floor insulation has been installed to the required standard if your first visit only takes place once the carpet is down.

Contractor agreement. Put an agreement in place at the start of the project that the contractor will return to undertake snagging. Their incentive to do so may be on the basis that a proportion of their agreed fee is held back for a period following completion or simply via an established understanding between you of what is required from them.

When engaging or managing contractors I normally hold 5% of the agreed payment as a retention. 50% of this is released to them on completion of the works and the balance usually released 12 months later once any snagging items or latent defects have shown themselves and been rectified.

When to do a snagging inspection. This should be undertaken once the build is completed and the project has undergone at least a builder's clean. Do a methodical walk through the property during daylight hours. Test lighting and power sockets, kitchen appliances, and taps; inspect doors, door linings, hinges, decorative finishes and the like, comparing each item with the original specification provided to the builders at the outset.

Some defects could be due to faulty fittings or appliances rather than being the builder's fault. Catching these at the outset will render the process of return and exchange far easier than if they are highlighted later.

For a major refurbishment project, I would expect to compose a list of approximately 50 items that need resolving. This number would be significantly higher if I had not kept a close eye on the project during construction.

Timescale to rectify. Once the list is agreed, ask the builders for a timescale within which all the items will be completed. The more comprehensive your instructions are at the outset of the project, the less difficulty you should have in getting any required snagging done. As an example, I always specify a minimum number of sockets in each room and detail whether to install chrome, brushed chrome or plain white fittings. The less ambiguity there is, the more likely you are to get exactly what you wanted.

It has been mentioned to me in the past that some builders have refused to undertake snagging on the basis that the property has been signed off by Building Control and is therefore satisfactorily completed. To me, compliance with Building Regulations and level of finish are two separate things, though this does highlight the need for clear written instructions with your builder in terms of what is expected and the level of finish you want.

Following a brief reinspection after the snagging list has been undertaken to check off each of the highlighted items, your project should be complete, enabling you to move onto the next one!

As always, I am very happy to assist YPN readers and can be contacted on 01843 583000 or graham@grahamkinnear.com.



Graham is the author of **"The Property Triangle"**