

# COMMERCIAL BUILDING SURVEY

Reading, Berkshire. RG1



**Mr X**

Prepared by:

**INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS**

Marketing by:

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## **CONTENTS**

INTRODUCTION  
REPORT FORMAT  
SYNOPSIS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION

### **EXTERNAL**

PARAPET WALLS  
ROOF COVERINGS  
ROOF STRUCTURE  
GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES AND SOIL AND VENT PIPES  
EXTERNAL WALLS  
WINDOWS AND DOORS  
EXTERNAL DECORATIONS

### **INTERNAL**

CEILING, WALLS, PARTITIONS AND FINISHES  
FLOORS  
DAMPNESS  
INTERNAL JOINERY  
TIMBER DEFECTS  
INTERNAL DECORATIONS  
THERMAL EFFICIENCY  
OTHER MATTERS

### **SERVICES**

ELECTRICITY  
GAS  
PLUMBING AND HEATING  
TOILETS  
MAIN DRAINS

### **OUTSIDE AREAS**

PARKING  
EXTERNAL AREAS

POINTS FOR LEGAL ADVISOR

### **APPENDICES**

LIMITATIONS  
ELECTRICAL REGULATIONS  
GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE PROPERTY MARKET

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# **INTRODUCTION**

We have been asked to inspect and prepare a Report and Schedule of Condition for XXXX Reading, Berkshire. RG1

We visited the property on XXXX

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

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 is usually one of the largest financial outlays made (particularly when you consider the interest you pay as well).

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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3

# REPORT FORMAT

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

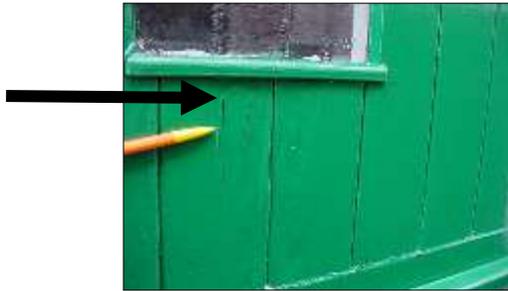
## **GENERAL/HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

*This has been given in the survey where it is considered it will aid understanding of the issues, or be of interest. This is shown in "italics" for clarity.*

## **TECHNICAL TERMS DEFINED**

Throughout the Report, we have endeavoured to define any technical terms used. This is shown in "Courier New" typeface for clarity.

## **A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS**



We utilise photographs and sketches to illustrate issues or features. In some photographs a pencil has been used to highlight a specific area. The sketches are not 100% technically accurate; we certainly would not expect you to carry out work based upon the sketches alone.

## **ORIENTATION**

Any reference to left or right is taken from the front of the property, including observations to the rear, which you may not be able to physically see from the front of the property.

## **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 property.

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.

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4

## **SYNOPSIS**

### **SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION**

This is a three storey property with the top floor situated within a mansard roof. There is a lower ground floor with a small amount of parking at the front of the property.

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

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5

# EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front elevation



Left hand side View



Rear view



Rear view

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# **FACILITIES**

## **Ground Floor**

The ground floor consists of:

- Reception
- Toilet for the less able / disabled
- Open plan area to the middle
- Two side offices (left hand side and front right hand side)

## **First Floor**

The first floor consists of:

- Two offices to the left hand side, one with walk through access to the other
- Open plan area
- Office to the right hand side

## **Top Floor**

- Office to the left hand side
- Office in the middle
- Office to the right hand side with a kitchenette

## **Outside Areas**

Small area at the front of the property for parking together with small underground car park to the rear.

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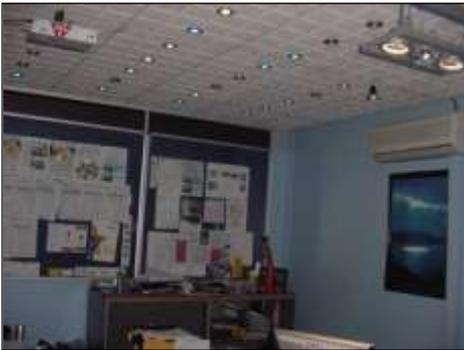
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7

# INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

The following photos are of the internal of the property to help you recall what it looked like on the day before you purchased the office. We have not necessarily taken photographs of each and every room.

## Ground Floor



Left hand side office



Middle Office



Right hand side office



Toilet for less able / disabled



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**First Floor**



Staircase



Reception



WC used for storage



Left hand side office



Middle office



Right hand side office



WC

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**Top Floor**



Left hand side office



Middle office



Office right hand side



Stairs and lift



WC

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# **SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION**

## **External**

Main Roof:	Asphalt roof on a timber decking
Gutters and Downpipes:	Internal
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Internal
Walls:	Stretcher Bond finish, we believe the property has been built on a steel structural frame with concrete floors (assumed)
Windows and Doors:	Timber and double glazed

## **Internal**

Ceilings:	Suspended tile system and plasterboard(assumed)
Walls:	
Internal:	Studwork partitions (assumed)
Floors:	
Ground Floor:	Re-enforced concrete (assumed)
First Floor:	Re enforced concrete (assumed)
Top Floor:	Re-enforced concrete (assumed)

## **Services**

Not inspected – you are recommended to have a separate Services Report.

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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11

## **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 450 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 offices we believe there are three elements you need to consider, these are:

### **The Business**

Only you can decide upon the true potential of the business and its value to you; although we do recommend taking independent advice on the value of the business and the value of the property.

### **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, we have not seen a copy of the Lease.

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12

## **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.

Generally we found the offices in below average condition. We feel that you need to come to agreement on the work recommended in this report before we can recommend you to take a Lease on and receive substantial long term reduction on rent equivalent to the cost of work outlined in this report.

We have divided the Executive Summary into 'The Good', 'The Bad' and 'The Ugly', to help distinguish what in our mind are the main issues.

## **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!*

- You have achieved change of use to an educational establishment.
- The space internally is reasonably adaptable, subject to Local Authority and Landlords approval
- From our understanding your business is relatively new, there is room to grow within the building and you can budget for improvements as you proceed.

We are sure you can think of other things to add to this list.

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13

## 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) Flat roof – renown for problems

This particular roof is very flat, there was water sitting on it at the time of our inspection.

When we opened up the suspended ceiling system we noted that rainwater was getting in via various places for example the drainage outlet point and an internal point.

We noted there had been a replacement of suspended ceiling tiles in the offices indicating that this is likely to have been a long term problem.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend the roof is excluded from the Lease. There is a substantial repair liability associated with repairs of this type of roof.



Water sitting on roof



Roof general view



Leak around downpipe drain from roof



Damp in timber Left hand side starting to affect steel beam below

Please see the Roof Section of this Report.

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14

## 2) Lack of maintenance and DIY quality redecoration

There is a general lack of painting externally for example we could see moss growing on the majority of windows. We believe they have not been painted due to the difficulty of painting them and high level access being required for example to paint the upper windows of this property a large amount of expensive scaffolding would be required as far as we can see.



Moss to window frames

We noted internally where there has been painting carried out, and you should bear in mind there is normally a Lease clause stating at the end of a Lease everything is redecorated. The redecoration that has been carried out is very messy and it has been painted onto window frames and skirtings. We often find that this sort of painting is harder to put right than no painting at all.



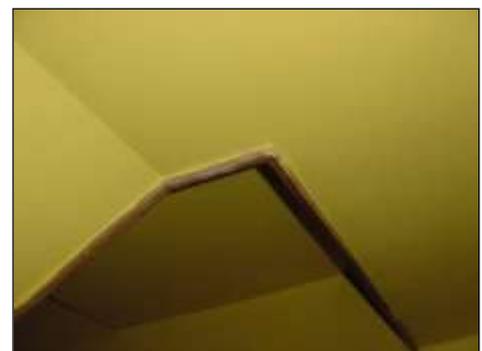
Moss to window frames

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Complete redecoration externally and internally would be a normal Landlord's requirement under a standard Full Repairing and Insuring Lease.



Damage to joinery on the staircase

**ANTICIPATED COST:** We expect this to be in the region of tens of thousands of pounds as there is likely to be a need for scaffolding externally, this is a considerable liability and needs to be negotiated out of the Lease.



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Yellow painted staircase area which would not meet with most Landlord's approval.

15



Painting over window frame



Section of wall that has not been painted



Badly painted walls where paint is onto skirting

Please see the External and Internal decorations Section of this Report.

### 3) Dampness coming through the walls

There is a defective box gutter means that rainwater is discharging down the walls as well as into the walls.

This is causing pattern staining externally and dampness to get into the property in some areas, particularly where there is a lack of sunlight which appears to be at the rear of the property. There are spot areas of dampness typically with readings of double what we would normally expect.



Box gutter

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You need to exclude the dampness from the Lease.



Pattern staining/ leaking box gutter

Please see the Walls Section of this Report.

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Checking and finding dampness in the walls



Pattern staining/dampness from a leaking box gutter, photograph taken during rainfall

4) **We have not carried out a check of the services**

The Lease you would typically have would have:-

An Asbestos report

Design Development Appraisal Report (DDA)

Services Report such as Institute of Electrical Engineers Report on the electrics, service records and reports on the lift and fire safety of the property.



Leaking single panelled radiator

**ACTION REQUIRED:** These all need to be provided in working order by the present tenant/landlord and excluded from the Lease

It is always a risk moving into an unoccupied property such as this where you may find the water supply is not suitable and/or part of the system is not working satisfactorily.

For example we noted you have single panelled radiators throughout the property for heating, these may not warm the property as quickly as you would wish.

Please see the Services Section of this Report.

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5) **Lift not working**

We would recommend you to set aside a sum of money to bring the lift back into working order.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You advised us that you had been informed of a quote of around £13,000 had been obtained, we have not seen a copy of this.

Please see the Services Section of this Report.



Lift not able to access and not working at time of inspection

6) **Tiled Entrance staircase and ramp**

You have a very slippery entrance staircase and ramp that has used what we believe to be, an internal tile, which is very slippery and not correct to be used for a Public building. From our experience, on the day of the survey when it rained was that the tiled area became very slippery when wet, we would class this as a big Health and Safety hazard.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend all the tiles are replaced with a more appropriate less slippery tile before the property is used by the Public.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £10,000 to £15,000 for the existing tiles to be removed and relaying new appropriate tiles; quotations required.

Please see the External areas Section of this Report.



Slippery steps and ramp, damage to tiles.



Slippery tiled surface to ramp at entrance

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18

## 7) **Parking**

There is minimal parking at this property, only you can decide whether this is appropriate for your clients or not.

Please see the Outside Areas Section of this Report.

## **The Ugly**

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

There are more issues in the Bad section than we would normally find, particularly bearing in mind the age of the property. A considerable amount of work is required to bring the property up to average standards; this will be a considerable liability under a normal Full Repairing and Insuring Lease.

We have not seen a Dilapidations Schedule that has been served to the outgoing tenants but it is normal for them to be carrying out external and internal redecorations and for them to have checked and providing service records for example to the lift, electrics, asbestos registers etc, etc....

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19

## **Other Items**

Moving on to more general information.

### **Maintenance**

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. From the condition that the property is in we can see that next to no money over the years has been spent on maintenance.

### **Purchase Price/Lease Price**

We have not been asked to comment upon the purchase/Lease price.

### **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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20

## **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:

The office is not to the normal standards that we find office buildings and there is a higher level of risk than normal. We would recommend you negotiate strongly on reducing the purchase/lease price and carrying out the exclusions recommended in our Report earlier in the Full Repairing and Insuring Lease.

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 estate 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 estate 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 the Report and contact us on any issues that you require further clarification on.

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21

# **MORE ABOUT THE REPORT FORMAT**

Just a few more comments about the Report format before you read the actual main body of the Report.

## **TENURE**

We have assumed that the property is a Full Repairing and Insuring Lease.

## **COMMERCIAL AGENTS – FRIEND OR FOE?**

It is important to remember that the commercial agents are acting for the seller (usually known as the vendor) and not the purchaser and therefore are eager to sell the property (no sale – no fee!). We as your employed Independent Chartered Surveyor represent your interests only.

## **TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT/LIMITATIONS**

This report is being carried out under our terms of engagement for Commercial Building Surveys, as agreed to and signed by yourselves. 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 with your business purchase. If you require any further information please telephone us.

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22

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



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23

# EXTERNAL

## ROOF COVERINGS

*The Roof Coverings 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.*

We will consider this roof in two areas; the main roof and the flat roof.

### Main Roof – Flat roof

*Whilst these roofs are called "flat", present building regulations and good building practice presently requires a minimum fall of 12 degrees.*

*Flat roofs are formed in a variety of materials. Difficulties can arise when the water is not discharged from the roof but sits upon it, as this can soon lead to deterioration which flat roofs are renowned for.*

The main roof is a flat roof which is formed in Asphalt. Asphalt is a good material for flat roofs and lasts 20 years plus and can be patch repaired. This roof has a protective and reflective silver paint (it reflects the heat and reduces deterioration)



Ponding on the roof, photo taken during rainfall

The problem with this flat roof is that it is too flat and there are areas where water is sitting on it known as ponding. We could see that there have been various repairs to the roof over the years yet from our view internally we could see that the roof is still leaking. This roof is a considerable liability.



General view of roof with internal gully

#### GENERAL INFORMATION ON ASPHALT

Asphalt is a mixture of bitumen and inert mineral matter. If laid upon a suitable base it is usual to expect a life of approximately 25 years from new.

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** We have recommended that this flat roof is excluded from your Lease.



General view of roof with ponding

We have been able to access the flat roof and viewed it standing on the flat roof.

The latest Building Regulations require flat roofs to be ventilated. Building Regulations are not retrospective but the reason for the requirement is to make sure that any moisture that enters the roof construction is dispelled by way of ventilation. We would suggest that if the opportunity arises ventilation should be provided. This will stop the possibility of fungal growth above the ceiling in the flat roof area.

Also it could not be established if there is insulation within the roof or a vapour barrier, without the vapour barrier and combined with inadequate ventilation there will be an increase in the risk of wet or dry rot.

## **Parapet Walls**

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

Around the perimeter of the roof there is a parapet wall with a metal copping. We could see that this is defective in several areas with metal copping joints opening up. We could also see old repairs in some areas and repairs to the parapet wall itself.



General view parapet wall

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Finally, we have made our best assumptions on the overall condition of the parapet walls from the sides we could see properly.



Repair to the parapet wall



Close up parapet wall – opening up of joint between the copping

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26

# **ROOF STRUCTURE**

*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.*

## **Access to the Flat roof**

Access to the flat roof is via a ladder concealed in the ceiling then you come up through and into a glass reinforced plastic (GRP) unit which also holds the water tanks. The glass reinforced plastic unit could do with a clean, it is suitably water tight considering its purpose.



Flat roof with GRP structure



Access to the flat roof



Close up of the GRP structure

## **Roof Access**

The main roof structure is accessed with the moving of the ceiling tiles and viewing via torch light. We have removed a sample of three tiles from the top floor to view the ceiling.



Roof viewed by moving ceiling tiles

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## **Roof Structure**

We have viewed the roof structure in three places.

We could see the majority of the roof was supported by timber joist spanning from the front to the rear with I Beams adding additional support. We believe this mixture of joists and I Beams is typically used to provide an economical roof structure.



I beam and joists

Please note our view of the roof structure was via removing a few ceiling tiles and as such we have a limited view.

## **Roof Timbers**

We found the roof timbers generally in slightly below average condition considering their age mainly due to the dampness. We have inspected the roof structure for:

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



Roof timbers

Our examination was limited by the general configuration of the roof and that we were viewing it via the ceiling roof lights. As mentioned what we could see was generally found to be in slightly below average condition due to the rainwater leaks from the asphalt roof above.



Leak to drainage outlet

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The leaks coming through the roof look to be long term leaks and we therefore believe they should be excluded from the Lease. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend adding ventilation. The only way to be 100 per cent certain is to have the roof cleared and checked.

### **Compartmentalisation / Fire breaks**

As far as we can see the roof structure has not been sub-divided and/or compartmentalised, this would normally be carried out to minimise the spread of fire in a worst case scenario. When you have lectures in the top floor room you need to consider you literally have a timber ceiling directly above your head therefore appropriate fire safety measures should be carried out.

### **Water Tanks**

The water tank is located within a GRP preformed box on the roof, which also forms the access to the outside of the roof these can be affected by cold and hot weather



Water tank

We would always recommend that water tanks be drained down and cleared of any debris etc. (we have seen dead birds and other unmentionable things in these tanks). As you are cleaning your teeth with this water it is best that it is as clean as possible!

### **Ventilation**

As mentioned previously we could not see any ventilation to the roof.

### **Insulation**

No insulation could be seen meaning that any heat that you are using will be going straight out through the roof. Please see the Thermal Efficiency 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. With this type of roof

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29

it is very limited. 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 box gutters are formed in lead and are leaking.

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



Box gutter



The guttering runs set into the brickwork which is not ideal as leaks can actually come inside the property before you notice them externally

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30

## Soil and Vent Pipe

The soil and vent pipes are internal, they are within a service duct adjacent to the lift, access to them is at some areas. We noted a lot of stored items which should be cleared out and removed by the present occupiers or yourself. We have flushed the WC's as we have passed through the building but this is not the same as having an occupied building. The service ducts are visible at roof level and are plastic.



Soil and vent pipe within service duct on the top floor

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would comment on taking on a property that is not currently occupied with regard to the services. You need to have a full service inspection before you purchase the property or take the risk and have a plumber on standby when you access the property.



Services terminating at high level

Finally, gutters and downpipes have been inspected via the service duct and at roof level.

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31

# WALLS

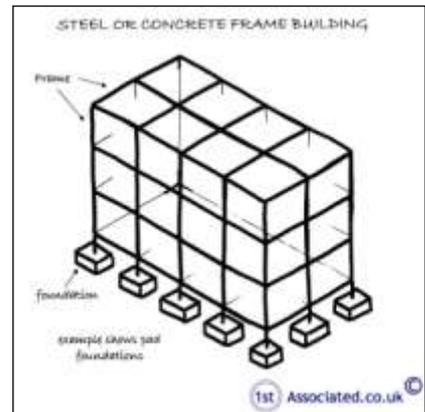
*External walls need to perform a variety of functions. These include supporting upper floors and the roof structure, resisting dampness, providing adequate thermal and sound insulation, offering resistance to fire and being aesthetically presentable.*

It has not been possible in this particular instance to confirm the structure, we believe it is likely to be built on a structural frame. As we have not opened up the structure we cannot confirm this. Equally it could be built with load bearing brickwork within the sides and a structural frame. Assuming it is built on a structural frame it is likely to look like the frame in the sketch below. The brickwork is effectively a cladding in this type of construction.

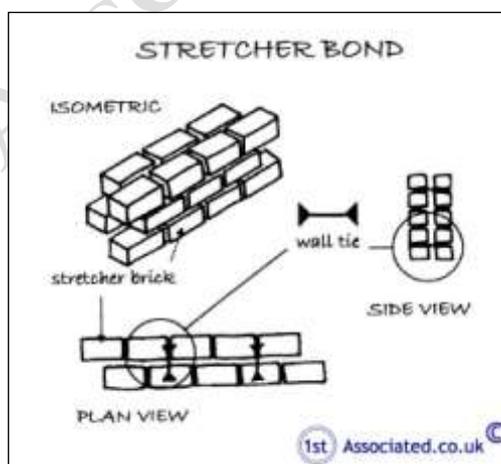
## Brickwork

The Stretcher Bond brickwork and pointing is in average condition where we can see it. The brickwork is likely to be cladding on a structural frame.

The inner walls are likely to be formed in blockwork and bonded to the brickwork outer walls with wall ties. This gives the impression of a traditional brick built property externally with the concrete structure visible at each floor level



Steel or concrete frame



Stretcher bond brickwork



Stretcher Bond Brickwork

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### **Pattern staining**

Pattern staining is occurring to the brickwork where there are leaks from the box gutter.



Pattern staining on brickwork

### **Vertical tiling**

To the top of the building there is vertical tiling to form part of the mansard roof.

The mansard is clad with a man-made slate.



Vertical tiling

### **Loose slates**

There are a number of loose and missing slates

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Loose and missing slates need to be secured we would also recommend that the moss is removed at the same time as this is coming away and blocking the box gutter.



Loose slate

Finally, the external walls have been inspected visually from ground level and/or randomly.

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Where the window and door lintels are concealed by slates /brickwork / 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 slates / brickwork / plaster has been finished. We have made various assumptions based upon what we could see and how we think the slates / 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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34

# **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.*

In properties of this type the foundations will have been specially designed. We can only assume that the original design met the Building Control standards of the day.

## **Foundations**

We would expect this type of property to have piled/pad foundations, without opening up the structure we cannot be certain. However, from what we could see it has stood the test of time with no visible signs of movement to the walls.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your legal advisor to check and confirm the property had Planning Permission and Building Regulations Approval.

## **Building Insurance Policy**

With a Lease property the insurance is normally carried out by the Landlord and recharged to yourselves. You should ensure that the Building Insurance Policy contains adequate provision against any possibility of damage arising through subsidence, landslip, heave etc.

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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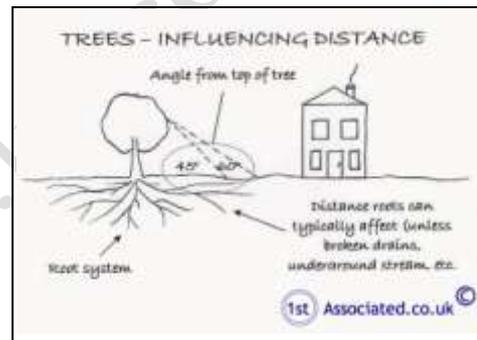
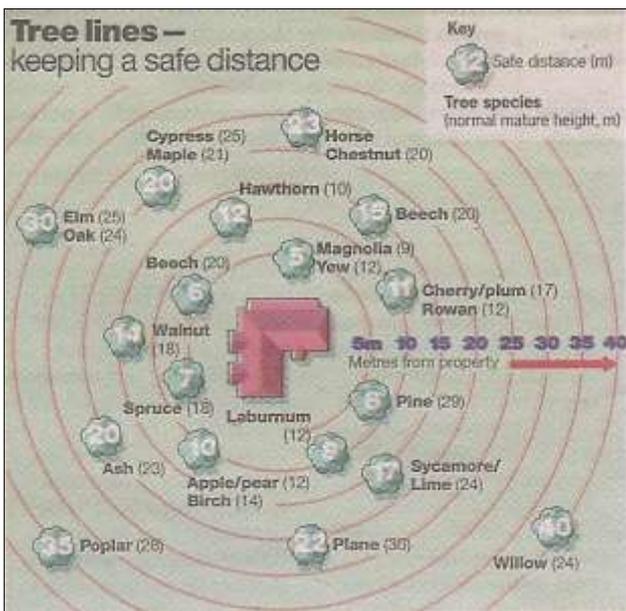
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35

# TREES

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

There are no trees within your outside areas that are within influencing distance of the property.



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.*

We could not see a damp proof course (DPC) clearly visible around the property but we could however see weep holes which does indicate that there is a cavity tray which allows any dampness in the walls to be transferred at the base of the property. Without opening up the structure we cannot comment further on this.



Weep holes

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, in properties of this age it is unlikely that a damp proof course would have been built in originally. However, later extensions often have damp proof courses as we are advised with this property

Please see the Dampness Section of this report.

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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37

# WINDOWS AND DOORS

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

*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.*

## Windows and Doors

The windows are predominantly casement windows which are painted timber and double glazed with trickle vents. The windows are in below average to average condition.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary. Repair and redecoration work is required

### Trickle Vents Defined

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

We would draw your attention to the fact that sealed double glazed units can fail, particularly as a result of poor workmanship during installation. Failure of the seal leads to condensation between the two panes of glass and simply replacing the affected units may not provide a satisfactory long term solution.

Enquiries should be made as to the existence of any transferable guarantees. Generally it is considered that double glazed units have a life of about ten years.



Timber casement windows with trickle vents



Moss on the windowsill



Moss on window

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38

Finally, we have carried out a general and random inspection of the fascias and soffits and windows and doors. 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 fascias and soffits and windows and doors. 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.*

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary with regard to External Decorations.

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 Windows and Doors section.

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40

## INTERNAL

### CEILINGS, 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 property has three types of ceiling finish internally to the office areas these are:-

an exposed suspended ceiling, the tiles are rectangular

in some areas particularly the toilets there is a hidden suspended ceiling system

in other areas such as the staircase there is a

plasterboard finish

#### Plasterboard Defined

The usual name for Gypsum plasterboard, which is building board with a core of aerated gypsum, usually enclosed between two sheets of heavy paper, used as a dry lining.

We noted within the suspended ceiling system that there are signs of old leaks and also areas where tiles have been misplaced indicating



Suspended ceiling system with exposed grid



Suspended ceiling system, square tiles



Plasterboard finish



Suspended ceiling system, dampness staining

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41

that the roof is leaking. In addition to this there is also impact damage to some of the ceiling tiles.

The suspended ceiling system has been opened up in a few places

### **The ceiling to the outside car park area**

There is a sprayed insulation to the underside of the car area. Sprayed insulation is typically used where there is coldness to the ground floor. We have come across cases where this has been so bad that people have decided to move out of the property due to the wind chill occurs beneath the building.



Car park ceiling

### **Internal Walls and Partitions**

The internal walls have a lightweight studwork which divides the areas into offices. In some areas there is a plastic vision, as far as we can see none of them reach through the ceiling and therefore there are no fire breaks and therefore these partitions are not fire resistant.



Internal partition

### **Repair required to partition**

The staircase and lift area should be sealed. We noted that there is a hole in the studwork adjacent to the lift on the first floor this needs to be filled and made fire proof. The property needs to be double checked to ensure there are no other such holes as the staircase/lift area can effectively act as a chimney transferring fire from one floor to the next and therefore requires additional fire protection.



1<sup>st</sup> floor landing hole in studwork partition in cupboard

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42

## Perimeter Walls

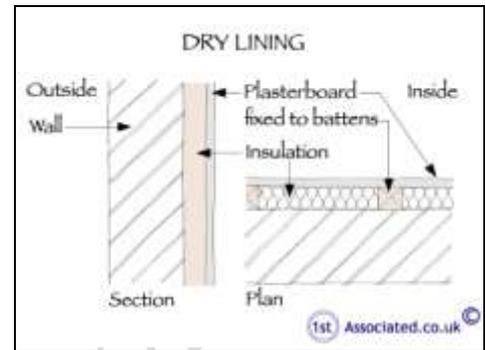
The perimeter walls are plaster finished in some cases they are dry lined or false walls for example on the first floor level where the mansard roof is.

### Hairline cracking

In some areas there was hairline cracking noted. We would specifically identify the hairline cracking on the first floor.

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.



Dry lining



Hairline cracking – photo shows cracking to the front right hand side of the property

# **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.*

## **All Floors**

The ground floor, first floor and top floor as far as we can see are formed in concrete with a carpet tile finish.

Some of the carpet tiles need replacing.

We have not opened up the floors or lifted carpet tiled floors.

Finally, we have not been able to view the actual floors themselves due to them being covered with fitted carpets, floor coverings, and tiles 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.



Concrete floor as viewed from the ground floor



Carpet and carpet tiles throughout in some areas this is heavily stained and needs replacing

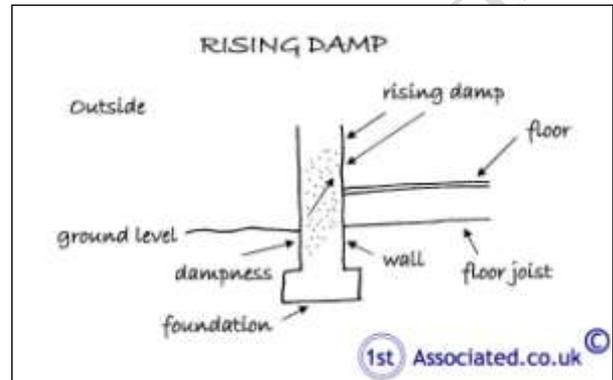
# DAMPNESS

*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.*

*There is now much debate over whether true rising damp does exist after research over a 10 year period.*

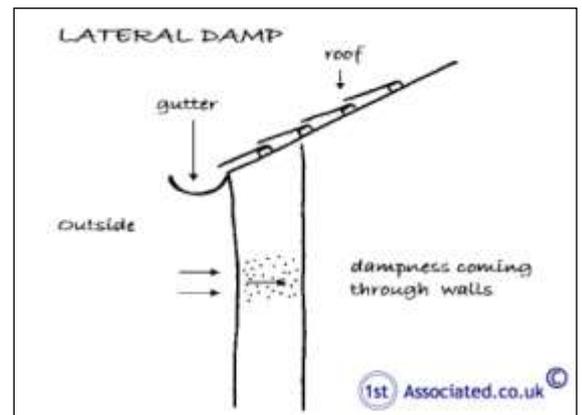


Rising damp

No evidence of any significant rising dampness was detected in the areas checked.

## 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.*



Lateral damp

We noted some areas of lateral dampness, when testing with the electronic damp meter; we believe this relates to pattern staining and the missing tiles.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see the Executive Summary. On a separate note you do need to resolve this matter.



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Testing for damp

45

## **Condensation**

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

At the time of the survey we could see no obvious visual signs of condensation, however, it depends upon how you utilise the building.

Finally, effective testing was prevented in areas concealed by heavy furniture, fixtures such as kitchenette 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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46

# INTERNAL JOINERY

*This section looks at the doors, the stairway, the skirting boards and the kitchen to give a general overview of the internal joinery's condition.*

## Doors

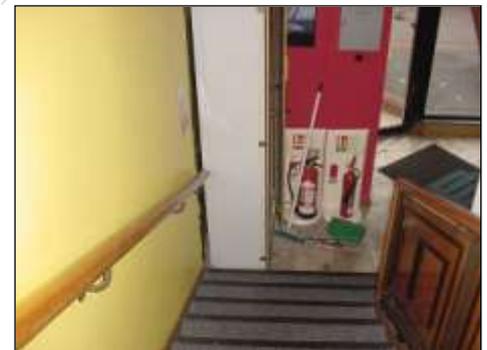
It is very difficult to give specific advice, without going through the plans in detail and seeing a written description on how you intend to utilise the building.

As a general rule a fire door has a door closer and an intumescent strip to help reduce the spread of fire and smoke.



Fire door

Protection needs to be given to high risk areas and escape areas, such as staircase areas and the lift as these act as chimneys allowing the fire to spread from floor to floor.



Concrete staircase

## Staircase

The property has concrete stairs which are carpeted with nosings.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend each stair is individually checked to ensure the carpet is secured and the stair nosing is secure.

## Kitchenette

There is a small kitchenette area to the top floor right hand office. We noted this has a long drainage run, this looks to have been fitted afterwards and may be subject to occasional blockages. The cold taps have been run for approximately five minutes. No build up or back up was noted.

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47

Finally, it should be noted that not all joinery has been inspected. We have viewed a random sample and visually inspected these to give a general overview of the condition. Please also see the External and Windows and Doors Section.

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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.*

In the areas inspected no evidence was found of any significant dry rot, please note our view of the roof structure was limited which is explained elsewhere within this report.

## **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.*

The condition of the windows indicates that there is likely to be some wet rot and will get worse if they are not redecorated. We also noted in the roof decking that there are areas where the roof was leaking and wet rot would be occurring in these areas. Note we could only see a limited amount of the roof structure

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

## **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 the main area that we look for woodworm. In a property this modern the timbers are normally treated against woodworm activity, we would comment that we saw no obvious visual signs of woodworm activity or indeed

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49

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past woodworm activity that has caused what we would term 'structurally significant' damage.

Finally, if you do decide to have the suspended ceiling removed in the top floor this will give an ideal opportunity to fully inspect the roof timbers. It would be unusual to find woodworm but it would be worth taking the opportunity to inspect the area.

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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.*

It should be noted that most Landlords only allow magnolia type decoration schemes. If they do allow brightly coloured schemes such in this case they would like it to return back to magnolia as this is generally considered an inoffensive colour which will enable the property to be Let to all parties.



Brightly decorated interior!

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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51

# **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.*

## **Roof Insulation**

We found no insulation.

## **Walls**

Given the age of this property it is likely to have had minimal insulation

## **Windows**

The windows are double glazed and therefore have reasonable thermal properties.

## **Floors**

The floors are concrete and can be cold. We noticed on the ground floor there has been insulation placed underneath it, this can often be due to the wind chill factor underneath these floors making the floors quite cold. You may need to increase the number of radiators and sizes within the property to accommodate this.

## **Services**

Service records should be obtained. It is essential for the services to be regularly maintained to run efficiently. We did note single panelled radiators.

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52

## Summary

The property is average for the age it was built but it would normally have been amended and adapted over the years. As we have mentioned elsewhere within this report you will be taking a risk when you move into an unoccupied property as there may be teething problems and you may need to have a heating engineer and a plumber on standby.

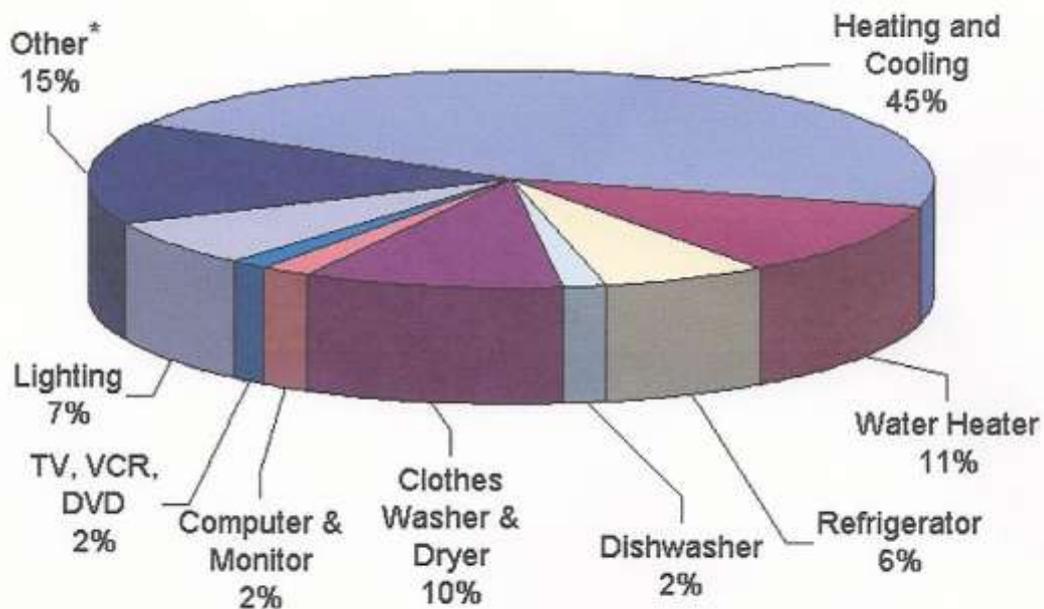
Further information can be obtained with regard to energy saving via the Internet on the following pages:

*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.*

### What does my energy bill pay for?



\*\*"Other" represents an array of household products; including stoves, ovens, microwaves, and small appliances. Individually, these products account for no more than about 2% of a household's energy bills.

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53

## **OTHER MATTERS**

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

### **Security System**

We noted security boxes to the property but we were not made aware of any security system by the person that let us into the property.

### **Fire Systems and Smoke Alarms**

The fire requirements now are for you to prove that you have appropriate fire systems for the use of the building considering its type, age and style. Considering you are changing the use from an office to a college where we would envisage there will be far more people therefore you need to carefully consider this area.



Fire hydrants

### **Asbestos**

Most Leases require an Asbestos register. We have not seen an Asbestos register.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Obtain and Asbestos register.

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54

## **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 Building 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.

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55

## **Electrics**

All electrics need to be tested by an NICEIC approved electrician or equivalent to Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) standard. Note our comments with regards to the lights and the extract system.

## **Fuel – Gas**

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.

## **Heating**

All radiators need redecoration and some of them are leaking which need to be checked and a heating engineer needs to be on hand when you commission the property. Located in top floor WC area, we only noted the one boiler which whilst we are not experts in this area we do feel that it will need upgrading to efficiently heat the building. It is of course dependent upon how many people you have in the building and how you utilise the building.

## **Extract Fans**

All the extract fans in the WC areas are not working as far as we could ascertain and need a general clean and overhaul.

## **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.

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

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56

to accommodate them. It is a condition of all the leases that we have seen to meet this requirement. In this case there is a toiler for the less able /disabled on the ground floor.

**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. 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.

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57

# **TOILETS**

## **Ground Floor less able / disabled toilet**

The property has a disabled toilet we would comment we have run the cold water taps in the toilets for 15 minutes, without any build up or back up.

## **Two toilets to the First Floor one male, one female**

One was being used as a storage cupboard therefore we had a limited access.

## **One Top Floor toilet**

Finally, although we may have already mentioned it above we would reiterate that it is important to ensure that seals are properly made and maintained at the junctions between wall surfaces and toilets etc. We normally recommend that it is one of the first jobs that you carry out as part of your DIY on the property, as water getting behind sanitary fittings can lead to unseen deterioration that can be costly, inconvenient and difficult to repair.

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58

## **MAIN DRAINS**

*The sanitary system, as we know it now, came into being some 100 years ago during the Victorian era and works so successfully today it is often taken for granted. It is only in recent years that re-investment has taken place to upgrade the original drainage systems.*

It is assumed that the property has mains drainage and that the foul drains discharge into a public sewer; this should be confirmed by your Legal Advisor prior to exchange of contracts, who should also provide information in respect of any common or shared drains including liability for the maintenance and upkeep of the same.

### **Inspection Chambers / Manholes**

*For your information, inspection chambers / manholes are required to be provided in the current Building Regulations at each change of direction or where drainage runs join the main run.*

We assume that the property has the benefit of mains drainage, although this should be confirmed by your legal advisor's enquiries.

We have not identified any inspection chambers / manholes.

You need to have your own closed circuit TV camera report before you purchase the property/lease.

### **Rainwater/Surface Water Drainage**

*Whilst very innocent looking rainwater downpipes can cause lots of problems. If they discharge directly onto the ground they can affect the foundations and even if they are taken away to soak-aways they can attract nearby tree roots or again affect foundations.*

*Some rainwater drains are taken into the main drainage system, which is now illegal (as we simply do not have the capacity to cope with it), and can cause blockages to the main drains! Here we have done our best from a visual inspection to advise of any particular problems.*

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59

We have been unable to determine the ultimate means of rain/surface water disposal.

Finally, rain/surface water drains have not been tested and their condition or effectiveness is not known. Similarly, the adequacy of soak-aways has not been established although you are advised that they tend to silt up and become less effective with time.

Please also see our comments within the Gutters and Downpipes section.

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60

# OUTSIDE AREAS

## PARKING

There is a small amount of parking to the front of the property. It is a sloping site running towards the walls which is why you are getting vegetation growing and you will also get dampness in this area.

There is an underground car parking area which needs a general clear and check that the lighting is working.

There is also what we would describe as a temporary timber lean to with a plastic sheeting roof. You need to check that the Landlord is aware of this and is included in the layout plan you have in your Lease.



Car parking area, vegetation at base and pattern staining caused when it rains



Car parking area at front of property



Gate to car park



Underground car parking area, lots of mirrors



Timber structure

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61

## **EXTERNAL AREAS**

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

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.



Boundary wall to left hand side

## **LOCAL AUTHORITY ENQUIRIES**

We have not made any formal or informal enquiries with the Local Authorities.

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62

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

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63

## **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.*

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64

# APPENDICES

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65

# **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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66

## **WEATHER**

It was overcast and rained at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

## **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.

## **INSPECTION LIMITED**

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been very limited due to not having full access to the roof and we have not been able to speak to the owners or their surveyors or been made aware of any planned maintenance that they recommend on the 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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67