

JOB REF: MH/MGM

# **SPECIFIC DEFECTS REPORT**

**Relating to Dampness (as specified on page 3)**

**A 1940s Detached Property**



FOR

**Mr A Client**

Prepared by:

**INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS**

Marketing by:

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**0800 298 5424**

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# **INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTION**

We have been instructed to prepare a report and offer advice and options on how to deal with the dampness in the following areas:

## **Ground Floor**

### **Study**

High level dampness to internal wall (originally an external wall).

### **Living Room**

Dampness was noted at low level in patches (two main patches), at high level (one patch),

## **First Floor**

### **Front Right Hand Bedroom**

Minor lateral damp to the right hand gable wall.

## **Flat Roof**

We were unable to access the flat roof for an inspection other than to the underside within the roof area where we noted a darkening of the timbers.

## **External**

There is cracking to the render on the front, side and rear of the property.

Dampness adjacent to the rear sliding door externally.

## **SYNOPSIS**

This is a two storey detached property believed to have been built originally in 1944. We have been advised that the property was extended to the side and rear in 1974 and further additions in 1998.

The property is situated in a residential area with a mixed range of housing. The property sits on a sloping site both front to back and side to side.

# CONSTRUCTION SUMMARY – to the area concerned

Chimneys: No longer used flue set within the wall

Main Roof: A pitched hipped roof clad with concrete tiles.

Note: There is a mixture of different types of underlayer used within the roof

Flat Roof to top of main roof: No access available

Walls: Smooth(ish) painted render with stretcher bond brickwork at low level.

We are advised that an expansion joint has been added on the right hand side to the render only.

External Joinery: Dated double glazed windows.

Foundations: Whilst the foundations have not been exposed we would expect the following:

Original Property: Approximately half a metre to a metre deep with a stepped brick footing (assumed).

Newer Extensions: A concrete foundation of a metre to 1.5 metres (assumed).

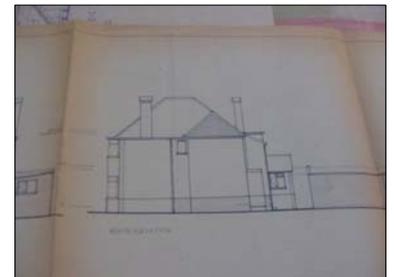
We have used the term ‘assumed’ as we have not opened up the structure.



Front Elevation



Rear Elevation



First extension side elevation



Second extension

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Executive summaries are always “dangerous” as they try and encapsulate relatively complex problems in a few precise and succinct words. Having said that here is our executive summary and recommendations:

With dampness of this extent it is likely to be a combination of issues and as such it would be a work in progress for some time. As we have discussed with you the property has been built with a mixture of construction types over the years, which unfortunately can in themselves cause issues.

Initially we would recommend the following work and then a review of the results within six months:

## **1. Study and Living Room**

We would recommend that the existing vinyl paintwork is removed and an emulsion-based paint is added to allow the inside of the walls to the right hand side of the property and dividing wall to breathe and dissipate any dampness.

## **2. Throughout the Entire Property**

We would recommend that the existing airbricks are checked and cleaned to ensure there is a free flow of air under the suspended timber floor, but you will need to make amendments and adjustments, for example to the rear where they are blocked. If necessary we would recommend the adding of additional airbricks.

## **3. Right Hand Gable Wall**

The hairline cracking to the render should be sealed using suitable mastic as a temporary measure.

## **4. Further Investigation Required**

We are concerned that the insulation beads / Barings may be allowing dampness to transfer from the outside wall to the inside wall and you therefore need to carry out further investigation on this matter. We would ideally recommend opening up the cavity wall in several areas at high level, middle and low level (we appreciate that this may be unsightly and difficult to hide fully when repaired) or the use of an endoscope, which is more discreet, but will limit our investigation.

## **5. Flat Roof to Main Roof**

We were unable to access the flat roof for an inspection other than to the underside within the roof area where we noted a darkening of the timbers. In our past experience this is related to dampness coming in and / or condensation. We would recommend that a roof light is added to the flat roof; this will allow access to it for an inspection and also allow ventilation, as well as having the added benefit of natural light in the area.

## **6. Dampness to Rear Sliding Doors**

We believe the dampness may be coming through the cracking in the render and dispersing to this point. We would like to monitor this to see how the other suggested works affect this area.

## **The Alternative Option**

The alternative you have is to hide the problem by using a dry lining. Having discussed this with you we believe we are right in saying that you would prefer to resolve the problems.

## **Work in Progress**

We would reiterate that whilst we have made specific recommendations in various areas it is likely that the problems are a combination of issues and that once the initial recommended work has been carried out you will need to renew and reassess the various options available.

## **Drying Out Time**

Once the causes of the dampness problems have been satisfactorily cured there will be a drying out time. It is generally considered that for every inch of wall (25mm) a months drying time is required. Also, replacement of plaster will be needed where it has been damaged by hygroscopic salts (salts that affect the integrity of the plaster and require its renewal).

And a final thought:

## **Defective Damp Proof Course**

A defective damp proof course in this age of property may also be a factor in relation to the rising damp, particularly where extensions have been added and a possibility of minor movement affecting the original damp proof course.

# **INSPECTION AND SURVEY FINDINGS**

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### Time Line – A brief history of the structure

1944	Assumed date of construction
1974	Garage on right hand side amended to a living room
1998	Study and bedroom added together with rear extension to form the kitchen
1998	Render repaired
2001	Last painted
12 <sup>th</sup> May 2008	<p>Horizontal and vertical cracking noted to the right hand gable.</p> <p>Crazed cracking noted to the front elevation (no other elevations reported upon).</p> <p>Dampness visible to the ground floor study, ground floor living room, and readings indicate minor dampness to the first floor right hand bedroom.</p>

# **INSPECTION**

We have carried out a visual inspection of the property and made random checks with an electronic damp meter in the areas specified as having dampness.

## **Dampness Areas**

### **Ground Floor:**

#### Study

Dampness to internal wall at high level, typical of lateral dampness but not consistent throughout wall.

#### Living Room

Low level dampness indicating rising damp and high level dampness indicating lateral damp

### **First Floor**

#### Front Right Hand Bedroom

Dampness not visible, but the electronic damp meter reading indicated minor dampness to the wall.

### **Flat Roof**

We were unable to access the flat roof for an inspection other than to the underside within the roof area where we noted a darkening of the timbers.

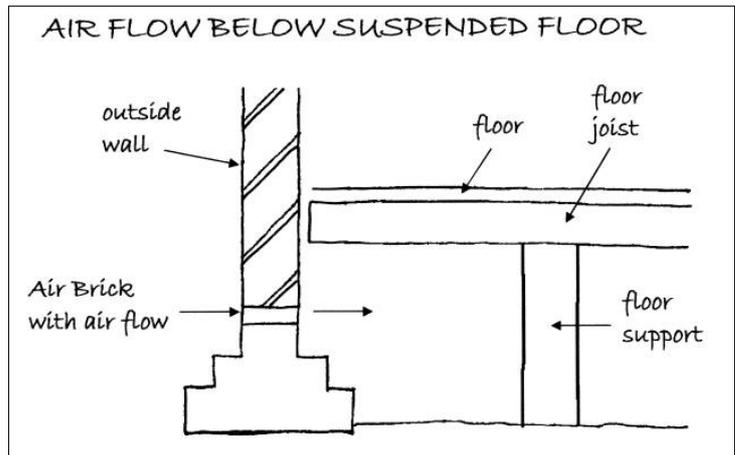
## SURVEY FINDINGS

Working from the bottom of the property upwards.

### Suspended Timber Floor and Airbricks

The property predominantly has a suspended timber floor; however there are areas of solid floor to the kitchen and within the living room.

To reduce deterioration of the timber to the suspended timber floor from dampness generally a free flow of air needs to pass under the property. At present we do not feel that you have this through put of air.

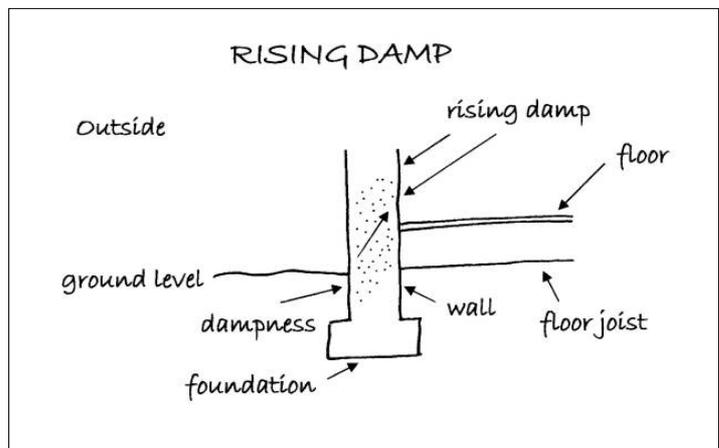


**ACTION REQUIRED:** Ensure that all airbricks are clear to allow a through put of air and possibly add additional airbricks.

As we are sure you will recall we looked at the adjacent property's airbricks which are a larger size than yours.

### Rising Damp

Typically we find in this type of construction, early brickwork cavity walling, that rising damp will rise to approximately one metre. However, the addition of polystyrene beads / Barings and particularly the addition of glue and not being able to establish what wall ties have been used means that the typical signs we look for on rising damp may be affected.



We have identified one area on the right hand side of the wall that we believe is caused by rising damp. There may be some more behind the study desk area.

## Interstitial Condensation

We spoke about the possibility of interstitial condensation; it is possible within a property such as this and ultimately we may have to consider this option, but initially there are more likely options.

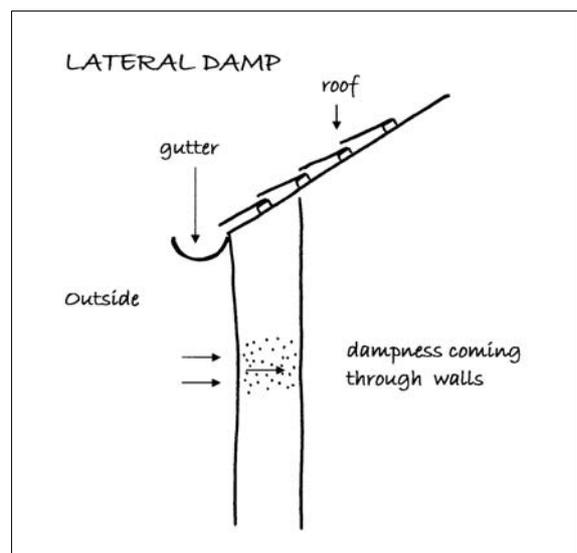
We would remind you that interstitial condensation is condensation between the inside face of the wall and the outside face of the wall.

## Differential Movement

Differential movement occurs where several different types of construction have been used, such as in this property. The original property is likely to have been a brickwork inner and outer skin. The newer 1974 extension looks from what we could see on the drawings to have been London Brick (the Marston Brick is from the London Brick family) and a different brick again will have been used on the newest extension. This combined with the different depths of foundations can lead to differential movement which in turn can cause the cracking in the render and / or cause a defective damp proof course.

## Lateral Dampness

Lateral damp is occurring due to the cracking within the render. This is caused by differential movement between the different types of render that have been used and this is why if you re-render we recommend that a sample is taken of the original render and this is matched as closely in mix as possible.



## **Roof and Guttering Detail**

The alterations and extensions have incorporated a flat roof at the top of the property and this means that an additional amount of rainwater is being discharged down the tile roof into the gutters. It needs to be established if the water is being captured by the gutters or overflowing or underflowing. There is also some moss on the roof which may from time to time block the roof gutters and cause dampness to get into the property at higher level; equally it may overflow the gutters which again would cause dampness at higher level (and in both cases possibly at lower level).

## **Expansion Joints**

There are several types of expansion joint. The expansion joint you have to the right hand gable, from our discussions, would appear to be in the render surface only and therefore helps reduce the amount of cracking in the render, without which there would be more. Without opening up we cannot confirm this.

## **Chimney / Flue on the Right Hand Side of the Property**

As discussed the chimney flue is also an option as to the source of dampness. This at some point will need to be inspected closely, but will need either a scaffolding or a cherry picker lifting device if access can be gained.

## **Your Ball Valve Test**

If we understood you correctly you have also tried to establish if the dampness is coming from leaking pipes by turning off the water supply and stopping the ball valves from working. This test showed that this was not the cause.

## **SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION**

The Summary Upon Reflection is a second summary so to speak, which is carried out when we are doing the second or third draft a few days after the initial survey when we have had time to reflect upon our thoughts on the property. We would add the following in this instance:

Having reconsidered this we do not feel we have to methodically work through various options starting as we discussed with the easy options first, or the 'low hanging fruit' so to speak!

If you would like any further advice on any of the issues discussed or indeed any that have not been discussed! Please do not hesitate to contact us on 0800 298 5424.

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# **LIMITATIONS**

## **Specific Defects Report**

### **1. Conditions of Engagement**

Please note: references to the masculine include, where appropriate, the feminine.

Subject to express agreement to the contrary (which in this particular case has been none) and any agreed amendments/additions (of which in this particular case there have been none), the terms on which the Surveyor will undertake the Specific Defects Report are set out below.

Based upon a visual inspection as defined below the Surveyor will advise the Client by means of a written report as to his opinion of the visible condition and state of repair of the specific problem or problems only.

### **2. The Inspection**

#### **a) Accessibility and Voids**

The Surveyor will base this report on a visual inspection and accordingly its scope is limited. It does not include an inspection of those areas, which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible. Our visual inspection will relate to the specific defects shown to us only.

#### **b) Floors**

We have opened up the front right hand corner of the living room floor and have made our best assumptions based upon what we could see in this area. The only way to be conclusive is to open up the entire floor.

#### **c) Roofs**

The Surveyor has inspected only the section of flat roof identified with possible dampness.

#### **d) Boundaries, Grounds and Outbuildings**

The inspection will not include boundaries, grounds and outbuildings unless specifically stated (none stated).

#### **e) Services**

No services inspected.

f) Areas not inspected

The Surveyor will have only inspected those areas identified within the report. His report will be based upon possible or probable defects based upon what he has seen together with his knowledge of that type of structure. If you feel that any further areas need inspection then please advise us immediately.

g) Specific Defects Report

As this is a report upon a Specific Defect we do not offer any comment or guidance upon reactive maintenance and/or planned or routine maintenance items.

h) Whilst we have used reasonable skill and care in preparing this report, it should be appreciated that the Chartered Surveyors cannot offer any guarantee that the property will be free from future defects or that existing defects will not suffer from further deterioration;

**3. Deleterious and Hazardous materials**

- a) Unless otherwise expressly stated in the Report, the Surveyor will assume that no deleterious or hazardous materials or techniques have been used in the construction of the property. However the Surveyor will advise in the report if in his view there is a likelihood that high alumina cement (HAC) concrete has been used in the construction and that in such cases specific enquiries should be made or tests carried out by a specialist.

**4. Contamination**

The Surveyor will not comment upon the existence of contamination as this can only be established by appropriate specialists. Where, from his local knowledge or the inspection he considers that contamination might be a problem he should advise as to the importance of obtaining a report from an appropriate specialist.

**5. Consents, Approvals and Searches**

- a) The Surveyor will assume that the property is not subject to any unusual or especially onerous restrictions or covenants which apply to the structure or affect the reasonable enjoyment of the property.
- b) The Surveyor will assume that all bye-laws, Building Regulations and other consents required have been obtained. In the case of new buildings and alterations and extensions, which require statutory consents or approval the Surveyor will not verify whether, such consents have been obtained. Any enquiries should be made by the Client or his legal advisers.

Drawings and specifications will not be inspected by the Surveyor. It is the Clients responsibility to forward any drawings and specifications that he has or knows the whereabouts of to us to include information in our report. If these are not forthcoming we will make our best assumptions based upon the information available.

- c) The Surveyor will assume that the property is unaffected by any matters which would be revealed by a Local Search and replies to the usual enquiries or by a Statutory Notice and that neither the property nor its condition its use or intended use is or will be unlawful.

## **6. Fees and Expenses**

The Client will pay the Surveyor the agreed fee for the Report and any expressly agreed disbursements in addition.

## **7. Restrictions on Disclosures**

- a) This report is for the sole use of the Client in connection with the property and is limited to the current brief. No responsibility is accepted by the Chartered Surveyors if used outside these terms.
- b) Should any disputes arise they will be dealt with and settled under English law;
- c) This report does not fall under the Third Parties Rights Act.

## **8. Safe Working Practices**

The Surveyor will follow the guidance given in Surveying Safely issued by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

# APPENDICES

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# **DEFINITIONS**

## **Rising Damp**

Rising damp depends upon various components including the porosity of the structure, the supply of water and the rate of evaporation of the material, amongst other things. Rising damp can come from the ground, drawn by capillary action, to varying degrees of intensity and height into the materials above.

## **Lateral or Penetrating Dampness**

This is where water ingress occurs through the walls. This can be for various reasons such as poor pointing or wall materials or inadequate gutters and downpipes, such as poorly jointed gutters.

## **Condensation**

This is where the humidity held within the air meets a cold surface causing condensation.

## SELECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS



Low level dampness to the living room wall



Blistering to the vinyl wall paint in the living room with an efflorescence or lime based paint or mist coat. We are unable to confirm from a visual inspection.



Checking for dampness from the gutters within the bedrooms



Checking the airbricks



Checking dampness to rear sliding French doors



Underside of flat roof