

COMMERCIAL BUILDING SURVEY

XXX

XXX

XXX

Basildon

Essex. SS15 XXX



FOR

Mr R X

Prepared by:

XXXX

INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS

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INTRODUCTION

Firstly, may we thank you for your instructions of XXX we have now undertaken a Building Survey (formerly known as a Structural Survey) of the aforementioned property. This Survey was carried out on XXX

The Building Survey takes the following format; there is an introductory section (which you are currently reading), which includes a synopsis of the building, and a summary of our findings.

We then go through a detailed examination of the property starting with the external areas working from the top of the property down, followed by the internal areas and the buildings services. We conclude with the section for your Legal Advisor and also attach some general information on the property market.

We are aware that a report of this size is somewhat daunting and almost off-putting to the reader because of this. We would stress that the purchase of a property always involves a large amount of money and you are subject to Caveat emptor which means “Let the buyer beware”.

We recommend that you set aside time to read the report in full, consider the comments, make notes of any areas which you wish to discuss further and phone us.

We obviously expect you to read the entire report but we would suggest that you initially look at the summary, which refers to various sections in the report, which we recommend you read first so that you get a general feel for the way the report is written.

As part of our service we are more than happy to talk through the survey as many times as you wish until you are completely happy to make a decision. Ultimately, the decision to purchase the property is yours but we will do our best to offer advice to make the decision as easy as possible.

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SYNOPSIS

SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION

(All directions given as you face the property).

This is a two storey detached office unit with car parking to the front of the property and trees surrounding it to the right hand side and rear together with a garden area to the left hand side.

The building boundary is the line of the building which incorporates the garden on the left hand side.

We believe the property was built in the 1980s. If the age of the property interests you your Legal Advisor may be able to find out more information from the Deeds.

GO VIEW MAPS

XXX Basildon, Essex. SS15 XXX



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GO VIEW MAPS

XXX Basildon, Essex. SS15 XXX



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SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION

External

Main Roof:	Shallow pitched concrete tiled roof
Gutters and Downpipes:	Deep flow plastic
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Internal
Walls:	Stretcher bond brickwork .
Structural frame:	Steel structural frame is visible at roof level
Foundations:	Typically this type of property will have a pile, pad or raft foundation. Action Required: Your legal advisor to make enquiries with the Local Authority.
Windows and Doors:	Pre-coated metal frame windows

Internal

Ceilings:	Suspended ceiling tiles both square and rectangular in shape old and new (assumed)
Walls	Studwork (assumed)
Floors: Ground Floor:	Solid floor (assumed) concrete
First Floor:	Solid floor (assumed) concrete

Services

We think it is reasonable to assume that the property has a mains water supply, drainage, electricity and gas, however we would recommend that your legal advisor checks and confirms. The Potterton Kingfisher floor mounted boiler is located on the first floor in the boiler room and the electrics are located on both the ground floor and the first floor.

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.

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EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front view



Entrance



Left hand side view



Right hand side view



Rear view and trees



Rear view and trees

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FACILITIES

Ground Floor

- 1.0) Entrance/stairway
- 2.0) Disabled/less able toilets and ladies toilets
- 3.0) Various open plan offices
- 4.0) Kitchen area and canteen
- 5.0) Various ancillary cupboards

First Floor

- 6.0) Landing area
- 7.0) Gentleman's toilets
- 8.0) Open plan office space
- 9.0) Internal Kitchenette area
- 10.0) Internal Boiler room area

Outside Areas

There is an unmarked car park to the front of the property and an un-adopted road scheme giving access to the property. There is a garden to the left hand side with trees surrounding the building to the rear and right hand side.

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INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

The following photos are of the internal of the property to help you recall what it looked like and the general ambience (or lack of). We have not necessarily taken photographs of each and every room.

Ground Floor



Open Plan Office



Office with clear partition



Kitchenette



Office



Ladies toilets



Disabled toilets

1st Floor



Landing and stairway area



Open plan office left hand side



Open plan office to the middle



Open plan office right hand side

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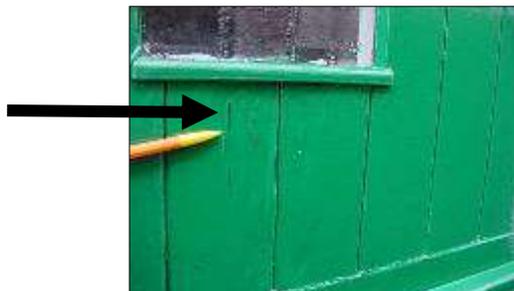
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REPORT FORMAT AND INFORMATION

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 Freehold.

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.

However we would comment that there seems to have been an above average number of properties for lease/sale in the area when we had a general walk around.

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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.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summaries are not ideal as they try to précis often quite complex subjects into a few paragraphs 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 250 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 suitability of this office for your business.

The Property

There are many aspects to look at property-wise; 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!

- 1.0) The property is empty and ready for occupation.
- 2.0) Decoratively the property is to what we would term move in standard (although we are aware this is superficial).
- 3.0) The property is situated on the edge of the industrial estate which we think gives a better impression than being stuck in the middle of an industrial estate.

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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.

1.0) Unusual construction

We would say that this metal sheet construction to the roof is unusual for two reasons:-



1.1) Metal sheet construction.

There is a metal sheet beneath the roof (rather than a protective underlayer) which could lead to condensation and/or interstitial condensation.

Steel frame at the top of the photo

Interstitial Condensation Defined

This is where moisture is present within the structure of a building. The more moisture it contains, the bigger the vapour pressure and the a smaller amount moisture, the less vapour pressure.

Condensation Defined

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

We would make a more general comment that we feel that properties that are not particularly energy efficient, such as this one, where there is a large roof void which you will be effectively heating will be more difficult to sell in years to come as energy efficiency moves higher up the agenda. This is already being debated in surveying circles whether energy efficient offices will fetch a premium.

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2.0) Location of property is close to trees.

This building has been built particularly close to the trees. From our discussions with the neighbour all the trees have tree preservation orders (which we believe you suspected). You literally have trees hanging over the top of your roof and they are certainly within what we would term as influencing distance with regard to the roots of the trees going under the property.



Trees close to property at rear

Influencing Distance Defined

This is the distance in which a tree may be able to cause damage to the subject property.



Trees close to property at rear

ACTION REQUIRED: We feel it is essential that you understand how the foundations are built. This information should be obtainable either from the present owners and/or the managing agent and/or the Local Authority. Your legal advisor needs to carry out investigations on this matter and provide us with a set of drawings for us to comment further upon.

Logically the developer may have designed the foundations to accommodate the trees or has put a root barrier in place.

From our experience the property industry is never to assume anything (as we are sure your legal advisor will also concur with) so it is essential that we see a copy of the drawings for further

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comment. We would go further than this and say that your legal advisor should be speaking directly with the architects/engineers of the original construction to get a comment upon how they made allowance for/accommodated for the trees that are so close by.



Trees close to property

3.0) The building is constructed typically for its era.

We have already touched upon this with regard to the roof but we feel it is worth reiterating that there are a lot lower levels of insulation than you would find in a more modern property.



Void above roof – you will be heating Basildon!

Our main concern is the roof void, which is directly above a fairly thin suspended tile which does mean you will be heating the entirety of that roof void (and we would only see heating bills going upwards).

4.0) It may suffer from cold bridging.

The property may suffer from cold bridging due to there being cold elements in the structure and as the steel frame that the roof is formed from and the concrete floor that the first floor is formed from. Where there is cold bridging there is always a risk of interstitial condensation and condensation.

Please see our comments and definitions earlier. Also please see our article on Cold Bridging in the Appendices (the article was written in relation to housing but we feel it is a worthwhile read in relation to this property).

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ACTION REQUIRED: There is very little you can do about this other than to accept that it is a characteristic of this age and type of building.

Please see the Trees Section of this Report.

5.0) Lack of maintenance has caused damage and deterioration

Lack of maintenance has caused damage and deterioration. It is essential that where a property is surrounded by trees the gutters and downpipes are cleared regularly.

We have recently come across what is known as a hedgehog gutter brush system, which is where a hedgehog brush type system is fitting into the gutter to prevent leaves and other matter getting in. Whilst we have not seen this in action it does seem to make good sense although we still think that some cleaning will be needed but is certainly worthwhile trialling.

During the latter part of the survey, when it was raining the rear downpipe was not discharging any rainwater indicating that it is blocked and will be discharging into the structure. Interestingly, the front right hand downpipe was discharging water a resin like substance during the entirety of the



Downpipe no longer connected and seems to be blocked



Residue discharging from front downpipe which we can only assume is from leaves and other debris in the gutters

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survey even when it was not raining!

ACTION REQUIRED:
Regularly clear gutters and downpipes which is easier said than done as we think you will need to have a cherry picker or some sort of similar lifting device to be able to manoeuvre around the trees to get to the gutter. We therefore would recommend provision is made for easier future gutter and downpipe clearing as it will be hard to actually access the gutters due to the trees being in the way on the right hand side and on the rear (all directions given as you face the property)



Close up of rear gutter and downpipe, staining to fascia board which indicates leaks. Note the tree hanging directly over this guttering

5.1) Downpipe not connected.

The rear downpipe is not connected, whilst it did not discharge when it rained we believe that it has done in the past and has contributed to a sinking of the ground adjacent to it.

Our concern is that the swan neck pipe fitting that is missing does not normally come loose and it looks like it may have been removed due to the drains being blocked.

ACTION REQUIRED: You need a closed circuit TV camera report on the drainage in this property.

Please see the Gutters and Downpipes Section of this Report.



Rear downpipe not connected



Ground adjacent to rear downpipe sinking

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6.0) Windows and doors deterioration

The finish/protective coating on the windows is starting to deteriorate and fade giving a poor quality look.

We spoke to the adjoining owner about the windows and he advised that they were not of a particularly good quality in his experience of trying to maintain them. He said that he was aware that one of the properties that was up for sale/lease had some work carried out to the windows but they now looked exactly as they had done previously.

On a more general comment we noted that the windows do not have trickle vents, which means that when the windows are shut there is no natural air ventilation circulating although we were pleased to see you do have the ability to open your own window.

Trickle Vents Defined

Small vents to the windows to allow air movement inside the property to stop a build up of fumes or humidity.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend budgeting for replacement windows.

Please see the Windows and Doors Section of this Report.



Front door paintwork fading



Close up of front door paintwork fading

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7.0) Dampness staining to some of the ceiling tiles

We noticed some dampness staining to a variety of the ceiling tiles which we think can relate to two things:-

Plumbing leaks particularly where the stains are on the ground floor ceilings but on the first floor level we think they may also relate to condensation problems which we have mentioned; please see our comments with regard to the roof.



Signs of water leaks in ceiling system

8.0) Car Park

The car park top surface is deteriorating and there are also signs of root penetration from the nearby trees. There also seems to be a lack of drainage to the property other than the running gully to the centre which we are not sure if the car park runs towards?!



Car park unmarked and deteriorating

ACTION REQUIRED:
Discussions to take place with the owners of the trees generally as they are starting to cause damage to the car park. We are advised by the adjoining owner that the trees are managed by Glenny who carried out your original report.

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Please see the Outside Areas Section of this Report.



Central running gully to car park area

9.0) Un-adopted roads

Your legal advisor advises that the roads are un-adopted to the property which means that you not only have a responsibility for their maintenance and the drainage underneath the roads but also you will have liability with regard to keeping them in good order.

ACTION REQUIRED: This is normally managed by the Estate Management Company, you should check with Glenny's to see if this is the case in this instance and what proportion of re-charge you are liable for.

Please see the Outside Areas Section of this Report.

10.0) Request for further information

10.1) Foundations, clay soil and trees close to the property.

The combination of trees close by and clay soil we would say is always considered a high risk purchase. We mentioned the trees in some instances are literally hanging over the top of the property. Having said that we spoke to the adjoining property owner who advised that in 20 years he was not aware of any major movement to his property.



Trees close to building

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We feel unfortunately the perception of risk may put people of purchasing this property in years to come.

We have included an article in the Appendices relating to Clay which we suggest that you read.

- 10.1.1)** Your legal advisor to contact the Local Authority to see if there is Provisional Building Regulations and Planning Permission drawings available. Permission needs to be sought from the initial owners to receive these, if they are not willing to partake in gathering these documents then we would recommend that you do not proceed with the purchase.

10.1.2) Drains

We would recommend a closed circuit TV camera report of the drains as any movement in the building as a whole is often shown in the drains and equally if there is any damage to the drains and water is getting into the ground then this can cause considerable problems in clay based soil.

- 10.1.3)** Ideally we would like a section of the wall opened up to view the base of the structural steel frame to see if any condensation is occurring at the base of the column which is where problems can arise. (We would not even be surprised if this is actually a concrete frame building with a steel frame roof we simply do not know without opening up the structure).

10.1.4) Arboriculturist report

We could see that maintenance does take place on the trees which we could see where they had been lopped over the years. The problem is that you do not have control over them. There should be an arboriculturist report on the trees and plan of action. Typically we see these plans cover the next five to ten years, we would be interested to see these as we are advised XXX manage the estate they should have this information available.

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ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend requesting from XXX an arboriculturist report on the trees, if they have one and this is assuming that XXX are managing the trees. We would add that we have found in the past it is worth having your own arboriculturist report as you can then use this as a negotiation tool to ensure that the trees are managed correctly.

ANTICIPATED COST: An arboriculturist report typically costs £250 - £500; quotations required.

10.2) Fire safety

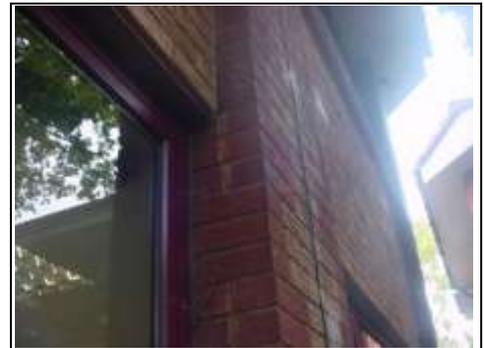
You obviously need to have a Fire certificate for the building which you have responsibility for. This will very much depend upon how you utilise the building and the number of staff as well as which type of work that is carried out within the building.

11.0) Brickwork

For a property that is so close to the trees we were surprised not to see any cracking damage. We note that there are expansion joints around the plasters and there is what we would term brick panelling between again with mastic joints. It could be that these have been so designed to allow for some movement in the structure which is to be expected with a property so close to trees. We can see that some of the brickwork is not to the best of quality and has what is known as butted up.

Butted up defined

This is a term used where brickwork is being put up quite



Repairs to perpendicular brickwork



Raking crack to rear brickwork

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quickly and the ends are just touched with mortar rather than being fully mortared.

This means, as you can see in the photographs, that we can get a pen into the perpendicular ends (known as the perp ends).



Brick panelling around column to right hand side, expansion joint and left brickwork panel close to tree



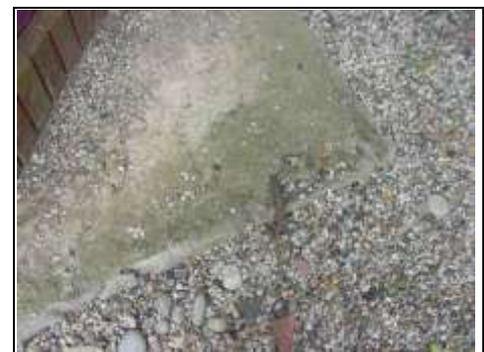
Some of the perpendicular ends have not been butted up

11.1) Quality of construction

Whilst the design of the construction may be good with expansion joints etc being present to allow for the close proximity of the trees (we do not know, this needs to be found out by having a look at the Plans and talking to the original architects/engineers).

We can see the brickwork above which has been butted up and we can also see the reinforcement bar in the neighbouring property which we should not be able to see! This should have a covering of concrete of course.

Whilst it could be carelessness we feel that we do need to bring it to your attention.



Reinforcement visible on neighbouring property indicates poor standard of workmanship



Close up view

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12.0) Drains

To reiterate whilst we have run the taps for fifteen minutes to half an hour and flushed the toilets this is not the same as when the testing the drainage system when building is in use.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend a closed circuit TV camera report on the drains particularly bearing in mind that we have been unable to lift any of the manholes.

ANTICIPATED COST: A few hundred pounds which pales into insignificance if there are major problems with the drains; quotations required.

Please see the Surface Water Drainage Section of this Report.

13.0) Soil shrinkage and movement of brick paves around the perimeter of the property

During the course of our discussions you commented above the brick paves appearance around the property which can be quite off putting and the movement in the soil too. Whilst this is partly due to clay soil and the lack of maintenance taking place we have also come across this problem where the soil that has been dug out has then be used around the site and not been compacted properly which then means you get this type of settlement occurring. However this is often known as initial settlement and is very unusual for no maintenance to have been carried out over such a long period of time which needs to be corrected as they are a trip hazard.



Settlement in brick paves at front of property

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend that all the brick slip trip hazards are levelled out.

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14.0) Adding a French drain

A system we have used in the past we feel may be of benefit here which is a French drain. This would resolve the problem of the weathering of the pointing to the bricks at the front of the property and also would help with the unsightly appearance of the ground moving away to the rear of the property. Whilst we would also add, you do appreciate that when a

building sits on clay soil you will get an element of movement and any property that sits near trees you will also get an element of movement, therefore the combination of both is not ideal.

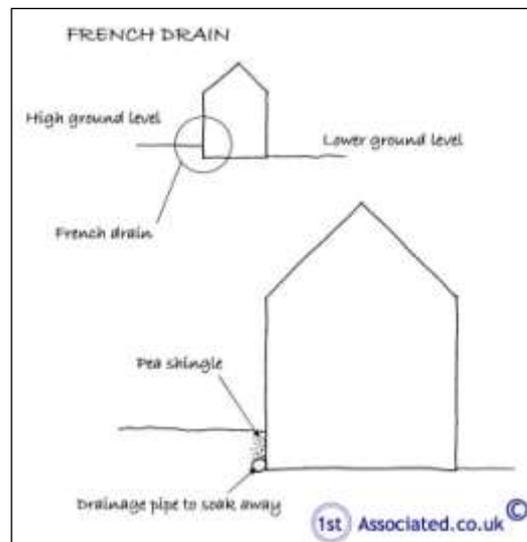
Please see the Trees Section of this Report.



Mortar weathered away



Settlement to rear possible old French drain



French drain

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15.0) Services

15.1) Electrics

We have carried out an earth test on the electrics which proved satisfactory but we would recommend an Institute of Electrical Engineers test and report by an NICEIC approved electrician.



Earth Test ground floor kitchen

The electric units are labelled by Integral XXX and are advised that XXX is the person to speak to XXX with regard to testing. We have left messages but not had a call back as yet.

15.2) Heating

There is a gas fired, floor mounted central heating system to radiators manufactured by Potterton and the make is Kingfisher which was a popular make and parts are still available. The boiler was working at the time of our inspection.



Potterton Kingfisher boiler

The boiler was last serviced by XXX three years ago XXXX and we would recommend that they service the boiler and we would also recommend that they look at servicing the air conditioning units. We have left messages but not had a call back as yet.

Please see the Services Section of this Report.

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16.0) Dilapidations claim by landlord against XXX

From what we can see no dilapidations work has been carried out. If this was originally Let on a typical Full Repairing and Insuring Lease (we appreciate you are now buying the property) the landlord will have had a dilapidations claim against XXX which as far as we can see has then not been spent on the property.

The Ugly

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

There is more than average items in the Bad section which would put many people/businesses off purchasing and as mentioned we feel that this is a high risk purchase and needs to be substantially discounted with regard to the problems and the current market if you are to purchase the property.

We would also comment that when you come to sell it there may be a perceived problem from the point of view of the trees, the clay soil.

In addition in the future we feel that there will be a far greater emphasis on energy efficiency which this building does not have at present although it could be added.

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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.

Electrics

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).

Heating

We would recommend that the system be tested and overhauled before exchange of contracts and that a regular maintenance contract be placed with an approved heating engineer.

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

This type of property is relatively modern (i.e., less than one hundred years old) but nevertheless still requires ongoing maintenance and repair. A budget for such work must be allowed to ensure it is maintained in a good

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condition. This will prevent undue and unnecessary deterioration. However its location close to the trees does mean that it will need quite a bit of maintenance.

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. You should now read the main body of the Report paying particular attention to any “**ACTION REQUIRED**” points.

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 require more information for us to be able to advise you further. Our thoughts are based upon the information we have found is that this is a high risk purchase which is likely to have high maintenance costs and high energy bills. This property will be difficult to sell in the now and in the future due to the perceived problems with the trees being close by.

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



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EXTERNAL

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 entrance area roof.

Main Roof

The main roof is shallow pitched and clad with concrete tiles. From what we could see the concrete tiles are lying level and true and look in reasonable condition considering their age. Sometimes we find that deterioration occurs to the ridge and exposed areas such as the eaves, you should periodically check these areas.

Our concern is with the structure underneath.

We were pleased to see that vents had been added at high level, although ideally we would like to see them at high and low level to create a better flow of air in the roof. We wonder if these had been added at a later date due to condensation problems in the roof.



Main roof with mushroom vents



Restricted view on left hand side and rear main roof

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Entrance Area Roof

The entrance area roof is a small roof which is starting to deteriorate. Our main recommendation would be to add a gutter around the entrance area, we know that you have plans to improve this area and make it a feature.



Entrance area roof, we recommend guttering is added



Close up view of entrance area roof

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

Unfortunately we were only able to see approximately fifty 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 as well as the Executive Summary.

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Protective Underlayer

We cannot see the protective underlayer due to the metal cladding beneath the roof. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary with regard to the likelihood of condensation and interstitial condensation in this area and also the large roof void area that you will be heating.



View within the roof void which can be accessed by lifting a suspended ceiling tile.

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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 property, as far as we could see, does not have a safe roof access. The roof space can be viewed by lifting a suspended ceiling tile and here we could see that there is a structural frame with wiring for the lights etc contained in it and also a water tank. Our main concern in this area is as set out in the Executive Summary.



Steel frame forming roof structure

Ventilation

No noticeable ventilation when we looked into the roof space.

Insulation

There is a lack of insulation at ceiling level. There may well be insulation in the actual pitch of the roof but this does mean that you are warming the roof void. Please see the Thermal Efficiency Section of this Report.

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.

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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.

From ground level the gutters and downpipes looked to be deep flow plastic and appeared to be in poor condition with leaks visible at the joints and we suspect they are full of leaves.

ACTION REQUIRED: You will need a cherry picker to access the gutters, they do need regular cleaning. 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. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary and speak to the next door neighbour who has experience of actually clearing these.



Downpipe

Soil and Vent Pipe

We did not note any soil and vent pipes externally to the walls. We therefore believe that the soil and vent pipes are internally encased within a service duct. Therefore, unfortunately, we were unable to inspect them and cannot comment upon them.

Finally, gutters and downpipes have been inspected from ground level. As it was only lightly raining at the time of the inspection it is not possible to confirm 100 per cent that the rainwater installation is free from blockage, leakage etc. or that it is capable of coping with long periods of heavy rainfall. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary about us thinking that the downpipes are blocked to the rear of the property.

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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.

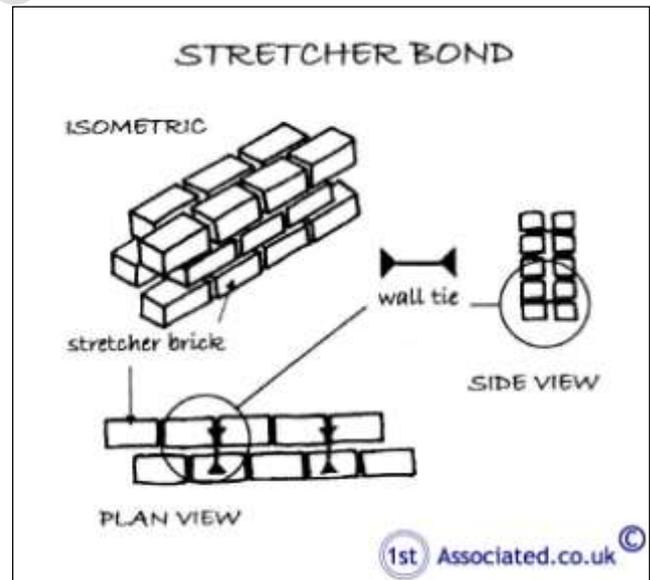
Brickwork

This property is brick finished and laid in a cement mortar, which in turn has been re-pointed in a cement mortar. This is all bedded in what is known as Stretcher Bond.



Brickwork

The term "Stretcher Bond" means that from the outside of the property, you can see a row of the sides of the bricks (known as "stretchers") followed by a course above of the same stretch of bricks set off so the joint is centrally above the "stretcher". This pattern would repeat throughout.



Stretcher bond brickwork

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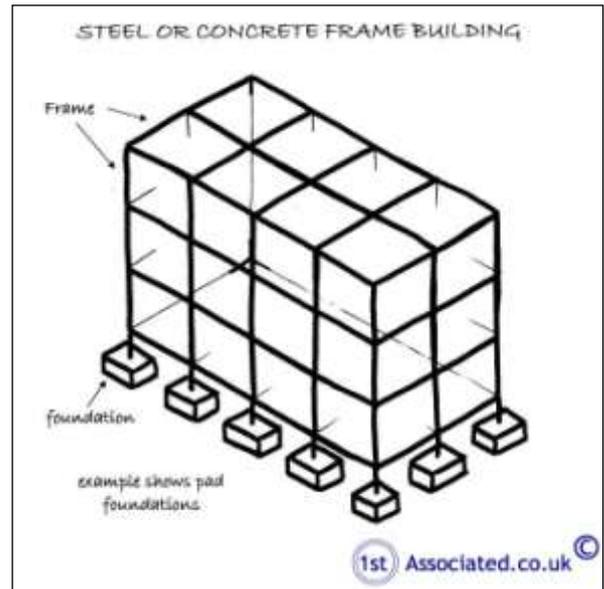
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Structural frame

We believe the property has a structural frame. From what we could see this is steel within the roof although it could be a concrete frame at low level as we have noticed a concrete floor.



Steel or concrete frame building

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 brickwork and plasterwork we cannot comment on their construction or condition. In buildings of this age concrete lintels or metal 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 brickwork / plaster has been finished. We have made various assumptions based upon what we could see and how we think the brickwork / 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

We need more information with regard to the foundations, please see our request for information in the Executive Summary.

London Clay area

This property stands on London Clay, as with the majority of properties in London. It is, therefore, more susceptible than most should drains leak or trees be allowed to overgrow, etc. It is not unusual to have some settlement in London 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

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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.

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TREES

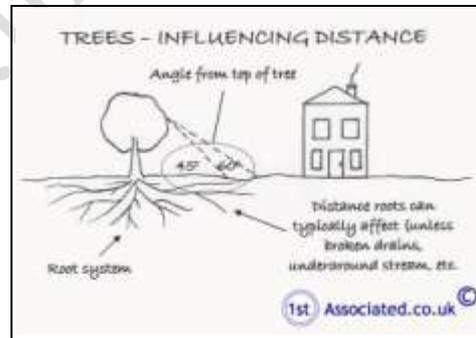
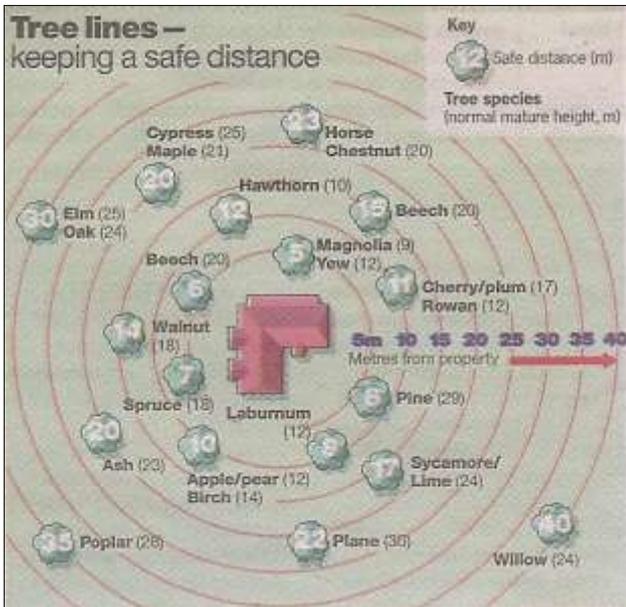
Trees within influencing distance of a property can affect the foundations by affecting the moisture content of the soil.

There are trees surrounding the property particularly to the rear and right hand side (all directions given as you face the property) many/most are within influencing distance of the main property and vegetation requiring cutting back to allow the sunlight to get to the building to dry it and also air to circulate around it.



Trees and vegetation close to property

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



Influencing distance

Influencing Distance Defined

This is the distance in which a tree may be able to cause damage to the subject property. It is not quite as simple as our sketch; it depends on the tree, its maturity, the soil type etc., etc.

Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

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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 could see a damp proof course, please see our comments with regard to the brick and mortar deterioration that is being caused by rainwater bouncing up off the brick paves to the front of the property. Your attention is drawn to the section of the report specifically dealing with dampness.



Damp proof course



Weathering to the bricks and joints, we would recommend a French drain is added

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.

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FASCIAS, 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

The property has painted/stained timber fascias and soffits; these are in average condition. However the gutters are blocked and therefore we suspect there maybe some wet rot.

ACTION REQUIRED: Check fascias and soffits when you clear the leaves and debris from the gutters.



Fascia board stained due to leaking gutter and downpipe

Windows and Doors

The property has modern metal windows that have a coating and incorporate double glazing. The finish is starting to degrade.

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



Fading paintwork to metal windows

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Deteriorating paintwork to metal
window

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. Please also see the Internal Joinery section.

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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 there is minimal external decoration unless you count windows and doors. The main area is the fascias and soffits please see our comments in that section.

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

The ceilings are finished with a suspended ceiling tile. In some areas there are the older rectangular ceiling tiles and in other areas there are more modern square ceiling tiles. We could see damp staining in many areas, both in the ground floor and the first floor. We believe this relates to a combination of pipe leaks and condensation to the pipes and also condensation to the roof.



Suspended ceiling system

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



Staining to ceiling leaking from above



Staining to first floor rectangular ceiling grid system



Ceiling ground floor

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Internal Walls and Partitions

The walls internally are studwork, as far as we could see, you need to check that you have the appropriate firebreaks for an office accommodation. This will depend upon the amount of people you have in the office and the way you use the office.

Perimeter Walls

We believe these to be plaster onto the inner wall of the cavity (rather than dry lined), without opening up the wall we cannot be certain.

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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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

If the floor is solid underfoot, assumed concrete.

First Floor

We have assumed that the first floor construction is concrete, as this is typical in this age of property.



Concrete on the first floor

Finally, we have not been able to view the actual floors themselves due to them being covered with fitted carpets, vinyl floor coverings in the kitchenette areas throughout, etc. We were only able to view the concrete floor by looking up through the suspended ceiling on the ground floor. Ideally we would like to see drawings in relation to the floors, please see our request for information earlier in the Executive Summary. 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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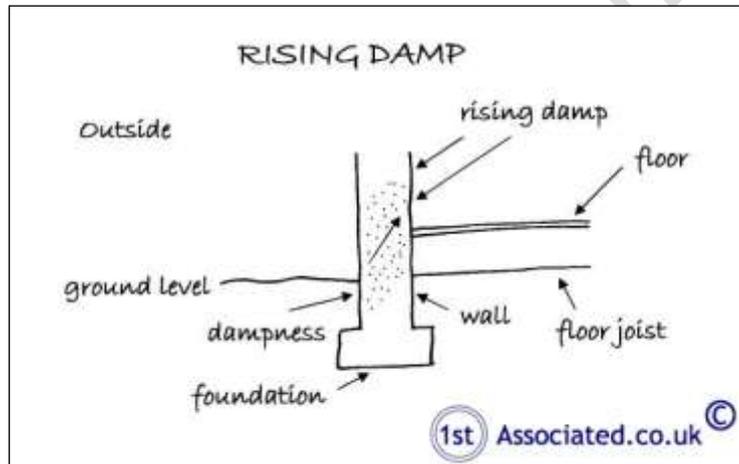
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DAMPNESS

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.



Rising damp

A random visual inspection and tests with a moisture meter have been taken to the perimeter walls and some internal walls. No evidence of any significant rising dampness was detected.

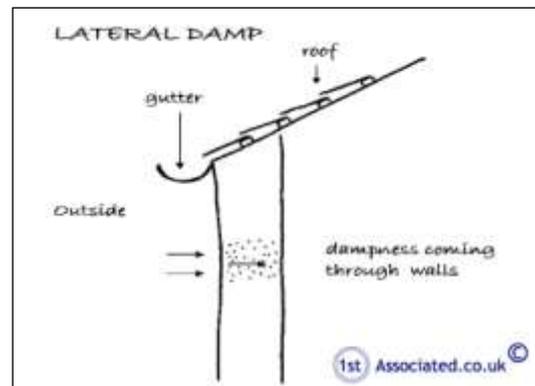


Testing for rising damp

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 internal walls, floors and other surfaces. No evidence of any



Lateral damp

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significant penetrating/lateral dampness was detected.

Condensation

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

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

Finally, effective testing was prevented in areas concealed by heavy furniture, fixtures such as kitchen fittings with backboards, wall tiles and wall panelling. We have not carried out tests to BRE Digest 245, but only carried out a visual inspection.

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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 would not expect any dry rot in this type of construction as timber is not the main element.

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.*

We suspect that there may be some wet rot to the fascia boards but we have not been able to see them clearing from ground level, you need to check them when you carry out work to the gutters.

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.

With this type of structure we would not expect woodworm unless the timber it is brought in with woodworm.

Finally, in this type of property you are more likely to have problems with regard to condensation on the metal and rusting than woodworm problems.

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INTERNAL DECORATIONS

With paints it should be remembered that up to 1992 lead could be used within paint and prior to this most textured paints (commonly known as Artex) contained an element of asbestos up to 1984, so care should be taken if the paintwork looks old and dated.

The internal of the property is decorated to a reasonable standard.

Finally, we would draw your attention to the fact that removal of existing decorative finishes may cause damage to the underlying plasterwork necessitating repairs and making good prior to redecoration.

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THERMAL EFFICIENCY

Up until the mid 1940s we did not really consider insulation in properties, for example it was only in the 1960s that we started putting insulation in the roof and then it was about 50mm, in the 1970s this was upgraded to 100mm. Then we started to think about double glazing and cavity wall insulation. Since then insulation standards have increased considerably and today we are looking at typically using insulation not only in the roof but also in the walls, floors and windows and more recently considerable work has been carried out on how efficient boilers are within properties. Care has to be taken that properties are not insulated disproportionately to the ventilation as this can cause condensation and you should be aware that you need to ventilate any property that is insulated.

Energy Performance Certificates

Energy Performance Certificates are required before a sale completes.

Roof

As we have mentioned throughout the report that the property is not insulated in the roof void which means you have to heat it, it may well be insulated in the roof lining.

Walls

From our external inspection they look to be cavity walls which in this age of property are likely to be insulated.

ACTION REQUIRED: Your legal advisor to check and confirm if the walls are insulated, if not we recommend insulation subject to the wall type being suitable.

Windows

The windows are double glazed although of an older standard and will give reasonable thermal properties.

Services

Service records should be obtained in relation to the boiler, it is an older boiler

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and therefore will not be as efficient as a modern boiler. It is essential for the services to be regularly maintained to run efficiently.

Summary

Assuming the above is correct, this property is poor compared with what we typically see.

Further information can be obtained with regard to energy saving via the Internet on the following pages:

HTTP//www.est.org.uk, which is by the Energy Saving Trust and includes a section on grant aid.

or alternatively www.cat.org.uk

or www.ecocentre.org.uk for an alternative technological view.

Finally, we would advise that an energy rating is likely to be required for future house sales.

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OTHER MATTERS

In this section we put any other matters that do not fit under our usual headings.

Security

No security system was noted. We cannot comment on security as it is a business decision as to whether you feel one is necessary. We are not experts in this field. We suggest you contact a member of NACOSS (National Approval Council for Security Services), obtainable through directory enquiries, or your local Police Force for advice on a security system.

Fire / Smoke Alarms

No smoke detectors were noted. The current Building Regulations require that they be wired into the main power supply. Obviously in a property of this age that is difficult, as it would mean having surface mounted wires or cutting wiring into the plaster. We are not experts in this field.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend, specialist advice on this.

We have seen recently a smoke detector that fits within a light fitting (although we have not used these personally), which is charged when the light is switched on, providing it is switched on a certain number of times a year. We feel this is an excellent idea as it alleviates the problems of batteries running out. We would also advise that if you wish to have any general advice the local Fire Authority are usually happy to help.

Insurance

We would always recommend staying with the existing insurance company, and then if there are any problems you should not have the difficulty of negotiating with two insurance companies passing the blame between each other.

We would refer you to our comments with regard to building insurance

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throughout this report.

Asbestos

In our experience properties that are Let on a Full Insuring and Repairing Lease should have an asbestos report.

ACTION REQUIRED: We recommend that you ask to see one from the vendors if they do not have one available then we would recommend that you have one carried out. We are not asbestos surveyors.

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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 need a test and inspection, please see our comments with regard to the previous companies that have serviced the electrics.

Heating

We have given the name of the companies that have previously serviced the heating at the start of this report. We would recommend that they are used, please be aware of our comments with regard to a large heating bill due to having to heat the roof void.

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

Category II lighting is throughout, you need to check and confirm that this is appropriate for your needs and up to date.

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Fire Regulations

ACTION REQUIRED: You should have a suitable Fire Safety Notice process in place.

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

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.

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.

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Service Pipes

We have not carried out tests in relation to service pipes.

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OUTSIDE AREAS

PARKING

There is parking at the front of the property



Parking without painted lines



Unsuitable drainage to car park

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Boundaries: The left hand boundary (all directions given as you face the property) is usually the responsibility of the subject property and is very overgrown.

Finally, whilst we note the boundaries, these may not be the legal boundaries. Your Legal Advisor should make further enquiries on this point and advise you of your potential liability with regard to any shared structures, boundary walls and fences.

Nearby buildings in area

There are several similar offices nearby.



Sign on XXXX shows some of these buildings have been long term empty units such as units XXX



Units for Let

POINTS FOR YOUR LEGAL ADVISOR

If you wish to proceed with your purchase of the property a copy of this report should be forwarded to your Legal Advisor and the following points should be checked by him/her:

- a) Responsibility for boundaries.
- b) Rights for you to enter onto the adjacent property to maintain any structure situated near or on the boundary and any similar rights your neighbour may have to enter onto your property.
- c) Obtain any certificates, guarantees or approvals in relation to:
 - i) Roof and similar renewals.
 - ii) Central heating installation.
- d) Confirm that there are no defects in the legal Title in respect of the property and all rights associated therewith, e.g., access.
- e) Rights of Way e.g., access, easements and wayleaves.
- f) Liabilities in connection with shared services.
- g) Adjoining roads and services.
- h) Road Schemes/Road Widening.
- i) General development proposals in the locality.
- j) Conservation Area, Listed Building, Tree Preservation Orders or any other Designated Planning Area.

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- k) Confirm from enquiries that no underground tunnels, wells, sewers, gases, mining, minerals, site reclamation/contamination etc., exist, have existed or are likely to exist beneath the curtilage of the site upon which the property stands and which could affect the quiet enjoyment, safety or stability of the property, outbuildings or surrounding areas.
- l) Our Report assumes that the site has not been put to contaminative use and no investigations have been made in this respect.
- m) Any outstanding Party Wall Notice or the knowledge that any are about to be served.
- n) Most Legal advisors will recommend an Envirosearch or a similar product is used by you to establish whether the area falls within a flood plain, old landfill site, radon area etc. If your Legal Advisor is not aware of Envirosearch or similar please ensure that they contact us and we will advise them of it. Any general findings should be brought to their logical conclusion by using appropriate specialist advisers.

However, with regard to Envirosearch or similar general reports please see our article link on the www.1stAssociated.co.uk Home Page.

- o) Any other matters brought to your attention within this report.

LOCAL AUTHORITY ENQUIRIES

Your Legal Advisor should carry out Local Authority searches to ascertain whether the property is a Listed Building and whether it is situated in a Conservation Area. They should also find out any information available with regard to Planning Applications and Building Control. We have not made any formal or informal Local Authority enquiries.

Finally, your Legal Advisor should carry out any additional enquiries they feel necessary and if they find anything unusual or onerous then we ask that they contact us immediately for our further comments.

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It is our policy not to offer a conclusion to ensure that the Building Survey is read in full and the comments are taken in context.

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 XXX

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REFERENCES

Life expectancies of building components

*Published by Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and
Building Research Establishment*

Surveying buildings

*By Malcolm Hollis published by Royal Institution of
Chartered Surveyors Books.*

Investigating defects in commercial and industrial buildings

By Trevor Rushton

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APPENDICES

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Condensation and Cold Bridging – What is Cold Bridging?

What is cold bridging and does it always cause condensation?

We often find cold bridging on certain types of property which unfortunately means that condensation is more likely. Cold bridging is caused by a colder element in the structure allowing coldness to pass through the structure much quicker when warm moist air is present in the property, often caused by things like having a shower or a bath, cooking or washing, particularly if you are drying washing on the radiators. This is also caused by the general climate which results in condensation on the element.



Certain types of buildings are more susceptible to condensation and cold bridging

You often see condensation in properties, for example on a mirror in a bathroom when you have had a shower or a bath. Cold bridging is far worse than condensation as it is caused by an element in the structure which you can do very little to change without great expense.

Typically this will be a lintel. Problems can occur with concrete lintels that were commonly used in the 1970's, and also in more modern, better insulated properties, cold bridging has been known to occur on metal lintels. The problem is what to do about it.



Example of a concrete lintel – can you notice where the cold bridging would be in this photo?



A close up view of the concrete lintel

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When is Cold Bridging Most Likely?

In our experience cold bridging is most likely on properties built in the 1930's to 1980's, most commonly in the 1970's. This is the era when we were just starting to think about insulation and we added insulation into our structures for example with cavity wall insulation or double glazed windows. This meant they were warmer which in effect has meant the significance of a lintel over a door or window being colder and allowing the transfer of coldness becomes much more important. This results in condensation that we commonly see above windows in this age and era of property.



Typical 1970's house



Typical 1970's houses

So what can you do about Cold Bridging?

The difficulty is resolving cold bridging. Normally where condensation is involved if you get the balance of warm and coolness of the air, the air ventilation and movement you can reduce considerably the chances of condensation. Airing the room which seems to have gone out of fashion where you literally open the windows in the morning to air the room is a big step forward.



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Where do we most commonly see cold bridging?

We would answer this in two ways. Firstly, we see as mentioned cold bridging is common in 1970's houses. It's also more common to various other factors.



The main other factor is large families or families with young children where there is a lot of washing going on and often during the winter months this washing is then dried on radiators. This is generally known as the lifestyle of the occupants.

Expert witness cases

We have seen some terrible examples of this. We have been involved in several court cases as expert witnesses where landlords are being taken to court over the condensation being caused by cold bridging. The discussions that then take place in court with us as expert witnesses are, is it a design characteristic or is it a lifestyle characteristic that is causing problems.

Is Cold Bridging a design problem?

We have been involved in many reports on condensation and cold bridging and some legal cases where we have been asked to act as expert witness. Really it's down to the design of the property. There are cold elements in it such as a concrete frame or concrete lintels. You have a disadvantage although, not impossible to stop the condensation it's very hard. It could also be argued that where cold bridging is occurring in a modern property you are getting interstitial condensation which is condensation within the structure which you literally can't see.



1960's concrete frame

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Concrete lintel visible externally
but they are not always visible



Dampness and condensation around
the concrete window lintel

Do lifestyle issues cause condensation?

By lifestyle issues we mean the way the building is being used. We have come across quite a few instances where it is how the property is being used that's causing the problems. This may be due to showers being taken without extractor fans being put on or it may be due to clothes being dried internally, particularly during the winter months. It could be steamy kitchens. Some things can be helped by airing the home by opening the windows and in bathrooms and kitchens you can have extractor fans that are controlled by humidity controls on the fans. So it really is an individual answer in most cases to the problems with the property.



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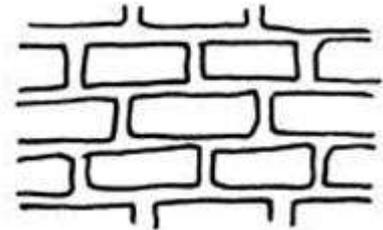
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Problems with clay soils

The magical properties of clay

Clay has several unique properties. It can both cause problems when it is a clay soil that your house is built upon and be useful when it is used for the bricks that your house is made of.

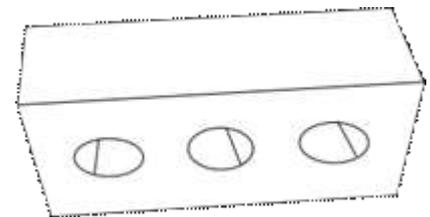


Clay expands and contracts, depending upon its moisture content. It is at its bulkiest at 40% to 60%, however, it changes form if it gets wetter or dryer. It is this change of its bulk that causes problems. When the clay soil gets too wet the clays bulk becomes larger and almost pushes the property out of the ground. This is known as heave. When the clay dries out it becomes dust like, then we get settlement of foundations and subsidence of the building, as its bulkiness has reduced considerably.

Its ability to change size wouldn't be such a problem if it weren't that most London properties are built on clay, and there are many areas of clay throughout the country, such as Bedfordshire and Peterborough, which, interestingly enough, are also known for brick making.

Finding out if your property is built on clay soil

There are several ways of finding out if your property is built on clay soil.



Cracks

If the property has historic cracks it may be that it is built upon clay. It is best to check before you panic. You can do this by looking at maps geological maps or ringing up your friendly insurance broker, as they have a postcode index as to what areas are considered high risk with clay and which aren't. However, we must add that these maps are quite general and that when we were on a course many years ago we asked how these maps were originally made. We were advised that students were employed during their summer holidays, so the reliability of them, it could be

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argued, is limited for the purposes of identifying if clay is under your building, as they were originally produced to help farmers.

Clay test

This is what a good surveyor would do if they had come to investigate problems with your foundations and the owner of the property was happy for them to dig up the garden! We take a lump of soil from the garden; this should be approximately the depth of the foundations. If it is Victorian or Edwardian property it may be a lot less, in a modern property it is likely to be 1 metre to 1.2 metres, to even 1.4 metres deep.

On a summer's day you can leave the lump of soil in the garden for it to dry out in the sun. When it dries out if it becomes powdery and much lower in volume then it is clay. Equally, if it rains and it becomes a larger volume then it is clay. Also, if it not warm you can leave it inside on the radiator. We believe (although we would need to check it) that a growth or reduction of approximately 30% (for some reason 28% is ringing bells). This type of clay is known as shrinkable clay.

Not all clay expands and contracts

We would add that not all clay expands and contracts. The deeper clay tends to be the more stable and harder clay and therefore doesn't expand to the same extent.

Clay that is used for brick making

We thought we would just add something about clay that is made for the use of brick making.

Old soft red bricks

The older bricks, were possibly even sun baked rather than fired, used a softer red clay. They have their own oil so they can affectively cook themselves.

You will also notice that it is the softer red clay bricks, even up the post-war era, that

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tend to be affected first by spalling.

Blue clay

Blue clay is fairly well known. This type of clay tends to be the harder clay and produces harder bricks and you may find bricks made out of this clay. A classic brick, and generally considered the hardest brick, is the Accrington brick and you would have to dig deep for this clay, i.e. normal clay would be dug at about 30 feet, or the metric equivalent!

Yellow or white clay

A yellow or white clay, that is used in a London stock brick, is harder than the soft red bricks but not as hard as the blue clay bricks.

Fletton brick

The one thing that used to confuse us for many years is what is the difference between a Fletton brick, a stock brick and a common brick. A Fletton brick, we believe, has its origins in Fletton near Peterborough, where bricks are produced in such quantities that it became the common name. Stock bricks tend also to be a common brick, but it specifically relates to bricks that don't have their own oils to fire, they would typically have to have methane today and years gone by coal dust to fire them, where as the soft red bricks tend to have their own oil that they can fire in. Therefore, you tend to find many of the older properties have a red brick as they were fired in the sun. The term common brick is a generic name.

Silicone brick

This isn't a brick at all, but, we believe, is made from concrete.

We hope you found the articles of use and if you have any experiences that you feel should be added to this articles that would benefit others, or you feel that some of the information that we have put is wrong then please do not hesitate to contact us (we

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are only human).

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LIMITATIONS

Our limitations are as the agreed Terms and Conditions of Engagement.

CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

The report has been prepared in accordance with our Conditions of Engagement dated XXXX and should be regarded as a comment on the overall condition of the property and the quality of its structure and not as an inventory of every single defect. It relates to those parts of the property that were reasonably and safely accessible at the time of the inspection, but you should be aware that defects can subsequently develop particularly if you do not follow the recommendations.

ENGLISH LAW

We would remind you that this report should not be published or reproduced in any way without the surveyor's expressed permission and is governed by English Law and any dispute arising there from shall be adjudicated upon only by the English Courts.

SOLE USE

This report is for the sole use of the named Client and is confidential to the Client and his professional advisors. Any other persons rely on the Report at their own risk.

ONLY HUMAN!

Although we are pointing out the obvious, our Surveyors obviously can't see through walls, floors, heavy furniture, fixed kitchen units etc. they have therefore made their best assumptions in these areas.

As this is a one off inspection, we cannot guarantee that there are no other defects than those mentioned in the report and also that defects can subsequently develop.

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WEATHER

It was raining at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

Our weather seems to be moving towards the extremities from relatively mid range. A few interesting facts in Britain over the years have been:

2000	Wettest year on record at the time
2003	Driest year on record at the time
2004	Wettest August on record at the time
2004	Boscastle was the worst flash flood on record at the time
2005	Third driest year on record at the time
2006	Warmest year recorded on record at the time
July 2006	Hottest July on record at the time
2006	Hottest autumn on record at the time
2007	Warmest spring on record at the time
2007	Wettest June on record at the time
April '06-April '07	Hottest 12 months on record at the time
2008	
2009	Third wettest August since 1956
2010	Heaviest snowfall in march since 1991
	Britain faces one of the coldest winters for 100 years

References BBC News www.bbc.co.uk

NOT LOCAL

It should be noted that we are not local surveyors to this area and are carrying out the work without the benefits of local knowledge on such things as soil conditions, aeroplane flight paths, and common defects in materials used in the area etc.

EMPTY PROPERTY

The property was empty at the time of our survey, we were therefore not able to carry out our usual question and answer session or have our questionnaire filled out.

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INSPECTION LIMITED

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been very limited due to not opening up the floors or walls together with not having site of further information required, please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

BUILDING INSURANCE

We do not advise with regard to building insurance. You need to make your own enquiries. Some areas may have a premium, some buildings may have a premium and some insurers may be unwilling to insure at all in certain areas. You need to make your own enquires prior to committing to purchase the property. Please be aware the fact a building is currently insured does not mean it can be re insured.

We would comment that non-insurability of a building we feel will affect value. It is therefore essential to make your own enquiries with regard to insurance before committing to purchase the property and incurring fees.

ACTION REQUIRED: You need to contact an insurance company today to make enquiries with regard to insurance on this property.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Our computer system sends two copies of our Terms and Conditions to the email address given to us when booking the survey; one has the terms attached and the other has links to the Terms and Conditions on our website (for a limited time). If you have not received these please phone your contact immediately.

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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.

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INFORMATION ON THE PROPERTY MARKET

We used to include within our reports articles on the property market that we thought would be of interest and informative to you, however we were concerned that in some cases these did not offer the latest information. We have therefore decided to recommend various websites to you, however it is important to realise the vested interest the parties may have and the limits to the information.

www.landreg.org.uk

This records the ownership of interests in registered land in England and Wales and issues a residential property price report quarterly, which is free of charge. The Land Registry is a Government body and records all transactions as far as we are aware, although critics of it would argue that the information is often many months out of date.

www.rics.org.uk

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors offer quarterly reports via their members. Although this has been criticised as being subjective and also limited, historically their predictions have been found to be reasonably accurate.

www.rightmove.com.uk

Rightmove is now gaining as a good source of commercial properties.

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