

# PROPERTY REPORT



**Mid Terrace  
Town Centre  
Office Premises**



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Office Premises**

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[www.1stAssociated.co.uk](http://www.1stAssociated.co.uk)  
0800 298 5424

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## **INTRODUCTION**

We have been asked to inspect and prepare a Report and Schedule of Condition on the subject premises.

This Report is to be read in conjunction with the Schedule of Condition.

The work has been carried out as per our standard Terms and Conditions of Contract which have been emailed to you as part of the confirmation of our instructions. If you would like further clarification please do not hesitate to contact us.

## **SYNOPSIS**

### **SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION**

A three storey mid terraced traditionally built property situated in a short row of commercial properties with a post office to the left hand side and a bank to the right hand side (all directions given as you face the front of the property). It is currently unoccupied..

There is a small frontage before the public footpath. To the rear there is a fenced and gated area which can be accessed via an unmade road (unadopted by the council therefore you may have a liability in relation to it – your solicitor to check and advise). There is a small back yard and outbuilding with w.c. and wash hand basin area and a shed which is divided with a small coal shed.

The adjacent property (the bank) has a date plaque saying 1899. If the history of the property interests you your Legal Advisor may be able to find out more information from the Deeds.

# **SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION**

## **MAIN BUILDING**

### **External**

Chimneys:	One stone chimney
Main Roof:	Pitched slate roof to main building Single pitched slate roof to outbuildings
Gutters and Downpipes:	Predominantly cast iron with some plastic
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Not visible
Walls:	Coursed stonework which has been repointed in a cement mortar (assumed) Rough cast render to the rear
External Joinery:	Painted single glazed sliding sash windows

### **Internal**

Ceilings:	Lath and plaster and plasterboard (assumed)
Walls	Internal: solid and studwork (assumed) Perimeter: predominately lime plaster
Floors: Ground Floor:	Suspended timber floor with exception of the entrance and staircase area (assumed)
First/Second Floor:	Joist and floorboards which run side to side and are likely to be embedded into the side walls (assumed)

### **Services**

We have assumed that the property has a mains water supply, drainage, electricity and gas but this does need to be checked and confirmed by your legal advisor. Heating is by way of gas fires and an individual heater unit for the hot water to the outside sink. The electric fuse board is located to the side of the entrance door and is dated as are some of the fixtures and fittings.

The above terms are explained in full in the main body of the Report. We have used the term 'assumed' as we have not opened up the structure. We have not made formal enquiries as to whether the property is Listed or in a Conservation Area.

## EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front elevation



Property within a row of commercial buildings



Rear elevation



Rear yard area



Outbuilding to the rear and parking  
– ownership to be confirmed

# **FACILITIES**

## **Ground Floor**

- Entrance lobby
- Front office
- Rear office
- Rear hallway

## **First Floor**

- Front office
- Rear office
- Landing and staircase

## **Top Floor**

- Front office
- Rear office
- Landing (Small access to roof space)

Note: The ceilings follow the line of the roofs, ie. the rooms are formed partly within the roof.

## **Rear left hand outbuilding**

- Single w.c. and wash hand basin

## **Rear outbuilding**

- Empty space

## **REPORT FORMAT AND INFORMATION**

To help you understand our Report we utilise various techniques and different styles and types of text, these are as follows:

### **PHOTOGRAPHS**



We utilise photographs and sketches to illustrate issues or features. In some photographs a pencil has been used to highlight a specific area.

### **ACTION REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

We have used the term **ACTION REQUIRED** where we believe that there are items that you should carry out action upon or negotiate upon prior to purchasing the Lease.

Where a problem is identified, we will do our best to offer a solution. However, with most building issues, there are usually many ways to resolve them dependent upon cost, time available and the length of time you wish the repair/replacement to last.

### **MARKET VALUE**

We have not been asked to comment upon the market value in this instance. We have not seen copies of the trading figures or the accounts.

### **EVERY BUSINESS TRANSACTION HAS A RISK**

Every business transaction has a risk, only you can assess whether that risk is acceptable to you and your circumstances.

**AGENT / BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER – FRIEND OR FOE?**

It is important to remember that the agents are acting for their client and not the purchaser. We, as your employed Independent Chartered Surveyor, represent your interests only.

**SOLICITOR/LEGAL ADVISOR**

To carry out your legal work you can use a solicitor or a legal advisor. We have used both terms within the report.

**TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT/LIMITATIONS**

This report is being carried out under our terms of engagement, as agreed to and signed by you. If you have not seen and signed a copy of our terms of engagement please phone immediately.

**OUR AIM IS ONE HUNDRED PERCENT SATISFACTION**

Our aim is for you to be completely happy with the service we provide, and we will try and help you in whatever way possible - just phone us.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Summaries are not ideal as they try to précis often quite complex subjects into a few paragraphs. This is particularly so in a summary about someone's future business when we are trying to second-guess what your priorities are, so it is important the Report is read in full.

It is inevitable with a report on a building of this nature that some of the issues we have focussed in on you may dismiss as irrelevant and some of the areas that we have decided are part of the 'character' of this property you may think are very important. We have taken in the region of 200 photographs (a CD copy of all photographs is enclosed) during the course of this survey and many pages of notes, so if an issue has not been discussed that you are interested in or concerned about, please phone and talk to us before you purchase the lease (or indeed commit to purchasing the lease), as we will more than likely have noted it and be able to comment upon it. If we have not we will happily go back. Having said all of that, here are our comments:

When purchasing the lease on an office we believe there are three elements you need to consider, these are:

### **The Business**

Only you can decide upon the true potential/suitability of the premises for your business and its value to your business. We do recommend taking independent advice on the value of the business and property if it doesn't form part of this instruction.

### **The Lease**

The quality of the lease needs to be discussed with your Legal Advisor and understood. You need to understand your rights, responsibilities and liabilities when you sign for a lease of this nature. We ask that your Legal Advisor brings any onerous or unusual clauses to our attention immediately. We assume this is a standard full repairing and insuring Lease.

## **The Property**

There are many aspects to look at property-wise, both from its condition at the moment, to its condition in relation to the lease (or in this case a standard full repairing and insuring lease, as we have not seen the one specifically relating to this property).

You are currently reading the Property Report which is intended to advise you on the property element of the purchase. We will also provide you with a Schedule of Condition, which will enable you to agree with the Landlord the condition of the property when you start to lease it.

We have divided the Executive Summary into 'The Good', 'The Bad' and 'The Ugly', to allow you to clarify and focus on exactly what the issues are.

## **The Good**

*Survey reports often are full of only the faults and general 'doom and gloom', so we thought we would start with some positive comments on the property!*

- 1) The rooms are a good size, albeit that they don't follow the modern requirement of having an open plan office however they do allow private rooms if so required and also subletting.
- 2) It has a good central location and a good view from the offices and there is parking nearby although it is limited.

## The Bad

*Problems / issues raised in the 'bad' section are usually solvable, but often need negotiation upon. However, a large number of them may sometimes put us off the property.*

### 1) High level work required – chimneys, roofs and gutters

We can see that work is required at high level to the chimneys, roofs and gutters. We can see leaks within the top floor offices which have occurred from the roof particularly to the rear of the property. Unfortunately or fortunately because these rooms are formed partly within the roof, if there is any roof leaks then you know about it very quickly. We can see blistering to the walls in the offices which we would attribute to leaking gutters and downpipes.

The inside of the roof inspection was very limited (head and shoulders only) but what we could see was in average to below average condition.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Ideally we would recommend excluding all high level work from the lease. High level work needed is to scaffold the property (which would be expensive in itself), to clear the vegetation from the chimneys, check and repoint and the same with the roof and the gutters. The gutters have a lot of vegetation in them and it is likely that the gutters will need tarring and possibly replacement sections however if left these areas will allow dampness in the property.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** We would expect this work to be costly due



Chimney with plants growing from it



Timbers can be seen to be discolouring indicating dampness and/or condensation



Blocked high level gutter

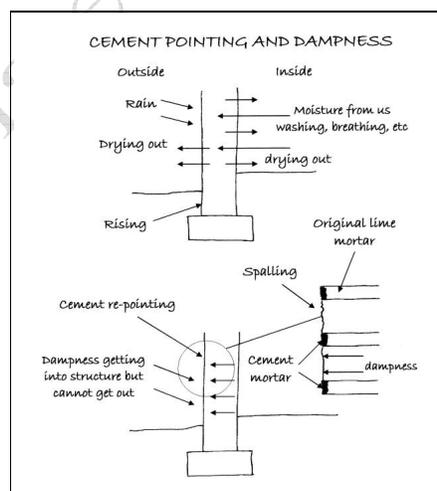
to the scaffolding required however it does also give the opportunity to add your own signage and to carry out maintenance to the windows and the walls. Please see the next sections. We would anticipate costs to be in the region of £5,000 - £10,000 depending on the exact work found; quotations required. We spoke about excluding this area from the lease which would be our preferred option or the landlord carrying out the work. To some extent carrying out high level work can be a blank cheque book scenario.

Please see the Chimney stacks, Roof Coverings and Gutters and Downpipes Sections of this Report.

## 2) External walls and dampness coming through the walls

2.1 We can see signs of dampness coming through the walls and also getting damp meter readings. This is known as lateral dampness. We believe this is caused partly by the cracking to the render to the rear and partly by defective gutters and by defective pointing. Unfortunately the re-pointing has been carried out with cement mortar so this stops the building from dissipating the dampness (think Vortex type coat rather than a raincoat with regard to how this building should work when dealing with rainwater).

This type of building therefore should have an open breathable joint in a lime based mortar in our opinion.



Poor quality cement re-pointing to stonework

## 2.2 Render

There is hairline cracking in the render so deterioration to some areas. This cracking will need sealing and also we believe there are defective areas of render that will need repair.



Hairline cracking to rear render



Lower render area starting to deteriorate



Repairs to hairline cracking that has taken place on render to rear

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend that the external work is excluded from the lease with the landlord carrying out the work, so effectively you will have an internal maintaining lease only. With the dampness in the property this would mean that you are likely to have to carry out a system of adding false walls as dampness is not a quick fix.

The work required to reduce the dampness getting into this property is first of all to make the property watertight at high level, i.e. ensuring the gutters and downpipes take water away and then in the case of the stonework we would recommend repointing in a lime based mortar and repairs to the plasterwork internally. Again internally we would recommend a lime based plaster, this puts up with dampness far better in older properties (whatever you do, don't use modern gypsum plaster as this doesn't cope with dampness very well or renovated plasters which locks the dampness into the property). To the rear you will need to seal all the hairline cracking and replace any damaged or deteriorating render.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** We would recommend this work is excluded from the lease. If it is carried out we would recommend that the landlord carries it out. Assuming that the scaffolding is in place we would expect costs in the region of £6,000 - £8,000 (quotations required) to repoint the stonework at the front and seal any cracks at the

rear as well as some partial re-rendering (which will be next to impossible to match to the existing rendering so you may be forced to end up painting the rear of the property). Our overall recommendation for these past two sections is that you have an Internal Repair Only Lease on the basis that the landlord repairs externally.

Please see the External Walls and Dampness Sections of this Report.

### 3) Wrongly used inserted damp proof course

We can see that in some areas a damp proof course must have been inserted together with the use of renovating plaster. Unfortunately this gives a bucket like seal to the base of the property forcing dampness to come out above the 1m that the renovated plaster is typically used, i.e.

as you can see to the rear right hand side of the property.



Close up of dampness above damp proof course that has been inserted

**ACTION REQUIRED:** As mentioned earlier this age of property should be using breathable materials rather than materials that give the sealing affect (sealing the moisture in) and it is very difficult to un-do. In this particular case there are problems with regards to the drains outside draining into the property and into the wall and also the ground floor which we cover in the next section.



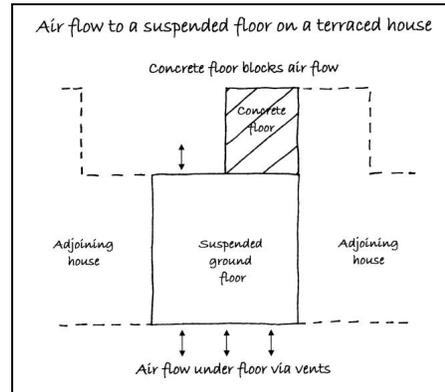
Damage to wall in rear hallway caused by damp proof course inserted

**ANTICIPATED COST:** Unfortunately this wall can't be repaired in isolation; it needs to be carried out externally to the gutters and downpipes and yard area and also the flooring. We would recommend replastering in a lime based plaster which we would expect to be in the region of £1,000 - £2,000; quotations required. You do also need to check to see what is on the other side of this wall.

Please see the Damp Proof Course Section of this Report.

#### 4) Ground floor joists rotting and a lack of airbricks

The floor is formed with a suspended timber floor. Unfortunately we have not been able to open this up nevertheless from the damp meter readings we obtained on the ground floor level, the lack of air vents to the rear of the property and the areas of concrete floor to the entrance we believe there is a problem with the floor.



**ACTION REQUIRED:** Before you commit to purchase this property you need to open up a section of the floor, we suggest sections (1) to the front of the property in the front office and (2) to the rear of the property in the rear office and adjacent to the rear exit door. We would be more than happy to return to comment further. You need to have contractors on hand to open up and replace the timbers, ideally the areas that are opened up should be adjacent to airbricks so we can see that these are really working although the airbricks to the rear appear to be at the wrong level unless there are vent trunks through the wall itself.



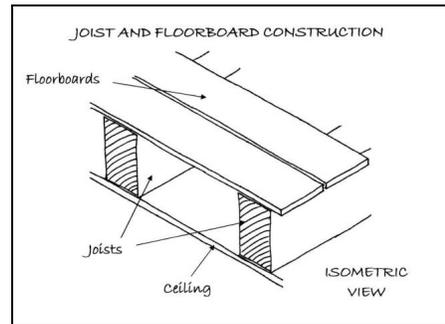
Damp floor

**ANTICIPATED COST:** To open up and put back the floor we would expect costs in the region of £250 - £500; quotations required. Note that the floor is damp and that new timber may be required. There will be major expense if these timbers need renewing or extensive repair.

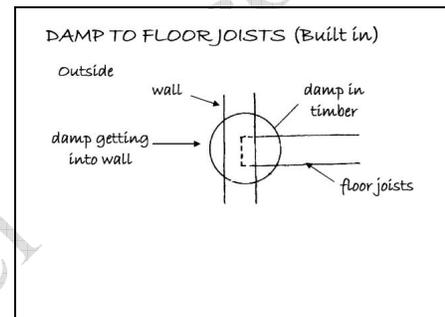
Please see the Airbricks and Floors Sections of this Report.

## 5) Deflection at first floor and top floor level

We found excessive deflection in the floors indicating that the joists have problems. This could relate to the joist ends rotting or woodworm throughout the timber. Although we saw no signs of woodworm we didn't take up the carpet area or have good access to the roof (head and shoulders inspection only) which is the other area that problems may be highlighted.



**ACTION REQUIRED:** The floors need to be opened up to check the condition of the timbers, they may have wet rot to the joist ends or they may be suffering from woodworm. We would recommend the opening up is carried out near the front and rear walls as we would also like to see if these are tied in to the joists.



**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £250 - £500; quotations required.

Please see the Floors Section of this Report.

## SERVICES

The services are not to current standards.

## 6) Heating

We would recommend the installation of a boiler and central heating system. The initial impact of adding central heating to this age of property may be that it draws the dampness that is within the walls through causing damage to the paintwork, paper and plasterwork internally but we do feel that you need to bring the property up to modern heating standards.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Install boiler and central heating system.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £6,000 - £10,000 as you may have to have a pressurised heating system. Please obtain quotations for this work.

## 7) Electrics

There is a mixture of old and new fittings to the property. We find typically that re-wiring is superficial and only carried out to areas that specifically need it.

We carried out an earth test which was satisfactory in the sockets which worked but some of them didn't work for example the front office left hand side low level wall socket point.



Working socket

**ACTION REQUIRED:** If you are looking to take on the building for the long term then you do need to look at re-wiring the whole of the property. In addition the existing lights would not meet current recommendations and they generally need to be changed to what is known as Category 2 lighting level although it does depend on what work you are carrying out in the offices.



Non working socket

**ANTICIPATED COST:** For re-wiring we would expect costs to be in the region of £5,000 - £10,000; quotations required. Sorry to be so broad with regards to our costs but it does depend upon the extent of re-wiring, for example you spoke about putting a kitchen area and toilet facilities in the rear office and the amendments that would be made in association with this.

Please see the Electrics Section of this Report.

## 8) Drainage

Whilst we have run the cold tap within the toilet into the drains for approximately half an hour without any excessive build up or back up you do need to be aware that in a property such as this where there has been minimum use of drainage for some time when an increased use of the drains occurs it may have problems. In our experience the only way to be certain is to have a close circuit TV camera inspection.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You will need a close circuit TV camera inspection to check the condition of the drains or have them excluded from the lease.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** Drainage survey in its basic form is £100 - £300 depending upon the length of the run; we suspect this will be quite a short run, and the associated work. Quotations required.

Please see the Main Drains Section of this Report.

## 9) Fire Regulations

We noted that there were fire doors (with door closers on them) and points where fire extinguishers once were together with signage nevertheless you need to ensure there are suitable means of escape from the upper floors which may mean a staircase needs to be added.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Speak to the fire bridge on an informal basis to understand what the requirements may be.

## 10) Access

There is a road access on the right hand side, your legal advisor needs to check and confirm that you have a right of way (all directions given as you face the front of the property).



Road access on right hand side

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your legal advisor to check and confirm if you have rights to use the access to the rear of the property and if so if you have responsibility with regard to the condition of the road, etc.

## The Ugly

*We normally put here things that we feel will be difficult to resolve and will need serious consideration.*

Overall, this is a very onerous building to take on and we would say particularly costly for a lease of five years that you spoke to us would be the length of lease that you would be looking at initially. We do feel that if the landlord is prepared to exclude sections from the lease and/or carry out work and reduce the rent (from its true market value) negotiations are worth pursuing. However you do need in our opinion to negotiate very hard for this to become a viable proposition and/or prepare to carry out a lot of maintenance and only have the benefit of these for the period of the lease.

## **Other Items**

Moving on to more general information.

## **Services**

Whilst we have carried out a visual inspection of the services within the property we also need to advise you of the following:

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would always recommend that you have an independent check by a specialist contractor. For the electrics we would recommend an NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent carries out an inspection, test and report to Institute of Electrical Engineers standards (IEE). For the heating in this particular instance there is no requirement to test the existing as we would recommend it be removed. Drainage we would recommend a close camera TV report. Water supply – there is danger in older properties of having a lead water supply, we would recommend that you speak to the water company to ask them if they have carried out such replacement, as you will be re-piping much of the water used in the building it gives an ideal opportunity to also check for any remaining lead pipes.

## **Maintenance**

It should be appreciated that defects which would normally be highlighted in a modern property, effectively form part of the property's overall character and style. Such defects are considered acceptable and may not have been specifically referred to as defects within the context of this Report.

This type of property will require ongoing maintenance and repair and a budget for such work must be allowed to ensure it is maintained in good condition. This will prevent undue and unnecessary deterioration.

## **Estimates of Costs**

Where we have offered an estimate of building costs please remember we are not experts in this area. We always recommend you obtain quotations for the large jobs before purchasing the property (preferably three quotes). The cost of building work has many variables such as the cost of labour. For unskilled labour we currently use between £75 and £100 per day (the higher costs in the city areas) and for tradesmen we use between £100 and £200 per day for an accredited, qualified, skilled tradesman. Other variations include the quality of materials used and how the work is carried out, for example off ladders or from scaffold.

If you obtain builders estimates that vary widely, we would advise the work is probably difficult or open to various interpretations and we would recommend a specification is prepared. It would probably be best to supervise the work if it is complex, both of which we can do if so required.

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## 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:

We discussed many issues during the course of the survey. We would say it is very important that:

- 1) You understand and establish the costs of a suitable office in a good condition in this area.
- 2) You understand and establish exactly what the landlord will exclude from the lease. Remember you are effectively carrying out building works for them which will in turn improve the quality of their property and in turn improve the value of the rentability of it and increase the rent chargeable.
- 3) You need to carry out strong negotiations with your landlord. We suspect they are aware of the situation in the property.
- 4) We recommend speaking to the previous tenant to establish what problems they had when working from this office. You need to understand if they are surrendering a lease or whether the lease is in existence. This will enable you to better understand what work is required and the market rate.
- 5) Major areas we would exclude are the high level work and the work to the walls and the floor work; this will effectively lead to you having an Internal Only Repairing Lease. Even with this in place you will still need to carry out extensive work to the services and add in basic facilities.

As a general comment for any work required we would always recommend that you obtain at least three quotations for any work from a qualified, time served tradesperson or a competent registered building contractor prior to legal completion.

If you so wish we can prepare specifications and obtain quotations for the work, whatever you do don't allow the agent to organise the quotes as he will utilise people he regularly uses who know they have to keep in with him/her to get further work and therefore are very keen to please the agent, as opposed to you the real client, and at the end of the day it doesn't take long to organise.

We would ask that you read this Property Report and the Schedule of Condition and contact us on any issues that you require further clarification on.

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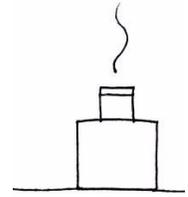
# **THE DETAILED PART OF THE REPORT FOLLOWS, WORKING FROM THE TOP OF THE PROPERTY DOWNWARDS**

It would appear that the property may have a Flying Freehold, i.e. it doesn't have straight vertical divisions to the right hand side. Your legal advisor needs to check this and confirm.



## EXTERNAL

### CHIMNEY STACKS AND PARAPET WALLS



#### Chimney Stacks

*Chimneys developed originally from open fires placed within buildings. From this, the chimney has developed to its present day format where it is used as an aesthetic feature and focal point rather than purely just to heat the room.*

There is one chimney to this property which is located to the left hand side (all directions given as you face the front of the property) and sits on the party Wall.

#### Chimney One – located to the left hand side

One stone built chimney to the left hand side with six chimney pots and a lead flashing. We noted vegetation and grass growing from the chimney indicating that it needs repointing.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.



Chimney with plants growing from it

#### Flashings Defined

Flashings prevent dampness from entering the property, usually at junctions where materials change. Such a junction is the one between the chimney and the roof.

## Parapet Walls

*Parapet walls are usually walls that are above roof level and often sit on the boundary of the property.*

There are small parapet walls to the gable ends of the property. We can see that there is light coming through on the coping stones indicating that they need work.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You need to check and inspect and repoint when carrying out high level work.



Light can be seen to the coping stones of the parapet walls on the front gable

Finally, we were only able to see approximately fifty percent of the parapet walls; therefore we have made our best assumptions based upon what we could see. A closer inspection may reveal more.

## Party Wall

Earlier we have used the term Party Wall in relation to the chimney. Here is some general information on Party Walls.

Party Structures Defined - Party Wall Act Etc. 1996

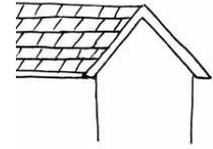
A structure that both parties enjoy the use of or benefit from. An example of this would be where both parties gain support from a wall or utilise a chimney or chimneys.

*Any work to party structures, such as party walls or party chimney stacks, require agreement under the Party Wall Act. We would be more than happy to offer you help and advice in this matter.*

Finally, we have made our best assumptions on the overall condition of the chimney stacks and parapet walls from the parts we could see. The inspection was made from ground level within the boundaries of the property (unless otherwise stated) using a x16 zoom lens on a digital camera. A closer inspection may reveal latent defects.

Please also see Chimney Breasts, Flues and Fireplaces Section of this Report.

# ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERLAYERS



*The Roof Coverings and Underlayers section considers the condition of the outer covering of the roof. Such coverings usually endure the extremes of climate and temperatures. They are susceptible to deterioration, which ultimately leads to water penetration.*

*The underlayer's function is to minimise wind and water damage. Dependent upon the age of your property this may or may not be present, please read on:*

We will consider the roofs in two areas, the Main Roof and the roofs to the two outbuildings (rear left hand side and rear outbuildings).

## Main Roof

*Slate has been commonly used as a roofing material in many areas, particularly where it was available as a natural resource. In more recent times it has been a planning requirement in areas where it was once the predominant roof finish.*

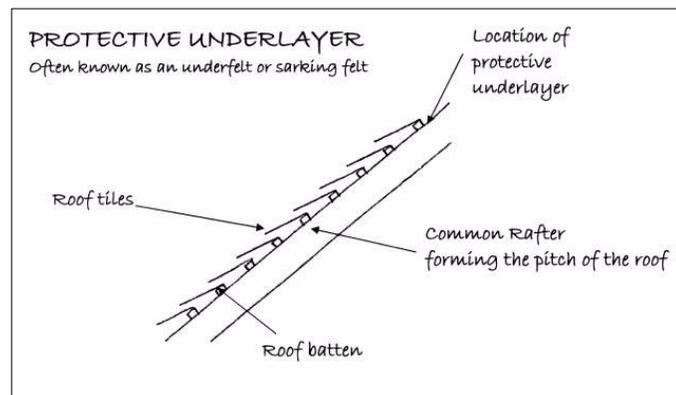
The main roof comprises a pitched roof clad in slates. The slates sit fairly true and we did not note too many slipped or cracked slates considering the property's age, type and style.



Roof slates

## Protective Underlayer (Often known as the sarking felt or underfelt)

*From the 1940s onwards felts were used underneath tiles/slates to stop wind damage and water penetration, these in more recent years have been replaced with plastic equivalents. These are commonly known as underfelts but now the name is not really appropriate, as felt is not the only material used.*



The property has a hessian based protective underlayer indicating that it has been re-roofed post war. Due to an awkward angle to get into the roof (it was over the stairway) and the small access area we have only carried out a head and shoulders inspection, however we would comment that we could see white staining on the timbers (known as batons) indicating that dampness or condensation is occurring in the roof which we were surprised to see. This may indicate problems with the roof therefore a close inspection needs to be carried out when the high level work is taking place.



This photo shows the common rafters (the ones that form the pitch of the roof) and the dark area between is the underlayer.

## Outbuilding Roofs

### Rear left hand side outbuilding

This is a shallow pitched slate roof, we can see some lead tingles have been added indicating that the nails may be starting to deteriorate.



**ACTION REQUIRED:** You need to lift a few slates to check the condition of the fixing nails.

Roof of outbuilding to rear left hand side

#### Nail Sickness Defined

The weakening of the fixing nails to slates or tiles due to the nails which fix them to the battens rusting. This is normally attributed to problems with slate roofs.

#### Lead Tingles or Lead Slaps Defined

These are strips of lead usually about 25mm wide which are used to secure slates where they have slipped.

## **Rear outbuilding**

This roof is generally in average condition considering it is an outbuilding. There is a poor detail to the rear left hand side of the rear outbuilding roof that looks like it is allowing water into the brick walls.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend a lead flashing and a proper coping stone is added.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £100 - £300; quotations required.



Roof of outbuilding to rear



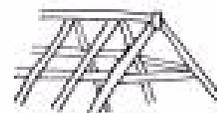
Poor detailing

Finally, all the roofs were inspected from ground level with the aid of a x16 zoom lens on a digital camera.

Unfortunately we were only able to see approximately eighty percent of the main roof from ground level via our ladder or via any other vantage point that we managed to gain. We have made our best conclusions based upon what we could see, however a closer inspection may reveal other defects.

For further comments with regard to ventilation please see the Roof Structure and Loft Section.

## ROOF STRUCTURE AND LOFT



### (ALSO KNOWN AS ROOF SPACE OR ATTIC SPACE)

*The roof structure or framework must be built in a manner which is able to give adequate strength to carry its own weight together with that of the roof covering discussed in the previous section and any superimposed loads such as snow, wind, foot traffic etc.*

#### Main Roof

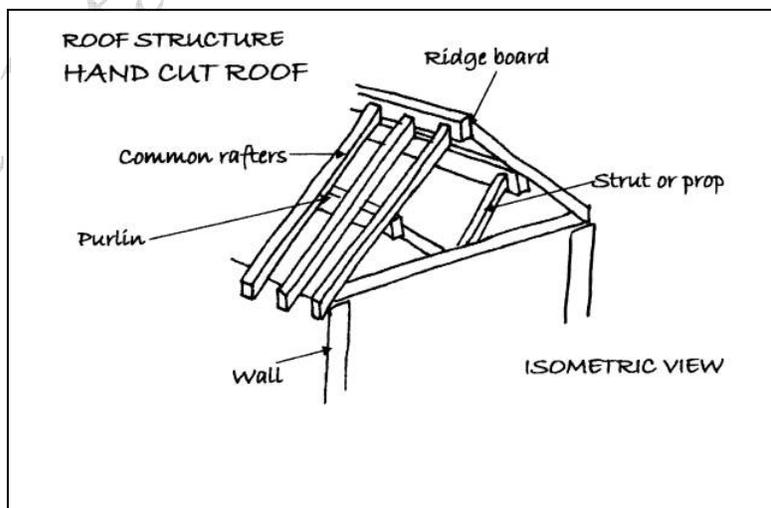
#### Roof Access

The main roof is accessed via the loft hatch located on the landing area of the top floor. As mentioned we were only able to carry out a head and shoulders inspection due to its location and size.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend a large access hatch is formed in a safe area and the roof is re-inspected prior to you legally committing to purchasing this property.

#### Roof Structure

This type of roof structure has what is known as a cut timber roof. This is a roof that is purpose made and hand built on site. Without the original design details we cannot categorically confirm that there are no defects; however it is in line with what we typically see.



## Roof Timbers

We have inspected the roof structure for:

- Serious active woodworm
- Structurally significant defects to the timbers
- Structurally significant dry rot
- Structurally significant wet rot



Rear roof – timbers can be seen to be discolouring indicating dampness and or condensation

Our examination was limited by the general configuration of the roof and the insulation. As mentioned, from what we could generally see there was dampness getting into the roof.

## Rooms in the roof

Due to the way the property is constructed part of the top floor rooms are formed in the roof; we can see areas where repairs have been carried out. To the rear there looks to have been replacement of several of the common rafters (the ones that form the pitch of the roof) indicating that there is major problems with this roof.



Underside of roof in top rear room

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend this roof has to a new access hatch and be inspected properly before you legally commit to purchase. The only way to be 100 per cent certain is to have the roof cleared and checked.

### **Fire Walls**

We can see brick firewalls on either side, however also please see our comments with regards to you having a stepped division between you and the neighbouring property, possibly a flying freehold.



Firewall

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your legal advisor to check and confirm whether or not you have a Flying Freehold.

### **Water Tanks**

We didn't see any water tanks in the roof.

### **Ventilation**

We didn't see any ventilation within the roof.

### **Insulation**

Please see the Thermal Efficiency Section of this Report.

### **Electrical Cables**

We can often identify the age of an electrical installation by the age of wiring found in the roof. In this case there was insufficient quantity to comment other than what we have seen throughout the rest of the property is old.

Please see our further comments in the Services Section of this Report.

Finally, we would ask you to note that this is a general inspection of the roof, i.e. we have not examined every single piece of timber. We have offered a general overview of the condition and structural integrity of the area.

# GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES



*The function of the gutters and downpipes is to carry rainwater from the roof to the ground keeping the main structure as dry as possible.*

*Defective gutters and downpipes are a common cause of dampness that can, in turn, lead to the development of rot in timbers. Regular inspection and adequate maintenance are therefore essential if serious problems are to be avoided.*

## Gutters and Downpipes

The gutters and downpipes are predominantly Cast Iron with some Plastic with vegetation and grass growing from them.



Grass growing out of gutters

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Clear and repair. We would always recommend that the gutters and downpipes are cleaned out, the joints are checked and the alignment checked to ensure that the gutters fall towards the downpipes.



Broken downpipe



Gulleys that need clearing

### **Soil and Vent Pipe**

The soil and vent pipe was not visible to the main property as it is all contained within the outbuildings. If you do add a toilet within the main building then you will have to look at putting a soil and vent pipe up the entirety of the property as it is typically recommended that they are a meter above the roof level unless you use a modern air inlet valve often known by its trade name of a Durgo valve.

Finally, gutters and downpipes have been inspected from ground level.

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# WALLS



*External walls need to perform a variety of functions. These include supporting upper floors and the roof structure, resisting dampness, providing adequate thermal and sound insulation, offering resistance to fire and being aesthetically presentable.*

## Stonework / Render

The walls are stonework to the front and render to the rear.

### Stonework

To the front of the property unfortunately repointing has been carried out which whilst no doubt well meaning, is not appropriate for this type of construction. A cement mortar has been used rather than a lime based mortar. We recommend you use lime mortar in any future repairs regardless of what the builders say! Using lime mortar will limit further damage to the brickwork, which is almost impossible to repair successfully. However, we would add that many, if not most, of the properties that are re-pointed are re-pointed wrongly; it is only in recent years that we have discovered the problems that can occur from it.

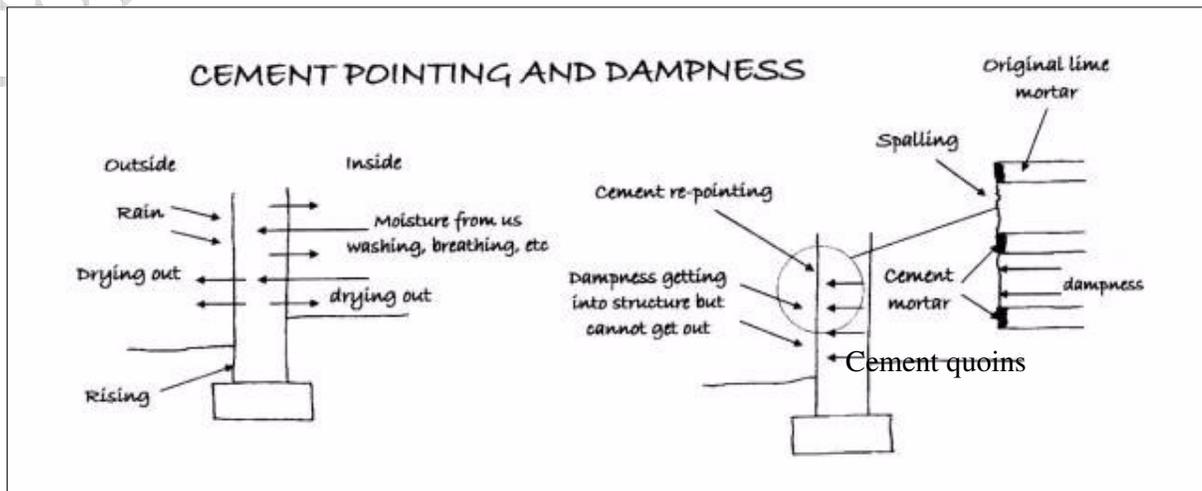
There were some feature stone quoins to the front of the property in a red stone which would be a nice feature if cleaned appropriately.



Poor quality cement repointing to stonework



Stone quoins



## Render

The walls to this property are finished in a roughcast render to the rear. We have carried out a tap test to the render at low level (literally hitting the render with the back of a hammer to try to establish if there are any hollow areas in it) and we feel in this instance that the render is in average condition for its age, type and style. From low level however we suspect higher up that there are considerable problems particularly bearing in mind the amount of dampness that we found in the property.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.



Hairline cracking to rear render



Lower render area starting to deteriorate



Repairs to hairline cracking that has taken place on render to rear

## Render Detailing

A good indication of the quality of rendering, we have found over the years, is by the quality of detailing above the windows and to the base of the property. In this instance the detailing over the stonework we believe is a good detail. At ground level we would prefer to see a bell mouth detail rather than the render to the floor detail which does tend to allow capillary action which then allows dampness inside which can be seen.



Drip detailing above windows



No bell mouth detail

Finally, the external walls have been inspected visually from ground level and/or randomly via a ladder. Where the window and door lintels are concealed by stonework / render / plasterwork we cannot comment on their construction or condition. In buildings of this age stone lintels, metal lintels or timber lintels are common, which can be susceptible to deterioration that is unseen, particularly if in contact with dampness.

Our comments have been based upon how the stonework / render / plaster has been finished. We have made various assumptions based upon what we could see and how we think the stonework / render / plaster would be if it were opened up for this age, style and type of construction. We are however aware that all is not always as it seems in the building industry and often short cuts are taken. Without opening up the structure we have no way of establishing this.

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# **FOUNDATIONS**



*The foundations function is, if suitably designed and constructed, to transfer the weight of the property through the soil. As a general comment, many properties prior to the 19th Century have little or no foundations, as we think of them today, and typically a two-storey property would have one metre deep foundations.*

## **Foundations**

With this age of property foundations are likely to be shallow and in stone. There is a possibility there may be a basement that we can't see an access to within this property which may be accessed from one of the adjoining properties.

## **Building Insurance Policy**

You should ensure that the Building Insurance Policy contains adequate provision against any possibility of damage arising through subsidence, landslip, heave etc.

It is your responsibility to check out prior to commitment to purchase that insurance is available on the property on the basis of the things we have reported in the survey. Much as we would like to we are unable to keep up with the changing insurance market and give you advice with regard to this. Please remember to talk about any cracks identified within the property. Often insurers will refer to progressive and non-progressive cracking. Unfortunately this is something we are unable to comment upon from a one-off inspection - the Building Research Establishment recommend a year of monitoring of any cracking.

We would always recommend that you remain with the existing insurance company of the property. We would refer you to our comments with regard to building insurance throughout this report.

Finally, we have not excavated the foundations but we have drawn conclusions from our inspection and our general knowledge of this type, age and style of property. As no excavation has been carried out we cannot be 100 percent certain as to how the foundation has been constructed and we can only offer our best assumptions and an educated guess, which we have duly done.

## DAMP PROOF COURSE



*The Building Act of 1878 required a damp proof course to be added to all newly built properties within the London area. It also required various other basic standards. These requirements were gradually taken up (or should that be grudgingly taken up) throughout London and then the country as a whole, although this took many years for it to become standard practice.*

All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) and good building practice dictates that a differential of 150mm (6 inches) should be maintained between the damp proof course and ground levels. In this case, we believe the property may have been built with a damp proof course but we literally can't see it to the front and to the rear it is covered by the render. It has had damp proof courses inserted at a later date as can be seen by the way the plaster is within the rear hallway area. Your attention is drawn to the section of the report specifically dealing with dampness.

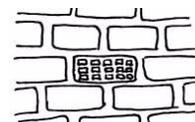


Close up of dampness above damp proof course that has been inserted

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

Finally, sometimes it is difficult for us to identify if there is a damp proof course in a property. We have made our best assumptions based upon our general knowledge of the age, type and style of this property.

## AIRBRICKS



*In properties with suspended floors you need to have an airflow beneath to stop deterioration. The air is allowed to pass under the property by the use of airbricks. Generally the rule of thumb is that airbricks are spaced every metre and a half approximately, but this depends upon the specific circumstances of the property.*

There are airbricks visible to both the front and rear of the property however the airbricks to the rear of the property look too high to be used within the floor. As mentioned elsewhere within the report that unless there is a conduit passing air from the airbrick location through the wall and into the floor you will have to add airbricks to the rear of the property.

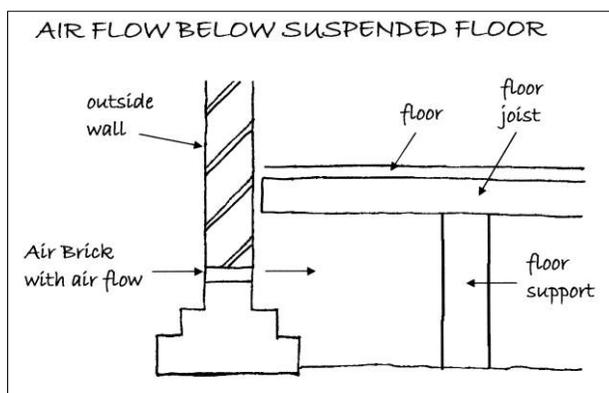


Airbrick to front of property – near green vegetation

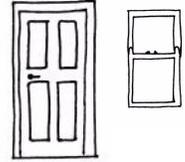


Airbrick to rear of property – you can see floor level to right hand side

Finally, we have made our best assumptions based upon our visual inspection of the outside of the property and our general knowledge of this age, type and style of construction. We have not opened up the floor, unless we have specifically stated so in this section.



# FASCIAS AND SOFFITS AND WINDOWS AND DOORS



*This section covers fascias, soffits and bargeboards and windows and doors, and any detailing such as brick corbelling etc.*

*Fascias and soffits offer protection to the rafter feet and also allow the securing of the guttering. Windows primary functions are to admit light and air, but they also have thermal and sound properties. The doors allow access and egress within the property.*

## Fascias and Soffits

These are very much hidden behind the guttering. Given the amount of vegetation in the gutters it is highly likely there is damage and deterioration. To the front of the property there are stone fascias. To the rear, it is likely to be timber fascias where the render is.

## Windows and Doors

This property predominantly has sliding sash windows. These are single glazed and have a painted timber finish and are in average condition considering their age, type and style. We would specifically comment that our knife test didn't find any major rot in the windows to the ground floor however it is always likely in our experience that rot is at higher levels.



Checking windows

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend repair, prepare and redecorate.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** To redecorate the entirety of the front and the rear windows assuming that scaffolding is in place we would expect costs to be in the region of £7,000 - £8,000; quotations required.

If you have not occupied a property with sliding sash windows previously, you should be aware that typically they are draughty and rattle. There is no easy way to eliminate this problem. In our experience, a general ease and adjustment of the windows and the addition of a plastic tube draught sealer (available from most DIY stores) and regular redecoration is the best option to minimise the draughtiness of the windows in this case.

Finally, we have carried out a general and random inspection of the external joinery. In the case of the fascias and soffits it is typically a visual inspection from ground level. With the windows and doors we have usually opened a random selection of these during the course of the survey. In this section we are aiming to give a general overview of the condition of the external joinery.

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## **EXTERNAL DECORATIONS**



*The external decorations act as a protective coat for the building from the elements. Where this protective covering has failed, such as with flaking paintwork, the elements will infiltrate the structure. This is of particular concern as water is one of the major factors in damage to any structure.*

In this case the external decorations are mainly to the windows, possibly to the fascia boards to the rear and the entrance and doors. Please see above for our comments with regards to the price.

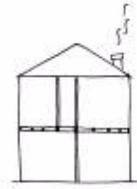
Finally, ideally external redecoration is recommended every four to five years dependent upon the original age of the paint, its exposure to the elements and the materials properties. Where painting takes place outside this maintenance cycle repairs should be expected. Ideally redecoration should be carried out during the better weather between mid-April and mid-September.

Please see our comments in the External Joinery section.

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# INTERNAL

## CEILING, WALLS, PARTITIONS AND FINISHES



*In this section we look at the finish applied to the structural elements such as the plasterwork applied to the ceiling joists, walls or partitions, together with the construction of the internal walls and partitions.*

### Ceilings

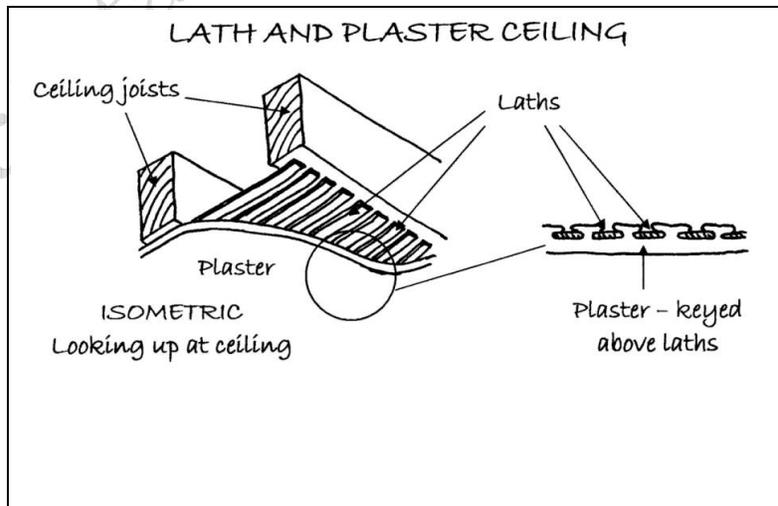
From our visual inspection of the ceilings and our general knowledge of this age and type of construction we believe that the ceilings are likely to be lath and plaster / plasterboard. There is a suspended ceiling to the ground floor area; the adjacent photo shows the nice ceiling above the suspended ceiling.



View taken within ceiling space of ground floor office after removing suspended ceiling tile.

#### Lath and Plaster Defined

Laths are thin strips of timbers which are fixed to the structure. Wet plaster is applied to the laths, usually in several layers. The plaster forms a key as it is forced between the laths. This plaster, once dry, is given further coats and often a decorative finish.



### Internal Walls and Partitions

The internal walls are likely to be a mixture of solid and studwork.

## **Perimeter Walls**

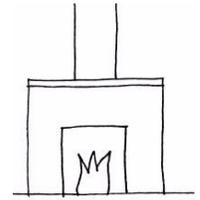
We are not certain of the exterior perimeter walls construction or more correctly the finish internally other than it has been affected by dampness coming through. You need to resolve the dampness externally before you can carry out repairs to the plaster. As mentioned we would recommend that you have an Internal Only Lease in which case we would recommend then putting false walls in place in some areas or replastering and accepting that it will become defective.

Finally, ceilings, walls and partitions have been inspected from floor level and no opening up has been undertaken (unless permission has been obtained by yourselves). In some cases the materials employed cannot be ascertained without samples being taken and damage being caused.

We cannot comment upon the condition of the structure hidden behind plaster, dry lining, other applied finishes, heavy furniture, fittings and kitchen units with fitted back panels.

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## CHIMNEY BREASTS, FLUES AND FIREPLACES



*With the advent of central heating fireplaces tend to be more a feature than an essential function in most properties.*

The chimney breasts are located on the left hand side of the property (all directions given as you face the front of the property). We certainly wouldn't recommend using the existing gas heating system that is in place in the chimneys or lighting a fire.

As you are aware at the time of the survey no chimneys were in use. Any chimneys that you do not propose to use should be capped and ventilated to prevent dampness.

Finally, it is strongly recommended that flues be cleaned and checked for obstruction prior to use to minimise the risk of hazardous fumes entering the building.

Please also see the Chimney Stacks, Flues and Parapet Walls section of this Report.

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# FLOORS



*Functionally floors should be capable of withstanding appropriate loading, preventing dampness, have thermal properties and durability. In addition to this upper floors should offer support for ceilings, resistance to fire and resistance to sound transfer.*

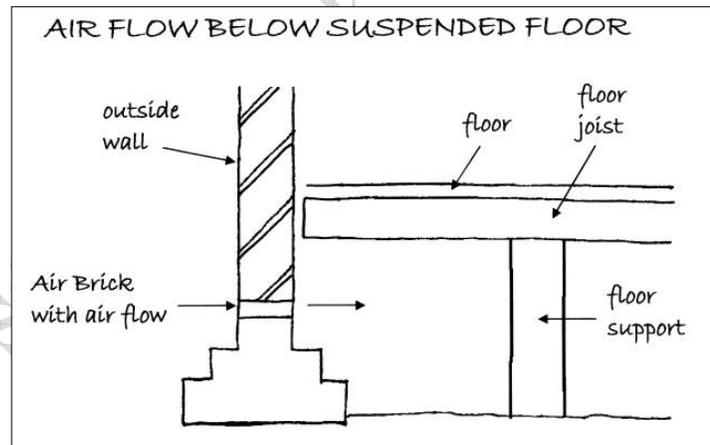
## Ground Floor

We have assumed there is a suspended timber floor generally throughout the ground floor with the exception of the staircase and entrance area.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments within the Executive Summary.

### Suspended Timber Floor Construction Defined

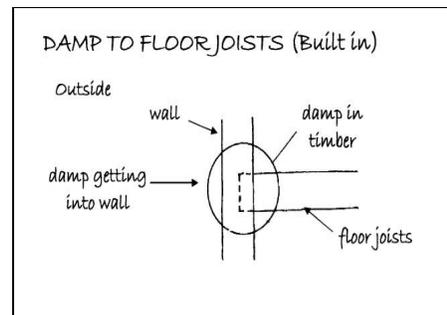
A suspended timber floor usually consists of timbers spanning the ground floor, supported on piers (usually brickwork), vented via air bricks within the walls



## First/Top Floors

We have assumed that the first floor and top floor construction is joist and floorboards which run side to side and are likely to be embedded into the side walls (assumed).

There is a lot of deflection to these walls, far more than we would normally expect which is unusual in this age of property as the timbers are normally substantial and can cope with some rot to the raft ends.

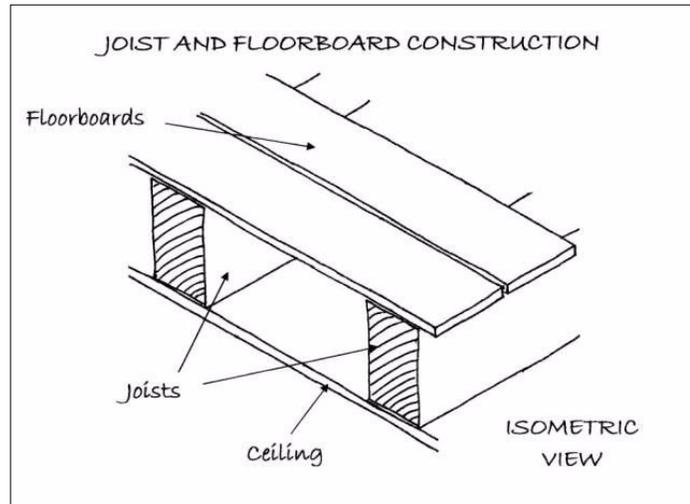


**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend the floor is opened up to check and we would also look to see if these front and rear walls are tied in to the main structure at the same time.

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

Joist and Floorboard Construction Defined

These are usually at first floor level consisting of a joist supported from the external walls, either built in or, in more modern times, sitting upon joist hangers, sometimes taking additional support from internal walls, with floorboards fixed down upon it.



Finally, we have not been able to view the actual floors themselves due to them being covered with fitted carpets, floor coverings, etc. The comments we have made are based upon our experience and knowledge of this type of construction. We would emphasise that we have not opened up the floors in any way or lifted any floorboards.

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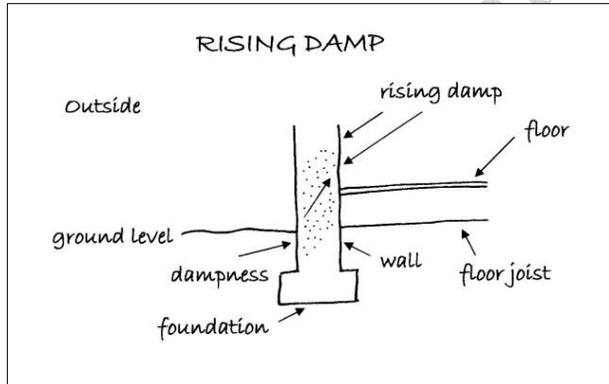
# DAMPNESS



*In this section we look at any problems that are being caused by dampness. It is therefore essential to diagnose the source of the dampness and to treat the actual cause and not the effect of the dampness.*

## 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.*



A random visual inspection and tests with a moisture meter have been taken to the perimeter walls and dampness was found throughout the property.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.



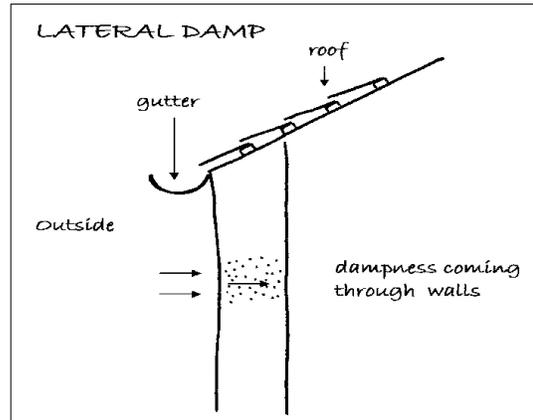
Checking for dampness

Copyrighted status

## **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.*

Tests were taken with a moisture meter at random points to external walls. We generally got high dampness readings and/or visually noticed dampness coming through the property in the form of mould.



**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.



Dampness

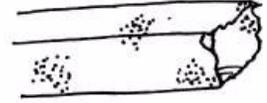
## **Condensation**

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

There are no signs of condensation however it does depend upon how the building is utilised. In this case the building hasn't been utilised at all for some time. You do need to think about condensation when you look at adding the kitchen area and bathroom facilities.

Finally, effective testing was prevented in any concealed areas. We have not carried out tests to BRE Digest 245, but only carried out a visual inspection.

## TIMBER DEFECTS



*This section considers dry rot, wet rot and woodworm. Wet and Dry rot are species of fungi, both need moisture to develop and both can be very expensive to correct. We would also add that in our experience they are also often wrongly diagnosed.*

### Dry Rot

*Dry rot is also sometimes known by its Latin name *Serpula lacrymans*. Dry rot requires constant dampness together with a warmish atmosphere and can lead to extensive decay in timber.*

We physically didn't see any dry rot but all the signs are present that it could be occurring.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You need to open up the floors before you commit to legally purchasing this property.

### Wet Rot

*Wet rot, also known by its Latin name *Contiophora puteana*, is far more common than dry rot. Wet rot darkens and softens the wood and is most commonly seen in window and doorframes, where it can relatively easily be remedied. Where wet rot affects the structural timbers in a property, which are those in the roof and the floor areas, it is more serious.*

Wet rot could be seen. We suspect from the deflection in the floors that there may be more to be seen.

### Woodworm



*Active woodworm can cause significant damage to timber. There are a variety of woodworm that cause different levels of damage with probably the worst of the most well known being the Death Watch Beetle. Many older properties have woodworm that is no longer active, this can often be considered as part of the overall character of the property.*

The roof is usually the main area that we look for woodworm. In this case we had limited access however we did find dampness throughout the property which is an ideal environment for woodworm particularly if you do occupy and then warm the property up as this may activate the woodworm.

In many properties there is an element of woodworm that is not active. Our inspection is usually restricted by insulation covering some of the timbers and in the roof, as it is restricted throughout the property by general fixtures and fittings.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** If you wish to be 100 per cent certain that there is no woodworm the only way would be to check the property when is emptied of fixtures and fittings etc.

Finally, when you move into the property, floor surfaces should be carefully examined for any signs of insect infestation when furniture and floor coverings are removed. Any signs that are found should be treated to prevent it spreading. However, you need to be aware that many damp and woodworm treatment companies have a vested interest in selling their products and therefore have fairly cleverly worded quotations where they do not state if the woodworm they have found is 'active'. You should ask them specifically if the woodworm is active or not.

We would also comment that any work carried out should have an insurance backed guarantee to ensure that if the company does not exist, or for whatever reason, the guarantee is still valid. More importantly it is essential to ensure that any work carried out is carried out correctly.

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## **OTHER MATTERS**

### **SERVICES**

This survey does not include any specialist reports on the electricity supply and circuits, heating or drainage, as they were not requested. The comments that follow are based upon a visual inspection carried out as part of the overall Survey.

Services and specialist installations have been visually inspected. It is impossible to examine every detail of these installations without partially dismantling the structure. Tests have not been applied. Conclusive tests can only be undertaken by suitably qualified contractors. The vendor/seller should be requested to provide copies of any service records, test certificates and, ideally, the names and addresses of the installing contractors.

### **Electrics**

The electrics are likely to require complete renewal however we would recommend in the first instance a test by an NICEIC approved electrician or equivalent to Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) standard.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Re-wire. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.



Fuse board

### **Heating**

There is no heating effectively at the moment.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary about adding heating.

### **Fuel – Gas/Oil**

The respective safety standards to be applied and most full repairing and insuring leases require a test certificate. All services to Gas Safe Standard or equivalent.

## **Lighting**

This is not to modern office standards. You will need to upgrade this.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

## **Fire Regulations**

Normally it is a requirement of any Lease or Tenancy agreement that current fire regulations are adhered to and that a service contract is in place. This is how the property should be left. It is unclear in this instance whether the top floor was being used as an office or not as we believe there may be Fire Regulations requirements to the third floor usage.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You should have a suitable Fire Safety Notice from the outgoing tenant/landlord.

## **Disability Discrimination Act**

You should be aware that it is now a requirement to give reasonable access to the disabled and make reasonable amendments to the property as is necessary to accommodate them. It is a condition of all the leases that we have seen to meet this requirement. In this case we could see that there is a toilet for the less able/disabled on the ground floor and we assume that there are associated areas that are thought through but this does need to be checked.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You should ask to see if a report has been carried out in line with the Disabilities Act highlighting areas that can be improved or have been improved.

## **Asbestos Register**

In a property of this age there may well be some asbestos as we have indicated to the flues. This was commonly used post war until it was banned only in the last ten or so years, although it is rumoured that it was still used after this point in time.

It is now a requirement for any public building to have an asbestos register, indicating whether there is or is not asbestos and if so where it is.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** An Asbestos Register should be provided by the outgoing tenant/landlord.

You should note that work involving products containing asbestos is covered by Health and Safety legislation and you are recommended to seek the advice of the Local Authority Environmental Health Officer before proceeding with any such work.

We are not asbestos surveyors.

### **Drains**

We have not carried out a drainage test. We would recommend that a closed circuit TV camera report is carried out.

### **Service Pipes**

We have not checked the service pipes other than we could see that there is a mixture of different materials used and we could see that many of the service pipes have been cut away as they contain valuable metal.

### **Building Insurance**

We are becoming increasingly concerned with regard to the insurability of some properties which is a commercial decision made by the insurance companies and not purely based upon its condition but based upon general risk criteria that they set within their business.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would therefore recommend that you obtain insurance quotes before you commit to purchase this property to understand your liability. If at all possible we recommend you keep with the existing insurance company. In the case of leasehold properties such as this it may be the liability and responsibility of the landlord to insure. You need to check that you are insured adequately.

## **LIMITATIONS**

As per our original Terms of Engagement, we would remind you specifically that:

We have not inspected parts of the structure that were covered, unexposed or inaccessible during our inspection. We therefore cannot confirm that such parts are free from defect, structural or otherwise.

We have not determined whether any hazardous materials such as high alumina cement, calcium chloride, asbestos etc have been used in the construction.

Our report is for the use of the party to whom it is addressed above and no responsibility is accepted under the Third Parties Act or for any third parties who use this report in whole or in part.

We have not carried out a comprehensive test of any electrical, mechanical or drainage services. We therefore cannot confirm that they are operational and in good condition. If you wish us to arrange tests please advise us.

We have not carried out or arranged for specialists to undertake any reports, for example an environmental report or an audit report upon the property. We are therefore unable to advise whether any contaminated or other adverse environmental issues affect the site.

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

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