

JOB REFERENCE: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

# RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY

xxxxxxxxxx,  
Cricklewood,  
London,  
NW2 xxx



FOR

xxxxxxxxxx

Prepared by:

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

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 xxxxxxxxxx.

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:

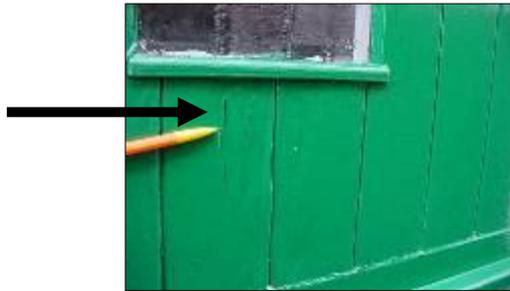
## **GENERAL/HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

*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**

This is a large two storey semi-detached property in a residential area of similar era properties. The property has been extended and altered over the years including a single storey extension to the right hand side and a room in the loft.

To the front of the property there is a concrete/paved area and a garden to the rear.

As we understand it the property has been rented for a year or so and the condition reflects what we typically see in multi-occupied properties.

We believe that the property was built in the late 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:*

1878	Electric Street Lights are installed in London
1896	First modern Olympic Games (Athens)
1900	Max Planck formulates the Quantum Theory
1903	First flight by Wright Brothers
1905	Einstein proposed his Theory of Relativity
1908	Olympics held in London
1910	Death of King Edward VII

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# EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front Elevation



Rear View



Left hand street view



Right hand street view



Right hand view



Front garden/paved area



Rear garden

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## **ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES**

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

### **Ground Floor**

The ground floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Entrance hall and stairs
- 2) Lounge (front)
- 3) Lounge (middle)
- 4) Lounge (rear left)
- 5) Kitchen (rear right)
- 6) Shower room with W.C.(rear right corner)

### **First Floor**

The first floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Bedroom (front)
- 2) Bedroom (front middle)
- 3) Bathroom (middle)
- 4) Bedroom (rear middle)
- 5) Bedroom (rear)

### **Room in the roof**

Your Legal advisor needs to check if this is an official conversion i.e. with Local Authority approval.

### **Outside Areas**

There is concrete/paving to the front of the property with a rear garden to the rear. Parking is with a permit on a first come first serve basis. You may have difficulty parking in front of your property as is often the case in this era of development which was built without the car in mind.

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.

## Ground Floor



Entrance Hall and stairs



Kitchen- rear right



Lounge front



Rear lounge



Shower room – rear right



Shower room with W.C.  
rear right

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**First Floor**



Bedroom - front



Bedroom - front



Bedroom – middle front



Bathroom- middle



Bedroom – middle rear



Bedroom - rear

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Landing



Stairs to the room in the roof

**Room in the roof**



Entrance to the room  
in the roof



Room in the roof

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## SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION

### External

Chimneys:	Brick chimneys
Main Roof:	Pitched, clad with concrete tiles with a roof window
Flat Roof:	Asphalt, single storey to the right hand side with a roof window
Main Roof Structure:	Cut timber roof ( partly hidden by the room in the roof)
Gutters and Downpipes:	Cast iron and plastic
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Plastic
Walls:	Flemish Bond brickwork (assumed) Re-pointed in cement mortar
Fascias and Soffits:	Painted timber
Windows and Doors:	Aluminium double glazed with some timber windows.

### Internal

Ceilings:	Lath and plaster and plasterboard (assumed)
Walls:	Predominantly solid (assumed)
Floors: Ground Floor:	Partly suspended floor and partly concrete floor (assumed)
First Floor:	Joist and floorboards with embedded timbers (assumed)
Room in the roof:	Ceiling joists and sheets of timber

### Services

We believe that the property has a mains water supply, mains drainage, electricity and gas (all assumed). The electrics, circa 1960's/1970's, are located under the stairs. The property has two Vaillant boilers one in the rear bedroom and the second in the rear lounge.

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.

Once you have read the report we would recommend that you revisit the property to review your thoughts on the building in light of the comments we have made in this survey.

### **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) This property has large rooms; 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) We were surprised at how light the property was on the day of the survey. This is due to the large windows and the front bay window.
- 3.0) The property also has some of the original features left, which add to the overall character of the property.

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

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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.

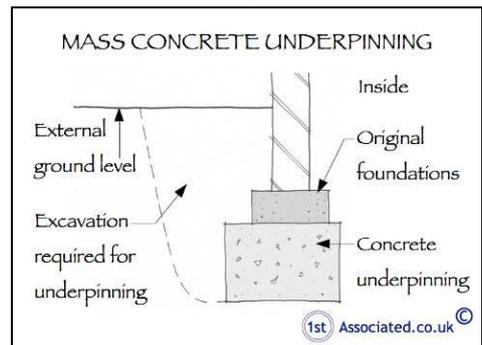
### 1.0) Underpinning to next door neighbours property

The neighbouring property was underpinned in 1992/1993. From what we understand the re-enforcement was very deep, over three metres and involved partial underpinning of the external walls. We are advised that the total cost including re-decoration etc. was £55,000 (fifty five thousand pounds) in 1992. xxxxx, your neighbour, may be able to advise you further with regard to exact details of this work. He believes it related to problems with the tree adjacent to his property.



The circled house has been underpinned

Interestingly structural movement and underpinning affects value even when repair work has been carried out as many people simply will not buy a property or one adjacent to it that has been underpinned. This has to be taken into consideration when looking to purchase this property.



Concrete underpinning



Tree adjacent to next doors property



Step crack visible to boundary wall

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1.1) **Signs of movement in this property**

1.1.1) We can see cracking internally between the front and middle bedroom and cracking to the room in the roof space.



Crack in the middle bedroom top of the wall



Crack in the middle bedroom bottom of the wall



Cracking in the room in the roof  
This shows it is moving to the left

1.1.2) We can see some hairline cracking to the front bay window through the brickwork. The majority of cracks that we would expect to see would be in the mortar/pointing. However this property has been re-pointed and as such we would not expect to see them.



Hairline crack to the front bay window

Re-Pointing Defined

Re-pointing is carried out where the existing mortar has failed and broken away to stop damp penetration and further deterioration. The mortar should be raked out to approximately 20mm and then replaced with a mortar of a similar type, therefore, stopping damp occurring.

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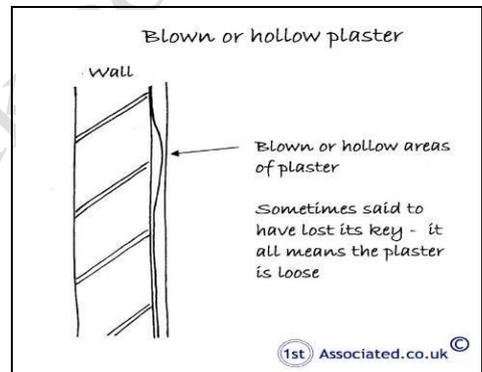
1.1.3) There is also some bulge/undulation to the rear wall.



Bulging in the rear wall

1.2) **Other signs that the property may be moving**

We also noted a number of hollow areas in the plaster to the rear wall when we carried out the survey. This may mean that there is some movement in the property or it may mean just that the plaster is coming to the end of its natural life. What it will mean is that re-plastering will be necessary and we would recommend this is carried out with a lime based plaster



Blown or hollow plaster

1.3) **Working with limited knowledge**

We would normally meet the occupiers and have the benefit of a question and answer session with them to establish such things as how old decoration is and their view on the cracking etc. Without this we have to make our assumptions from what we viewed at the property at the time of our inspection and our discussions with the neighbour.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Ideally we would like the owner to specifically advise how long the cracking has been in the property and provide any photographic evidence they have to back up their comments. Your Legal Advisor to specifically ask in writing if they were aware of the cracks and how long have they been present.

Please see the Foundations and Walls Sections of this Report.

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2.0) **Right hand side movement**

2.1) **Drains**

The drains run to the right hand side of the property and part of the movement is to the right hand side.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend a closed circuit TV camera report of the drains is carried out to establish the condition of them.



Drain front right

**ANTICIPATED COST:** Approximately £250 - £400 (two hundred and fifty pounds to four hundred pounds). This is dependent upon who you use to carry out the work; please obtain quotations.

2.2) **Chimneys removed**

We note that the rear chimney has been removed as we could physically see where the tiles change colour. We also believe there has been a chimney removed to the right hand side as well. This will have affected the floor structure and this is why there is more deflection in the floor then we would expect.



Dark tiles show where chimney may have been removed



The picture rail indicates where the other chimney has been removed on the right hand side

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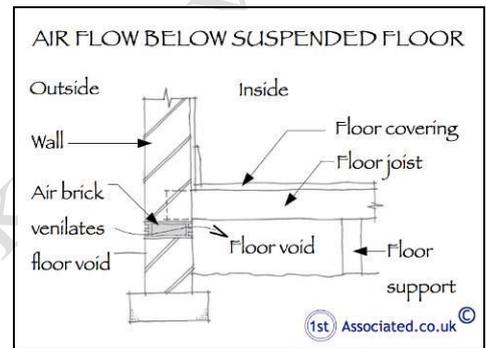
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**ACTION REQUIRED:** There is little you can do about this (you could rebuild them if you really wanted to) and we would generally say to consider this as part of the character of the property.

Please see the Chimney Section of this Report.

3.0) **Ground Floor suspended timber, concrete and dampness**

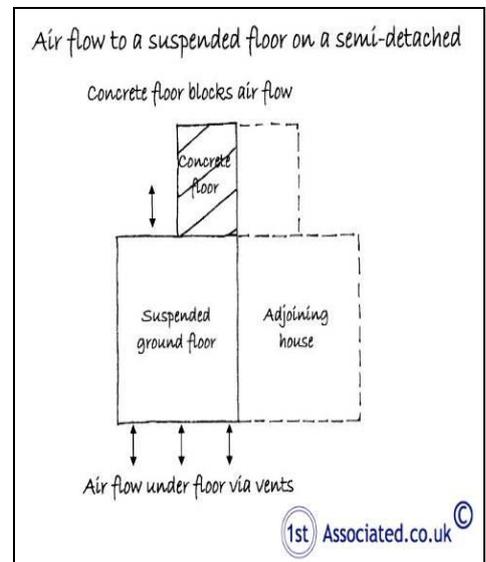
There is a suspended timber floor to the ground floor of the property. We can see to the rear room of the property that part of the floor has been replaced with concrete. This then stops a free flow of air underneath the floor which is needed to minimise wet rot and dry rot. This in turn is why, we believe, we are getting high damp meter readings in this area as any dampness under the floor cannot go anywhere and is simply using the concrete floor slab like a large piece of blotting paper and absorbing into it. This then gets into the adjoining walls.



Airflow under suspended floor



Dampness



We are aware your property would be the one on the right hand side but we have not got a sketch for a right handed property!

Extension Flat roof

We also cannot discount the adjacent flat roof that may have leaks and that are manifesting in this wall. With flat roofs we find that when they leak we very rarely find the dampness at the point of the leak.



Rear flat roof

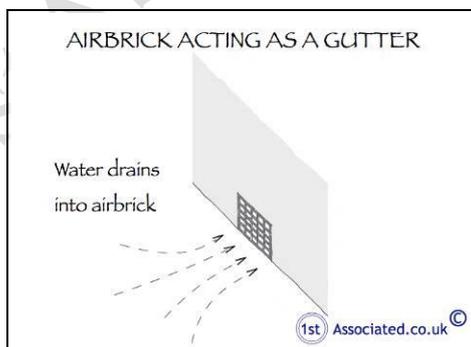
3.1) Rising Damp

We noted rising damp in the kitchen and the adjoining rear lounge area which again we believe relates to the concrete floor issues mentioned previously.

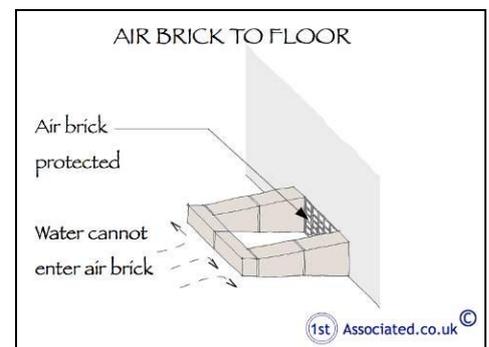


Rising damp

**ACTION REQUIRED:** For the dampness in the property the timber floor should be vented which is easier said than done. You can put running vents internally or you can add a vent through the concrete floor (yes this will involve digging up the concrete floor from what we can see). This will be in the new kitchen area and possibly the old kitchen allowing a through flow of air. There is an outside chance that these vents are already in place and are simply blocked. The air bricks that we can see to the rear of the property are low and could effectively be acting as gutters and so some modification needs to be made.



Airbricks acting as gutters



Air brick protected

Please see the Dampness Section of this Report

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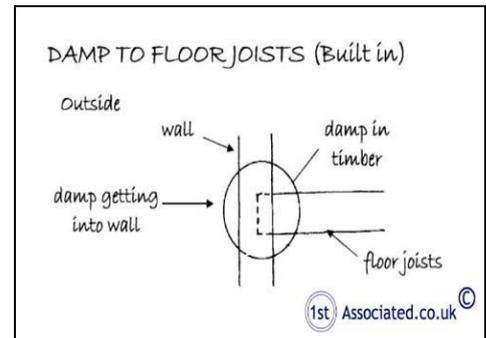
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4.0) **Front and middle bedroom deflects more than we would expect**

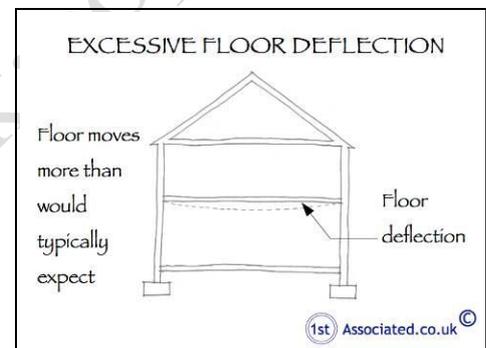
We have already mentioned that chimneys have been removed and there may well be wet rot to the embedded floor joists. We carried out an impact test (which is literally jumping up and down on the floor) and found the front and the middle bedrooms deflect more than we would expect.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would like to open up the floors to check the condition of the timbers but we would need permission to do.

Please see the Floors Section of this Report.



Damp to floor joists



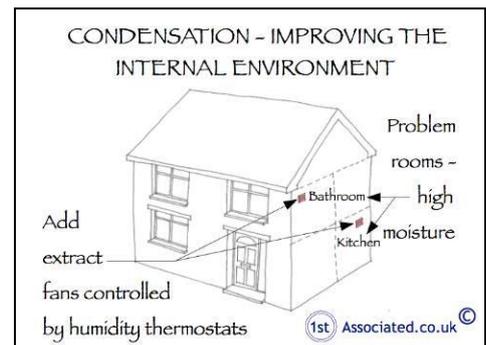
Deflection

5.0) **Cold bridging and mould**

We can see that cold bridging is occurring through the flat roof on the right hand side of the property particularly around the rear door area and the shower area where there simply does not seem to be enough ventilation.

Cold bridging defined

Cold bridging is caused by a colder element in the structure allowing coldness to pass through the structure much quicker when warm moist air is present in the property.



Condensation

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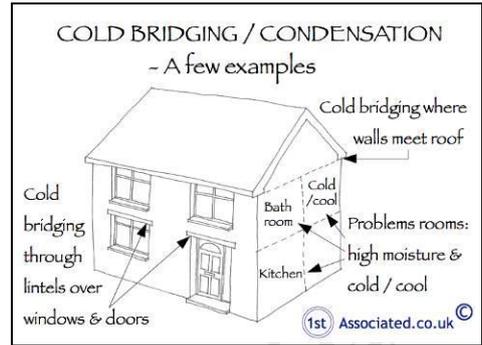
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**ACTION REQUIRED:** The area needs to be ventilated better however part of the construction is that there are cold elements (such as lintels) in it which have to be considered part of the characteristic of the building unless you want to go the expense of removing them.



Cold bridging and condensation



Exposed lintels to the window on the side of the property



Concrete lintels to the rear of the right extension

The extension is a humidity creating area and with the kitchen and shower room located in there this needs to be controlled and managed by adding large humidity controlled extract fans.



The area is vented but not enough. We would recommend a large humidity controlled extract fan is added

**ANTICIPATED COST:** Large humidity controlled extract fans £200- £400 (two hundred to four hundred pounds); please obtain quotations.

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Poor ventilation causes cold bridging



Cold bridging causes mould to the ceiling

Please see the Dampness Section of this Report.

### 6.0) Cold house

The property has large rooms and large glazed areas and will therefore need good heating to make it a warm house as we suspect at the moment it is a cold house. Whilst the house has two boilers it is very much down to how efficiently they are running and also the size of the radiators in the rooms. There is a British thermal calculation known as BTU that can assess the size of the radiators recommended. We personally have one similar large house that we actually used double the British Thermal Units recommended to allow the house to warm up quickly.



Large areas of glazing

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We feel you are likely to need more radiators and larger radiators.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** £2,000 - £4,000 (two to four thousand pounds); please obtain quotations.

Please see the Thermal Efficiency Section of this Report.

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## 7.0) Room in the roof

There is a fairly small room in the roof which looks unlikely to be a legal conversion i.e. approved by the Local Authority. It is however worth checking this as you can get various rights over time. To make it into an official, Local Authority approved, habitable room you will need to have Building Regulations that will look at things such as;



Room in the roof

1. The safety of the room if a fire occurs
2. The strength of the floor. This usually means the replacing of ceiling joists with floor joists
3. Staircase access

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your legal Advisor to check and confirm if this is a Legal Conversion.

Please see the Roof Section of this Report.

## 8.0) Asbestos

Many older properties have had asbestos used in them as it was as common as timber at one time. We believe an asbestos board may have been used above the flue to the rear right hand side as a deflector.

We are always aware that when we use the term asbestos that it can cause panic and indeed it does affect value. We need to make you aware that you may find more asbestos during the course of any alterations and modifications that you carry out in the property.



Asbestos board above flue?  
Used to deflect heat away from the plastic pipes above

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** If you wish to confirm you are 100 percent free of asbestos you need to have an asbestos survey and report carried out.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** This varies considerably. We have recently had samples taken of a property that cost a few hundred pounds but as said this can vary; please obtain quotations.

We are not asbestos Surveyors. Our insurance requires us to recommend that you have a separate asbestos survey.

Please see the Other Matters section of the report

#### 9.0) Nicotine staining

We believe there is nicotine staining in some areas of the property, for example, the kitchen area. Nicotine staining is always difficult to clean and which needs to be cleaned prior to re-decoration if not it will grin (show) through.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Allow extra time for cleaning rooms.

#### 10.0) Noise Transfer

The neighbour commented about noise transfer from this property. We have found in this era of property that this can be an issue.

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## 11.0) Services

### Dated Electrics

The electrics are dated with a 1960's/1970s fuse board.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend a new fuse board as these are much more efficient and cut out much quicker particularly if you have young people in the house with small fingers that play with sockets!



Dated fuse board

**ANTICIPATED COST:** £250 - £500 (two hundred and fifty to five hundred pounds; please obtain quotations.

### Single panel radiators

Please see our comments in the Cold House Section above.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend replacing the single panels with double panel convection radiators and increasing the size as remember there are some very large rooms. It is best to live in the property for a while and establish if it is warm enough for you before you carry out any work as warmth and coldness is very subjective.



Single panel radiator

Please see the Services Section of this Report.

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## The Ugly

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

### Underpinning and settlement

As you are aware the neighbours property has been underpinned. From the description given by the neighbour it would seem to be a very deep underpinning and as mentioned earlier he believes it was related to the adjacent tree which is still there. He did comment that the council have had a claim made against them by the insurance company regarding the tree.

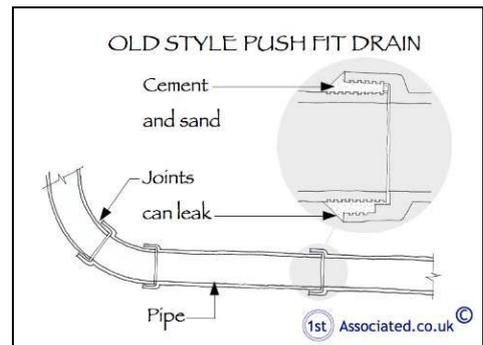


The tree is still there

This leaves you in the situation where next doors property has had deep underpinning and although your property is said to have had no underpinning there can be effects from the underpinning.

As stated the tree is still in place. If we have a summer like we did this year with rain and sun then the root system can develop and if the property is in a clay soil, which in this case is more than likely, then it can affect the property. We have included an article in the appendices on the magical properties of clay.

We would also comment that there is a possibility that the drains are leaking to the right hand side which is why we recommend the closed circuit TV report is carried out.



Old style drain

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## **Modernisation and upgrading**

We can appreciate how the property will benefit from upgrading and modernisation. However you have to be aware that where a property is considered to have structural problems or in this case be near a property that has had structural problems it does affect the value. No matter what you do to the property inside, this issue will still be raised in the future and if anything people are now getting less likely to buy properties with structural problems due to the banks, building societies and mortgage companies who are very careful what they lend and who they lend it to.

## **At risk**

At the end of the day only you can decide whether the risk reflects the price you can purchase this property at and also how it will affect your future ability to sell the house.

## **Long term living in the house**

We spoke about the length of time that you thought about living in the property and you said it was a long term purchase. This may mean that the property will work perfectly for many, many years for you. Ultimately you will have to sell the property at some point and so you do need to consider selling the property, which does seem strange, before you have even purchased it.

We will be more than happy to discuss any of these matters further if you so wish.

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## **Other Items**

Moving on to more general information.

## **Design**

### **Updating and renovating**

As you are aware the entire property needs updating and re-decoration.

#### **Kitchen**

We spoke about moving the kitchen from its present site to the rear lounge area and making the existing kitchen into a utilities room and also about removing the shower room.

All are feasible however with any building work it has a price. In this case the adding of a water supply pipe and drains to the new kitchen is very important as well as an electrical ring main for the kitchen (these are different to a normal ring main). You would typically have three ring mains in a property, one for the ground floor, one for the first floor and one for the kitchen.

#### **Bathroom**

The bathroom is relatively dated and would benefit from upgrading in our opinion. Also large humidity controlled extract fans should be added (also to the kitchen and shower room if you keep it).

## **Maintenance**

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

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

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## 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 fuse board is dated so it is likely the entire installation is dated. We believe the requirements of The Institute of Electrical Engineers would not be met. The Institute of Electrical Engineers standards (IEE) recommend a test and report (often known as a periodic inspection) whenever a property changes occupancy. This should be carried out by an NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent.

### Heating

As mentioned earlier within the report the property may be a difficult house to heat because of its large rooms. We would recommend that the system be tested and overhauled before exchange of contracts and that a regular maintenance contract be placed with an approved heating engineer.

### Drainage

Whilst we have lifted the three manhole covers we found to the right hand side (front, middle and rear) of the property, and the water was running freely, the only true way to find out the condition of the drains is to have a closed circuit TV camera report to establish the condition of the drains. In this age of property there have often been leaks over the years which in turn disturb the soil beneath it and cause movement.

### 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.

#### **SERVICES ACTION REQUIRED:**

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

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### **DIY/Handyman Type Work**

There are numerous other items that we would class as DIY or handyman type work such as redecorating to turn the property into your home. We have detailed these and other issues within the main body of the report.

### **Purchase Price**

In our experience settlement does affect value. 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.

### **Estimates of Building 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 £125 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:

If you do purchase this property you do need to make sure you are buying at the right price and that you are comfortable with the characteristics of the property and the risks involved. As mentioned we certainly do not feel the house will fall down but we do feel there are various elements and risks to the property that will affect value and the number of future purchasers who will be interested in purchasing the property. So carry out a full investigation.

We would refer you to our comments in the Executive Summary, 'Good', 'Bad' and 'Ugly' Section and ask that you re-read these.

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.

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 – FREEHOLD (OR AS GOOD AS)**

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 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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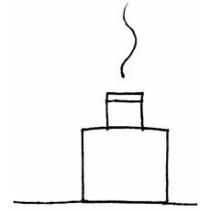
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## EXTERNAL

# CHIMNEY STACKS AND FLUES, PARAPET WALLS AND ROOF WINDOWS



### Chimney Stacks

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

There is a chimney located to the front right hand side (all directions given as you face the property).

### Chimney One –front right

This chimney is brick finished with a cement flashing with lead underneath and two chimney pots. From what we could see from ground level it looked in average condition considering its age, type and style.

Our concern is the cement flashing although it does appear to have a lead or metal underneath it. We do find that cement does crack over time and allow dampness in.

Unfortunately we were unable to see the top of the chimney known as the flaunching, we therefore cannot comment upon them.



Chimney – front right



Cement flashing needs repairs



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**ACTION REQUIRED:** Repair the flashing and periodically inspect the chimney.

**Chimney Two and chimney three**

Chimney two we believe would have been to the right hand side and chimney three would have been to the rear left hand side of the property. Both have been removed. We always prefer for properties to have their chimneys intact as we feel often they are part of the integral structure.



Where chimney has possibly been removed

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Regarding chimney three which is the rear left hand side you need to check whether next door has removed their chimney or not as it may affect this property . Please see our comments within the Executive Summary.

**Possible chimney four**

From looking at adjoining properties there may possibly have been a chimney four to the rear right hand side.



You can see on a neighbouring property that this chimney is still intact and shows where it would have been on your property.

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.

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Flaunchings Defined

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

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.

**Flues**

*Flues offer ventilation to things like boilers and soil and vent pipes and usually come through the roof covering, which can often also be a weak area.*

The property has a plastic flue from the rear bedroom Vaillant boiler. There is possibly an asbestos board above the top of it which we have mentioned earlier.



Asbestos deflective board above flue

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our warning about asbestos within the Executive Summary

**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 is a parapet wall to the left hand side built from brick with a lead flashing. From what we could see we would comment that generally it is in average condition. We were pleased to see that the lead work was stepped. We can see some cement mortar is coming away. In a perfect world this would be repointed.

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Parapet wall left hand side



Cement mortar is coming away

We noted that a section of the parapet wall has a tile on edge which in our experience leads to dampness getting in the property. In fact we could see dampness getting in that area.



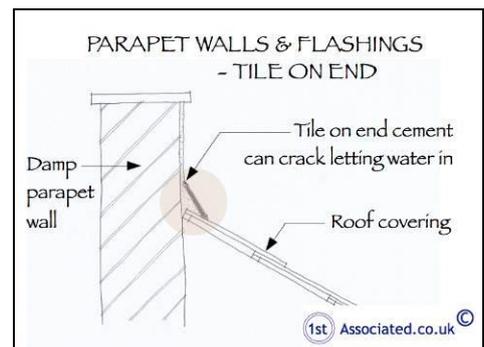
Where the lead flashing becomes tiles on edge



Damp getting in where the timber is against the wall

Tile on Edge Defined

A tile sitting sideways, bedded in cement mortar which has been utilised as a flashing. Due to the cement mortar it is bedded in being brittle and prone to cracking, this is not an ideal material. We would always recommend the use of lead flashings.



Tiles on edge

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend re-pointing before the winter of 2014.

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

**Roof Windows**

**(Known as roof lights or Velux windows which is the trade or generic name)**

**The main roof has two roof windows**

Roof window one – room in the roof

There is condensation occurring on the roof window in the room in the roof as this is probably the coldest room in the house during the winter months. Humid air is drawn towards it. We have mentioned having large humidity controlled extract fans added in the property to reduce the travel of moisture within the property.



Condensation on roof window



Roof window

Roof Window two – back roof

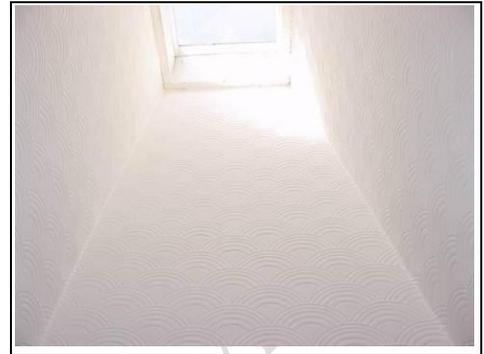
This purpose made roof window looks to have been repaired over the years with what appears to be Flashband. We could not see any damp staining inside.

**Flashband Defined**

Flashband is a sticky backed felt which is best used for temporary repairs only.



Roof window has been repaired



No damp staining visible internally

**ACTION REQUIRED:** A replacement window may be the easiest way to make this watertight.

**Party Wall**

The party wall relates to shared items, such as chimneys and firewalls. 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.*

We particularly refer you to the party wall act because of the chimneys and we suggest you speak to Mr Khan next door to see if his chimneys are still in place as this may well affect you.

Finally, we have made our best assumptions on the overall condition of the chimney stacks, flues, parapet walls and roof windows 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.

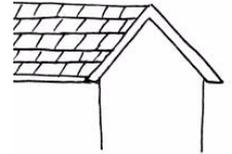
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# ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERLAYERS

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:

We will consider the roofs in two areas, the main roof and the extension flat roof.

## Main Roof

The main roof is pitched, relatively shallow to the rear and clad with concrete tiles and, from ground level, this looks in average condition, considering the roofs age type and style. There is some minor moss on the roof.

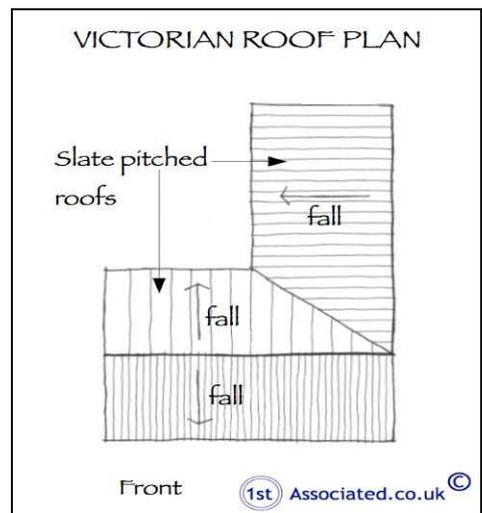


Picture of main roof



Moss on the concrete tiles  
Excessive moss can block drains

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Carry out periodic inspections and maintenance of the roof, as required.



Roof plan similar to this property the slates have been replaced with concrete tiles

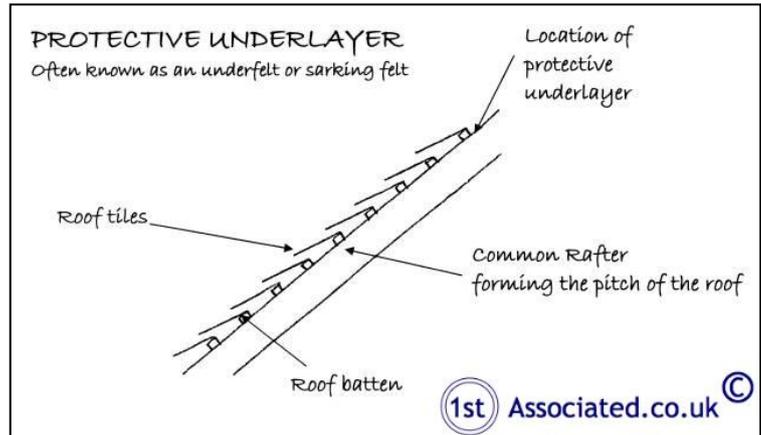
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## Protective Underlayer (Often known as the sarking felt or underfelt)

*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.*



When we inspected the loft space we found a Hessian base Bitumen membrane. This type of membrane has been used since the 1960s. We generally found it to be in average condition, with damage in some areas which is what we typically find.



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

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## Rear Right Extension Flat Roof

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

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

This roof is asphalt covered onto a timber decking. We would consider asphalt to be the best material for flat roofs. Unfortunately the roof is flat and there is ponding visible on it, ironically, just in front of the rear drain.



Roof light on flat roof



Ponding around the drain point



Parapet wall on flat roof

## Ageing asphalt

The asphalt is ageing. We can see this by the cracking in the asphalt.



Bitumen has been put on the cracks to try and save them and to stop water getting in



More cracking in the asphalt

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

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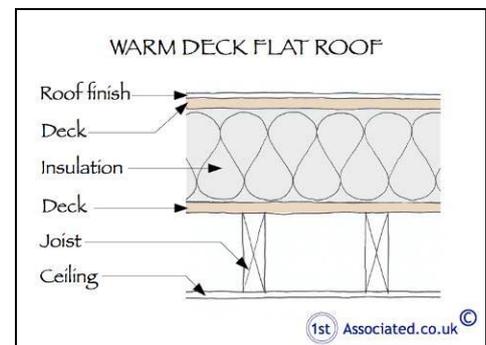
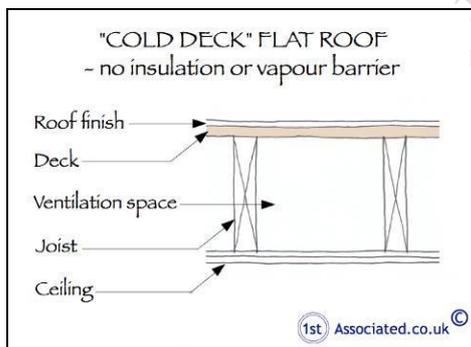
## Venting of flat roofs

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

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

## Insulation

A lot of heat can be lost from older flat roofs which are typically known as cold roofs and which should, at some point, be upgraded to an insulated warm roof. In this case you could also add insulation cut to falls which means you could have a good fall on the roof. We believe the roof will need to be replaced in the next five to ten years. Of course you may have to carry out repairs in the meantime.



All the roofs were inspected from ground level with the aid of a x16 zoom lens on a digital camera. Flat roofs have been inspected the roof itself.

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

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

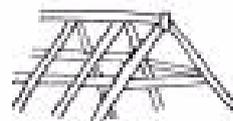
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## **ROOF STRUCTURE AND LOFT**

### **(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 could access the roof in two areas, the room in the roof to the front of the property and the loft to the rear. Within the room in the roof we could see very little as it was lined.

Our main investigation has been in the rear roof. The main roof is accessed via the loft hatch located to the rear of the landing. There is no loft ladder, electric light or secured floorboards. We recommend that these be added, as it will make the loft space safer and easier to use.

The loft has been viewed by torch light, which has limited our viewing slightly.

#### **Roof Structure**

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

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## Roof Timbers

We have inspected the roof structure for:

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



General view of inside of the rear roof

Our examination was limited by the general configuration of the roof, the old water tanks and an old boiler. What we could see was generally found to be in below average condition, because of the dampness, for its age, type and style. It is, however, feasible that there are problems in the roof that are hidden and we are concerned we could not view main roof properly.



Dampness getting in via the parapet wall

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

## Fire Walls

The property has a brick firewall located to the left hand side (all directions given as you face the property). The firewall is also a Party Wall.



The photo shows the ceilings. Plasterboard on the left and lath and plaster on the right meaning the ceilings have been partly replaced

### Fire Walls Defined

Fire walls help prevent the spread of fire through roofs and are a relatively recent Building Regulation requirement.

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## Water Tanks

There is a collection of water tanks in the roof space including at least two cast iron tanks. There is also an old boiler. These are often left in the roof as it is hard to remove them as they need to be cut up to fit through the loft hatch.



Old boiler and cold water tank behind



Two old water tanks

## Ventilation

There is no ventilation visible in the roof. We would always recommend this is added.

Please see the Thermal Efficiency Section of this Report.

## Electrical Cables

We can often identify the age of an electrical installation by the age of wiring found in the roof. In this case the electric cables that we could see were dated. Please see our comments about upgrading the electrics.

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

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

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## GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES



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

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

### Gutters, downpipes and hopper heads

The property has a combination of cast iron and plastic gutters and downpipes.

Cast iron of this age will need maintenance. If it is regularly maintained, it can in our experience, last longer than plastic.

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



Cast iron downpipe



Hopper head to the rear flat roof  
which we unblocked



Plastic downpipe

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would 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.

## Soil and Vent Pipe and Drainage

### Soil and vent pipes

The property has plastic soil and vent pipes.



Soil and vent pipe



Plastic soil and vent pipe

### Unusual and adapted drains

We had to put in a separate heading for this as we have not come across drains that have been added in this manner. We can see to the rear of the property there is rainwater and foul water discharging into a DIY standard drain which in turn goes into the drains on the right hand side.



Interesting drain arrangement

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We also saw a similar arrangement to the middle of the property where clearly drains have been utilised. In both cases they would not meet Building Regulations and does give an indication of work that has been carried out to the house without getting proper Building Regulation approval. These are not major issues but we think if someone carries out this type of work without getting approval, what is hidden that we can 't see?



Unusual drain -middle

Finally, gutters, downpipes, hopper heads 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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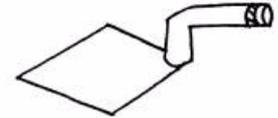
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## WALLS



*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 brickwork

### 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.

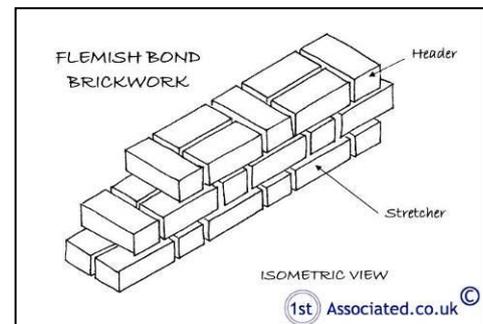
The solid external walls may be liable to penetrating dampness internally, dependent upon their condition and their exposure to the weather. External faces should be kept in good condition.

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.



Flemish Bond



Flemish Bond Brickwork

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## Spalling

There was some spalling to the brickwork.

### Spalling Defined

Spalling occurs to brick or stone when water penetrates the surface and via freezing and thawing starts to cause deterioration to the surface. 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.



Soft red brick starting to deteriorate exposing the lime below

## Extension

Please see our comments about the concrete lintels and cold bridging in the Executive Summary



Concrete lintels

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/ 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 / plasterwork have been finished. We have made various assumptions based upon what we could see and how we think the brickwork / 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.

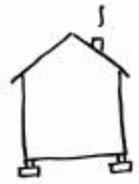
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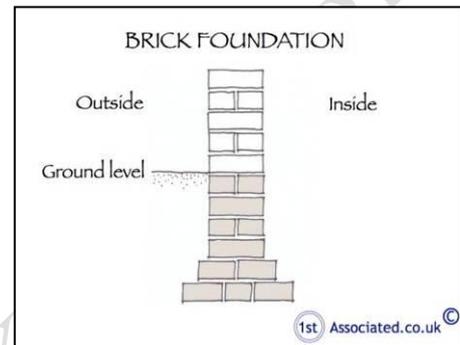


## FOUNDATIONS

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 possibly with a bedding of lime mortar and possibly a concrete foundation for the more recent work.



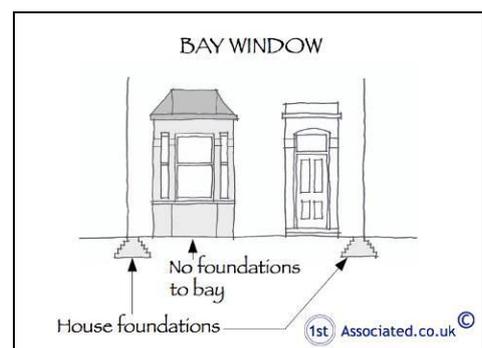
Brick foundation

### Next door neighbours underpinned foundations

Often where underpinning is carried out they tie into the existing structure. This would have included tying into your structure possibly on the party wall. The owner cannot recall if this was carried out or not.

### 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.



No foundations to bay window

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## **Trees and London Clay**

Together this combination can cause problems. 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.

## **Building Insurance Policy**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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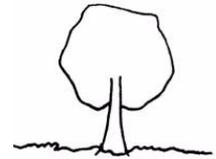
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# TREES

FOUNDATIONS



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

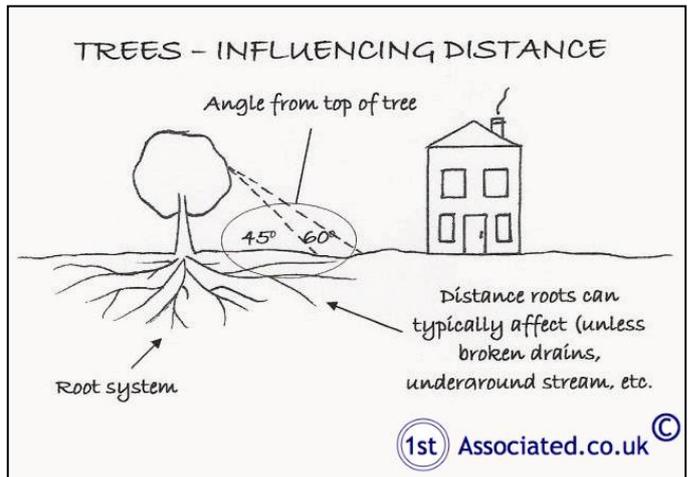
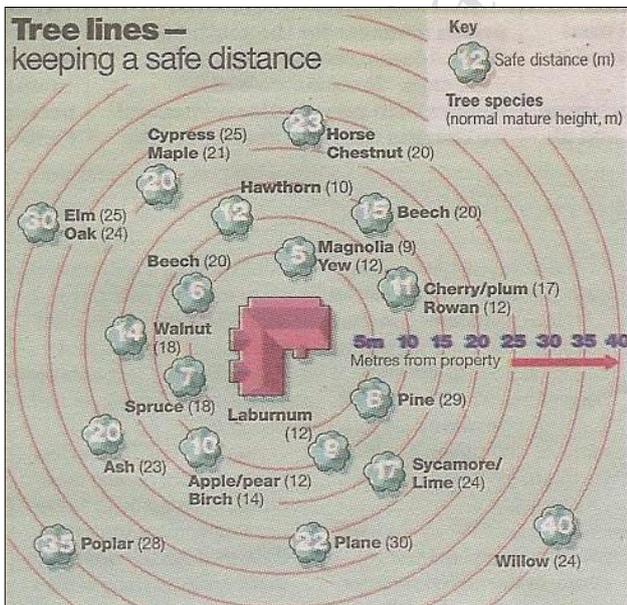
There is a tree within what insurance companies would term as influencing distance of the property. You do need to ring and check with your insurer if this affects your premium. You do also need to advise your insurer that the neighbouring property has been underpinned. The danger here is that the tree is so close to the property that its roots will affect how the property reacts particularly during drought/excessive dry weather and persistent excessive periods of rain.



Tree in front of neighbour's property

We do feel that trees tend to get the blame for everything and we are very surprised at the depth of underpinning that was carried out in the adjoining property.

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary regarding Underpinning



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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.

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## **DAMP PROOF COURSE**

Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

*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, cannot see a DPC as it is hidden by the plinth but it is likely to be slate in this era of property.



The plinth is hiding the damp proof course

Your attention is drawn to the section of the report specifically dealing with dampness.

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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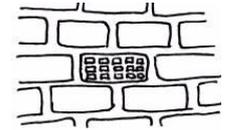
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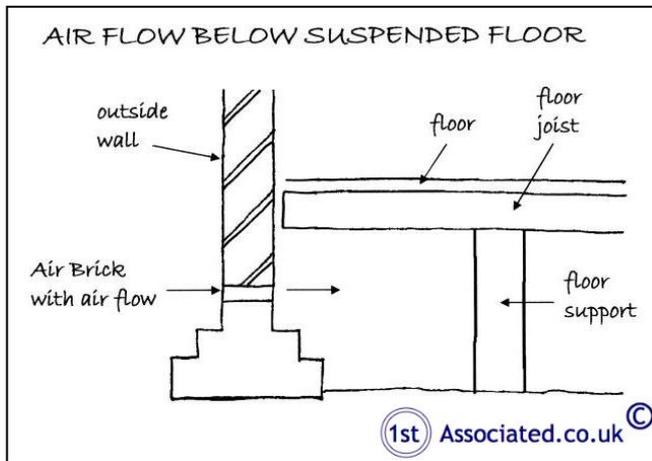
# AIRBRICKS



*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.*

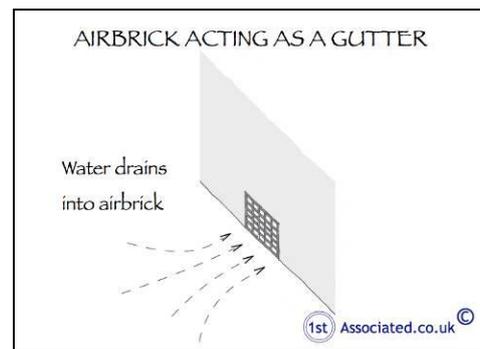
## Low Level Air Bricks

The property has a suspended timber floor which is blocked in part. 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 to the rear of the property acting as a gutter

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



Air brick acting as a gutter

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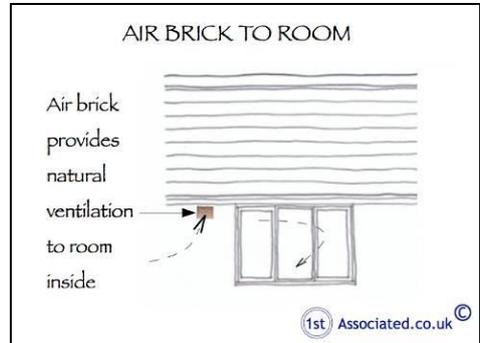
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## High Level Air Bricks

There are a few high level air bricks/vents at high level that we believe were added at a later date. They were probably added to try and resolve the problems of mould and cold bridging in the property.



Air vent



Air brick provides ventilation

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

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.

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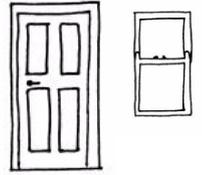
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## FASCIAS AND SOFFITS AND WINDOWS AND DOORS

*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

The fascia boards visible (although they are difficult to see) are timber and painted. On the ones we can see the paint is deteriorating indicating that the gutters are leaking or in need of a clean.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Clean the gutters. Make sure gutters and downpipes are watertight before carrying out any repairs on the fascias by the winter of 2014.



Fascia

### Windows and Doors

The property has a combination of Aluminium double glazed windows and plastic windows in a timber frame. There may also be the odd timber window remaining. There really is the history of windows in this property.

There is the odd pane of broken glass and also some misted windows. The main issue is the rotting timber which we recommend is replaced.



Aluminium window

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** Replace the timber.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** To replace the timber would be approximately £2,000 - £5,000 (two thousand to five thousand pounds). It may be more economical to replace the windows.



Broken glass in window



Misted up window to the rear bedroom window



Plastic window in a timber frame with rotting sill



Rotting window sill right hand window

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

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

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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 fair amount of white painting around the window areas although not as much as next door who have painted their entire brickwork white. This is something we would not recommend as:-

1. It stops the bricks from breathing and dissipating any dampness.
2. It means you have to paint it every four to five years.



Fair amount of external decoration

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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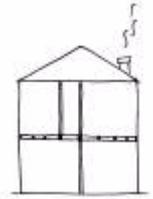
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## INTERNAL



# 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

We were only able to see the ceiling constructions from within the rear roof. Within this section parts of the ceiling had been replaced with plasterboard and some were the original lath and plaster. This is no doubt what has happened throughout the property. We would expect the newer right hand extension to be plasterboard. Lath and plaster is a lime based plaster and more able to cope with movement in a property.

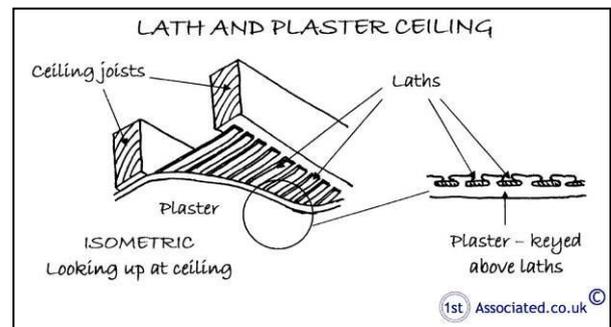


Plasterboard

Lath and plaster

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

### **Perimeter Walls**

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

This comment has been based on the visual look of the wall which is relatively “smooth” and normally means a modern finish.



Skim coat of plaster

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

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

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

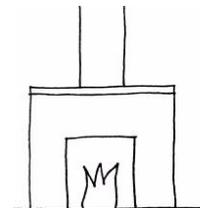
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## CHIMNEY BREASTS, FLUES AND FIREPLACES

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

The chimney breast is still visible in the front lounge and the front bedroom to the right hand side (all directions given as you face the front of the property).

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

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary and the Chimney Section regarding the removal of 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.



Chimney breast in  
Front bedroom



Chimney breast in front lounge

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# FLOORS

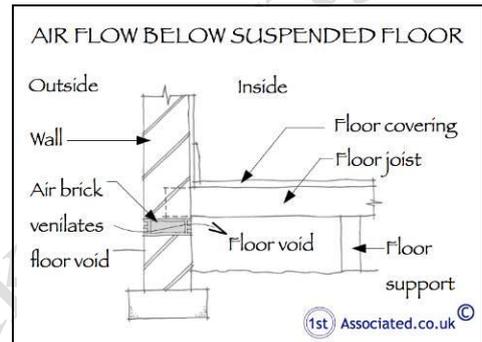


Functionally floors should be capable of withstanding appropriate loading, preventing dampness, have thermal properties and durability. In addition to this upper floors should offer support for ceilings, resistance to fire and resistance to sound transfer.

## Ground Floor

There is predominantly a suspended timber floor which requires air movement underneath to minimise wet rot, dry rot and woodworm. In the proposed kitchen area/rear lounge the floor is concrete beneath.

However, we have not opened up the floors or lifted the carpets / floor coverings etc.



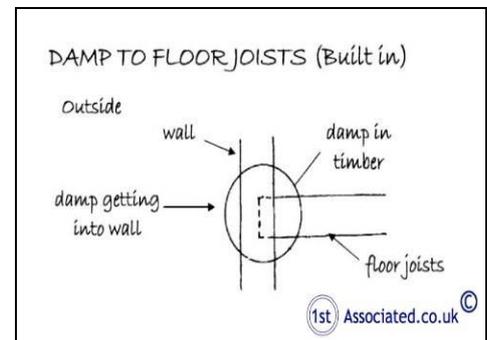
Suspended timber floor

## First Floor

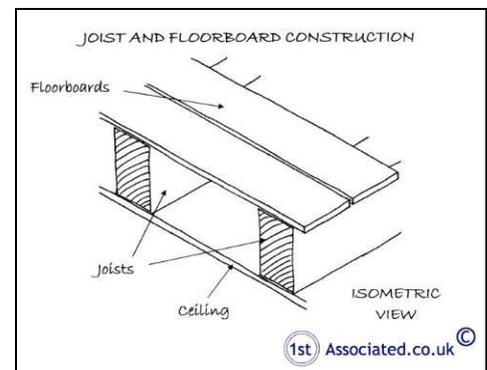
We have assumed that the first floor construction is joist and floorboards with embedded timbers, as this is typical in this age of property.

### 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.



Embedded timbers



Joist and floorboard

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## **Room in the Roof**

We suspect that this has been built on the original ceiling joists. This is always one of the problems with rooms in the roof as they need to be replaced with floor joists.



Timber sheets

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

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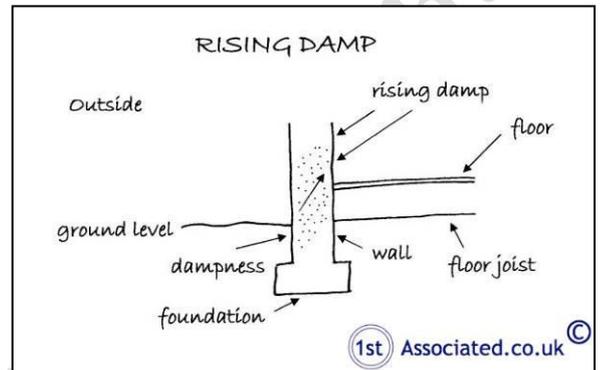


## DAMPNESS

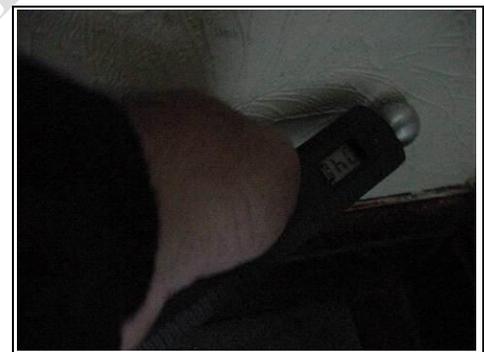
*In this section we look at any problems that are being caused by dampness. It is therefore essential to diagnose the source of the dampness and to treat the actual cause and not the effect of the dampness.*

### 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. There is a strong argument that true rising damp very rarely is found.*



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



Testing for rising damp

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see the Executive Summary

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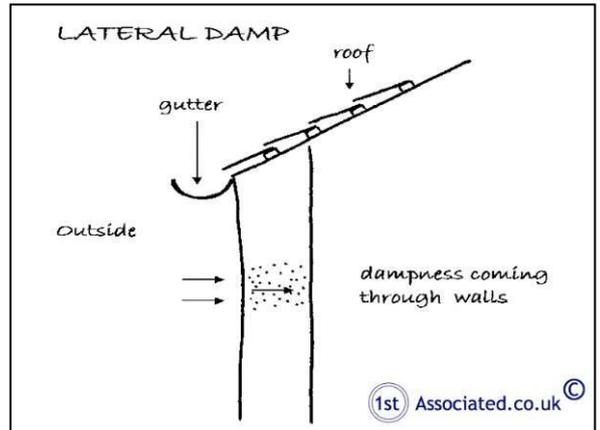
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## Lateral or Penetrating Dampness

*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 found it to be in line with what we would expect for this age, type and style of property.



Testing for lateral dampness in rear bedroom

## Condensation

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

At the time of the inspection there were obvious signs of condensation in the rooms on the right. There were also misted windows which is a form of condensation.

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



Surface temperature Testing for condensation and cold bridging

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Condensation 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.

### **Extract fans in kitchens and bathrooms**

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

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend large humidity controlled extract fans be added to the kitchen, bathroom and shower room. Please see our comments within the Executive Summary.

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

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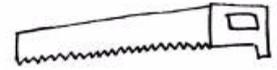
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## INTERNAL JOINERY



*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 doors are painted panel doors. We can see from these that there has been historic movement in the property (the frames show where there has been movement).



The door frame is out of square showing historic movement in the property



Panel door

### Staircase

We noted that the underside of the staircase was exposed. It is more normal today to have a half hour fire barrier to stop fire spreading from the ground floor to the first floor in a worse case scenario. You may wish to take a view on whether you add this.



Under the stairs

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## **Kitchen**

We found the kitchen is dated and we understand your reason for moving it. You do need to think about drains, supply pipes and the electricity circuit.

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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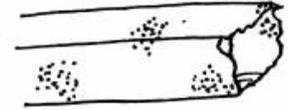
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## **TIMBER DEFECTS**



*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. We would advise that we have not opened up the floors, which are particularly important, especially the ground floor and we had a limited view of 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.*

We noted a lot of wet rot in the window sills and the start of it in the roof. Please see the Roof Section of the report.

Again, we would advise that we have not opened up the floors and we had a limited view of the roof.

We would add that we would like to open up the floor to see what is underneath..

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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 could only see thirty per cent of the roof. Within this area of the roof we found no visual signs of woodworm activity or indeed signs of past woodworm activity that has caused what we would term 'structurally significant' damage. In many properties there is an element of woodworm that is not active. Our inspection is usually restricted by insulation covering some of the timbers and general stored items in the roof, as it is restricted throughout the property by general fixtures and fittings. We would comment in this instance that it was restricted by the room formed partly in the roof.

**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 dated and in fairly average condition for a rented property, believe it or not!

You may wish to redecorate to your own personal taste.

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

Current Building Regulations require 300mm of insulation in the roof. In this instance we could not see any insulation in the roof.

### The room in the roof

This could suffer from heat gain in the summer and heat loss in the winter.

### 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.

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**Windows**

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

**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 below average /average compared with what we typically see. Improvements could be made.

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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.*

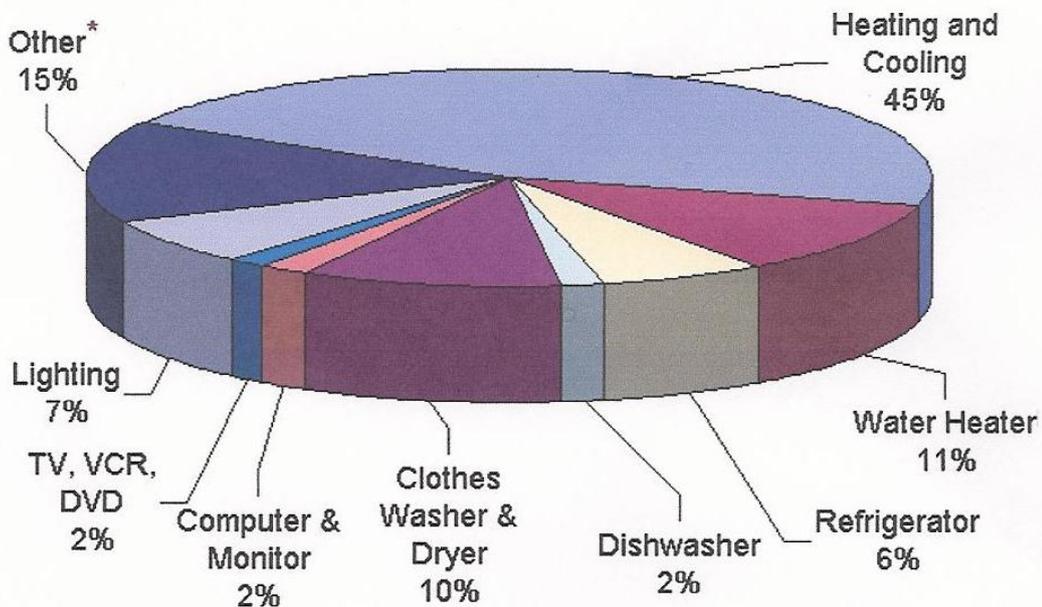
*or alternatively www.cat.org.uk*

*or Sustainable Energy Without the Hot Air by David J C MacKay  
HTTP//www.withouthotair.com/Videos.html to download for free or buy a paper copy as 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.

**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

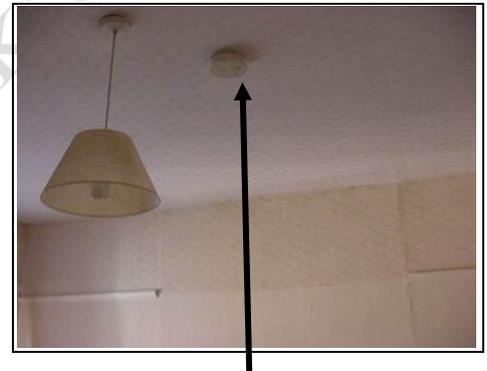
*In this section we put any other matters that do not fit under our usual headings.*

### 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 / Smoke Alarms

Some smoke detectors were noted. The current Building Regulations require that they be wired into the main power supply. Obviously in a property of this age this is difficult, as it would mean having surface mounted wires or cutting wiring into the plaster.



Smoke alarm

**ACTION REQUIRED:** 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

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

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

### Asbestos

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

In this case we have noted an asbestos board outside above the boiler flue. This is known as a deflector and stops the heat damaging the plastic pipes so this does have a purpose and cannot just be removed.

Asbestos 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.

Our insurance company requires us to advise that we are not asbestos surveyors.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** If you wish to confirm you are 100 percent free of asbestos you need to have an Asbestos survey carried out. Please see our comments within the Executive Summary

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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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 cupboard under the stairs. The fuse board looked dated and better are now available. We would recommend it is replaced.



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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**Electric socket points**

The socket points are surface mounted in many cases. Re-wiring would allow them to be bedded.



Electric socket point hanging off in the room in the roof

**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 1<sup>st</sup> 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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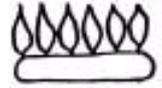
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## GAS



*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. There are two consumer units one is located in the cupboard under the stairs and the second one is located in the cupboard near the bathroom (we only noticed this in the photos). It looks as if the property has almost been split in two as this would be the reason for two separate gas supplies.



Gas meter 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 meter in cupboard next to bathroom

**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

The controlling stopcock was not located.

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.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Ask the owners to show you where it is.

### 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 average. 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

The water tanks are not likely to still be in use as there are two boiler systems.

### Hot Water Cylinder

There is a hot water cylinder located in the roof but is not in use.

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## Plumbing

The plumbing, where visible, comprises copper piping. With modern installations we are finding that plastic pipes are used and hidden with copper tails. This is where copper is just added to the end of the pipe run. No significant leakage was noted on the surface, although most of the pipework is concealed in floors, walls and ducts.

## Heating

The property has two boilers. These are located in the rear lounge and the rear bedroom and are both manufactured by Vaillant.

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.

## Ten Minute Heating Test

There was no owner / occupier at the property and therefore we do not turn the heating on in case there is a problem with it.



Boiler in rear bedroom



Boiler in rear lounge

**ACTION REQUIRED:** The estate agent needs to show and prove that the heating is working. We do think that the property is being heated; in fact it has to be to have stopped the dampness showing through.

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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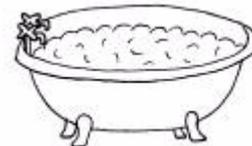
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## **BATHROOM**



*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 - small**

The property has a three piece bathroom suite, consisting of a bath, wash hand basin and WC, which looks in below average condition, subject to some day-to-day wear and tear, as one would expect.

### **Shower Room and W.C - rear**

This has suffered from condensation and mould is visible in there. An upgrade is recommended.

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.

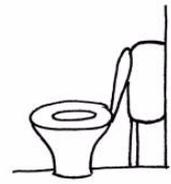
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## MAIN DRAINS

*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 down the right hand side of the property .

#### Manholes Defined

Access areas which usually fit a man (or woman) into them and are put in where the drains change direction.

### Inspection Chamber / Manhole One – front 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 brick built.



Manhole - front right

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**Inspection Chamber / Manhole two- middle right**

We duly lifted the cover and found it to be free flowing / blocked at the time of our inspection. There is a paving slab acting as a cover, this needs to be replaced.

From what we could see it is brick built.



Manhole – middle right  
Paving slab covers the manhole



Manhole – middle right

**Inspection Chamber / Manhole three – rear right**

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

From what we could see it is brick built.



Manhole -rear right

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.

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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 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

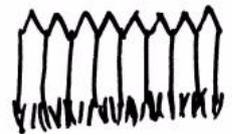


Parking is usually roadside parking on a first come first serve basis. There is a parking permit system in place. We were advised by the neighbour that the traffic wardens are very efficient!



Parking at roadside

### EXTERNAL AREAS



#### Front Garden

The front garden has been concreted /paved and is used for bin storage. There are a few plants in the borders. We can see some movement to the left hand wall and some step cracking.



Front garden

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Front gate



Front wall

### Rear Garden

The rear garden is in need of work. There is a shed and a pond to the end of the garden. The grass has not grown in the centre which to us indicates either there has been a fire or there was once a tree there. The right alley way is covered in moss so does not get much light.



Rear garden



Was there a tree here?



Alley way to the right hand side covered in moss



Patio area would benefit from improvement and levelling

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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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## **Neighbours**

### **Left Hand Neighbours**

We spoke to the neighbour who was very helpful and we had a cup of tea with him. We would recommend visiting the left hand neighbour who is very keen to have the property occupied by a family rather than it being rented!

### **Right Hand Neighbours**

We knocked but no one answered the door.

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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.

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- 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 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](http://www.1stAssociated.co.uk) Home Page.

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

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## **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**.

For and on Behalf of  
Independent Chartered Surveyors

**This Report is dated: xxxxxxxxxx**

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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 xxxxxxxx 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 a cool and windy autumn day (although it looks sunny in the photos) 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.

**EMPTY PROPERTY**

The property was empty at the time of our survey; we were therefore not able to carry out our usual question and answer session or have our questionnaire filled out. We were advised it had been occupied as a rental property.

**INSPECTION LIMITED**

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been very limited as we only had access to thirty per cent of the roof because of the room formed in it and we were not able to open up the ground floor, the first floor and the room in the roof. We would particularly have liked to open up the ground floor.

We would however like to say thank you for coming to see us at the property, it was nice to meet you.

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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 enquires prior to committing to purchase the property. Please be aware the fact a building is currently insured does not mean it can be re insured.

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

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

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

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

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# APPENDICES

1. The electrical regulations – Part P of the Building Regulations
2. Information on the Property Market
3. Victorian Thermal efficiency article
4. Clay article

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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](http://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](http://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](http://www.halifax.co.uk) and [www.nationwide.co.uk](http://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](http://www.hometrack.co.uk)

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

[www.motleyfool.co.uk](http://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](http://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](http://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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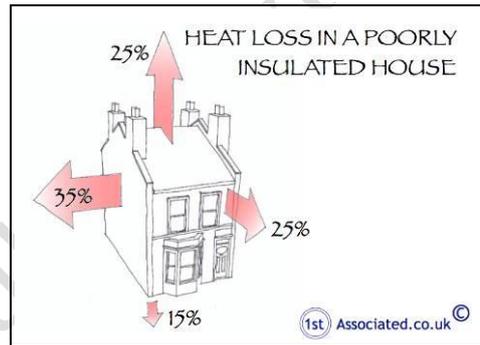
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# Victorian and Edwardian Houses. Are they thermally efficient?

**Free phone us on 0800 298 5424 for a chat about anything thermal!**

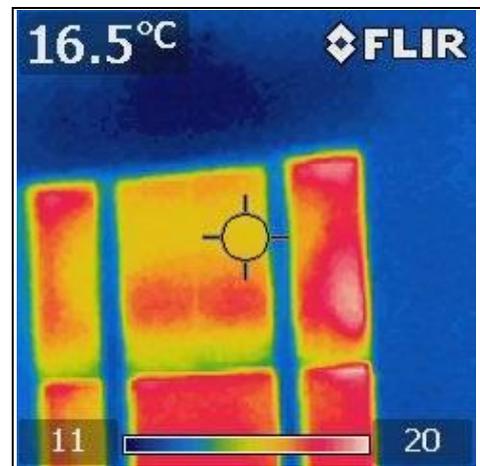
We would reiterate we are happy to talk about any property matter whatsoever as we do not have any vested interest other than providing you with a good survey and report and giving you good independent advice. Please feel free to phone for a friendly chat. This is just a reminder about our Free phone 0800 298 5424 number.



Heat loss in a house

## Thermal problems in Victorian and Edwardian properties

The following article considers thermal problems that you could have with Victorian houses. We have also written articles on other eras of housing such as Tudor, Georgian and Regency, War years and Post War Years and Modern and New properties. So if Victorian or Edwardian is not the era of the house that you live in then please have a look at our other articles as we are sure to have written one that applies to you.



Thermal image of a bay window in a Victorian property. It is single glazed with all the heat coming out of it

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## Thermal efficiency in Victorian and Edwardian Era housing

This series of articles considers the thermal efficiency of houses based upon the era they were built. This article looks at properties from the Victorian and Edwardian eras which are effectively from the 1830's to 1910. Although the majority of Victorian houses were built during the 1880's to 1890's the Victorian style continued into 1910 even after Queen Victoria had passed away.



Victorian/ Edwardian  
property street view

## What were the Victorians and Edwardians thinking about when they built their houses?

When houses were built in the Victorian and Edwardian eras little thought was given to thermal efficiency. The rooms were heated with both coal fires and wood fires and there would literally have been a fire in almost every room. A very common feature of Victorian properties is access to a coal storage area either via gates to the back of the property that give access to a coal shed or via coal chutes to the front of some properties.



Victorian terraced  
houses circa 1890

## Thinking about insulation started in the 1970's

It was many years before energy efficiency was really considered and we would say it wasn't fully considered until the oil and fuel crisis in the early 1970's. This resulted in thought being given to how we used our fuel and also on how to insulate our houses and commercial properties. The Building Regulations that came into existence nationally in 1948 were the method by which thermal efficiency factors were brought in.



Victorian property with bay  
windows built circa 1890

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## What makes Victorian and Edwardian houses different to a modern house?

When Victorian and Edwardian houses were built they concentrated on the basics of housing such as keeping everyone dry and warm. The latest mod-cons of the day were running water and good drainage. In fact with the coming of the industrial age everyone had a better standard of house to live in. However as we understand it thermal efficiency certainly wasn't high on their list of things to consider.



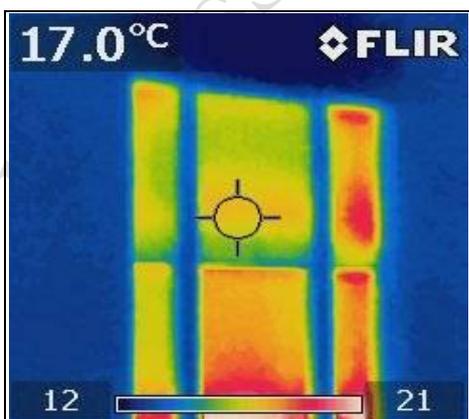
Victorian properties

## What characteristics do Victorian and Edwardian properties have from a Thermal Efficiency point of view?

Victorian and Edwardian properties lose heat in a number of ways. The red circles on the adjoining photo of a Victorian property indicate where heat would be lost in a un-insulated Victorian house such as through the roof, the timber, single glazed, sliding sash windows, the walls, the lintels and through a draughty suspended timber floor.



Heat loss in a Victorian property



Thermal image of a sliding sash window



Sliding sash window

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## Let's look at sliding sash windows

Whilst we still marvel at the construction of sliding sash windows, as they were a major step forward at the time, anyone who has lived in a property with sliding sash windows will understand that they can be drafty and they can rattle and are not easily adjusted.



Victorian sash window

## Let's take a second look at the thermal properties of a Victorian or Edwardian house.

Today we find that most Victorian and Edwardian properties have had some form of thermal insulation which has helped improve the living environment. They are often a mixture of the original construction with newer elements such as insulation in the roof and where the building is not listed or in a conservation area it may well have double glazing as well. Also the original fireplaces may have been replaced with central heating.

We can use the adjacent photo to show you the good thermal efficiency of the property.



Terraced late Victorian property with modern insulation.

### The Green ovals represent in order;

1. The top oval is an insulated roof.



Insulation in this roof is about 250mm deep and covers the joists



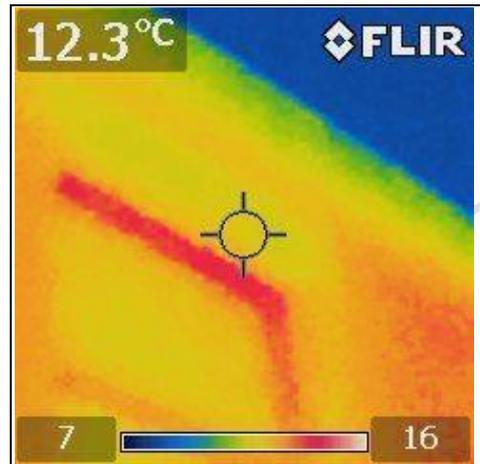
Insulation in this roof is about 150mm deep and does not cover the joists

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- 2. The middle oval is for double glazed windows, albeit plastic or within a timber frame.



Double glazed window



Thermal image of a double glazed window

- 3. The lower green oval is where a radiator would be under the window in the property. Hopefully there would also be an energy efficiency boiler. You also need to check what radiators there are in a property as single panel radiators have poor thermal efficiency.



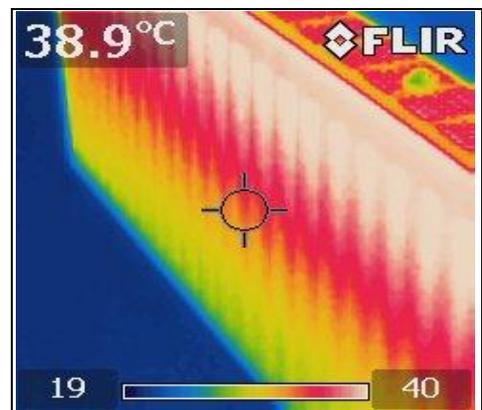
Single panel radiator



Single panel radiator



This is a double panel convection radiator. Note the clothes drying on the radiator.



Thermal image of a radiator

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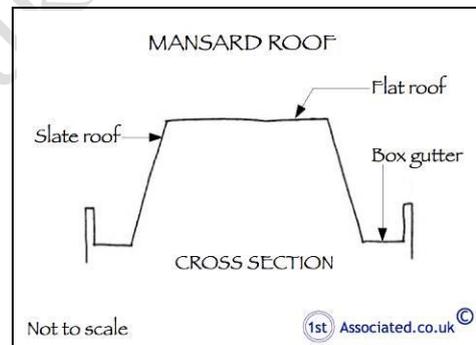
## All properties have their own characteristics such as this early large Victorian Property

Here we have an early large Victorian property (the emphasis is on large) that is situated in a conservation area. This can mean several things;

1. They cannot change the windows on the front of the property so they are still timber sliding sash windows. Some of the windows are very large which means that they are heat sapping.
2. To the top of the property is a Mansard Roof (yellow oval). Unless this was built recently, and from when we carried out the survey we don't think it was, there is unlikely to be insulation in the roof or the walls of the Mansard. This means that heat loss can be great to that area.
3. Whilst the property does have radiators it also had two boiler systems (from memory). The sheer size of the old Victorian rooms and ceiling height means it requires a lot of heat to warm it.



Early large Victorian property in a conservation area with a Mansard roof



Mansard roof

## Areas that people forget to insulate

Things that you need to check if you are buying a Victorian or Edwardian property (or make sure your Surveyor checks) is that with Victorian and Edwardian properties sometimes we find that the bay window area within the roof has not been insulated. We can only imagine this is because it is difficult and fiddly to do and also it's unlikely the owner who has had the insulation carried out will check there. Unfortunately the bay window



Victorian property with a box bay window

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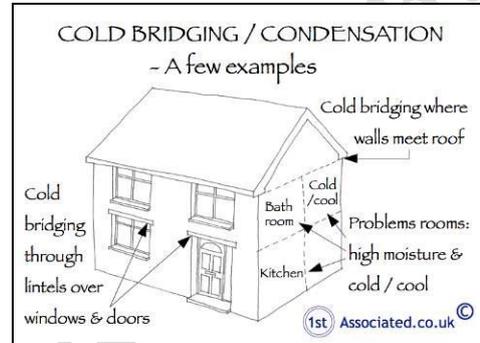
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rooms are often used as the master bedrooms which mean they have a fair amount of heat in them and so heat loss is important.

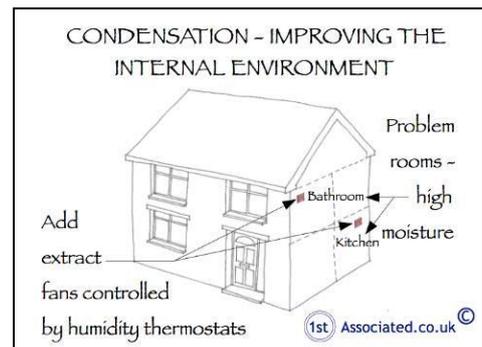
## Thermal and cold bridging in a Victorian or Edwardian property.

An interesting problem that we are coming across more frequently is Thermal and Cold Bridging in Victorian properties. We can only see this becoming a bigger problem as there seems to be a lack of understanding of how old buildings work. This is unfortunately made worse when insulation is added without any thought being given to it.



Thermal and cold bridging and problems with lintels

Properties that have thermal and cold bridging tend to be properties where there is a fair amount of humidity in the property. This is drawn through the colder elements of the property such as lintels which in a Victorian or Edwardian property could be brick or timber and could have been replaced with concrete and metal over the years.



Condensation

**Remember you should have working extract fans in humidity creating areas such as;**

1. The bathroom
2. The Kitchen

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Humid air cannot escape quickly enough and mould is formed in the bathroom



Mould in an internal bathroom

Also if you are washing and drying clothes in a property, particularly in the winter months if you are drying the washing inside on the radiators, then you need to make sure the areas are well ventilated as humidity travels around the buildings looking for the cold bridging areas to cause damp and mould.



No apologies for using this photo again.  
Drying washing on radiators inside is not recommended

## Chartered Surveyors with thermal imaging cameras?

Now let's have a look at a Victorian house through a thermal imager. Yes we do have thermal imagers and yes it can be dangerous Chartered Surveyors using thermal imagers if they do not have enough experience working with them. We have developed knowledge of thermal image cameras over the many years we have now worked with them. We have even given lectures about them at some universities.

Please see our articles on our website about thermal imaging.

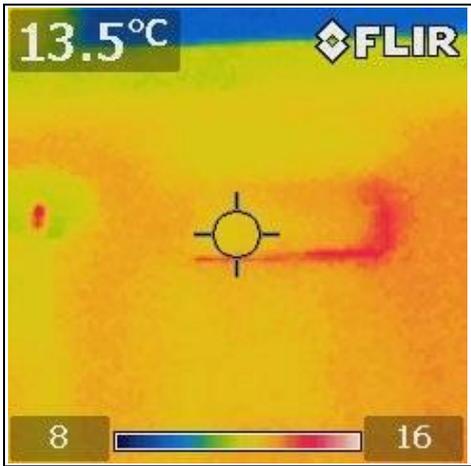
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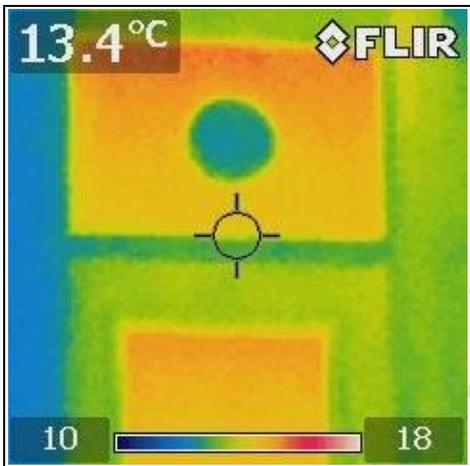
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Thermal image of a replacement timber window that was slightly open shows heat coming out of the window



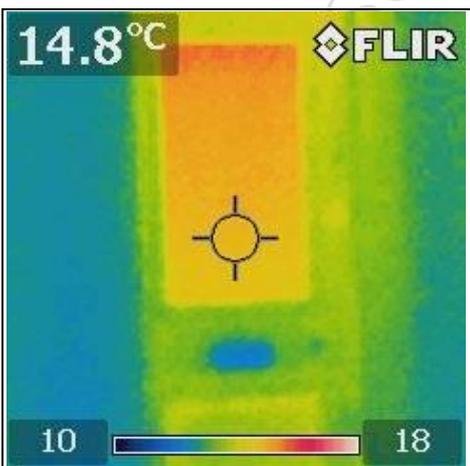
Timber window that is slightly open



Thermal image of a vent above the door



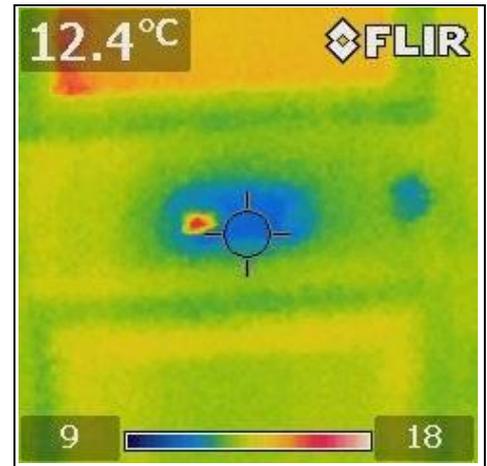
Vent above the door



Thermal image of a door shows coldness from the letter box



Door with a letter box



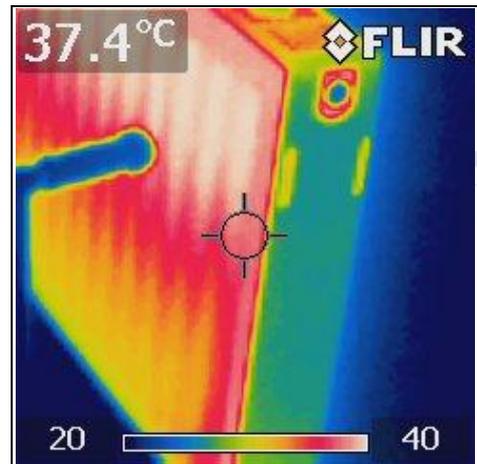
Thermal image of the letter box shows some heat coming out of it

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## Boilers and Light bulbs

Most properties today, we find, have a boiler and a water heated radiator system. These can be of various ages and the efficiency of the boiler being the key factor. We are not sure whether the modern boilers are more cost effective as having spoken to maintenance people over the years we are generally finding that modern boilers do not last as long and require more maintenance. This is not a scientific study! It is just comments that we have heard.



Thermal image of a radiator

We have also included light bulbs in this section as old incandescent light bulbs are not as efficient, we are advised, as LED light bulbs. LED light bulbs are said to have a life of 20,000 hours which is approximately 20 years. This is a lot longer than a standard light bulb but, we don't know about you, we can never remember when we last changed a light bulb.

## Victorian and Edwardian houses that have been extended and altered.

Many people, rather than move, have decided to extend their Victorian or Edwardian property. A common extension is a rear extension but we are finding that roof extensions and alterations are also being considered. This section of the article looks at how extending a property can affect the thermal performance.

### Rear Extensions

The two typical rear extensions that we see on Victorian and Edwardian properties are;

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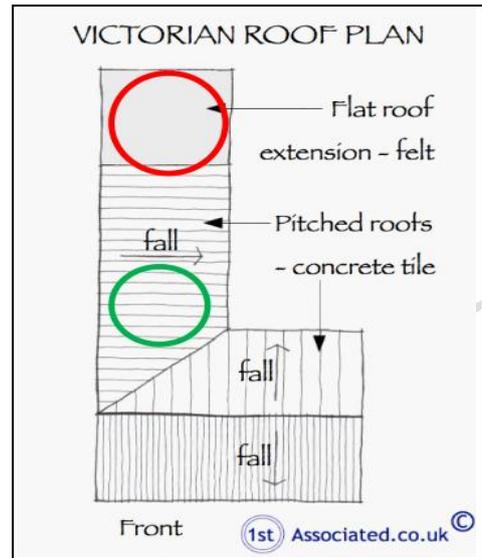
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## 1. Rear extension with a pitched roof

These are older style, single storey extensions which have a pitched roof. We usually find these are used for kitchen extensions, breakfast rooms, utility rooms and cloakrooms. We also generally find there is no access into the roof space. We would take an educated guess that when they were built there was no insulation put in them. Dependent upon how you use the area you may wish to add insulation.



Typical Victorian roof plan



Victorian property with rear extension with pitched roof could have insulation added



Shallow pitched roof with a corrugated plastic section that will leak heat

## 2. Rear extension with a flat roof

We also see a fairly large number of single storey flat roof extensions which tend to be from the 1960's onwards. When they are from the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's we would expect a cold roof. If it has been built in recent times then it may well have a warm roof.

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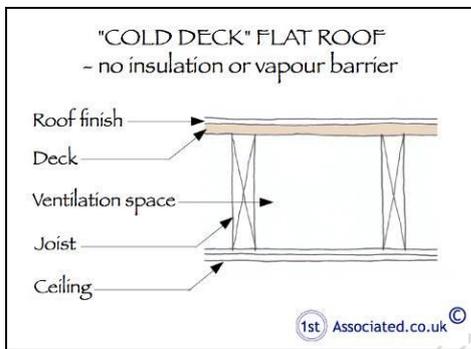
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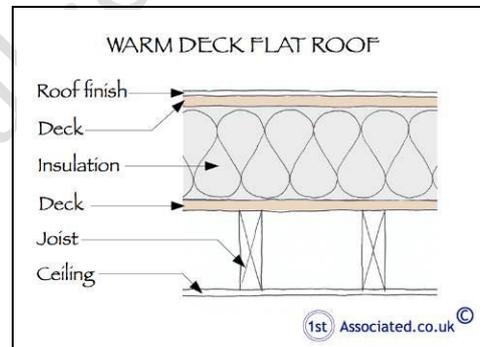
Victorian property with a flat roof extension and balcony will not have insulation



General view of a flat roof extension



Cold flat roof



Warm flat roof

### Victorian Just Build it Extensions

Here in the photo you can see a combination of different roofs. These are what we call a 'just build it' extension where people become frustrated with the lack of space and just want to add something on the rear with the roof being added anyway it can. here you can see a polycarbonate roof that will let heat out.



Mansard roof with dormer windows added to it

## Roof extensions and alterations

### Roof windows

There are many types of roof extensions and alterations. These conversions range from the adding of a roof window, often known by its trade name of a Velux window or a roof light, which tend to follow the line of the roof and which are often not official Building Regulation conversions. You need to check with the Chartered Surveyor who is carrying out your structural survey that everything is in order with the roof and it may also be necessary to check with the Local Authority about Planning Permission and Building Regulation approvals.



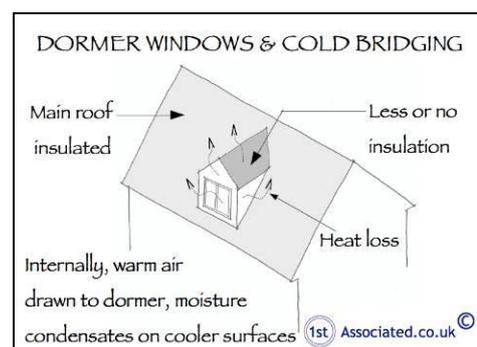
Victorian property with loft conversion that has been converted leaving the existing pitch



Roof lights in the converted roof of a Victorian property

### Dormer roof extension, small or large

Sometimes the roof extensions are much larger and incorporate a dormer roof. This can be in the form of a small dormer with a pitched roof as can be seen in the sketch or a large dormer with a flat roof. The smaller pitched roofed ones tend to be the older style roof extensions with the larger dormer style tending to be the newer ones. As such the newer ones can have insulation particularly if they have been built in the last ten years. However this does need to be checked as without insulation in a roof extension you can get



Dormer windows and thermal and cold bridging

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thermal gain during the summer months and heat loss during the winter.



Dormer roof extension



Dormer extension on Victorian property



Mansard roof with dormer windows added to it



Dormer windows on a Victorian property



Insulation being added to a Dormer extension on a Victorian property

## Thermal gain in the summer and heat loss in the winter

Un-insulated roof extensions result in poor quality rooms due to the temperatures where you get heat gain in the summer and heat loss during the winter that make them almost unusable.

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# A few questions on the thermal properties of Victorian and Edwardian properties

## 1. Where do we most find thermal efficiency problems?

With particular reference to thermal and cold bridging our thoughts on this have very much changed as we used to say that thermal and cold bridging was typically found in properties from the 1960's/1970's. However we are increasingly finding it in a broader range of properties, particularly Victorian and Edwardian properties but also in earlier Georgian properties and in War Years and Post War properties.



Street view of  
Victorian properties

We feel the common factors are where people are trying to live to modern standards of heating and insulation without understanding that the older properties need to breathe and be treated differently to newer properties. This is understandable after all they look pretty much the same. By the same we mean the basics, they have a roof, walls and windows.



View of larger  
Victorian/Edwardian properties

We are also finding a lot of problems with thermal and cold bridging where extensions have been added in the form of rear, side or even roof extensions. These are often built to a different standard and so problems can occur.

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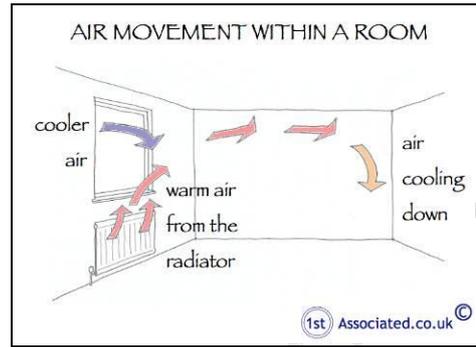
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## 2. Is it down to the design of the building?

Sometimes yes we would agree it is down to the design of the building and there is very little that can be done about that. Where there are cold elements in the Victorian or Edwardian building such as concrete lintels that come into contact with moist air then condensation and cold bridging will occur. Sometimes this can be reduced but sometimes it is impossible to stop it completely. You have to consider and look at things such as air circulation in a property and how the building is being used.

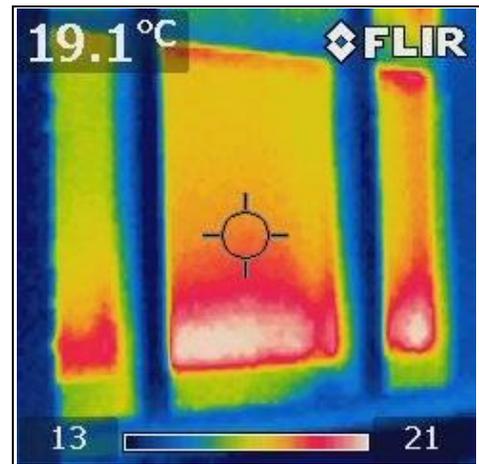


Air movement

## 3. Why do we have condensation problems in the winter but in the summer we don't?

The different seasons mean that the building reacts differently. Anyone who has lived in an old property will know that windows and doors particularly sash windows will swell during the winter months.

There can be similar issues with a property where, regardless of your lifestyle, during some of the different seasons, for example the winter or a wet spring, taking a shower can relate in condensation even with extract fans running (although this is far less likely).



Thermal image of a sash window

It also depends on what the humidity level is outside as this can be greater than inside. The moisture/humidity will then seek out colder rooms such as spare bedrooms and the corners of cupboards. When you open these at a later date you will be surprised to find black mould.

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#### 4. What is this black mould that we see in the house?

The dust and dirt in the environment including skin particles gets drawn towards thermal and cold bridging areas typically in lintel areas or areas that are not used as much such as cupboards. These can look unsightly and no matter how many times you clean the area the mould keeps coming back. This is because you are dealing with the effect of the problem by cleaning the mould rather than the cause.



Black mould in a cupboard



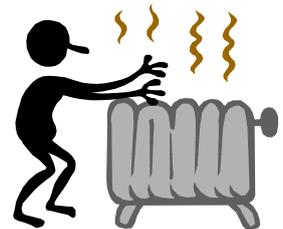
Lintels can cause thermal and cold bridging



Black mould around the lintel area

#### 5. Is the lifestyle of the person in the building a factor in Thermal and cold bridging?

This is often a contentious issue and a difficult question to ask, as no one likes to be told they are not living correctly. There can often be disagreements between landlords and tenants as to whether the tenants are using the building appropriately. In our experience the major factors that need to be looked into are the size of the family living in the property, especially large families with lots of young children which in turn mean lots of washing and cleaning to be done. It can also be attributed to how the property is being used i.e. are showers being taken morning and evening every day?



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## 6. Expert witness case, what is an expert witness?

Some people are finding the problems caused by thermal and cold bridging to be so life changing that they will go to court over it. We have carried out expert witness reports in quite a few cases and it is where a Chartered Surveyor (it can be other professionals) is employed as a specialist within a field to comment independently on problems with condensation within a property. We have been involved in several court cases as expert witnesses where either the landlord or tenant have decided that the problems with the property have become so bad that they feel court action is the only redress.



Typical Victorian properties

Expert witnesses look at how problems such as condensation can occur and how it relates, for example, is it relevant to an occupier's life style.

To any Solicitors or Legal Advisors reading this we are also happy to carry out Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).

## 7. What can we do to reduce thermal and cold bridging?

The difficulty is in resolving thermal problems as generally they are unique to each building. We are more than happy to talk to you about this on the phone and we are happy to come and carry out a survey of the property.

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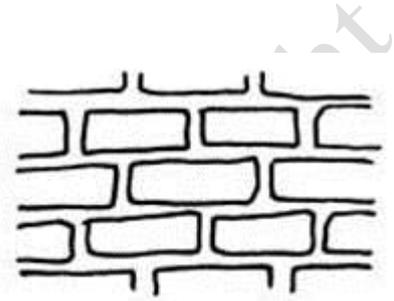
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# Settlement, Subsidence and Heave and the part clay soils play in this

## *The magical properties of clay*

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

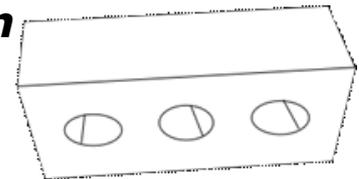
Clay expands and contracts, depending upon its moisture content. It is at its bulkiest at 40% to 60%, however, it changes form if it gets wetter or dryer. It is this change of its bulk that causes problems. When the clay soil gets too wet the clays bulk becomes larger and almost pushes the property out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



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

## *Finding out if your property is built on clay soil*

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



## Cracks

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

## Clay test

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

On a summer's day you can leave the lump of soil in the garden for it to dry out in the sun. When it dries out if it becomes powdery and much lower in volume then it is clay. Equally, if it rains and it becomes a larger volume then it is clay. Also, if it not warm you can leave it inside on the radiator. We believe

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(although we would need to check it) that a growth or reduction of approximately 30% (for some reason 28% is ringing bells). This type of clay is known as shrinkable clay.

## Not all clay expands and contracts

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

## Clay that is used for brick making

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

## Old soft red bricks

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

You will also notice that it is the softer red clay bricks, even up the post-war era, that tend to be affected first by spalling.

## Blue clay

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

## Yellow or white clay

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

## Fletton brick

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

## Silicone brick

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

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