

JOB REFERENCE: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY

Camden,
NW3



FOR

XXXXXXXXXX

Prepared by:

INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS

Marketing by:

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INTRODUCTION

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

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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REPORT FORMAT

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

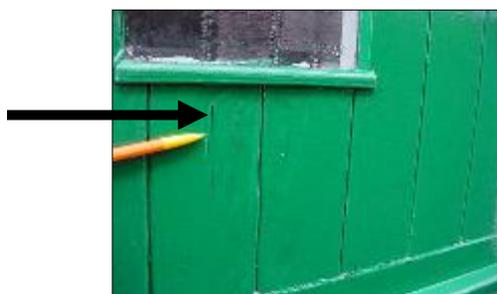
GENERAL/HISTORICAL INFORMATION

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, pen or arrow 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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SYNOPSIS

SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION

The flat is situated on the ground floor of a substantial four storey property that has been converted into four flats.

Parking is at the roadside on a first come first service with a permit system in place.

We believe the properties are Leasehold/Shared Freehold with the landlord being Camden Council. We have not seen copies of the lease/shared freehold, but we would be happy to comment if the details are duly forwarded to us. As the property is Leasehold/Shared Freehold you will no doubt have a shared responsibility for common areas/common components. Common areas/common components include not only the access stairways and corridors but also other areas of shared use such as the roof structure and external walls and the drainage for example.

The property was built in the late Georgian / early Victorian era. If the age of the property interests you your Legal Advisor may be able to find out more information from the Deeds.

Putting Life into Perspective!

Some of the things that were happening around the time the property was built:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1837 | Victoria becomes Queen of Great Britain. |
| 1840 | The First Postage Stamp |
| 1851 | First World Exhibition held in London |
| 1854 | Florence Nightingale pioneers modern nursing in the Crimea |
| 1859 | Charles Darwin proposes the Theory of Evolution |
| 1863 | The Opening of London Underground |

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EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front Elevation



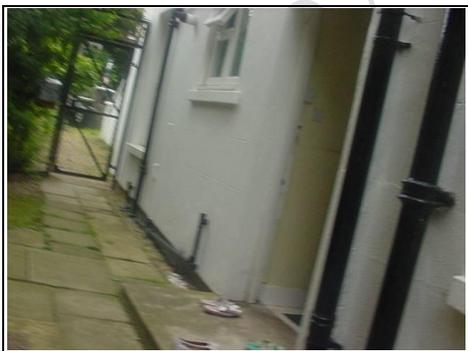
Flat front view



Flat rear view



Rear View



Right hand side entrance to the flat looking towards the front garden from the rear



Right hand view



Street view

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ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES

(All directions given as you face the front of the property)

Ground

The lower ground floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Entrance Door and Hallway
- 2) Reception One (front left) currently used as a bedroom
- 3) Kitchen (front right)
- 4) Master Bedroom (rear left)
- 5) Bedroom (rear right)
- 6) Storage Room/ larder (left middle)
- 7) Bathroom (right middle). Bath and wash hand basin only.
- 8) W.C. (right middle)

Communal Areas / Shared Areas

The shared areas consist of:

- 1) Steps and Main Entrance Door (front) with individual doorbells. Although not required by this flat you may have a shared cost.
- 2) Entrance Hallway (not accessed). You may have a shared responsibility for this
- 3) Front Garden (assumed shared). Your Legal Advisor to check and confirm
- 4) Rear Garden (assumed shared). Your Legal Advisor to check and confirm

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Outside Areas

To the front of property is a communal garden with a bin storage area. To the rear is what we would usually advise is a communal garden, however the ground floor flat has been gated and fenced off and we are advised the occupiers have tended to the garden during their time of occupancy.

Finally, all these details need to be checked and confirmed by your Legal Advisor.

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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. We apologise that there is not a photo of the kitchen, this was not clear. However we do have photos of specific areas within the kitchen as you will see later on in the report

Ground Floor



Hallway



Lounge (front right)



Master Bedroom (rear left)



Bedroom (rear right)



Storage Room/larder (left middle)



Bathroom (right middle)



W.C. (right middle)

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Communal / Shared Areas



Front Garden



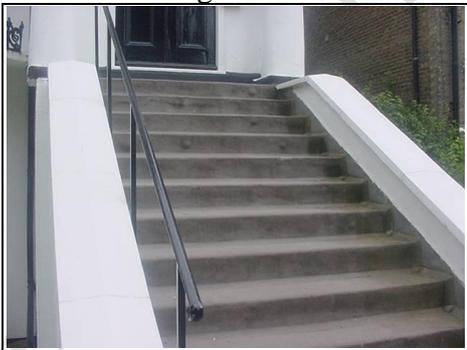
Bin storage area in front garden



The right side gate into rear garden



Rear garden



Steps to other flats in the building



Front entrance door to other flats in the building

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SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION

External

Chimneys:	Two rendered chimneys (right) One rendered chimney(left)
Parapet Wall	Rendered parapet wall
Main Roof:	Shallow pitched slate roof (difficult to view)
Main Roof Structure:	Cut timber roof (assumed)
Gutters and Downpipes:	Cast iron and plastic
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Cast iron and plastic
Walls:	Flemish Bond brickwork at high level (assumed). Stone quoins and painted stucco render.
Fascias and Soffits:	Painted timber
Windows and Doors:	A mixture of single and double glazed timber sliding sash and timber casement windows.

Internal

Ceilings:	Lath and plaster and/or plasterboard (assumed)
Walls:	Solid(assumed)
Floors: Ground Floor:	A cross battened floor or a suspended timber floor with areas of concrete (assumed).

Services

We believe that the property has a mains water supply, mains drainage, electricity and gas (all assumed). The Main wall mounted boiler is located in the kitchen and the dated electrics are located in the storage room / larder.

The property is not Listed.

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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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 home when we are trying to second-guess what their 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 300 photographs 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 property (or indeed commit to purchasing the property), 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.

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!

- 1.0) Older properties typically have more space than newer properties, both in the actual size of the rooms and the height of the rooms.
- 2.0) The property has good natural light due to the bay windows.
- 3.0) The overall property also has some of the original features left, which add to the overall character of the property.
- 4.0) The property has its own access. Your Legal Advisor to check and confirm.
- 5.0) The property has a bin area that is relatively nearby. Your Legal Advisor to check and confirm.

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

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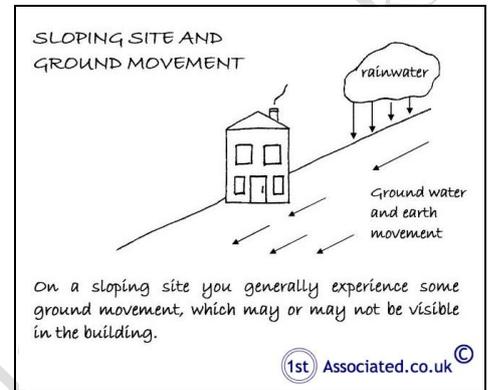
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The Bad

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) Ground Levels

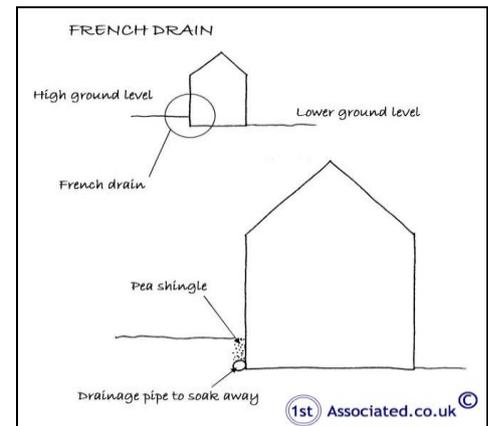
The whole property sits on a sloping site which means that rainwater needs to travel from the front towards the back of the property. To do this it travels underneath and around the property. Given the poor ground level (we explain this further along in the report) we believe this could be affecting the suspended timber floor beneath.



We can see what we believe to be a French Drain has been added to the side of the property and partly to the rear. We do not know when this was added (as the occupier could speak little English) or if it is a true French Drain.



Is this a proper French Drain?



ACTION REQUIRED: To check the French Drain that you have is a proper French Drain. We would also say that as an overall concept the French Drain should be added around the entirety of the property and not just to parts of it.



Is this a proper French Drain?

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ANTICIPATED COST: £4,000 - £6,000 (four thousand to six thousand pounds); please obtain quotations.

2.0) Suspended timber floor

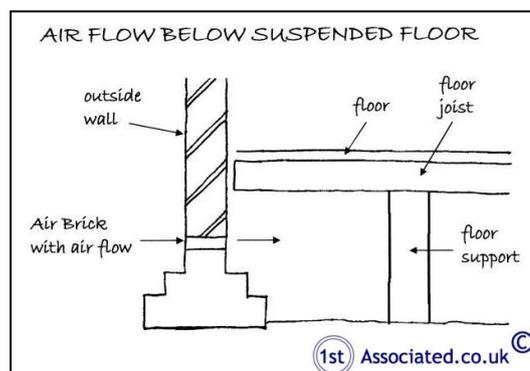
The property has a suspended timber floor. A suspended timber floor requires air movement underneath to minimise wet rot, dry rot and woodworm.

The timber floor has been partly replaced with concrete over the years. Unfortunately this usually means that there is no through flow of air under the floor.

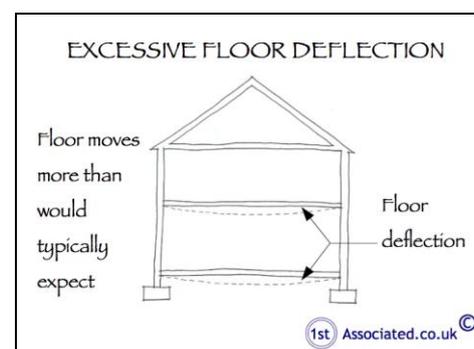
We can feel deflection in the floor that indicates deterioration has taken place and we could see that, when we lifted the carpet to the rear master bedroom, there is a problem with rotting floors beneath.

ACTION REQUIRED: You need to open up the entirety of the suspended timber floor areas and check for wet rot, dry etc. ideally this should be carried out before you purchase the property.

ANTICIPATED COST: Best case scenario is a few hundred pounds and the worst case scenario could be a major replacement of the floor which could range from £5,000 to £15,000 (five thousand to fifteen thousand pounds). This is dependent on how easy or difficult it is to replace the joists particularly bearing in mind the concrete floor; please obtain quotations.



The hallway has a concrete floor



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Deterioration in the floor



Deterioration in the floor

The main problem here is that the property sits on a sloping site and the ground levels are low. So you do need to resolve the dampness getting into the property as what we have discussed here with regards to the suspended timber floor is the effect. The cause is the dampness getting in.

Please see the Floors Section of this Report.

3.0) Cut down tree

There is a tree that has been cut down to the rear right hand corner. The daughter, who was in at the time of the inspection, has lived in the house for about a year and a half. She advised us that it has not been cut down in that time but it has been cut down in the time her mother has lived in the property.

We believe the tree has had quite an effect on the property as we could see hairline cracking to the walls (this is partly due to age of the plaster) and we could also see movement to the doors and windows where they are out of square.

As mentioned earlier the occupier could speak very little English and advised us it



Tree stump is very close to the property



Tree stump

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was her mother's house. Unfortunately our usual question and answer session with the occupiers was not possible.

We lifted the manhole cover at the corner of the property that is adjacent to where the tree was and could see that this is a relatively modern concrete manhole which could indicate past problems. Older manholes would be brick.



Modern Drain

ACTION REQUIRED: We feel the best way to deal with this is for the landlord to put in an insurance claim with regard to movement on the property. This would then allow for monitoring for a year, which is what is recommended by the Building Research Establishment, rather than a one off inspection that you have had today.

We would add that older properties tend to be able to cope with movement far better than modern properties. However without being able to view the flats above we do not know what alterations may have occurred as a whole which may also be affecting the property.

This is a sample of the many photos we have taken with regard to this problem



Cracking to rear bedroom adjacent to where the tree was



Further cracking to rear bedroom



Remaining trees are close to the rear of the property

Please see the Trees Section of this Report.

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4.0) Trees to the front of the Property

Whilst we are on the subject of trees we would just comment that the trees to the front of the property have caused cracking to the boundary wall. This will be a shared item and a shared cost to repair.



Trees to the front of the property



Crack in the boundary wall caused by the trees

Please see the Trees Section of this Report.

5.0) Noise Transference

As you are on the ground floor, the floors and ceilings of your apartment also form the floors of the apartments above you. Without proper insulation you could get some noise transfer, without any insulation at all you could get lots of noise transfer between the apartments! We have come across several instances where this has resulted in neighbourhood disputes.

In our experience flat conversions in this age, type and style of property often have no acoustic barriers put in-between the floors. However we have to add that we have been pleasantly surprised by some of the Local Authority conversions.

ACTION REQUIRED: The only way to be certain with regards to the noise transfer is to open up the floors. We would nevertheless strongly recommend that you meet the neighbours before you decide to purchase the property. In particular take note of if they have a wooden floor as

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noise transfer from this can be considerable. Many leases now have clauses in them stating that no wooden or laminated floors are allowed but older properties tend not to have this. We would add that it is one thing having this in the lease but it is another abiding by it.

Please see the Floors Section of this Report.

6.0) Services

6.1) Fire Alarm System

There is no fire alarm system in this property and unfortunately we have not gained access to the whole property (the one tenant we spoke to was too busy to let us in). We doubt if there is a fire alarm system throughout the entire property. We are great believers in fire alarm systems/smoke alarm systems that identify where the fire is in the property.

ACTION REQUIRED: This is typically something where funds would accumulate in a planned maintenance fund with all occupiers and owners contributing to it. This is typical of something that a good property management company would be recommending.

ANTICIPATED COST: This depends upon the specific fire system but is likely to cost thousands of pounds; please obtain quotations.

6.2) Security

Whilst there is a voice entry system at the main door of the property we much prefer a video entry system for everyone. This can be combined with the fire alarm system.

ACTION REQUIRED: Again this would be something a good property management company would be promoting.



Voice entry system

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6.3) Electrics

The electrics are old, probably from the 1960's and much better are now available

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend replacement.



Dated Fuse board

ANTICIPATED COST: As it is likely to need re-wiring as well we would expect costs to be in the region of £2,500 (two thousand five hundred pounds) plus, even just to carry out minimum work. From our survey we would also say that additional socket points are required. You can combine this sort of work with the work we have recommended to the floors; please obtain quotations.

6.4) Central heating system

The boiler is a wall mounted dated Main boiler. We do not come across these that often. There are also some radiators on internal walls which is a system often used to save costs by plumbers which can in turn promote condensation, particularly in a rented property.



Main boiler



Radiator on internal wall

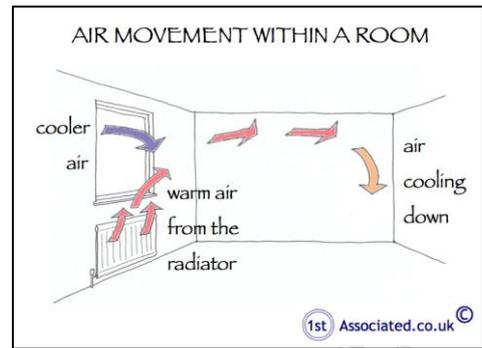
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Radiators are more effective fitted under the windows rather than on internal walls as this promotes air flow around the property.



ACTION REQUIRED: Whether the boiler lasts much longer really depends on how frequently it has been serviced and so you do really need to obtain this information from the present owner.

ANTICIPATED COST: We would recommend basing costs on a worst case scenario and allow a sum of £2,000 - £3,000 (two thousand to three thousand pounds) to replace the boiler and £5,000 - £6,000 (five thousand to six thousand pounds) to replace the radiators and move them to under the windows; please obtain quotations.

Please see the Services Section of this Report.

7.0) Common shared areas

We have not had access to the common shared areas such as the entrance hallway and the stairways. You will probably have a responsibility for these and other areas such as the roof and the drains etc.

A good landlord would have a planned maintenance programme in place for such things as roof replacement, replacement of timber lintel (beams) over the bay windows etc. as these are often a problem. There may still be many timber lintels in the property.



Timber lintel over bay window

ACTION REQUIRED: Probably our biggest concern for future costs would be in relation to high level work such as to the chimneys, the roof and also for drainage work. By the future we mean within the next ten

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years. Your legal Advisor needs to specifically write to the landlord or managing agent to ask if they have a planned maintenance programme in place together with a sinking fund.

Please see the Other Matters Section of this Report.

8.0) **Does the Property have an Active and Interested Management Company?**

Many of the problems caused with these multi-occupied conversion properties is that there is no one person of the shared owners who takes responsibility for shared issues. The usual way to do this is to set up a Management Company and they would look at things such as fire alarm systems, general maintenance etc. A good management company can often make or break a property.

Neighbours in the flats above you

We spoke to one of the neighbouring flats via the intercom but we did not actually meet them or enter the building. They advised that there was not a tenants association or occupiers association and that they did not have informal meetings either with regard to the property. They also advised that they are tenants of the landlord, Camden Council.

ACTION REQUIRED: We recommend that you meet the neighbours before you purchase the property.

Please see our further comments in the Other Items Section.

The Ugly

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

There is nothing which we feel falls within this section providing you are happy with the characteristics of the property which we have mentioned throughout the report.

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Other Items

Moving on to more general information.

Living in Multi-Occupied Leasehold/Shared Freehold Properties

This is more a statement of information. There can be problems living in multi occupied properties with anything from noisy neighbours to non-contribution to the 'sinking fund'. The property is Leasehold/Shared Freehold, which is very different to having a Freehold property, where you can almost literally do as you like (within the scope of the Law!).

Please see the attachment in the Appendices at the end of this Report.

Sinking Fund / Planned Maintenance - Future Work

With properties such as this there should be a planned maintenance program. We would expect this to be looking at and considering any anticipated works and associated costs at least ten years in advance.

ACTION REQUIRED: Your Legal Advisor to check and confirm future planned maintenance costs and expenditure.

ANTICIPATED COST: Your Legal Advisor to confirm.

Communal Areas

We have not seen all the communal areas in this instance and although you don't use them you may have a liability for them.

ACTION REQUIRED: Your Legal Advisor to check and confirm.

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Reactive / Day-to-Day Maintenance and Cyclical Maintenance

By reactive / day-to-day maintenance we mean work of a more immediate nature, such as repairs to leaking showers or blocked drains or entry door systems. By cyclical maintenance we mean maintenance carried out on a regular basis such as to the fire alarm system and the lifts and the garden maintenance. The latter is particularly important to you as you are on the ground floor; the last thing you want is blocked drains.

Dependent upon the terms of your lease/shared freehold agreement some of this may come under your responsibility but be managed for you and re-charged back to you by the Management Company.

ACTION REQUIRED: Typically there is a Service Charge for day-to-day maintenance / reactive maintenance and also cyclical maintenance. Your Legal Advisor to confirm costs.

Services

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

Electrics

The electrics are dated and need replacing. This is particularly important if you intend to rent out the property.

Whilst we have carried out a visual inspection of the electrics (this is commented upon in the Electrics Section of the report) we also need to advise you of the following:

We would recommend an Institute of Electrical Engineers standards (IEE) test and report carried out by an NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent.

Heating

The wall mounted boiler is old and some radiators are internal. We would recommend that the system be tested and overhauled before exchange of

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contracts and that a regular maintenance contract be placed with an approved heating engineer.

Drainage

We have lifted some of the man holes and whilst these have been clear we did note there was a newer concrete manhole than we would expect to the rear right hand side. This could indicate possible problems. Please see our comments with regard to the trees.

Whilst we ran the tap for 15 minutes without any build up or blockages the only way to be 100% certain of the condition of the drains is to have a closed circuit TV camera 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.

ACTION REQUIRED - SERVICES:

We would reiterate that we recommend with regard to all services that you have an independent check by a specialist contractor.

DIY/Handyman Type Work

In this section we would normally comment upon smaller/less skilled jobs that you can carry out by yourself or get a handyman in to do, however under a normal lease/shared freehold (assuming a full repairing and insuring lease/shared freehold) these type of jobs are typically the responsibility of the Landlord (albeit that they usually recharge it to you) with usually only the internal of the property being your responsibility.

Purchase Price

We have not been asked to comment upon the purchase price in this instance, we have however referred you to sources of general information on the

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housing market within the Information on the Property Market Section, which can be found in the Appendices at the end of the Report.

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 and estimates can of course vary from area to area when giving a general indication of costs. 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 usually be best to have work supervised 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 have discussed this property with you and we would comment that you do need to be a more robust purchaser than a typical house purchaser. As you are looking to rent this out it would indicate to us that you are comfortable with property and property as an investment. You intimated that you will looking for both cash flow and capital growth and possibly use as accommodation in years to come. You of course can only add in the factors to our property assessment.

We would add as a general comment, although we have mentioned that you should get quotes much of the work we are commenting on will be the overall responsibility of the Landlord/Managing Agent, albeit that they would recharge it to the Leaseholders/Shared Freeholders. Such things as the French Drain around the property may well be the Landlords responsibility under the lease.

The idea of obtaining quotations is to allow you to negotiate with regard to the price of the property. We would always recommend 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.

We would ask that you read the Report in full and contact us on any issues that you require further clarification on.

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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 – LEASHOLD / SHARED FREEHOLD

We have not seen a copy of the lease/shared freehold agreement and have assumed for the purposes of this report that it is a full repairing and insuring lease/shared freehold agreement and that there are no onerous or unusual clauses, if there are your Legal Advisor/Solicitor should bring these to our attention.

ESTATE AGENTS – FRIEND OR FOE?

It is important to remember that the estate agents are acting for the seller (usually known as the vendor) and not the purchaser and are therefore eager to sell the property (no sale – no fee!). 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 for Building Surveys, as agreed to and signed by yourselves. If you have not seen or are not happy with the terms of engagement please phone immediately 0800 298 5424 or email the secretary from which this survey came from.

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 property purchase - just phone us.

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



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EXTERNAL

CHIMNEY STACKS AND PARAPET WALLS



Chimney Stacks

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

There are three chimneys to this property they are located two to the right hand side and one to the left hand that sits on the Party Wall (all directions given as you face the property).

Chimney One – left centre

This chimney is rendered and has a few chimney pots; we were unable to see the flashings. It was very difficult to see the chimney, however, the darkening of the render does indicate to us that dampness is getting in to it. We would best be able to see this problem if we gained access to the roof.



Unfortunately we were unable to see the flaunching, we therefore cannot comment upon them.

Chimney one (left centre)

ACTION REQUIRED: Your landlord / managing agent should have a schedule with regard to problems and planned maintenance with regard to the chimneys.



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Chimney Two – Front Right

This chimney was also finished in render which looks to be slightly darker than we would expect indicating that it is taking in water. There are no obvious visual signs of the render coming away. Unfortunately again we could not see the flashings.



Chimney two (front right)

Chimney Three – Rear right

This is the chimney that we could see least of. However we could again see a darkening of the render indicating that dampness may be getting in.



Chimney three- (rear right)

Parapet Walls

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

In this case there are rendered parapet walls to the left hand side with a coping stone. Again we would have been able to see if this was waterproof from within the roof which we have not been able to get into.



Parapet wall (left)

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We would comment that with any high level work such as this scaffolding can be as costly if not more costly than the actual work. Our experience with local authorities is that they have all the high level work carried out in one go which does make sense. However it does mean that work is carried out many years before it needs to be carried out.

Flashings Defined

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

Flaunchings Defined

A low, wide cement mortar fillet surrounding the flue terminal on top of the chimneystack to throw off rainwater.

Render Defined

A sand and cement external coating applied in two or three coats or layers.

Cement Fillets/Cement Flashings Defined

This is where cement has been used to cover up or fill the junctions between two areas, for example between a roof and a wall to help prevent dampness. Cement is a brittle material and prone to cracking which in turn allows dampness into the structure. We would always recommend the use of lead flashings.

Party Wall

The party wall relates to shared items, such as chimneys and parapet walls. If you do any work on these you will need to deal with the Party Wall Act. Here is a brief explanation of it.

Party Structures Defined - Party Wall Act Etc. 1996

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

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

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

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

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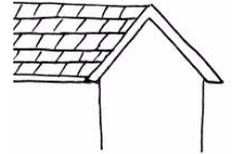
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ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERLAYERS



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.

Dependent upon the age of your property and the type of construction it may or may not be present, please read on:

Main Roof

We simply could not see the main roof properly due to the angle therefore we would prefer not to comment on it. We do find that with these shallow pitched roofs they are often over insulated which can cause condensation within them. You do need to ensure they are well vented.

ACTION REQUIRED: Again the landlord/managing agent should have inspected the roof and have a view on this.

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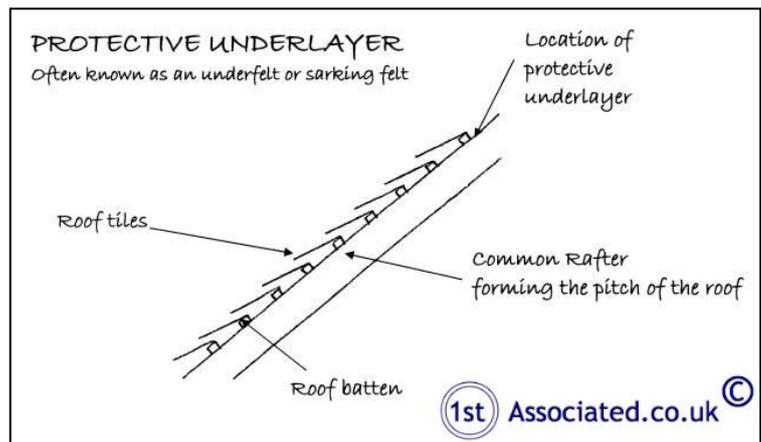
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Protective Underlayer (Often known as the sarking felt or underfelt)

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



We have not had access to the roof and so we cannot comment.

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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

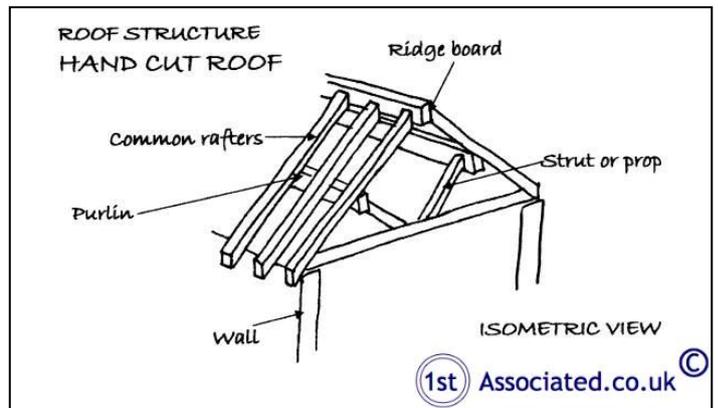
Roof Access

We have not had access to the roof space so we cannot comment.

Roof Structure

As an educated guess we would expect to see a cut roof based on our knowledge and experience of this age, type and style of property.

This is a roof that is purpose made and hand built on site.



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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.

Gutters and Downpipes

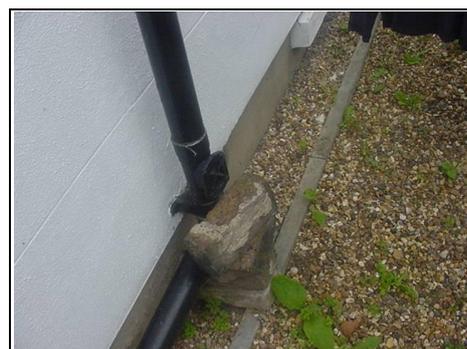
The property has a combination of the original cast iron gutters and downpipes and plastic gutters and downpipes?



Cast iron and plastic downpipes

Cast Iron

These are in average condition for their age, type and style cast iron of this age will need maintenance. If regularly maintained it can last longer than plastic, in our experience.



Bricks supporting the downpipe

Plastic

Some of the original cast iron gutters and downpipes have been replaced with plastic ones.

There may be some minor leaks to the gutters and downpipes but most people would be happy to live with these providing repairs are carried out within the next six to twelve months.



Awkward swan neck downpipe is leaking slightly

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ACTION REQUIRED: We would always recommend you stand outside the property next time it rains heavily and see how well the drains cope with the rainwater particularly looking at the guttering and the joints.

We would also 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.



Some rusting to the downpipe

Soil and Vent Pipe

The property has cast iron and plastic soil and vent pipes. Cast iron of this age will always need repairs. You will no doubt have a shared cost for the entirety of the soil and vent pipes although in theory you only use the bottom section.



Soil and vent pipes



Soil and vent pipes

Finally, gutters and downpipes and soil and vent pipes have been inspected from ground level. As it was not 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. Our comments have therefore been based on our best assumptions.

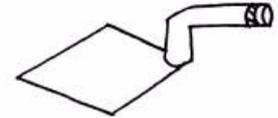
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WALLS



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.

The walls are constructed of Flemish Bond brickwork at high level and Stucco render at low level.

Brickwork

The property is built in a brick originally in a lime mortar in what is known as Flemish bond brickwork.

The term Flemish Bond relates to the way the bricks are bonded together and have a pattern visible from the outside of the property that shows the end of the brick (header), then the side of the brick (stretcher), then the end of the brick, then the side of the brick, and this pattern repeats course after course, i.e. header-stretcher, header-stretcher.

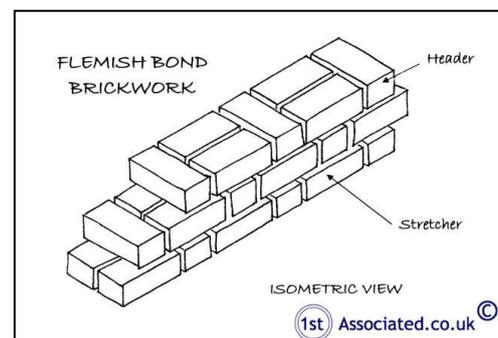
The solid external walls may be liable to penetrating dampness internally, dependent upon their condition and their exposure to the weather. External faces should be kept in good condition.

Before the 19th Century, the practice of building timbers into external walls was almost universal. These were known as bonding timbers. They are of course prone to rot as solid walls allow dampness through. Unfortunately, without opening up the structure, we are unable to confirm if this is the case.

Generally Flemish Bond brickwork is liable to penetrating dampness internally, dependent upon the condition of the brickwork and the exposure to the weather. In this case it is essential that external faces be kept in good condition.



Brick work to upper property



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Stucco Render

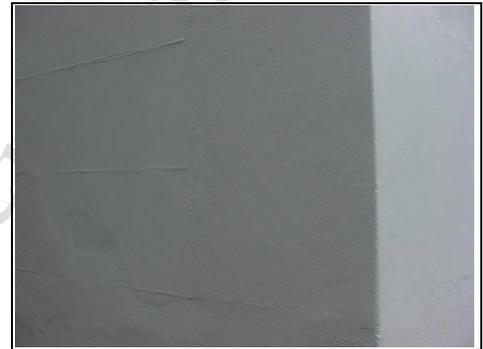
Stucco is a render that imitates stone walling and was very popular at the time this property was built in the wealthiest of houses. You can still see many of the horizontal lines that give the appearance of stone. In this particular case there have been major repairs to the rear of the property around where the tree area is.

ACTION REQUIRED: Your Legal Advisor to specifically ask the existing owners if there have been structural problems with the property.

Also as mentioned in our Executive Summary we would recommend that you ask the owners/existing landlords to put in an insurance claim and for this to be confirmed in writing before you purchase the property.



New render



Stucco plaster has been repaired over the years. The lines are missing



In other areas it is hand painted



Stucco render with what appears to be a spray paint finish.

Cracking

There is hairline cracking but this is internal.

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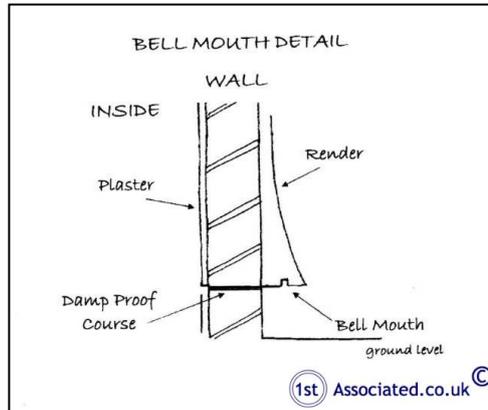
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Render Detailing

Bell mouth to base of property

We were pleased to see a form of bell mouth detail to the base of the render.



Bell mouth detail

Lime Mortar

With rendering on an old property the most important thing we feel is to have a lime based mortar as a hard cement based mortar can cause problems and be forever cracking. Unfortunately it is very difficult to tell whether this particular render is lime based or cement based.

ACTION REQUIRED: As the render looks relatively new we would recommend that you ask the owners / landlords when it was replaced and how?

Decorative rendering

There is decorative rendering around the windows and to the quoins which add to the overall character of this property.



Quoins

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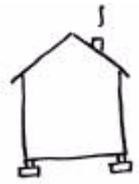
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FOUNDATIONS



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

Given the age of the property you may find different depths of foundations. We would expect to find a stepped brick foundation unless it has been underpinned at a later date, for example, to the bay window. These typically did not have foundations.

Bay Windows.

Bay windows in this era of property typically do not have foundations underneath them and have been subject to movement. We are aware that some insurance companies underpin bay windows with a modern foundation. We think this is excessive and unnecessary.

London Clay

As with most properties in the London area, this property stands on London Clay. 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. However, from our inspection of the walls we have found nothing unusual.

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

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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 recommends a year of monitoring of any cracking.

We would always recommend that you remain with the existing insurance company of the property.

We would refer you to our comments with regard to building insurance throughout this report.

Finally, we have not excavated the foundations but we have drawn conclusions from our inspection and our general knowledge of this type, age and style of property.

As no excavation has been carried out we cannot be 100 percent certain as to how the foundation has been constructed and we can only offer our best assumptions and an educated guess, which we have duly done.

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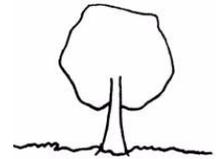
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TREES

FOUNDATIONS



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

There are trees within what Insurance Companies would term as influencing distance of the property. We have spoken in the Executive Summary about the closeness of the tree to the right hand corner of the property but there are also additional trees still relatively close to the house. To the front of the property close to the boundary wall there are trees which have caused it to crack.

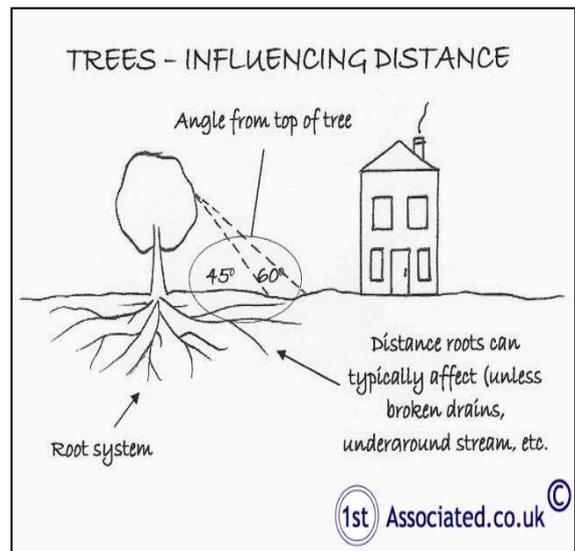
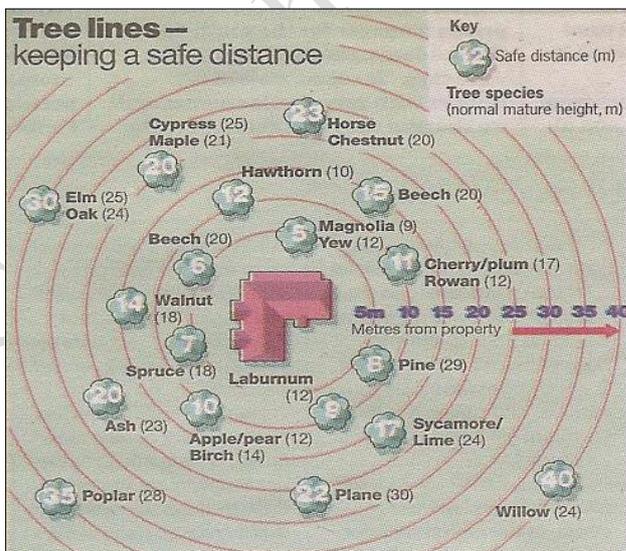


The trees to the front of the property



The trees to the rear of the property

ACTION REQUIRED: You need to obtain advice from your insurance company with regard to any premium that may occur and please see our comments within the Executive Summary about monitoring the property



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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.

Finally, insurance requirements with regard to trees have varied over the years and in our opinion have got ever more onerous. We have seen the notifiable distance of a tree away from a property to have been reduced over the years and we reiterate our comments elsewhere within this report that you need to make enquiries with regard to the insurability of your property in relation to trees and other features when you purchase the property.

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 cannot see a DPC because of the render. Your attention is drawn to the section of the report specifically dealing with dampness.



DPC not visible because of the render

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.

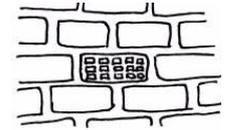
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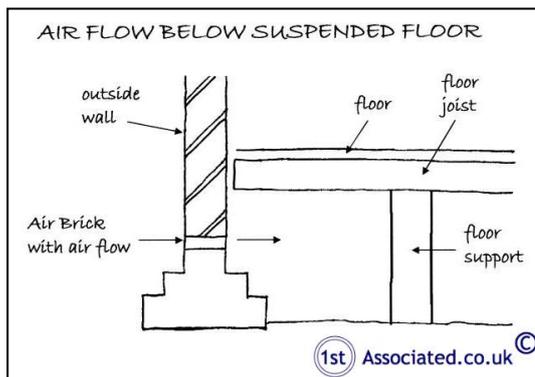
AIRBRICKS



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

Low Level Air Bricks

There are air bricks at low level. Air bricks are essential to have a through flow of air as this helps to reduce the chances of wet rot, dry rot and woodworm.



Air brick

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

High Level Air Bricks

There are vents at high level on some of the flats. This does indicate that there may be condensation problems in these areas. This is a typical solution to that.

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



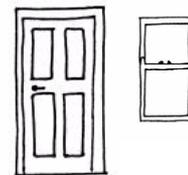
Airbrick at high level on upper flat

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FASCIAS AND SOFFITS AND WINDOWS AND DOORS



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

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

Fascias and Soffits

There are decorative fascias and soffits with corbels. Fascias and soffits are normally painted timber but as we are viewing these from a distance we cannot be certain. As is common on older properties you have a larger soffit.



Fascias and soffits with corbels

Windows and Doors

The property has a combination of newish single and double glazed timber sliding sash and timber casement windows. Replacing the windows is typical of something that can be carried out under the planned maintenance work.

General Information on Sliding Sash Windows

If you have not lived in a property with sliding sash windows previously, you should be aware that typically they are draughty and rattle. There is no easy way to eliminate this problem. In our



Double glazing in the new windows

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experience, a general ease and adjustment of the windows and the addition of a plastic tube draught sealer (available from most DIY stores) and regular redecoration is the best option to minimise the draughtiness of the windows in this case



Knife test on fairly new windows



Shutters/blinds on the French Doors



French doors (newish)

Knife Test Defined

This is where we push the knife into the window to check for rot. It is not rocket science!

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.

There is a lot of re-decoration with regards to the render and also a lot of skilled re-decoration and paintwork with regards to the sliding sash windows some of which are at high level and will require scaffolding. In particular we would draw your attention to the fascias, soffits and corbels at high level. They look relatively well decorated at present but they will be on a four to five year re-decoration schedule which will be costly when it comes around. You will have no option but to contribute to the payment of this, subject to the terms and conditions of your lease.

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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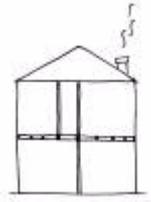
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INTERNAL



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

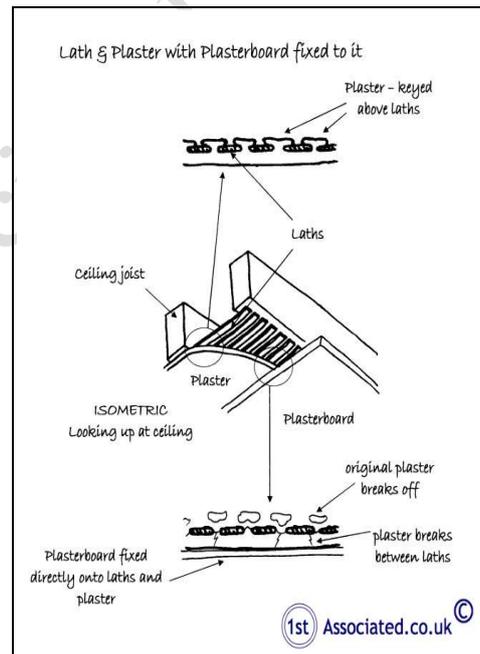
From our visual inspection of the ceilings and our general knowledge of this age and type of construction we believe that the ceilings are lath and plaster originally and are likely to have plasterboard tacked over them. Without opening the ceilings up we cannot be one hundred per cent certain. Although from the way some walls have been removed and the smoothness of the plaster we suspect that its plasterboard.

Lath and Plaster Defined

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

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.



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Internal Walls and Partitions

These are, we believe solid. It is of course impossible to determine the construction without opening up the walls and we have therefore taken an educated guess.



Wall has been removed

Perimeter Walls

Originally these would have been constructed with a wet plaster, possibly a lime plaster. We now believe they are probably still lime based with possibly a skim coat of gypsum plaster.

There are a lot of hairline cracks in the walls. Please see our comments within the Executive Summary.

Again, we cannot be 100% certain of the wall construction without opening them up which goes beyond the scope of this report.



Hairline cracks in rear right hand bedroom



Cracking in the kitchen



Window out of alignment

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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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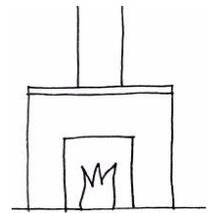
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CHIMNEY BREASTS, FLUES AND FIREPLACES



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

The chimney breasts are located to the left hand side (all directions given as you face the front of the property). We were pleased to see vents in the chimneys. Of course we cannot see the chimneys as they progress up through the property and do not know if they are vented throughout. These chimneys tend to get damp at high level and it can be affected by what people above and to the side of you do.



Vents to the chimneys

Finally, we will comment on the condition of the chimney breast where we can see the chimney breast. If we can see a chimney breast has been removed we will inspect for signs of movement and advise. However, often the chimney breasts are hidden so we cannot comment. Also additional support can be concealed very well when chimney breasts are hidden particularly when plastered over.

Your Legal Advisor needs to specifically check with the Local Authority for removed chimneys and associated chimney breasts and Building Regulations Approvals and advise by e-mail immediately if chimney breasts are found to have been removed. We would recommend opening up the structure to check the condition. If we are not advised we will assume the relevant Building Regulations Approval has been obtained.

It is strongly recommended that flues be cleaned and checked for obstructions prior to use to minimise the risk of hazardous fumes entering the building.

Please also see the Chimney Stacks, Flues

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FLOORS

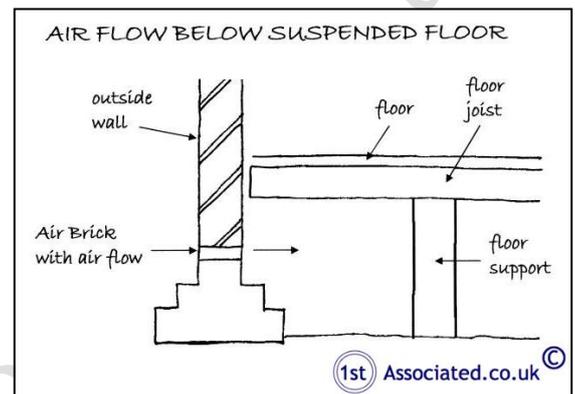


Functionally floors should be capable of withstanding appropriate loading, preventing dampness, have thermal properties and durability. In addition to this upper floors should offer support for ceilings, resistance to fire and resistance to sound transfer.

Ground Floor

The floors of the property are a mixture of suspended timber floors and concrete floors.

ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our comments within the Executive Summary??



Our investigation has been restricted.

However, we have not opened up the floors or lifted the carpets / floor coverings with the exception of the carpet in the rear room. This property has fitted carpets and we did not feel able to lay the carpets back down if we had lifted them in other areas.

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

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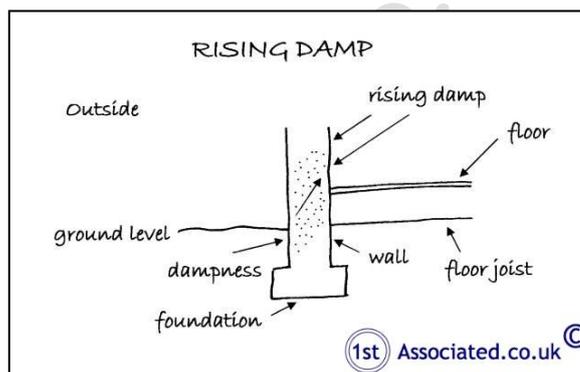


DAMPNESS

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

Rising Damp

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



A random visual inspection and tests with a moisture meter have been taken to the perimeter walls. In this particular case we have found minor rising damp in the property.

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



Testing for rising damp

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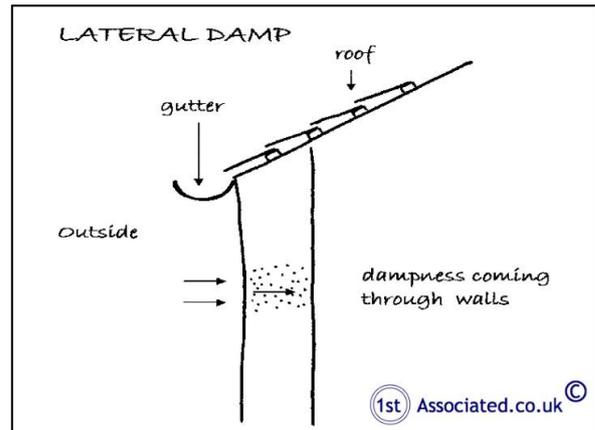
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Lateral or Penetrating Dampness

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.

We used a damp meter on the external walls. We have not found dampness.



Testing for lateral dampness

Condensation

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

At the time of the inspection there were no obvious signs of condensation.

However, it depends upon how you utilise the building. If you do your washing and then dry it in a room without opening a window you will, of course, get condensation. Common sense is needed and a balance between heating, cooling and ventilation of properties and opening windows to air the property regularly.



Checking for condensation

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Extract fans in kitchens and bathrooms

A way of helping to reduce condensation is to have good large extract fans within the kitchens and bathrooms which are moisture generating areas.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend humidity controlled extract fans be added to kitchens and bathrooms.



We would replace this extract fan in the bathroom with a larger humidity controlled extract fan

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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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

The property has substantial timber doors. We note some have Perko door closers and some have had them removed.



Timber door



Perko door closer



Door could not close because of an electric cable running through the opening

Staircase

The property itself does not have any stairs however there is a shared staircase up to the main front door (the one that you do not use). There is an area underneath the stairs that is used by the owner. You need to check and confirm whether this is shared use or not. It should in theory be shared use.

We found rubbish in the space and a few stored items. The gas meters are also located here and there is a rendered wall that has not been finished.



Under the stairs



Dampness under the stairs



Scratch coat put on but not finished

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Skirtings

These look to be a modern replacement skirting as we can see the knots grinning (showing) through. This does indicate that dampness is coming in or the original skirtings were not treated properly.



Knots in skirting grinning through in bay window and testing for damp

Kitchen

We found the kitchen in average to below average condition.

We have not tested any of the kitchen appliances.

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 Joinery/Detailing section.

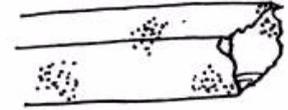
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TIMBER DEFECTS



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.*

We have not visually seen any dry rot during the course of our inspection.

However the conditions are right for this to be occurring under the floor. We did not see any fruiting bodies or such like common factors when dry rot is present. We would also say to bear in mind that we only see dry rot once every few years.

We would advise that we have not opened up the floors and we have not had access to the roof.

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.*

This is definitely occurring under the floor. You will need to open up sections of the floor to check its condition.

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

Again, we would advise that we have not opened up the floors and we have had not access to the roof.

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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 this case we did not have access to the roof.

We looked at some floor areas and we did not see any woodworm although we would add that the dampness does make conditions good for woodworm.

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

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

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

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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.

Internal decorations are in slightly below average condition

You may wish to redecorate to your own personal taste. It is very difficult to advise on how frequently redecoration should take place. This very much depends upon the use and abuse the decoration gets, for example, within hallways this tends to be greater than for example within a spare bedroom.

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.

HIPs

We understand that HIPs were suspended from 20th May 2010. Energy Performance Certificates are required before a sale completes.

Roofs

We did not have access to the roof space but you are effectively insulated by the flats above.

Walls

The walls to this property are solid in the sense that they do not have a cavity as a modern property would have. Also they are unlikely to have any substantial insulation, However, unfortunately it is generally very difficult to improve the insulation without affecting the external or the internal appearance of the property.

Windows

The windows are a mixture of single and double glazed and therefore will have poor to reasonable thermal properties.

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Services

Service records should be obtained. It is essential for the services to be regularly maintained to run efficiently.

Summary

Assuming the above is correct, this property is average as typically we would not expect to find double glazed windows in this age, type and style of property.

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

HTTP//www.withouthotair.com/Videos.html to download or buy like we did.

It is worth watching the video How Many Light Bulbs? by David J C MacKay HTTP//www.youtube.com/watch?v=UR8wRSp21Xs

Finally, we would comment that energy we feel will become a major consideration in years to come, particularly with the greater focus in modern buildings on energy efficiency.

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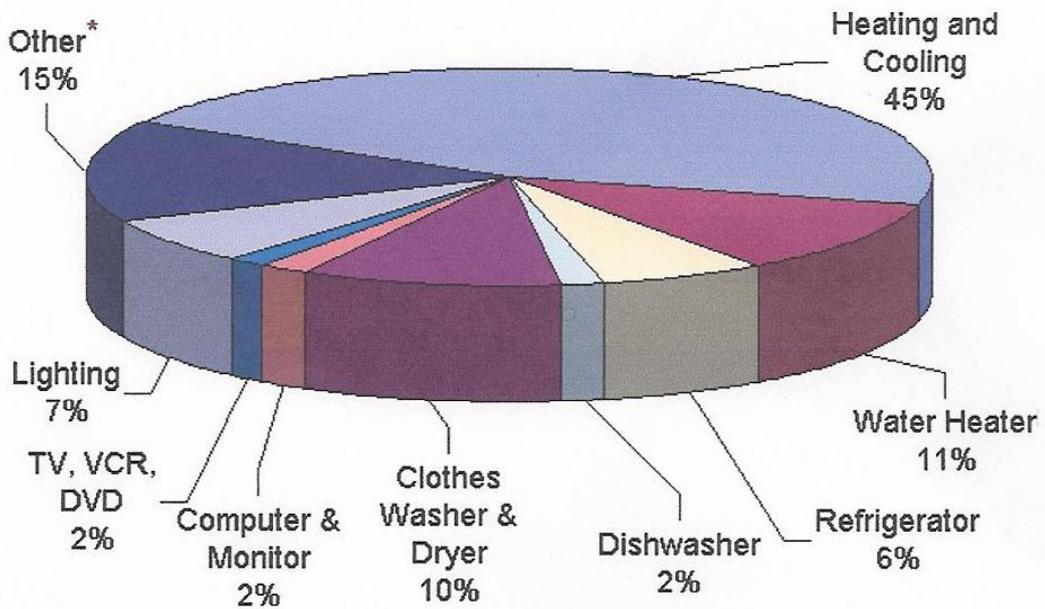
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What does my energy bill pay for?



*"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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OTHER MATTERS



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

Security

No security system was noted. It is a personal decision as to whether you feel one is necessary. We are not experts in this field and therefore cannot comment further. 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 Systems and Smoke Alarms

Multi-occupied Property – Fire Alarms

We are a strong believer that where properties are multi occupied, i.e. there are more than one resident or tenancy, that the fire alarm system should be interconnected alerting any of the properties if there is a fire anywhere within the building.

In addition to this there should be regular fire alarm drills.

ACTION REQUIRED: Your Legal Advisor to confirm whether this is the case.

We would recommend, for your own safety, that smoke detectors be installed. We would always recommend a hard wired fire alarm system and are also aware that some now work from a wireless signal which may be worth investigating. Whilst fire is relatively rare it is in a worst case scenario obviously devastating.

Insurance

As this property is leasehold/shared freehold we assume you have to pay your building insurance via the Management Company or Building Owner. Typically they will arrange for insurance and recharge it to you at a

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percentage of the cost. You should ensure that they have suitably insured the property.

Asbestos

In a property of this age there may well be some asbestos.

In this case we have not noted 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. We are not asbestos surveyors.

ACTION REQUIRED: If you wish to confirm you are 100 percent free of asbestos you need to have asbestos survey carried out. There should be an asbestos report on the property as a whole. We have not seen the property as a whole and have not seen an asbestos report.

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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 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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ELECTRICITY



It is strange to think that electricity only started to be used in domestic properties at the turn of the 19th century with gas lighting still being the norm for a good many years after.

Periodic inspections and testing of electrical installations is important to protect your property from damage and to ensure the safety of the occupants. Guidance published by the Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) recommends that inspections and testing are undertaken at least every 10 years (we recommend every five years) and on change of occupancy. All electrical installation works undertaken after 1st January 2005 should be identified by an Electrical Installation Certificate.

Fuse Board

The electric fuses and consumer units were located in the central larder/storage room. The fuse board looked dated, circa 1960's – 1980's and better are now available. In multi occupied properties a defective fuse board can be particularly dangerous.



Fuse Board

Earth Test

We carried out an earth test in the kitchen area to the socket point that is normally used for the kettle, this proved satisfactory.



Earth Test

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ACTION REQUIRED: As the property is changing occupancy an Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) test and report should be carried out by a NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent.

In addition to this your Legal Advisor is required to make full enquires with the owners to establish if any electrical installation work has been carried out and to provide suitable certification for any works carried out after 1st January 2005. Any comments made within this report or verbally do not change this requirement.

For basic general information on this matter please see the appendices at the end of this report.

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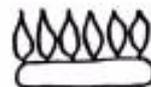
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There is very little we can check for in a gas installation, we do inspect to make sure there is one and that it has a consumer unit and that the boilers are vented. Ideally you should have a service inspection carried out by an independent Gas Safe registered plumber.

We are advised that the property has mains gas. The consumer unit is located under the stairs.

All gas appliances, pipework and flues should be the subject of an annual service by a competent engineer, i.e., a member of Gas Safe; works to gas appliances etc., by unqualified personnel is illegal. Unless evidence can be provided to confirm that there has been annual servicing we would recommend that you commission such a service prior to use to ensure safe and efficient operation.



Gas meters

ACTION REQUIRED: As a matter of course it is recommended that the entire gas installation is inspected and made good, as necessary, by a Gas Safe registered contractor. Thereafter the installation should be serviced annually.

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PLUMBING AND HEATING



In this section we do our best from a visual inspection to look at how the water is supplied to the property, how the supply is distributed around the property, how it is used to heat the property and how it is discharged from the property.

Water Supply

We noted two stopcocks, one in the kitchen and one in the W.C. but we did not test either of them.



Stopcock in the kitchen at high level



Stop cock in the W.C.

ACTION REQUIRED: Ask the owners to show you where they are (the owner's daughter did not want us to turn them off and on). However bear in mind her English is very limited.

Water Pressure

When the taps were run to carry out the drainage test we checked the pressure literally by putting a finger over the tap and we found this was affected by other taps being turned on and off. This could mean that when having a shower etc. that the hot water fluctuates.

The Water Board have to guarantee a certain pressure of water to ensure that things like boilers, particularly the instantaneous ones have a constant supply of pressured water



Deterioration in the floor

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(they would blow up if they didn't!).

ACTION REQUIRED: You could put a thermostatic controlled shower unit in place. This is important as you are possibly looking to rent the property.

Cold Water Cistern

We have not found a water tank. We can only assume that the water is directly fed to the taps. The original idea behind a water tank was to help water pressure and to give an emergency supply of water.

Hot Water Cylinder

We have not found a hot water cylinder in the property.

Plumbing

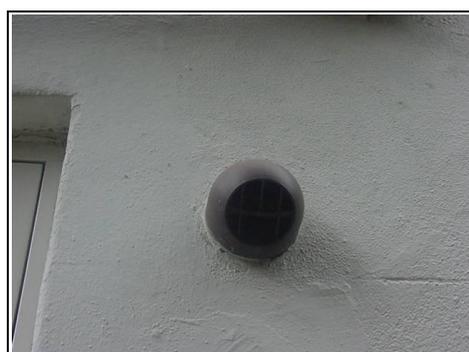
The plumbing, where visible, comprises copper piping. No significant leakage was noted on the surface, although most of the pipework is concealed in floors, walls and ducts.

Heating

The boiler was located in the kitchen, it is manufactured by Main and the model type is a Combi 24HE.



Boiler



Flue from the boiler

Our limited inspection of the hot water and central heating system revealed no evidence to suggest any serious defects but we would nevertheless recommend that the system be tested and overhauled before exchange of

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contracts and that a regular maintenance contract be placed with an approved heating engineer.

Ten Minute Heating Test

The owner's daughter did not want us to turn the heating on so this was not carried out.

Finally, it should be noted that the supply pipe from the Water Company stopcock to the internal stop tap is the responsibility of the property owner.

We cannot comment on the condition of the water service pipe to the building. It should be appreciated that leaks can occur for some time before signs are apparent on the surface.

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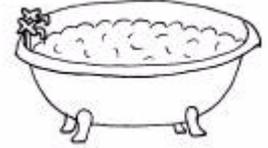
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BATHROOM



In this section we consider the overall condition of the sanitary fittings such as the bathroom, the kitchen, the utility room and the cloakroom.

Bathroom

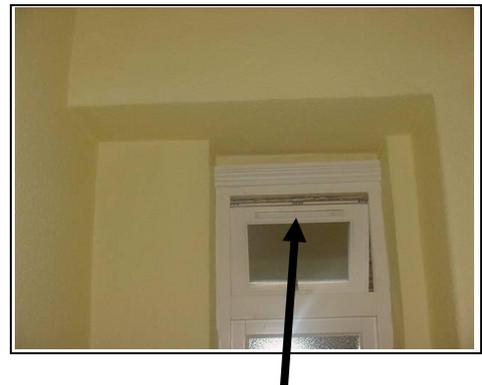
The property has a two piece bathroom suite, consisting of a bath and wash hand basin. There is also a shower within the bath. This looks in below average condition. Please note our earlier comments with regards to having a thermostatic controlled shower installed as water pressure is affected by taps being used and flushing toilets etc.



Shower in the bath.
The tiles have seen better days

W. C.

We would comment that the separate W.C. does not have the benefit of a wash hand basin. There is also no extract fan and we recommend this is added. There is a trickle vent in the window.



Trickle vent in window

Trickle Vents Defined

Trickle vents allow a trickle of air through, therefore stopping/reducing the likelihood of condensation occurring within the property.

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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 baths and showers 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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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 foul drains from the property 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.

The cold taps have been run for approximately quarter of an hour in the bathroom and kitchen. No build up or back up was noted.

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 have identified three inspection chambers / manholes.

Inspection Chamber / Manhole One – rear right

We duly lifted the cover and found it to be free flowing at the time of our inspection.

From what we could see it is built from concrete rings. This means it is a replacement manhole.



Manhole

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Inspection Chamber / Manhole Two

We could not lift the cover of this manhole.



Manhole two

Inspection Chamber / Manhole Three – right middle

We duly lifted the cover and found it to be free flowing at the time of our inspection. This has a ceramic pipe that would have been reserved for the better drainage systems.

From what we could see it is brick built.



Manhole with ceramic pipe visible, which is the best sort of pipe.

We find properties that become multi-occupied, such as this, can have problems during peak hours. In a rental property there can also be problems with almost anything being put down the drains! Unfortunately if they do overflow and back up then it's your property that will have the problems first. This is why it is important to check how the landlord deals with reactive maintenance.

We have only undertaken a visual inspection of the property's foul drains by lifting covers and running water from the taps within the house.

Finally, it must be emphasised that the condition of the property's foul drains can only be ascertained by the carrying out of a test; such a test has not been undertaken. Should there be leaks in the vicinity of the building then problems could occur, particularly with respect to the stability of the

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building's foundations. Drainage repairs are inevitably costly and may result in damage being caused to those areas of the property beneath, or adjacent to, which the drains have been run.

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.

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

In this age of property it is likely to be into shared drains. These can be a problem during heavy rainfall and peak periods, such as the 9 o'clock rush to work.

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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OUTSIDE AREAS

The main focus of this report has been on the main building. If you wish us to do a specific report on the other buildings then you need to instruct us for this separately. We are offering here a brief overview.

PARKING

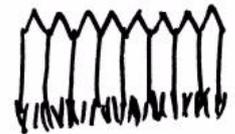


Parking is at the roadside on a first come first serve basis. There is a parking permits system in operation. We often find that with these areas that were designed before the car was used en mass that there can be difficulties parking outside or even near your property.



Parking at roadside

EXTERNAL AREAS



Communal Gardens

Front Garden

The property has a front garden with a grassed area and trees. The garden drops away and lowers as it heads towards your flats. There is also a bin storage area to the right hand side (all directions given as you face the property). Please also note the problem with cracking to the boundary wall. Our concern is that where the wall is on a public footpath that there may be a liability.



Front garden

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Bin area



Crack in the boundary wall



Front boundary wall

Rear Garden

The rear garden is mainly grassed with some trees and a garden shed. This garden is in theory shared. Our main issues are the tree that we have commented on and the overall water logged nature of the garden.



Rear garden



Garden is very damp



Entrance to the flat from the rear garden



Rear Boundary wall – next doors property

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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.

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.

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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) Timber treatments, wet or dry rot infestations.
 - ii) Rising damp treatments.
 - iii) Double glazing or replacement windows.
 - iv) Roof and similar renewals.
 - v) Central heating installation.
 - vi) Planning and Building Regulation Approvals.
 - vii) Removal of any walls in part or whole.
 - viii) Removal of any chimneys in part or whole.
 - ix) Any other matters pertinent to the property.
- 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 **0800 298 5424**.

This Report is dated: xxxxxxxx

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REFERENCES

The repair and maintenance of houses
Published by Estates Gazette Limited

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.*

House Builders Bible
By Mark Brinkley, Published by Burlington Press

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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 xxxxxxxxxx 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 warm and dry at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

In recent times our weather seems to be moving towards the extremities from its usual relatively mid range. Extremes of weather can affect the property.

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.

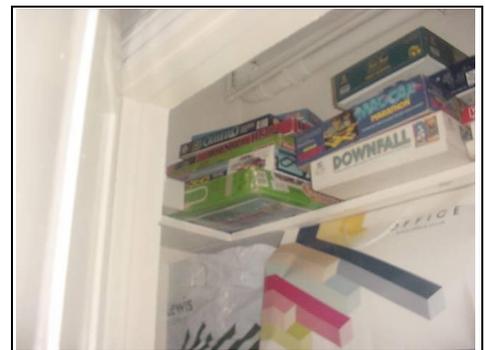
OCCUPIED PROPERTY

The property was occupied at the time of our survey, which meant that there were various difficulties when carrying out the survey such as stored items within cupboards, the loft space and obviously day-to-day household goods throughout the property. We have, however, done our best to work around these.

INSPECTION LIMITED

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been very limited as we did not have access to the roof or to the upper flats. We were also not able to open up the ground floor.

We did not meet the owner of the building only her daughter who had very limited English and we didn't have the benefit of meeting you at the property to talk about your specific requirements.



Stored items in cupboards

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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 enquiries 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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APPENDICES

1. General Information on Living in Leasehold/Shared Freehold Properties.
2. The Electrical Regulations – Part P of the Building Regulations
3. Information on the Property Market
4. French Drain Article

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General Information on Living in Leased/Shared Freehold Properties

Living in Multi Occupied Properties

- As a leasehold/shared freehold flat owner, you usually own and are responsible for the maintenance of everything within its four walls, including floorboards and plasterwork, but not usually the external or structural walls.

The landlord, who can be a person, a company, a local authority or a housing association, owns the structure and common parts of the building and the land it stands on and is responsible for its maintenance.

According to independent advice agency the Leasehold Advisory Service (Lease), it's now becoming quite common for the leaseholders/shared freeholders to own the freehold of the building through a residents' management company, effectively becoming their own landlord.

- A lease/shared freeholder agreement is a contract between the leaseholder/shared freeholder and the landlord, giving conditional ownership for a fixed period of time. It is the key to all the responsibilities and obligations of both the leaseholder/shared freeholder and the landlord and should spell out what you can expect from the landlord in terms of services.

No two leases/shared freehold agreements are the same, so it is essential you read yours carefully to find out exactly what your rights and responsibilities are. Get advice if unsure about any legal language.

- Your contractual rights laid out in the lease/shared freehold agreement normally entitle you to expect the landlord to maintain and repair the building and manage the common parts such as grounds, staircases and hallways.

At the same time, you will be required to keep the inside of the flat in good order, to behave in a neighbourly manner, to pay a share of the costs of maintaining and running the building and not to do certain things, such as sub-let, without the land-lord's consent.

- Because leasehold/shared freehold is a tenancy, it is subject to the payment of a rent – which may be nominal. Ground rent is a specific requirement of the lease/shared freehold and must be paid on the due date.

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- Service charges are payable by the leaseholder/shared freeholder to the landlord for all the services they provide, including maintenance and repairs, insurance of the building and, in some cases, provision of central heating, lifts, lighting and cleaning of common areas etc. Service charges usually also include the costs of management, either by the landlord or by a professional managing agent.

Details of what can and cannot be charged by the landlord and the proportion of the charge to be paid by the individual leaseholder/shared freeholder are all set out in the lease/shared freehold agreement. So do read it very carefully.

All maintenance costs are met by the leaseholders/shared freeholders and landlords normally make no financial contribution. Service charges can vary from year to year and can go up and down with no limit other than that they are “reasonable”.

Most modern leases/shared freehold agreements allow for the landlord to collect service charges in advance, repaying any surplus or collecting any shortfall at the end of the year.

- The lease/shared freehold agreement normally obliges the landlord to take out insurance for the building and common parts and gives them the right to recover the cost of the premium through service charges. The policy doesn't usually cover the possessions of individual leaseholders/shared freeholders.
- Many leases/shared freehold agreements provide for the landlord to collect sums in advance to create a reserve fund, ensuring that enough money is available for future scheduled major works such as external decoration. The lease/shared freehold agreement will set out the sums involved and when regular maintenance works are due.
- Leaseholders/shared freeholders have powerful rights to challenge service charges they feel are unreasonable at Leasehold Valuation Tribunals (LVTs), which provide a relatively informal way to resolve residential leasehold/shared freehold disputes.

Application to LVTs can be made under many different laws and on many subjects. LVTs can determine, among other things, the reasonableness of a service charge and whether it is payable and disputes relating to insurance.

Lease publishes useful leaflets, which are downloadable from its website, on LVTs.

- Some landlords carry out the management of the property themselves but many appoint a managing agent to manage and maintain the building on behalf of the landlord

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in accordance with the terms of lease/shared freehold agreement, current relevant legislation and codes of practice.

The agent takes instruction from the landlord, not the leaseholders/shared freeholders, but should be constantly aware of the leaseholders'/shared freeholders' wishes and requirements. The agent will receive a fee which is usually paid by leaseholders/shared freeholders as part of the service charges.

- There is no statutory regulation of managing agents. Some are members of professional organisations such as ARMA, the Association of Residential Managing Agents, tel: 010-797-2607 or go to arma.org.uk, and agree to abide by its own code of practice and that of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, tel: 0870-333-1600 or visit rics.org.uk.
- If there is a problem with management services, the leaseholder's/shared freeholder's argument is not with the agent but with the landlord, who has ultimate responsibility for the full and proper management of the property.

Leaseholders/shared freeholders with such complaints are advised to discuss their situation with Lease before contacting their landlord. In extreme cases where the landlord will not meet his obligations to maintain the buildings and communal areas in accordance with the lease/shared freehold agreement, it may be necessary to take action through the county court. Lease can give in-depth advice on such a course of action.

- For disgruntled leaseholders/shared freeholders who have suffered long-term bad management from landlords or who believe they could do a better job at a lower cost, there is another option.

Since September 2003, flat owners in England and Wales have been able to exercise the Right to Manage (RTM) and take over the management of their building without having to prove any fault on the part of their landlord.

RTM, part of a package of reforms stemming from the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002, empowers leaseholders/shared freeholders to take control of the running of their building without having to stump up large sums of money to buy the freehold. They also gain better control over insurance costs and the level at which service charges are set.

Exercising this right is a relatively simple process. A formal notice is served on the landlord by an RTM company which has been set up by a sufficient number of qualifying

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tenants – leaseholders/shared freeholders whose lease/shared freehold agreement was originally granted for a term of more than 21 years. For details, see the Lease website.

But don't think of RTM as easy DIY management and a way of getting rid of all managing costs. Managing a building involves running a complex business and complying with a raft of legislation and there will always be managing costs. Lease advises leaseholders/shared freeholders exercising this right to appoint a professional to manage their block.

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THE ELECTRICAL REGULATIONS – PART P OF THE BUILDING REGULATIONS

Here is our quick guide to the Regulations, but please take further advice from a qualified and experienced electrician.

From 1st January 2005, people carrying out electrical work in homes and gardens in England and Wales must follow new rules in the building regulations. All significant electrical work carried out in the home will have to be undertaken by a registered installer or be approved and certified by the local authority's building control department. Failure to do so will be a legal offence and could result in a fine. Non-certified work could also put your household insurance policy at risk.

If you can't provide evidence that any electrical installation work complies with the new regulations, you could have problems when it comes to selling the property.

There will be two ways in which to prove compliance:

1. A certificate showing the work has been done by a Government-approved electrical installer - British Gas or NICEIC Electrical Contractor.
2. A certificate from the local authority saying that the installation has approval under the building regulations.

Homeowners will still be able to do some minor electrical jobs themselves. To help you, we've put together this brief list of dos and don'ts.

Work You Cannot do Yourself

- Complete new or rewiring jobs.
- Fuse box changes.
- Adding lighting points to an existing circuit in a 'special location' like the kitchen, bathroom or garden.
- Installing electrical earth connections to pipework and metalwork.
- Adding a new circuit.

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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.halifax.co.uk and www.nationwide.co.uk

Surveys have been carried out by these two companies, one now a bank and the other a building society for many years. Information from these surveys is often carried in the national press. It should be remembered that the surveys only relate to mortgaged properties, of which it is generally considered represents only 75% of the market. It should also be remembered that the national coverage of the two companies differs and that they may be offering various incentives on different mortgages, which may taint the quality of information offered. That said they do try to adjust for this, the success or otherwise of this is hard to establish.

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www.hometrack.co.uk

This gives information with regard to house sale and purchase prices.

www.motleyfool.co.uk

We also like the Motley Fool website which is a general financial site and although it is selling financial services and other services they do tend to give a very readable view of the housing market.

www.rightmove.co.uk

This is probably the largest Internet search engine for estate agency sales and also has useful information with regard to prices of property (but it is not the same as having a chartered surveyor value it).

www.zoopla.co.uk

This is a very good website for seeing the prices of properties for sale in a certain postcode area.

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French Drain

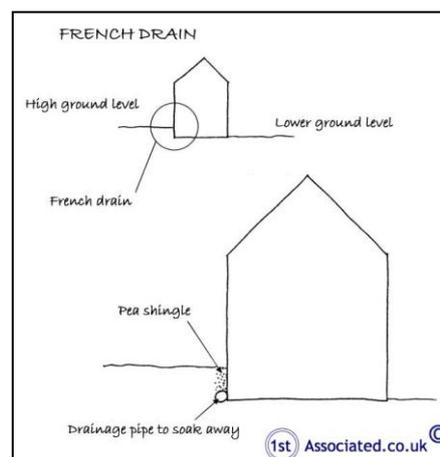
Using a French drain to resolve a dampness problem

We are finding where we are asked to look at damp walls and damp floors or damp problems in general that commonly it is because the external ground level is higher than the internal ground level, or airbricks have been blocked, or simply paving slabs, decking or briquettes have been used to form a patio area. This then discharges any rainwater against the building. Quite often the solution is to add a French drain.

Whilst French drains are quite simple and are basically nothing more than trenches filled with gravel, although there is a bit more to them, as we will explain, they are almost a D.I.Y. job for most people and they are relatively easy to install and are low cost. However, you do need some care and attention, otherwise you can install what we have heard referred to, as the French pond.

What use is a French drain?

A French drain is a trench, the width of approximately six inches or 300 millimetres wide, or the width of your spade, and is approximately twice the depth, i.e. 12 inches or 300 millimetres. In most cases this will suffice, however, where there is a great deal of ground water you may wish to make the trench wider and deeper.



The French drain acts as an area where water soaks away quickly. We often recommend them close to building, but not next to the building, as this helps reduce the ground level and/or take any water that is directed at that area away. For example, where a patio has been put in place which aims any rainwater at part of the wall. As mentioned, whilst a French drain is a D.I.Y. job, it does need some understanding of how it works.

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French drains must be on a slope

The piping that goes at the base of a French drain should be perforated or, as we did years ago for land drains, there should be gaps between each pipe. It should be set onto a bed of firm ground and the pipes should be on a fall to the drain. Whilst you should be able to ensure there is enough fall by sight, we also like the idea of rolling a marble from one end to the other.

You will then need to put the pipes down, fill the trench with half an inch, to an inch, of good sized gravel. You can leave it at that, or in addition you can cover with sand and then turf over. This is how a basic French drain is carried out.

The French drain system that we would recommend

This would be as described, although we would add to the base an inch or two of gravel on to which the perforated drainage pipe will rest. It will then wrap around that drainage pipe filter fabric. This is to stop the holes in the perforated pipe from blocking up. By the way, the drainage pipe should be four to six inches/100 millimetres to 250 millimetres. We would then fill with gravel. In addition to this, we would add a silt trap and this is added in the run of the pipe and is very similar to a road gully (not that's of much use if you don't understand how a road gully works). The silt trap is a rectangular box with a pipe opening at each end. The drained water passes onto this and any particles sink to the bottom of the box and then the water travels on to the other side of the box, enabling you to feed into a drain.

These are usually made of glass reinforced polyester and have been available in this form since the mid-1980's. They are normally reinforced with a steel frame for additional strength and re-bedded in concrete.

The French pond!

French drains will, over time, clog up, which is why we recommend using a filter fabric. However, even with this they will eventually clog up. Unfortunately, there is no dingo-rod equivalent, as it is normally fine sand, organic matter or clay that has clogged up the French drain. So, it is a case of digging it up and cleaning the pipework (or it may be quicker to just replace it), adding a filter fabric and re-filling the gravel.

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