RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY

Clophill, Bedfordshire, MK45

FOR
Mr C

PREPARED BY

Independent Chartered Surveyors
0800 298 5424

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0800 298 5424

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

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

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 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 house 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 telephone 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 house is yours but we will do our best to offer advice to make the decision as easy as possible.

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" type face for clarity.

PHOTOGRAPHS

We utilise photographs to illustrate issues or features. In some photographs a pencil has been used to highlight a specific area (with this property we have taken approximately one hundred photographs in total and we have enclosed a sample of these within the report).

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.

SYNOPSIS

SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION

We are advised by the present owners that the property was built in 1604, although they could not recall where they first heard this (our estimation of the age is within the report).

This property was built during the Tudor period. This was the period when arguably the first building Act came into being in 1619, when James I set up the commission.

1625 saw Charles I make various proclamations relating to building, which included confirming brick as an approved building material, however due to the lack of transport local materials still remained the most common material mainly being timber and stone.

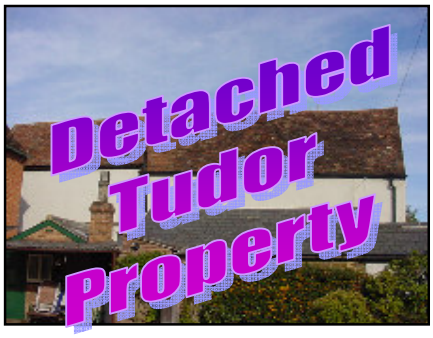
Charles II's first proclamation came in 1661 and tried to bring some control to the relatively large amount of building work being carried out and over crowding, but it went mainly unheeded. The plague of London followed in 1665 and the fire of London in 1666. Not surprisingly the most comprehensive Act followed in 1667 and from then on all new buildings in London were required to be built of brick or stone including lintels; all to be supervised by appointed surveyors and it could be argued that this helped form Georgian design.

This is a two-storey property that has been much altered over the years, amended and extended. It has an adjacent linked garage and off road parking and there is a conservatory to the rear and smallish garden.

This property and the adjoining property once formed part of the farm. We are advised that the surrounding land was sold off in the 1950s/1960s and has resulted in the surrounding houses.

The village of Clophill is predominantly residential with a few public houses. There is a shop and school. The nearest largest towns/villages are Ampthill and Shefford with Dunstable and Luton also being relatively close.

EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Left hand elevation

Right hand elevation

Front elevation

Rear elevation

ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES

Ground Floor

The ground floor accommodation consists of:

- Entrance hall
- Bathroom
- Large Lounge with stair access to the first floor
- Kitchen with a Utility Room, giving access to the garage
- 'New' conservatory to the rear

First Floor

The first floor accommodation consists of:

- Three double size bedrooms
- One single size bedroom
- Bathroom with a wash hand basin and W.C.

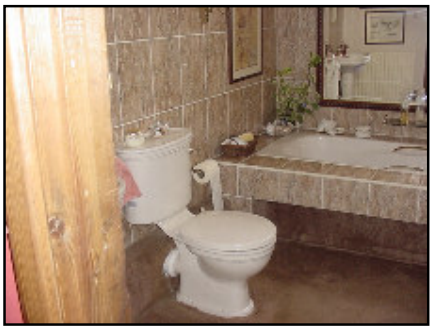
INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Please note that some of the photos may have been taken with a concave lens, to enable us to show you as much of the room as possible, which does make the photos slightly blurred.

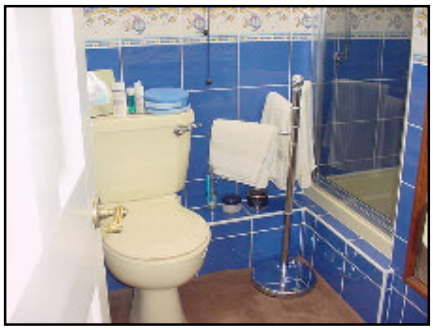
Lounge, looking into kitchen

Another view of the Lounge

Kitchen



Ground Floor Bathroom



First floor bathroom, wash hand basin, w.c. and shower

Master Bedroom

Rear Bedroom

Stairs and Landing Area

SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION

EXTERNAL

Chimneys:	One brick chimney
Main Roof:	A pitched roof, clad with clay tiles
Secondary Roofs:	A pitched slate roof
Rainwater Goods:	A mixture of plastic and cast iron
Walls:	Painted render finish, although in some areas it looks to be painted over brickwork
External Joinery:	Painted timber sash windows and painted timber fascias and soffits

INTERNAL

Ceilings:	A mixture of lath and plaster and plasterboard
Walls:	A mixture of studwork and solid (assumed)
Floors:	Ground Floor: Solid under foot and assumed to be concrete. A small area viewed in the hallway was confirmed as being concrete. First Floor: Joist and floorboards (assumed)

OUTSIDE

A small garden to the front and a smallish garden to the rear; this has probably occurred due to the land that has been sold off around the property. To the right hand side there is a linked garage with off road parking for one or possibly two small cars.

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.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summaries are dangerous 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. Having said all of that, here are our comments:-

Generally we found the house in reasonable. We would however draw your attention to the following:

1) **Misplaced Common Rafter within the Roof**

The clay roof to the front of the property undulates, as one would expect in a property of this age. When we were inspecting the roof structure we noted that one of the common rafters (these are the rafters that form the pitch of the roof) has moved. We suggest that this is repositioned. Do not get overly concerned about this, from our inspection we note that this type of work has previously been carried out.

ACTION REQUIRED: A competent carpenter should be able to resolve this problem and check the other timbers. Approximately one day's work. Our main concern would be that the carpenter, if he is not careful, will cause more damage than good – the roof is fairly delicate.

ANTICIPATED COST: £250.

Please see the Roof Structure Section of this report.

General view of the roof

Just to the left of the torchlight is the broken timber – sorry it is a poor photo but I was literally on my knees at the time.

2) **Roof Detailing – Lead Flashings**

Following on from the above, the roof would benefit from a general check over once the roof structure repairs have been made. The cement flashings and various other bodged flashings, particularly to the valley gutter at the front of the property, should be replaced in lead.

ACTION REQUIRED: We expect that most of the work/time will be spent replacing deteriorating tiles as they are in a fairly poor condition and it looks like little more than gravity is holding them in place. If care is not taken then a domino effect could occur. Again, a good quality contractor is required.

There will also be a fair amount of work replacing the existing flashings with new lead flashings, as you presently have a mixture of fairly cheap quality flashings, i.e. either made of cement or a product known as Flashband, which is like a sticky backed lead.

We would anticipate a week's work.

ANTICIPATED COST: £2,500 - £5,000 – this very much depends upon the amount of tiles that are replaced. We suggest a quote is obtained for this prior to making a final offer on the property.

Please see the Roof Coverings Section of this Report.

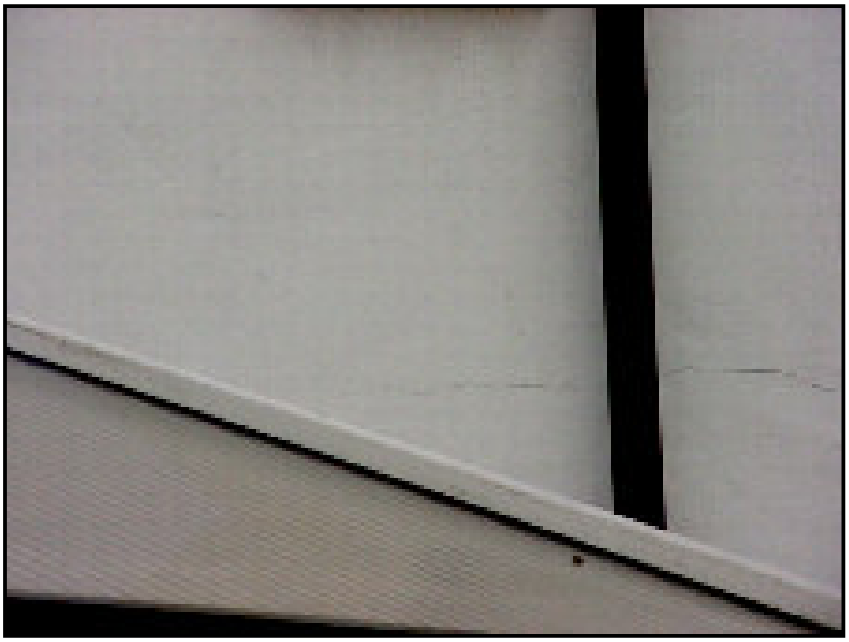
General view of the roof, you can see that the tiles are spalling and that they have opened up slightly, leaving gaps between them, which is why we have recommended a general overhaul of the roof.

The red pencil here indicates where a flashing has been added in a temporary material known as Flashband. This should be replaced in lead.

3) **External Render**

This is a very difficult one to summarise as there are various issues with the render. The first and main one is that, assuming that the front portion of the property is predominantly timber frame, the wrong type of render has been used – this is a cement based hard render when a lime based soft render should have been used. Having said that, if the owner's comments are true (made during our question and answer session), that there have been no major issues over the 17 years they have lived in the property, then it is likely that much of the original timber frame has been replaced with either block or brick, possibly when it was developed in the 1980s. From our inspection it was very difficult to be certain of this. The front of the property certainly has a proportion of the original waffle and daub.

Possibly due to the various types of materials beneath the render there is hairline cracking in the structure. This sort of cracking needs sealing instantly. We always describe the render as being like a raincoat, and any cracks as being like leaks through that raincoat, which can and will cause damage to the structure below.



This horizontal hairline crack is an example of the sort of cracking that is being caused by differential movement in the structure.

Here on the rear gable, if you look closely you can see pattern staining, indicating the structure beneath in a noughts and crosses type pattern above the window.

We would also comment that the quality of render can usually be determined by the quality of detailing upon it. In this case they are generally very poor. An example of this would be the presence of drip details (see photo below).

Above the window there should be a drip detail to throw the water away from the window.

Equally so there should be a bell-mouth detail at the base of the render. If this was formed it would help considerably in reducing the dampness in the structure.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would also suggest you go around the property with a mastic gun sealing any hairline cracks. You will also note hollow areas, which we identify later on within the report, that we suggest are hacked off, but not until the summer of 2004, and you will also note areas that have been repaired poorly, as they do not match in with the existing render.

The major cost would be to form a bell-mouthed detail to the base of the render, and we suggest this is carried out as soon as possible. The main

aim of this is to allow dampness, which is above what we would normally expect, out of the front of the structure.

ANTICIPATED COST: £5,000 - £10,000. The bell-mouth detailing is an awkward piece of work and will then involve the whole of the property being re-decorated. Therefore we would suggest that you live with this until you carry out the hacking back of the hollow areas of render in the summer or spring months and at this time you also add drip details above the windows and re-decorate.

Please see the Walls and Dampness Section of this Report.

There are numerous other items that we would class as DIY or handyman type work, such as clearing the gutters and replacing any missing parts, re-securing as necessary or for example brushing off the moss to the low level concrete tile roof on the right hand side. These problems are fairly typical for this age, style and type of property. We have detailed these and other issues within the main body of the report.

The above issues are explained in full within the main body of the report.

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 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.

SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION

The Summary Upon Reflection is a second summary so to speak, which is carried out with our thoughts a few days after the initial survey. We would add the following:-

Our main point of concern or risk that you take on in this property is the roof, as many of the clay tiles are in poor condition and it is almost impossible for anyone to cost prior to literally getting on the roof and starting to replace the tiles. Indeed we were on the verge of commenting that the roof should be left until it actually leaks and on reflection we feel that this may be the best practice, although we usually prefer preventative measures than after the event action. The risk would be that there is a leak into the roof that you do not notice; we therefore feel that a roofer really needs to inspect this roof prior to your legal commitment to purchase.

The next area we would comment upon is the dampness in the structure. Many mortgage lenders may require a damp proof course adding. This should only be added if it turns out that the majority of the front of the property is not timber frame. We would recommend that some sort of investigation is carried out by opening up the render. We feel a fair amount of dampness could be reduced by adding the bell-mouth render detail that we have mentioned earlier.

The dampness is a complex issue and we would be more than happy to talk this through over the phone, or indeed visit the property with you to explain this further.

As a general comment for any work required we would always recommend that you obtain at least three quotations for any work from a qualified, time served tradesperson or a competent registered building contractor prior to legal completion. If you so wish we can prepare specifications and obtain quotations for the work, whatever you do don't allow the estate agent to organise the quotes as he will utilise people he regularly uses who know they have to keep in with him/her to get further work and therefore are very keen to please the estate agent, as opposed to you the real client and at the end of the day it doesn't take long to organise.

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

MORE ABOUT THE REPORT FORMAT

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

TENURE

We have assumed that the property is to be sold Freehold or Long leasehold, with no unusual or onerous clauses and that vacant possession will be available on completion. Your Legal Advisor should confirm that this is the case.

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 therefore are eager to sell the property (no sale – no fee!). We as your employed Independent Chartered Surveyor represent your interests only.

TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT/LIMITATIONS

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

OUR AIM IS ONE HUNDRED PERCENT SATISFACTION

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

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

General View of the Road

EXTERNAL

CHIMNEY STACKS AND ROOF LIGHTS

Chimneys

There is one chimney to this property.

Chimney One

This is a brick built chimney, which has a painted finish. From what we could see of the flashings they looked to be lead and what we could see of the flaunchings they were concrete and in reasonable condition. In addition to this the chimney was standing fairly straight. We would estimate that this is a fairly recent addition to the property, possibly carried out when it was developed/re-developed in the 1980s, at the most 50 years old.

Our only proviso or additional comment would be to check the flashings when you are having the roof work carried out as the general standard of flashings on the property is not very good.

Flaunchings Defined

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

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.

Roof Lights

There is a roof light allowing light into the first floor bathroom area. This looks relatively new, from its design we would say in the past 30 or so years and in theory we believe this should have had planning permission given on it.

> **ACTION REQUIRED:** Your Legal Advisor to specifically ask the present owners when the roof light was installed and if planning permission was received.

We examined the roof light within the bathroom area and did not note any visual signs of it leaking. However we would comment that it seems inevitable with roof lights that they will sooner or later leak. If this doesn't occur then they seem prone to condensation. Keep a cloth handy!

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

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

ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERFELTS

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

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

We will consider the roofs in four areas, the main old roof section, which is to the front of the property and the 'new' roof to the rear of the property. Both are in clay and possibly look like the same roof to the untrained eye. We will also look at the left hand side slate covered roof and the conservatory roof.

Main Roof – Old Section – Front Half of the Roof

Clay Tile Roof

We believe from the angle/pitch of this roof that it was once thatched. Acts required thatched roofs to be removed from habitable buildings (although we are advised that at one point this was the hayloft to the adjoining farmhouse). Clay tiles were the common material used to replace thatch and these would have been hand made at the time, which you can see from the general undulation of the roof and the way they sit. However, the clay tiles are spalling and opening up and are coming to the end of their useful life.

We learnt many years ago that nearly all buildings seem to last longer than seems possible, so you may be lucky and the roof may carry on for many years to come. However, you may be unlucky with a snowfall or perhaps the strong winds that we are currently experiencing; we feel you would then get what we would term as a domino effect, where lots of the tiles would be displaced.

To the front portion of the roof there is a mixture of the old original clay tiles and some newer tiles, but predominantly the older clay tiles have been used in this area, as is common practice (as you show the original part of the building on the main elevation). Within the roof we tried to establish further what sort of tiles were on the roof. Was it the original clay peg tiles or the more modern nibbed clay tiles? Unfortunately we were unable to establish this in this instance.

Whilst we are used to seeing these type of roofs undulate, and indeed it could be argued that it is part of the character, we felt that perhaps the undulation

was just a bit too much in this instance. When we went within the roof we found that a small bit of the structure had given way. This simply needs propping back in place, but at the same time this may displace some of the tiles that seem to be held there purely by gravity.

ACTION REQUIRED: We suggest that three days spent by a competent roofing contractor on the roof, once the roof structure has been sorted out, should prolong the life of the roof.

You should agree the rate for replacement clay tiles prior to them starting.

Here you can perhaps see the darker front roof, which is the original roof to the property.

We know we have already used this photo, but it does demonstrate well the tile issues.

Spalling Defined

Spalling occurs to brick or stone when water penetrates the surface and via freezing and thawing starts to break the surface up. This in turn allows further water penetration and the surface breaks up further. This ultimately can lead to water damage or structural damage to the area.

Sarking Felt

Half of the roof has no sarking felt and the other half has a hessian based sarking felt. This is why we are unable to confirm the exact nature of all the tiles on the roof.

A hessian based sarking felt means that this roof is likely to have been re-roofed about 40 – 50 years ago, which is generally when sarking felt of this type started to be used.

Main Roof – Rear Extension

This too is clad in a clay tile. We believe that as this has been re-roofed fairly recently – from our question and answer session with the present owners, we believe it to have been partially re-built in about 1985/86. What typically happens is that as many of the original clay tiles are used as can possibly be saved and these are intermixed with newer clay tiles. However the roofer may well at this stage have run out of the original clay tiles and be using predominantly clay nibbed tiles or even concrete tiles. Either way the rear roof appears visually in better condition than the front roof – not that that is particularly difficult.

> **ACTION REQUIRED:** The roofer to have a general look at this roof. We do not expect that many tiles will need replacing, but you never know until you have a close look. Due to the plastic sarking felt (see below) we suggest that venting is added in this area. There is a discrete vent that can now be added at the ridge and also underneath some of the tiles.

Here you can see the fairly flat look of the roof. We mentioned that there may be concrete tiles mixed with clay tiles. We have made this comment due to the moss that is present, which is a common feature with concrete tiles.

Sarking Felt

Within the main roof we noticed a plastic based sarking felt. This type of sarking felt is well known because it causes condensation to occur and was used briefly in the 1980s.

The difficultly is to actually take it out; this is a major task. This would involve taking all the tiles off the roof and in my opinion it is best left. However, we would recommend that you set aside a day in the summer and a

day in the winter just to check in the roof. We have actually seen this type of roof dripping with condensation – this was in a modern house in Milton Keynes. If there is a problem noted you could telephone us and we would be more than happy to call round and give you our best advice how to resolve it.

Left Hand Side Lower Single Storey Roof

There is a slate roof to the left hand side of the property. This is in reasonable condition, although we did note some lead tingles. This can only really be viewed if you stand within the curtilage of the adjoining property on the left hand side (the old farm). Normally as a rule of thumb in surveying once you have a dozen tingles you feel that the roof is coming to the end of its natural life.

The reason tingles are used is usually because the nails rust away and lose their fixing, this is known as nail sickness (which quite concerned us when we first heard the term).

We have not been able to access this roof.

If you look closely in the centre of the photo you can see the lead tingles. We have not been able to access the inside of this roof.

Junction Of Roof To Adjoining Main Building

We would much prefer to see a lead flashing running along this edge. There is a cement fillet flashing; these tend to deteriorate over the years and are considered cheap, almost temporary flashings.

You can see that some of the ridge tiles have been displaced in this photo. This is to the front of the property, but the area obviously suffers from a fair amount of windy weather.

Cement Fillets/Cement Flashings

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 they are replaced with lead.

Valley Gutter

There is an awful valley gutter detail to the front of the property where the entrance hall roof meets the main building. This has had various flashings and has had a bodge repair, for want of a better term, with a product known as Flashband. This all needs forming in lead and we would say this is fairly essential work and suggest it is done as soon as possible.

ACTION REQUIRED: We have earlier recommended that you have a roofer for a week to look at the main roof. You should also generally carry out lead work to the property, particularly to the left hand side roof and particularly the valley gutter that we have just mentioned.

There are also some other areas of cement fillets, to the right hand side around the chimney, which you may wish to pick up at the same time.

Conservatory Roof

The conservatory roof is, we are advised, relatively new. It is formed in a polycarbonate with a plastic joining bead and it certainly looked fairly new. We assume it is probably still under guarantee.

> **ACTION REQUIRED:** Your Legal Advisor to confirm whether a guarantee is present.

Where it meets the main building there is a lead flashing, which we feel is the best type of flashing.

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

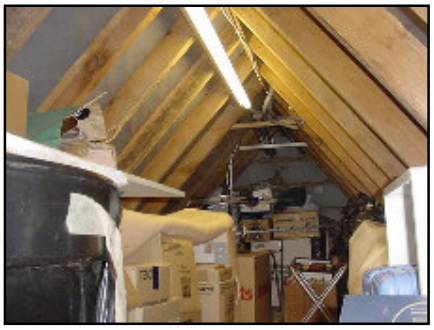
ROOF STRUCTURE AND ROOF VOIDS (ALSO KNOWN AS ROOF SPACE OR ATTIC SPACE

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.

We were only able to gain access into the main roof, here there were two access hatches. The one into the new roof had a loft ladder and a light and some boarding. The front roof access had none of these, we would suggest that they are added to make the roof space easier and safer to use. Both roof spaces were in addition viewed using torchlight to be able to see the perimeters, which limited our viewing slightly.

Rear Roof Space

This had what is known as a cut timber roof. This is a roof which is purpose made and built on site in situ. The timbers look a reasonable size and have reasonable spacing and are also fairly new, we would anticipate the last 50 years at the most, probably renewed when the development took place.



Our concern is the plastic sarking felt that has been used that we have commented upon within the Roof Covering Section. The grey between the joists is the plastic sarking felt and to the rear you can see blockwork has been used, indicating the rear extension is probably mainly blockwork with a render finish.

Water Tanks

The water tanks are formed in plastic, we therefore assume they are relatively new.

Front Roof Space

This was a completely different roof space that had the original structure. We were able to see the old wattle and daub at the gable ends of the property and the roof structure, whilst also being a cut roof (formed on site) was made in the days when wood peg fixings were used rather than nails. The roof has been adapted and altered over the years with some new timbers. To the very front end on the right hand side (all directions given from the front of the property) one of the common rafters (the rafters that form the roof pitch) has come out of place.

The roof has signs that it has had a woodworm infestation, as we would expect in a property of this age. Whether it is actually active is a difficult question, which can only really be resolved in April and May, which are the breading seasons for this insect. Our best guess would be that it is not active as it has not spread to the woodwork within the new portion of the roof, as far as we could see and we could not see any frass (the sawdust that the woodworm give off) although it is obviously fairly difficult to tell when you are in a roof that is only lit by torchlight.

ACTION REQUIRED: A carpenter should be able to resolve the rafter that has moved by using what is known as an 'A' frame and we would also suggest that he checks and secures any other timbers at the same time. Great care should be taken or else he could cause more damage than good.

A general view of the roof. If you look between the joists you can just see the old peg tiles and some pegs, although we do not think the pegs are original and the battens look fairly new (the battens are the timbers going across horizontally). You can also see a metal tie that has been added at some point to pull the structure together.

Some of the original wattle and daub on the left hand side and as you can see a completely different roof structure.

In both roofs there was approximately 100mm of insulation.

Finally, we would ask you to note that a general inspection of the roof timbers in both roofs has been made; we have not examined every single timber because some parts of the roof are inaccessible and it is simply not practical.

RAINWATER GOODS

Rainwater goods is the term given to the rainwater gutters and the rainwater downpipes. Their function is to carry rainwater from the roof to the ground keeping the main structure as dry as possible.

Defective rainwater goods 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.

Mixture

There is a mixture of cast iron rainwater goods and plastic. 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. However, we would hazard a guess that there are likely to be some leaks. We would draw your attention to one in particular.

End Cap on Right Hand Side of the Property

There is an end cap missing on the right hand side (all directions given facing the property). This has allowed water to cascade down the render, which has in turn formed hollow areas in the render.

We had an interesting discussion with the present owner who advised that it had caused no problems and we showed him where the render had 'blown' and he still refused to accept that it had caused any problems. Luckily the damage is occurring to the newer part of the structure, which is likely to be formed of block work, from what we could see within the garage. This would have been a far greater concern to us if it had been in the older front portion of the property.

ACTION REQUIRED: Fix an end cap on the rainwater goods.

We would always recommend that the rainwater goods are cleaned out, the joints are checked and the alignment checked to ensure that the gutters fall towards the downpipes.

You can just about see the gutter here, the end cap to this is missing.

Close up of missing end cap.

The blown render beneath the gutter. This is typical of the problems that can occur from the most minor piece of lack of maintenance.

Finally, gutters and downpipes have been inspected from ground level. We were not able to make a close inspection of the roof level rainwater goods (our ladders are not long enough) and therefore cannot be 100% certain of the type of material used or the condition. Our comments have therefore been based on our best assumptions.

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.

This is a difficult building to analyse. The rear of the property is likely to be built predominantly in block work with a render finish. We base this comment upon the block work we have seen within the garage and also the block work we have seen to the rear gable end when we were within the roof.

What exactly is to the front of the property is very difficult to ascertain. Originally the property is likely to have been predominantly timber framed. As were the majority of buildings up to and around the 16th Century. This type of timber-framed construction usually consists of a framework of timber members from ground level (known as the sole plate) through the walls to the roof timbers. The timber structure works in three dimensions and as a whole structure. Originally, the structures were held together by wood fixings, such as pegs and joints. Later techniques and repairs used metal fixings to help bond the structure together.

A nice example of a metal fixing within the property. How much good some of these fixings do to the structure overall is a whole topic on its own.

We carried out a tap test on the render (literally tapping the render with the back of a hammer at both high and low level) and we generally got fairly solid sounding noises. This leads us to believe that probably the majority of the building has been rebuilt, possibly in block work when the development took place in the mid-1980s, or possibly in brickwork as the wattle and daub over the years failed, which is why were both surprised and pleasantly pleased to see the wattle and daub to the end gable when we went into the roof. There is an outside chance that some wattle and daub still remains in the property, although the vast majority of it, we believe, has been replaced.

An example of the wattle and daub seen within the roof.

Sole Plates Defined

Sole plate is a term used for the timber that sits horizontally at ground level forming the base of the timber frame. It is an area of concern in timber framed properties as it is one of the main causes of failure.

Infill Panels Defined

It is likely that this timber frame would have been infilled with a wattle and daub. Over the years, no doubt, part of the structure would have been repaired/replaced. This replacement often took the form of brickwork, although there is no way of telling without destructive testing as all walls are covered with a render.

Painted Render Finish

The outer walls are painted render, which always concerns any surveyor as both the render and the paint can hide so many problems. In this type of structure there will always be some movement (and there is hairline cracking) in the wall as the structure is a mixture of a timber frame that can be seen internally and possibly some timber frame in the walls. Between the timber frame there is likely to be some wattle and daub, possibly some brickwork and possibly some brickwork. In addition to this it is all sitting on what is likely to be a clay based soil. So hairline cracks in a property of this type should not be that great a concern.

Cement Render

The walls have been finished in a cement render, no doubt the intention of who ever did it was well meaning and had the best interests of the property at heart, possibly the render was in a terrible condition, however, unfortunately they have used a cement based pebbledash render.

Whilst it looks good at the moment it will have a limited life as the timber structure moves throughout the seasons (albeit only very slightly) cement render will not have the ability to move with the structure. Whilst we are not advocating taking this render off you should be aware that it will deteriorate.

> **ACTION REQUIRED:** Any hairline cracks should be filled. Personally we would recommend a mastic, and the outside of the property needs to be regularly painted, we would suggest every three to four years.

What would improve the property greatly is to form a bell-mouth at the base of the property.

DON'T PANIC!

This is not your property, just an example of what can happen with rendered properties.

To the right hand side of the bush you can see the render deteriorating. This can start to occur where hairline cracks are found within the render.

An example of render with correct bell-mouth detailing to the base.

Render Detailing – Bell-Mouths

A sign of the quality of rendering is the detailing around the windows and to the base of the property; here you should find bell-mouths, which are details that throw water away from either the base of the property or the windows. On the right hand side window you can see one that has been formed, however to the base of the property nothing has been formed. We have found dampness within the property and we feel this could be alleviated considerably if a bell-mouth is formed as this would stop water from sitting at the base of the property.

ACTION REQUIRED: Form a bell-mouth to the base of the property. Unfortunately this would then need the external of the render to be re-decorated to match in with it.

ANTICIPATED COST: £5,000 - £10,000. This is for the improvement to the bell-mouth render detailing, the bell-mouth work above the windows, the hacking off of any loose render, filling of the hairline cracks and the re-decoration. Although this is specialist work, it really needs to be quoted.

Possible Sandstone

We noted that some sandstone was present to the rear left hand side of the property, it may well have been that sandstone was the original material used for this property as it is found in some parts of the surrounding areas, particularly towards Leighton Buzzard, which is known for its sand mining. (Indeed we can remember at college being told that Leighton Buzzard actually exported sand to the Arabs, whether this is true or not, or an urban myth, we have never had the need to find out.)

The sandstone has been used to make a feature within the conservatory.

Lintels

Where the window and door lintels are concealed by plasterwork and render we cannot comment on their construction or condition. In buildings of this age timber lintels, concrete lintels or metal lintels are common which can be susceptible to deterioration which is unseen particularly if in contact with dampness.

Finally, the external walls have been inspected visually from ground level and randomly via a ladder within the boundaries of the property.

FOUNDATIONS

The foundations function, if suitably designed and constructed, is to transfer the dead or superimposed load through the soil so it can suitably carry the loads. Many properties prior to the 19th Century have little or not foundations, as we now think of them, with a minimum depth of around one metre filled with concrete.

Typically, with this age of property the original part is unlikely to have any foundations at all. However it is simply not possible to tell without excavation, for example in the past we have found where timber frame properties have been built near water that they have been on oak posts.

The newer part to the rear of the property is likely to have foundations of approximately three foot and are likely to be mass concrete if the foundations were altered in the 1980s when the extension was built, if not it really is anyone's guess.

We have inspected the base of the walls for any signs of movement and found nothing on the front and right hand sides. It was very difficult to inspect the property on the left and rear.

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.

Finally, no examination has been made of any foundation to the building because to do so requires extensive excavation. We therefore cannot confirm 100 per cent the stability of the walls the foundations support but we have drawn conclusions from the surface evidence available at the time of the inspection and our general knowledge of this type of construction.

Likewise, we cannot comment upon how the foundations are constructed, we can only offer you our best assumptions, which we duly have done.

TREES

There are no trees within influencing distance of the main house. Although as mentioned elsewhere in this report the bush/ivy needs cutting back and bringing under control.

Influencing Distance Defined

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

Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

DAMP PROOF COURSE

Damp proof courses were not generally added until the Building Act of 1878 required them. These requirements were gradually taken up (or should that be grudgingly taken up) throughout the Country.

All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) to minimise dampness. 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 this is not a new property and therefore whether it should have a damp proof course is subject to many discussions by surveyors. In our opinion a property of this age should not have a damp proof course with the exception of the rear area where we are assuming it is predominantly block work built. If the front portion of the property has been re-built in block work then that too should have a damp proof course.

We have taken damp proof readings throughout and found dampness in the front of the property. If you read the Walls Section you will see that we suggest a bell-mouth is added to the render.

To the rear of the property we found a small amount of dampness, but acceptable for this age, type and style of property.

It is often not possible to inspect or even identify if there is a damp proof course in a wall, although sometimes the edge of the damp proofing can be seen. Very often the exact position is covered with mortar or render and is not visible. We have made our best assumptions based upon our findings during the course of this inspection.

Finally, your attention is drawn to the section of the report specifically dealing with dampness.

EXTERNAL JOINERY

The external joinery part of this section covers windows, doors, fascias and soffits and any detailing such as brick corbelling etc.

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

Fascias and Soffits

There is only a fascia to this property and this is hidden behind the rainwater goods. Given the age of the property we believe it is likely to need replacing/repairs. This should be checked whey you are having the roof work carried out.

The fascia board is behind the rainwater goods.

End of Timber Wall Plates

If you look at the above photograph you will see the end of the timber wall plate. Whilst we know that people often like to have them as features, we feel it is far better that they are covered in render as this stops the dampness getting into the wall plate.

Windows and Doors

The windows are getting to the point where they need re-decorating. We suggest next summer.

> **ACTION REQUIRED:** Prepare and re-decorate. We suspect this is probably a DIY/handyman job.
>
> **ANTICIPATED COST:** A few hundred pounds depending on how you do it and who you use.

Finally, a general and random selection and inspection of the fascias and soffits, windows and doors and any exposed timbers, has been made visually to give an over-view of the general condition. Please also see the Internal Joinery section.

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.

We always say where properties are rendered and are painted, such as this property, you should not underestimate the amount of time and/or money that it will take and cost to re-decorate this properly. We noted on the re-decoration side that various areas have been missed when it had been re-decorated. We spoke to the owner about this who advised that he had carried it out a few years ago.

It is essential that the render be re-decorated properly as this effectively is its raincoat. This type of property should have a micro-porous paint, which is a paint, which allows the structure to breathe and move with the seasons.

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.

INTERNAL

CEILINGS, WALLS, PARTITIONS AND FINISHES

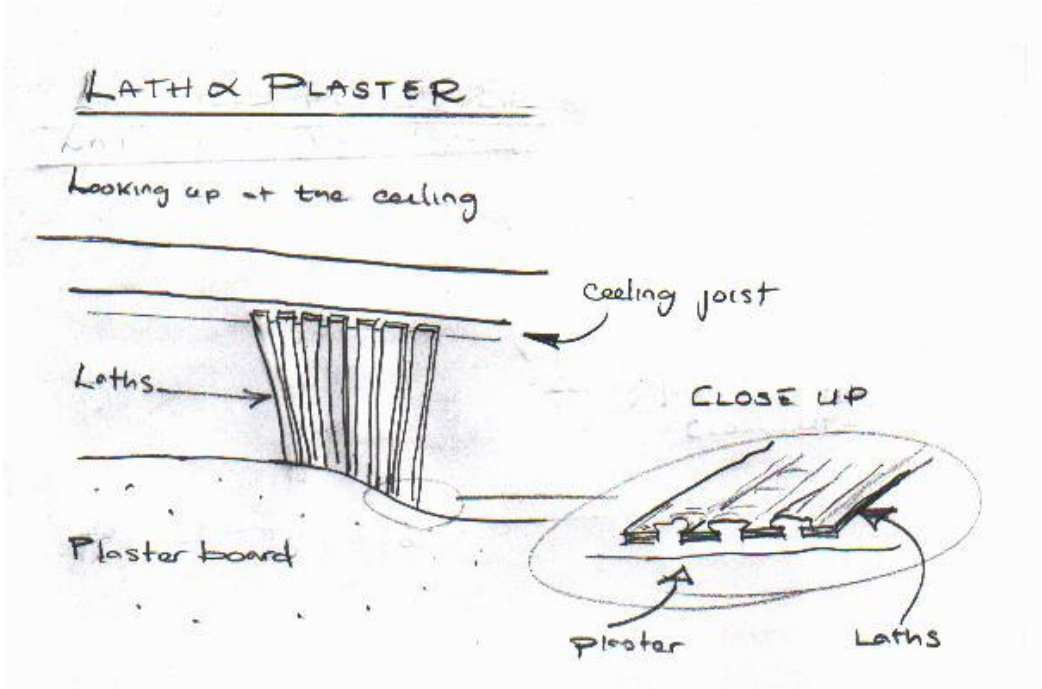
In this section we look at the finish applied to the structural elements such as the plasterwork applied to the ceiling joists, walls or partitions, together with the construction of the internal walls and partitions. The concept of internal finishes is relatively modern. Partitioning developed originally to separate the livestock from the human occupants. Finishes have developed from this very functional beginning to their decorative nature of today.

Ceilings

From a visual look of the ceilings, they looked to be formed both in lath and plaster and plasterboard, the lath and plaster to the older part of the property and the plasterboard to the newer part of the property. All of it looked in acceptable condition, although do not be surprised if the older plaster comes away if and when you redecorate.

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.



Common defects with this type of plastering are that the laths are placed too close together or too far apart therefore the plaster cannot form a

key. It can also deteriorate due to dampness within the structure, general vibrations, structural movement and age.

With the lath and plaster you can make a better assessment if you lift all the roof insulation. We lifted a random selection of two areas and in these areas it was reasonable. We obviously cannot be certain of its condition throughout based on these two areas. It really is anyone's guess as to how long the older ceilings will last.

Internal Walls and Partitions

From our tap tests (literally hitting the wall with the back of our hand) we found there to be a mixture of both studwork and solid walls, which is not unusual in a property which has been altered and amended a lot, such as this one.

We believe the main structural loading of the property is taken on the outer walls with additional support given by what is known as the secondary timbers, which are the visible joists and beams you can see within the lounge area.

Finally, ceilings, walls and partitions have been inspected from floor level and no opening up has been undertaken. The type of materials employed cannot be ascertained fully without 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.

CHIMNEY BREASTS, FLUES AND FIREPLACES

At the time of the survey the chimney was not in use. We are advised that it is currently blocked and has not been used for many years. This seems a shame as it does seem a nice feature for the front room. If you do intend to use it then it is strongly recommended that flues be cleaned and checked for obstruction prior to use to minimise the risk of hazardous fumes entering the building. Although, as already commented the chimney looks fairly new.

Please also see the Chimney Stacks section of this Report.

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.

No exposure was carried out due to the restrictions of fitted carpets, floor coverings etc. The comments are based upon our experience and knowledge of this type of construction.

Ground Floor

This would originally have been an earth floor which has had tiles added at a later date. It has now been replaced with a concrete floor throughout.

To the front of this we did get damp meter readings, as you would expect, which is capillary attraction from the dampness within the walls.

A photo of the concrete floor and the present owners feet!

First Floor

The first floor is constructed of joist and floorboards.

If you look up when you are in the lounge area you will note the size of the timbers. The joists are smaller than we commonly use today and more square in profile, which is why the floor deflects more than you would expect in modern properties. You should assure yourselves that you are happy to live with this deflection, which is due to the central wall being removed on the ground floor.

You also may be interested to note that the joists are numbered.

We would add that there is something that does not quite ring true about the numbering of these timbers, which we cannot quite put our finger upon. In our experience the numbers are neater than we would normally find, but we are really not certain.

No floorboards were lifted, and the floor was not accessed.

Joist and Floorboard Construction Defined

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

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 as there are also other sources of dampness such as condensation, which may inadvertently by the inexperienced eye be considered to be lateral dampness or rising damp.

Rising Damp

Rising damp depends upon three components, the porosity of the structure, the supply of water and the rate of evaporation from the wall surface. The water rising from the ground will tend to rise in the raw materials and will continue to do so due to capillary action to varying degrees of intensity and height.

It is fairly difficult to comment upon the dampness in just a few lines without going through various different ways of looking at the structure. We will however try and be as succinct as possible, so please bear with us.

Tests were taken with a moisture meter at random points to internal wall surfaces. Rising damp was found throughout the property, particularly in the older section. However, we are not overly concerned with this as older properties were never meant to be as dry as modern properties – despite what the damp proof companies say. In fact we follow the general thoughts and philosophy of SPAB (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings), who advise the National Trust and English Heritage, who generally consider that these buildings should have an element of dampness. However, we would add that there are various unknowns here; the base of the property could still have a timber wall plate, which it would have done when it was originally built as a timber frame structure. If this is the case we need to reduce the dampness slightly, which is why we have suggested the forming of the bell-mouth on the outside of the property.

You could, if you so wish, before you take the step to form this bell-mouth in the render, open up the structure at the base to check what is there. This would involve hacking back some of the plaster. If you telephone us we would be more than happy to assist and advise you on this matter.

> **ACTION REQUIRED:** There is an element of dampness, but we suggest that this is acceptable for this age of property. We suggest you open up the base of the structure to check if there is a timber wall plate

there. If there is then we need to dry out the structure a little better, in which case we would recommend the render bell-mouth drip detail.

You could ask the present owners to expose the base, as this would enable this element of work to be eliminated.

Effective testing was prevented in areas concealed by heavy furniture, fixtures such as kitchen fittings with back boards, and wall tiles etc.

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 material, inadequate rainwater goods or corroded downpipes.

Again some dampness was found but this is acceptable in this age, type and style of property.

Condensation

We can see 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 and ventilation of properties. Normally opening windows first thing in the morning resolves most condensation issues.

INTERNAL JOINERY

This section looks at the doors, the stairway and the skirting boards.

Windows and Doors

We were pleased to see that most of the windows had window locks on them.

The doors are generally timber panel doors and have obviously been added at a later date.

Staircase

We noted that there was a curtain around the staircase area, which comes directly off the lounge, which will be a fairly large area to heat in the winter months. We would not be surprised if you get some fairly hefty heating bills.

Kitchen

The Kitchen is to a reasonable standard in our opinion with newish units of a pine-type finish.

Finally, it should be noted that not all joinery has been inspected. We have taken a random sample and visually inspected these to give a general over-view of the condition. Please also see the External Joinery/Detailing section.

TIMBER DEFECTS

This section considers dry rot, wet rot and woodworm.

What is Wet Rot or Dry Rot?

Wet and Dry rot are species of fungi that initially need moisture to allow their airborne spores to germinate. Dry Rot can grow rapidly when conditions are good and if water continues to enter a building unchecked, wetting internal wood. Wet Rot can also spread throughout the timber in a property over a short period of time.

Dry Rot and Wet Rot

There is an outside chance that there is some dry rot/wet rot within the base of the structure if there is still a sole plate there. There is also an outside chance of dry rot/wet rot in the joist ends.

Sole Plates Defined

Sole plate is a term used for the timber that sits horizontally at ground level forming the base of the timber frame. It is an area of concern in timber framed properties as it is one of the main causes of failure.

The sole plate would be at the very base of the wall, in this case where the black paint is.

Please see our comments within the Dampness Section.

Woodworm

Woodworm has been present/is present within the front portion of the roof. Our best guess is that it is no longer active.

ACTION REQUIRED: If you wish to be 100 per cent certain get the property checked when it is empty of fixtures, fittings and furniture etc.

INTERNAL DECORATIONS

The decorations are slightly tired. 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.

It is likely that the plaster that has been used is fairly old in this property and it may come away when you redecorate. This is because the plaster is likely to be predominantly lime based and is fairly old.

Particularly as there is damp in the structure at the lower levels this may have affected the lime plaster further.

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.

THERMAL EFFICIENCY

It is very difficult to comment upon thermal efficiencies in a building of this age and type. For example, many requirements of present Building Regulations, which cover thermal efficiency would not be appropriate to this type of structure as they are designed for modern buildings, which are constructed to different standards.

We would, however, comment as follows:-

Roofs

We would say approximately 100mm of insulation is present within the roof. Current recommendations are that 200mm is required. However, we would not recommend that it is increased as it may cause condensation in this particular example.

Walls

The walls to this property are solid. It is very difficult to improve thermal efficiency in solid wall construction without major alterations. These will usually affect the external appearance or reduce the internal space.

Windows

The property has single glazed windows. We noted that a few of them had what is known as secondary glazing, which generally stops draughts.

Secondary Glazing Defined

This is an inner layer of glass or plastic usually set within the window that reduces the coldness when near the window.

Conservatory

We would just comment that the conservatory can have considerable thermal gain; we did not note any roof vents. We did note blinds to half of the conservatory; we are advised that this is partly due to the expense of these sort of blinds and also that this was the side that the sun affected.

Services

The boiler is located in the garage. We are advised that it was serviced at the beginning of October.

Summary

The property is fairly large and the lounge for example is a very large room to heat, but it does have the benefit of an entrance hallway, which means the wind will not blow directly in and the kitchen has the benefit of the conservatory, which again stops the wind from blowing directly into it. However, if you are used to living in a newer house then this house is likely to feel slightly colder, however it is fairly typical for what we see of this age, type and style of property.

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

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

> *HTTP//www.est.org.UK which is by the Energy Saving Trust and includes a section on grant aid.*
>
> *or alternatively www.cat.org.UK*
>
> *or www.ecocentre.org.UK for an alternative technological view.*

OTHER MATTERS

Security

We are advised that there is a security system and that it works. The panel is located on the right hand side of the door. As a matter of policy we do not comment on its layout and efficiency. Further information should be obtained from the vendor and the installer at a later date.

Smoke Alarms

We noted one smoke alarm. It was interestingly positioned to the floor at the top near the stairs. The current Building Regulations require that they be wired into the main power supply.

Obviously in a property of this age that is difficult to do retrospectively unless major work is being carried out. However, you may wish to do this when redecoration or building work is taking place. We would recommend, for your own safety, that battery-operated smoke detectors are installed in each room and checked on a monthly basis. We would also advise that if you wish to have any general advice the local fire authority is usually happy to give advice.

Insurance

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

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 should be requested to provide copies of any service records, test certificates and, ideally, the names and addresses of the installing contractors.

ELECTRICITY

The fuse board and consumer units are located on the right hand side of the property near the fireplace. These looked to be approximately 40 years old and it is likely that some rewiring was carried out when the property was extended and altered in the 1980s. However, we doubt if much has been carried out since then. The standard visible socket points and switches were fairly modern.

If there is no record of an electrical test having been undertaken within the last five years, it is recommended that the installation be tested by a competent electrician (NICEIC registered) and all recommendations implemented. Thereafter, the installation should be re-tested every five years.

GAS

The consumer unit was also located next to the fireplace alongside the electrics. This looked 20 – 30 years old.

We were not able to see whether the boiler was vented, it should be under the current regulations. We are advised that there has recently been a service on the boiler and would recommend that your Legal Advisor obtains a copy of this.

All gas appliances, pipework and flues should be the subject of an annual service by a competent engineer, i.e., a member of CORGI (the Council of

Registered Gas Installers); 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.

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

> **ACTION REQUIRED:** Obtain a copy of the latest service agreement and confirm that it meets CORGI standards.

PLUMBING AND HEATING

Water Supply

The controlling stopcock is located in the hall. It is important that its presence is established in case of bursts or leaks. The stopcock and other controlling valves have not been inspected or tested for operational effectiveness.

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.

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 this seemed reasonable.

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

Cold Water Cistern and Hot Water Cylinder

The cold water cistern was located in the rear roof and we believe the hot water cylinder is located in the cupboard next to the first floor bathroom.

Plumbing

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

Heating

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

Soil and Vent Pipe

There is a plastic soil and vent pipe to the left hand side of the property. Probably replaced when the bathroom area was altered.

SANITARY FITTINGS

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

The ground floor bathroom is as new and looks very nice in our opinion. The first floor bathroom is fairly basic and includes a w.c. and wash hand basin.

And finally, it is important to ensure that the tiling and seals are properly made and maintained at the junction between wall surfaces and baths, showers etc., as damp penetration can lead to the development of fungal decay in concealed areas. This may not become apparent until a major attack has developed necessitating extensive and costly repairs.

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. Therefore the drains in a Georgian property will have been added at a later date. 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.

Manholes

There are no manholes visible in or around the subject property. We did find some on the adjoining neighbour's land – the old farm, which we comment on below. The present owners advised us that there was a manhole in the hallway. After much carpet lifting we found one sealed manhole, however this has been concreted in place. The owners thought there may be another manhole within the hallway, but we were unable to locate it. The fact that the manhole is sealed is a sign that it has not been opened up for some time, which we could argue means that it has not been blocked for some time.

As mentioned we found two manholes in the adjoining property on the left hand side, however the owners were unhappy for us to lift the manholes and advised us that he had lived in the house for 70-odd years and he knew that the drains did not go that way. Unfortunately in this instance we have not been able to view any manholes. However, we ran the taps for approximately 15 minutes (the cold tap in the kitchen and the cold tap in the first floor bathroom) and there was no build up or back up in the basins during this time.

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

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 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

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

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 Rainwater Goods section.

OUTSIDE AREAS

GARAGES AND OUTBUILDINGS

The garage is joined on to the property and accessed via the Utility Room. It should ideally have a fireproof door as this is considered to be a high risk area and modern properties tend to have a half hour fire resisting door, which as far as we could see this one did not have.

ACTION REQUIRED: We therefore recommend that ideally a half hour fire resisting door is added.

We noted similar problems with the render as those mentioned on the main house, such as no drip details over the door of the garage, which is causing cracking to the render.

Cracking above garage door.

EXTERNAL AREAS

Boundaries

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.

The left hand boundary is usually the responsibility of the subject property, but this has only usually been the case for properties built since 1948. We discussed this with the present owner and they were unable to advise who owned which boundary.

The left hand boundary is a mixture of an old sandstone, which was the traditional building material in much of this area, particularly over Leighton Buzzard way.

To the right hand side is a timber fence, which looked in reasonable condition.

Neighbours

We spoke to the neighbours on the left hand side, they are an elderly couple who have lived in their property for most of their lives. To the right hand side the people were out at the time of our inspection.

POINTS FOR YOUR LEGAL ADVISOR

If you wish to proceed with your purchase of the property a copy of this 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) Roof and similar renewals.
iv) Central heating installation.
v) Planning and Building Regulation Approvals.
vi) 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.

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 of the knowledge that any are about to be served.

n) We strongly recommend that Envirosearch or a similar product is used by your Legal Advisor to establish whether this area falls into a flood plain, old landfill site etc., and brought to its logical conclusion. If your Legal Advisor is not aware of the system please ensure that they contact us and we will advise them about it.

LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREA

From our investigations we have been advised that the property is not Listed but is within a Conservation Area.

We were fairly surprised at first that the property was not Listed, however there has been considerable re-building and we feel that this is the reason why it has not achieved a Listed status.

Your Legal Advisor should confirm the above and carry out any searches he/she feels are necessary.

PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL

Planning and Building Control

Planning was sought for the demolition of a garage and the erection of an extension including bathroom, bedroom, kitchen extension and a new garage. This was approved in 1980. Planning was also sought for a front entrance lobby and was approved in 1980. In 1994 planning was approved for the erection of a conservatory to the rear.

This was confirmed by Matt Richards of the Planning Department of the Mid Beds District Council on 14 October 2003.

Your Legal Advisor should confirm this information and carry out any checks he/she feels necessary.

Finally, an extract from the book "Sold"!

"When you receive your full structural survey (now known as a Building Survey) or House Buyers Report, do remember that you have requested a list of the property's faults so it is unlikely to make cheerful reading. Every property has its faults but what you are looking for are the serious ones. If your Report does reveal a serious problem that you had not anticipated when making your offer, the first thing to do is to decide whether you want to take on the repairs if an adjustment is made to the price. If you do, then get quotes for the work as quickly as possible and present your case in a fair manner. Most people are reasonable under such circumstances and will compromise but inevitably there are those who are sufficiently confident of their position to say take it or leave it. In a very active market, prices may have moved up sufficiently to cover the extra expenditure in theory and the vendor will not hasten to point this out but remember that he has probably got a vendor pressing him to proceed quickly and starting with a new purchaser will cause him delay"

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! Please do not hesitate to contact us on 0800 298 5424.

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

APPENDICES

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 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.

WEATHER

It was a sunny autumn day at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

We would add that some defects only become apparent upon physical occupation or are only present as a result of the extremes of weather (which are becoming a more frequent occurrence). As you are probably aware the year 2000 was the wettest year on record and 2003 the driest year on records, this may have adverse effects on lots of buildings in years to come.

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 roof space and obviously day-to-day household goods throughout the property. We have, however, done our best to work around these.

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.

www.hometrack.co.uk

From what we can see this is an internet based company who say they offer independent property research (in fact they say they are the only independent company), although they also advise that they are part of a property related group that has bought and sold over 60 million pounds worth of residential property, which indicates that they may have a vested interest. They do also comment that they have carried out their own independent surveys and they have at least two Hometrack recommended estate agents in each postcode area. We would refer you to the 'About us' section within their website to understand better where their information is coming from. We would comment that we have been pleasantly surprised with the quality of information provided by the company.

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.