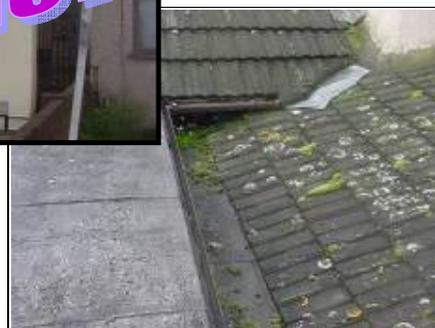


# RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY

XXXXXXXXXXXX

**Dagenham,  
Essex,  
RM10 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 xxxxxxxxx; we have now undertaken a Building Survey (formerly known as a Structural Survey) of the aforementioned property. This Survey was carried out on xxxxxxxxx.

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:

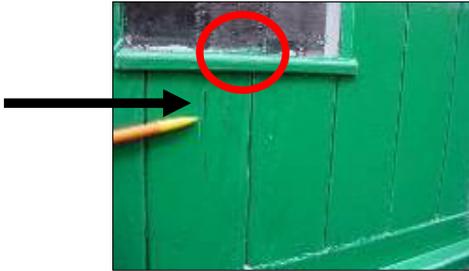
## ***GENERAL/HISTORICAL INFORMATION***

*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, arrow or circle 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 single storey detached bungalow set in a residential area that has been altered and amended over the years.

The property has a front garden and a good sized rear garden. Parking, as you are aware, is very limited in the area but we were able to park at the time of the survey.

We believe that the property was built during the War Years, possibly earlier. During this time there was a rationing of materials and limited skilled labour available which can mean that sometimes there are unusual constructions hidden beneath what appears to be a typical construction. If the exact 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:*

1928	Alexander Fleming develops penicillin
1931	The Highway Code issued
1934	Mao Zedong began the Long March
1937	The emergency (999) telephone number introduced
1939-1945	World War II (6 June 1944 D-Day)
1941	The National Fire Service established
1944	D-Day
1946	Winston Churchill gave his 'Iron Curtain' Speech
1952	Princess Elizabeth became Queen at age 25

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## EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front Elevation



Rear View



Right hand view



Front garden



Rear garden looking away from the house



Rear garden looking towards the house

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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 lobby
- 2) Through Lounge (front left)
- 3) Kitchen(middle right)
- 4) Utility (middle left)
- 5) Bedroom one (front right)
- 6) Bedroom two (middle right)
- 7) Bathroom (rear left)
- 8) Conservatory (rear right)

### **Outside Areas**

The property has an alpine style garden to the front and has a surprisingly large garden to the rear that is laid to lawn with paving areas. There is a pond at the end of the garden and also a shed and a greenhouse.

You do need to make further investigations with regard to parking as this did look to be problematic. This is often the case with bungalows/houses that were built before the car was such an important part of our life.

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



Through Lounge (front left)



Kitchen (middle right)



Utility room  
(middle left)



Bathroom (rear left)



Bedroom (front right)



Bedroom (middle right))



Conservatory (rear right)

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## **SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION**

### **External**

Chimneys:	Render finished
Main Roof:	Pitched, clad with concrete tiles Front pitched roofs over bays
Rear Flat Roof:	Felt of various types and ages
Other roofs:	Single pitched rear left hand side
Main Roof Structure:	Cut timber roof
Gutters and Downpipes:	Plastic including some profile plastic
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Internal
Walls:	Painted cement (assumed)render
Fascias and Soffits:	Painted timber
Windows and Doors:	Plastic double glazed without trickle vents Single glazed to the roof space and to the rear

### **Internal**

Ceilings:	Lath and plaster and plasterboard (assumed).
Walls:	Mixture of solid and hollow(assumed)
Floors: Ground Floor:	Suspended floor to front with a solid floor to rear (assumed)

### **Services**

We believe that the property has a mains water supply, mains drainage, electricity and gas (all assumed). The electrics, circa1970's, are located in the front right hand bedroom. We are advised the boiler will be replaced with a modern efficiency boiler.

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 250 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) For this era the property is a good size having been extended and modernised.
- 2) There is the potential to do something within the roof if you so wish subject to Local Authority approval and amendments to construction.
- 3) The good size of the garden albeit there is no parking.

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) Chimneys

The chimneys are letting in damp. We recommend that the cement flashings are replaced with lead flashings. Cement flashings, in our experience, tend to let in dampness as often they can crack.

There are also some misplaced tiles that maybe causing dampness. The dampness can be seen coming in within the roof space.



Lead flashing to replace cement flashing



Chimney - left  
The cement flashing needs to be changed to lead flashing



The rear chimney has a part lead flashing but needs to be all lead.



Dampness visible in the roof space coming in from the chimney

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Remove cement flashings and add lead flashings. Also employ a roofer for half a day to reposition the displaced tiles. We would also recommend that you have a supply of tiles for when the roof next causes a problem. Ask the roofer to leave you some extra tiles.



Missing tile on single pitch roof

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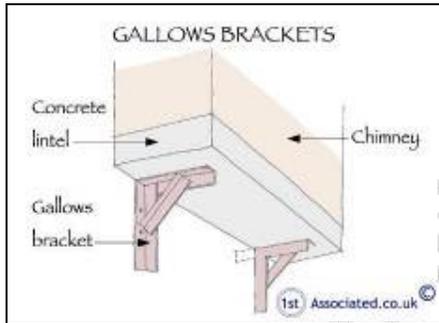
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**ANTICIPATED COST:** £250 to £1,000 dependent upon whether access is possible without scaffolding; please obtain quotations.

Please see the Chimney Section of this Report.

## 2.0) Removed chimney

The chimney to the front left of the property ( all directions given as you face the front of the property) has been removed internally without support. This chimney would have terminated to the front of the property in what is now the through lounge before the wall was removed. Building Regulations require appropriate support such as a lintel to be added. We also see gallows brackets on older properties.



Sketch of a gallows support to a chimney. Building Regulations now prefer a lintel to be added



Removed chimney

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your Legal Advisor needs to specifically check with the Local Authority for removed chimneys and associated chimney breasts and Building Regulations



Wall removed

Please see the Chimney Section of this Report

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### 3.0) Pitched roof and valley gutter

There are valley gutters to the front pitched roof where the concrete is coming away.



Valley gutter with concrete coming away



Valley gutters.  
The roof is similar to this one in the sketch

**ACTION REQUIRED:** This needs re-bedding and/or replacing with lead.

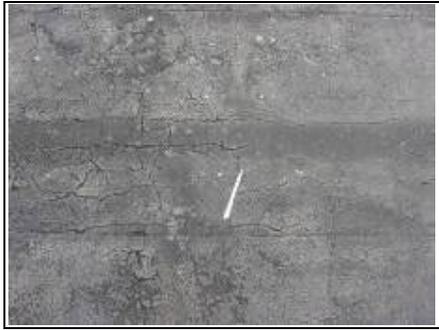
Please see the Roof Section of this Report

### 4.0) Rear flat roofs

We feel that the felt on the flat roof to the rear of the property is coming to the end of its life. The felt roof over the kitchen area has become un-bonded and is blistering with cracks and crazing in it. The rear flat roof that has chippings in it also has moss on it indicating that it is a flat, flat roof (water sits on this and causes moss to grow).



Rear flat roofs



Cracking and crazing to the felt roof over the kitchen



Flat, flat roof with moss growing on it

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend that a cut to fall insulation is added with high performance elastomeric felt or equivalent. These felts are more expensive than a traditional felt but, from our experience of carrying out surveys, they are lasting longer than traditional felt.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £1,000 to £2,000; please obtain quotations.

Please see the Roof Section of this Report.

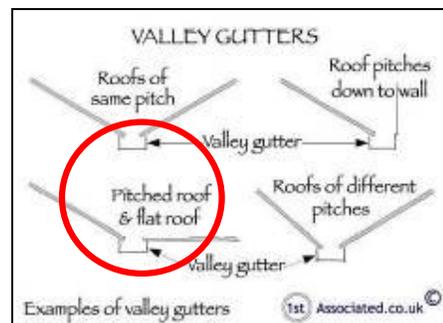
**5.0) Hidden Valley gutter to the rear**

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

We suspect that the valley gutter to the rear of the property is leaking although this is hidden internally by the suspended ceiling tiles within the bathroom.



Hidden valley gutter where the flat roof meets the single pitch roof



Valley gutter  
This sketch is handed i.e. the other way round.

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** Ideally we would like all valley gutters to be carried out in lead. However we do appreciate that it is sometimes difficult to find a skilled tradesperson to carry out this work and in which case we would recommend a high performance mineral felt.

Attention needs to be given to the detail particularly where the single pitched roof (rear left hand side) meets the valley gutter and also to ensure there is a fall on the valley gutter.

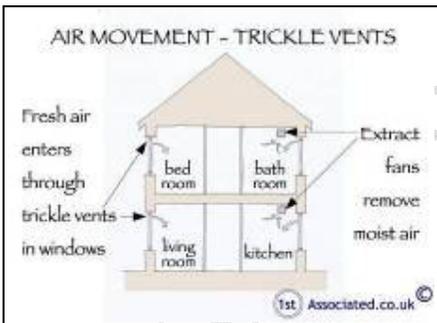
**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £750 to £1,500 (seven hundred and fifty to one thousand, five hundred pounds); please obtain quotations.

Please see the Roof Section of this Report.

## 6.0) Condensation likely

There are a number of factors within this property that mean that condensation is likely.

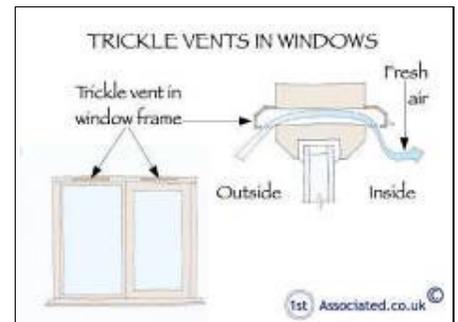
6.1 The lack of air ventilation externally as there are no trickle vents to the windows.



Trickle vents help air movement within a property

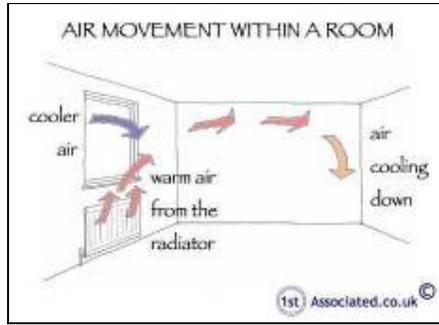


Front bay.  
No trickle vent in window



Trickle vent

6.2. The lack of good air circulation internally due to the radiators being placed on internal walls rather than under windows.



Air movement



Radiator on internal wall

6.3 No extract fans to the bathroom and the kitchen. In these areas we would recommend large humidity controlled extract fans to external air.



Large extract fan needs to be added to external wall in

6.4 From a lifestyle point of view washing was being dried internally on the radiators. This we think is why there was condensation on the inside of the double glazing.

Also the single glazing to the rear of the property will tend to get condensation due to the humidity in the air.



Condensation on window  
Hard to see in the photo

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Large humidity controlled extract fans to be added to the kitchen, bathroom and possibly the conservatory. If this is not carried out you may find black mould is occurring. We are still in the early days of discovering the health problems associated with this black mould.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** £500 to £1,000 dependent upon the difficulty of the wiring; please obtain quotations.

Please see the Dampness Section of this Report.

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## 7.0) Rising Damp

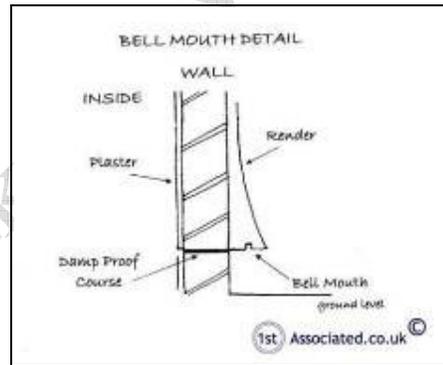
What we assume is dampness has been found within the bathroom to the rear of the property shown by the hollow and blown tiling.

We would recommend the render to the sides of the property should have a bell mouth added.

As discussed air movement around the property, particularly on the left hand and right hand walls is minimal and they get little sunlight (we did not actually see this as the sun was not out on the day we surveyed the property).



No bell mouth detail



Bell mouth detail

### Surface temperature

This is the highest difference in temperature we have ever had between the top and bottom of a wall.



Surface temperature reading at the bottom of the wall is 55



Surface temperature reading at the top of the wall is 77

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend you start off with the other alterations that we have mentioned earlier such as adding large humidity controlled extract fans and trickle vents to windows. We would also recommend taking care over what is

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dried inside. Possibly drying everything within the bathroom area and therefore allowing the humidity controlled extract fans to help with the humidity.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** For a new bell mouth £2,000 to £4,000 (two to four thousand pounds); please obtain quotations.

Please see the Dampness and External Wall Sections of this Report.

### 8.0) External joinery decoration

We did notice that the external joinery would benefit from being re-decorated.



Fascias need painting



Windows in roof need redecoration

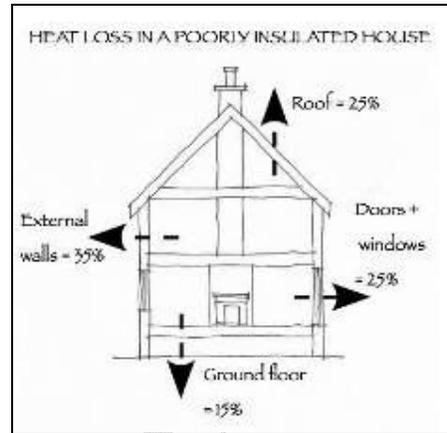
**ACTION REQUIRED:** Re-decorate.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** A few thousand pounds; please obtain quotations.

Please see the Fascias, Soffits, Windows and Doors Section of this Report.

## 9.0) Energy efficiency

With us moving more and more towards energy efficiency measures in buildings we would note that the roof was not insulated and that the conservatory area was not double glazed. It would be relatively hard to double glaze within the wood units but it is possible although the sealed units may suffer from movement and could break the seals. Secondary glazing may be an option.

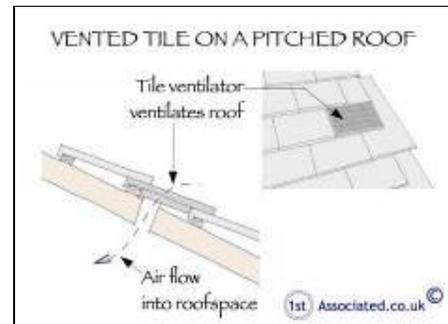


**ACTION REQUIRED:** Insulate the roof but ensure it is appropriately ventilated and also consider double glazing to the conservatory.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** There are many 'free' schemes for loft insulation in the roofs. We wish you luck dealing with the double glazing and from what you were saying you have some contacts in this area; please obtain quotations.



No insulation



Vented tile

Please see the Thermal Efficiency Section of this Report.

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## 10.0) Services

### Electrics

The electrics are dated circa 1970's and better are now available.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Replace the fuse board and you may wish to add additional socket points.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** Replacement fuse board £250 to £500. For extra sockets it will depend upon the number you require but they are typically between £50 to £100 dependent upon the difficulty of adding them; please obtain quotations.



Dated electrics



Extension lead within the conservatory

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.*

There are a number of points that we feel need to be negotiated on as we feel they are above what you would find in a typical property of this age, type and style.

We ask that you re-read the report and look for a discount on the price of the property.

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## **Other Items**

Moving on to more general information.

## **Maintenance**

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

## **Services**

Whilst we have carried out a visual inspection only of the services within the property and we would always recommend you have your own specific testing for each of the services

## **Electrics**

The fuse board is dated and we would recommend replacement. The Institute of Electrical Engineers standards (IEE) recommend a test and report whenever a property changes occupancy. This should be carried out by an NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent.

## **Heating**

From our discussions you are going to replace the heating system. We would make you aware that modern boilers can sometimes cause leaks on older radiators so you may have to replace these as well. If you do not replace the system then you need to have it tested and overhauled before exchange of contracts and then a regular maintenance contract be placed with an approved heating engineer.

## **Drainage**

Whilst we have lifted the manhole cover to the rear right hand side of the property 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. We did note that the cover was rusting and could indicate previous blockages.

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## **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.

## **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**

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

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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:

As previously mentioned we would expect a discount in the price based upon the problems we have found as all of these are likely to cost you a fair amount. Ideally you should obtain quotations for the work (with the approval of the existing owners of course).

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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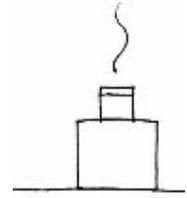
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## EXTERNAL

### CHIMNEY STACKS



#### Chimney Stacks

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

There are two chimneys to this property they are located to the front left hand side and the rear left hand side (all directions given as you face the property).

#### Chimney One –front left

This chimney is rendered with a cement flashing and one chimney pot. From what we could see from ground level it looked in below average condition considering its age, type and style. The chimney is letting in dampness which may be via the cement render or via the flaunchings.



Chimney- front left

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary regarding the chimney breast beneath it being removed.

Unfortunately we were unable to see the top of the chimney known as the flaunching, we therefore cannot comment upon them other than to say as dampness is getting in then this is also a possibility.



Flaunching

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## **Chimney Two – rear left**

This chimney is finished in painted render and looks to have been sealed. There is a part lead and part cement flashing. We would comment that there is cracking visible to the render

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Add complete new flashings and redecorate. Please see our comments within the Executive Summary.



Chimney rear left

### Flashings Defined

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

### Flaunchings Defined

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

### 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.

### Render Defined

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

Finally, we have made our best assumptions on the overall condition of the chimney stacks from the parts we could 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 three areas.

The main roof is pitched and clad with a concrete tile and, from ground level, this looks in average to slightly below average condition considering the roofs age type and style. We could see moss on the roof which indicates that the water is not running away properly and there is a lack of air circulation, ventilation and sunlight to the roof.



1970's concrete tile  
Not unusually for 1970's tiles they look to have been put on quickly

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Use a soft brush to remove the moss from the roof. We noticed that some tiles are out of place and recommend that you have a roofer for half a day to check them. Carry out periodic inspections and maintenance of the roof, as required



Moss on the roof.

### Front Pitched roofs and valley gutters

There are two small pitched roofs with valley gutters. The cement is coming away from one of the valley gutters. You need to check all of the valley gutters as they are renowned for this problem.

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Pitched roof



Pitched roof

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

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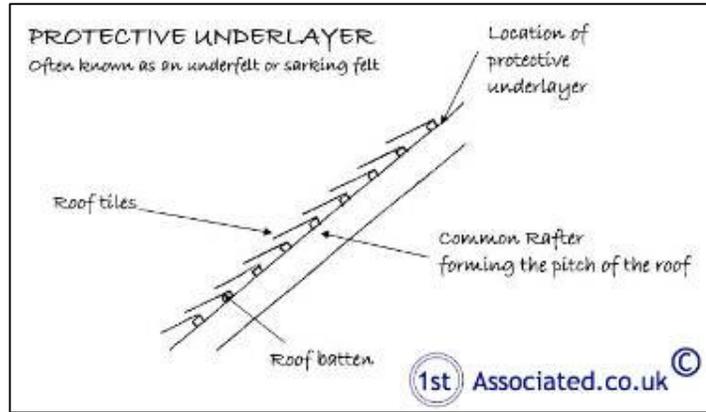
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## Protective Underlayer (Often known as the sarking felt or underfelt)

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



Protective Underlayer

When we inspected the loft space we found a Hessian based Bitumen membrane behind the building paper. This type of protective membrane has been used since the 1960s. We cannot confirm its condition as it was hidden by the building paper but the area that we opened, up as seen in the photo, was in average condition.



Hessian based underlayer behind the building paper



Building paper lining the roof

### **Rear Single Pitched roof**

This is clad in concrete tiles and has a fair amount of moss on it. Again this needs cleaning particularly as it goes into the awkward and poorly detailed valley gutter to the rear. Remember you will rarely see these valley gutters so if there is a problem the first time you will notice is because of dampness inside the property.



Rear single pitched roof

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

### **Rear Flat Roofs**

*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.*

There are two rear flat roofs.

One has a bitumen finish which is crazing and cracking.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend this is replaced with an insulation cut to falls to take the water away.



Rear flat roof with bitumen finish

The second roof has a mineral finish and is a flat, flat roof.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would ultimately recommend this is replaced with an insulation cut to falls to take the water away.



Rear flat, flat roof with a mineral finish

### **Further information on 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.

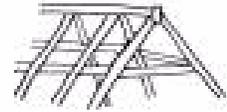
### **Insulation**

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.

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 from the roofs themselves as you are aware as you came on the roof with us. Thank you for taking the time and interest and accompanying us on the survey.

Finally, we were only able to see approximately ninety five 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.



# ROOF STRUCTURE AND LOFT

## (ALSO KNOWN AS ROOF SPACE OR ATTIC SPACE)

*The roof structure or framework must be built in a manner which is able to give adequate strength to carry its own weight together with that of the roof covering discussed in the previous section and any superimposed loads such as snow, wind, foot traffic etc.*

### Main Roof

### Roof Access

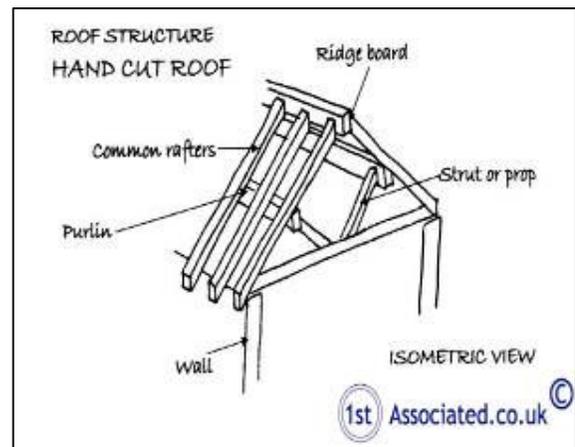
The main roof is accessed via the loft hatch located in the front right hand bedroom. There is no loft ladder, electric light or secured floorboards. There are some unsecured floor boards. If you recall these are definitely unsecured as one of them moved when we were walking around on it.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend that floorboards are added with insulation beneath as this will also insulate the roof better and make it a very useable space. We would also add a light and a ladder as this will make the loft space safer and easier to use.

Of course there are windows in the roof space but our viewing has been limited slightly because of the torch light inspection.

### 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.



Cut timber roof

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## Roof Timbers

We have inspected the roof structure for:

1. Serious active woodworm
2. Structurally significant defects to the timbers
3. Structurally significant dry rot
4. Structurally significant wet rot

Our examination was limited by the general configuration of the roof and the stored items. Our view was also limited by the building paper so we could not see the common rafters and these are the rafters that form the pitch of the roof. What we could see was generally found to be in average condition for its age, type and style. It is, however, feasible that there are problems in the roof that are hidden.

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



General view of inside of roof and windows



Stored items limit our view to the ceiling joists and the building paper limited our view to the common rafters..

## Water Tanks

There is a water tank in the roof space. You advised that this will no longer be required as you intend to put a new boiler in place. If you do intend to use it for some time then we would recommend that the water tank be drained down and cleared of any debris etc.



Water tank and dated hot water cylinder

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### **Ventilation**

We did not notice any ventilation in the roof so remember if you are insulating to a greater level then you also need to ventilate.

### **Insulation**

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 there was insufficient quantity of wiring to comment.

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 and Downpipes

The gutters and downpipes have been replaced with plastic some of which are profile plastic gutters; usually they were originally cast iron.

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. Specifically we would advise you that the front left hand gutter would benefit from a slate being put between the guttering and the building to protect it from dampness.



Profile plastic gutter

Half round plastic gutter



Downpipe needs a slate to prevent dampness getting into the property

**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.

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## **Soil and Vent Pipe**

We believe the property has an internal soil and vent pipe as we could not locate it.

The drains are slightly unusual with the bathroom being on the rear left hand side (all directions given as you face the front of the property) and the drains being on the right hand side as far as we could see.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the drain section.

Finally, gutters and downpipes and soil and vent pipes have been inspected from ground level. As it was not raining at the time of the inspection it is not possible to confirm 100 per cent that the rainwater installation is free from blockage, leakage etc. or that it is capable of coping with long periods of heavy rainfall. Our comments have therefore been based on our best assumptions.

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# WALLS



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

The walls are finished in painted render.

## Render

The external walls are rendered. We are always wary when we see rendered properties as it usually means they have been rendered for a particular reason.

In this particular case, we believe from looking at the property, it is the original finish.

We have carried out a tap test (literally hitting the render with the back of a hammer). We found it to be in average condition for its age, type and style.



Painted render

## Cracking

There is cracking to the render believed to be caused by the cement render being too hard in consistency.



Cracking on left hand side of render



Cracking right hand side of render

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Crack in render



Crack in render on window



Cracks to the render



Cracking in render to the rear

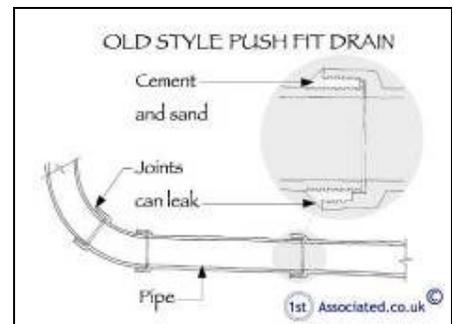
**ACTION REQUIRED:** All hairline cracks need to be sealed.

Cracking on nearby buildings

We noted cracking on the right hand neighbours building. This may indicate some leaks to the drainage. Older drains tend to be a push-fit type system that do leak.



Neighbours property also has cracking



Push fit drain

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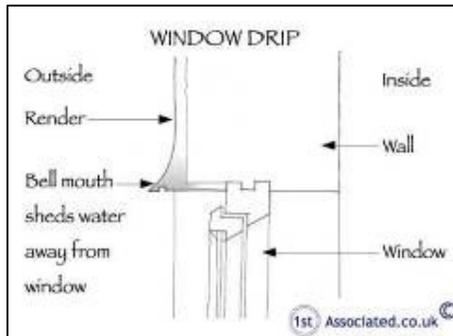
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## Render Detailing

You can normally tell whether the render is good or not by the drip detail over the window and the bell mouth to the base of the property.

### Window Drip Detail

With regard to the window drip detail there are not any windows that should have a drip detail apart from the side windows, which we can see, do not.



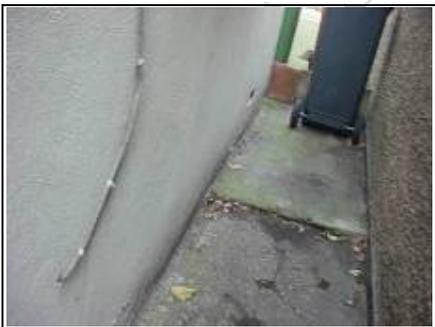
Window drip



Side window

### Bell mouth to base of property

We could only see a bell mouth detail to the base of the property to the very rear of the extension. To both the left and right hand side of the original property there is no bell mouth with the render going all the way down to the ground. This will cause capillary action and allow some dampness in.



No bell mouth detail



Bell mouth detail



Bell mouth to the rear

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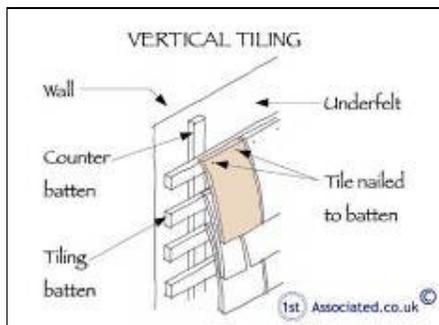
**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend that a bell mouth is added.

**Capillary Action defined**

This is the drawing up of water through materials

**Vertical tile**

There are small areas of vertical tiling above the splayed bays to the front of the property which look to be in average condition.



Vertical tiles



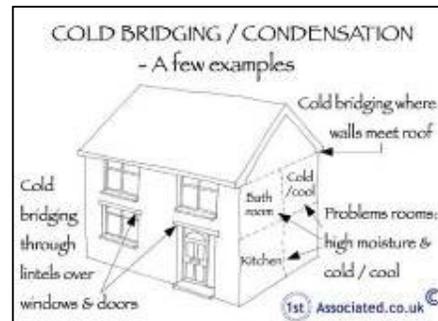
Vertical tiles

**Concrete Lintels**

In this age and era of property often concrete lintels are used and there may be problems relating to cold bridging. Please see our article in the Appendices at the back of the report.

**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, often caused by things like having a shower or a bath, cooking or washing, particularly if you are drying washing on the radiators. This is also caused by the general climate which results in condensation on the element.



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Finally, the external walls have been inspected visually from ground level and/or randomly via a ladder. Where the window and door lintels are concealed by render / vertical tiling/ plasterwork we cannot comment on their construction or condition. In buildings of this age timber lintels, concrete lintels, rubbed brick lintels, 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 render / vertical tiling/ plasterwork have been finished. We have made various assumptions based upon what we could see and how we think the render /vertical tiling/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.

To the rear extension we would expect to find a concrete foundation of some sort. We use the term 'of some sort' because these rear extensions tend to be fairly lightweight and sometimes next to no concrete foundation will be put in we would say 300mm and other times 450mm to the present requirement which is approximately 1.2 m.

### **Clay**

This property stands on 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 clay 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.

### **Cracks and insurance.**

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;

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the Building Research Establishment recommends a year of monitoring of any cracking.

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

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

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

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

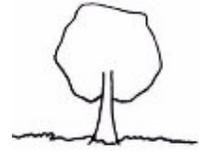
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# TREES

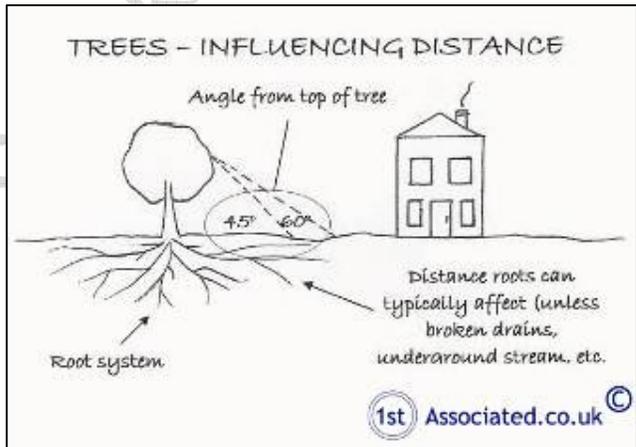
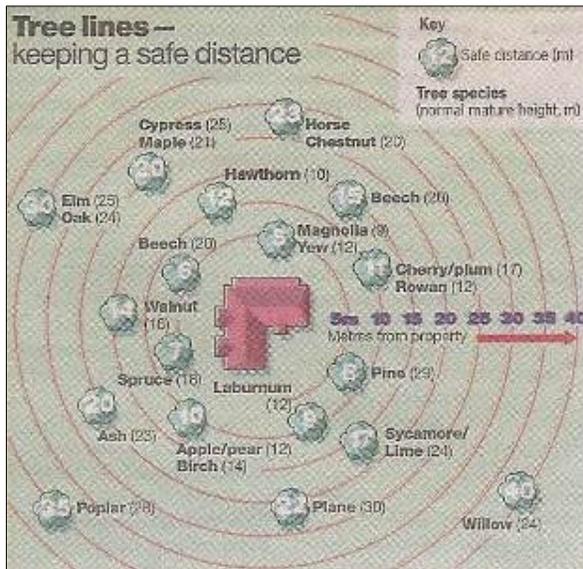
Trees within influencing distance of a property can affect the foundations by affecting the moisture content of the soil.

There is a tree within what insurance companies would term as influencing distance of the property.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend an Arboriculturalist (not a tree surgeon) is asked to view the property and give a ten year plan for maintenance.



The tree is located to the rear of the property



Influencing distance of trees to a property

### Influencing Distance Defined

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

Please also refer to the External Areas Section.



## **DAMP PROOF COURSE**

*The Building Act of 1878 required a damp proof course to be added to all newly built properties within the London area. It also required various other basic standards. These requirements were gradually taken up (or should that be grudgingly taken up) throughout London and then the country as a whole, although this took many years for it to become standard practice.*

All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) and good building practice dictates that a differential of 150mm (6 inches) should be maintained between the damp proof course and ground levels. In this case we cannot see a DPC because of the render although to the left hand side there does appear to have been some slippage on a damp proof course. In this era of property the damp proof course it likely to be slate.



Slippage on DPC

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.

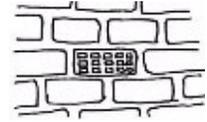
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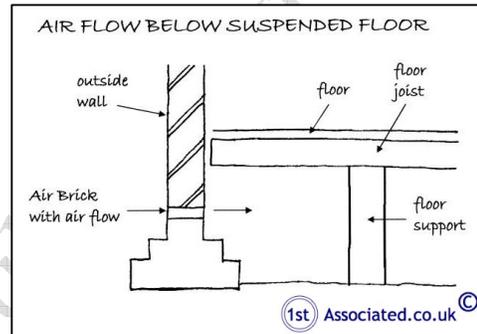
# AIRBRICKS



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

## Low Level Air Bricks

There are air bricks to the front bay at low level and we could also see some to the side of the property. We would however prefer to see some airbricks to the rear of the property to allow a through flow of air. 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.



Suspended timber floor



Air brick to the front bay at low level



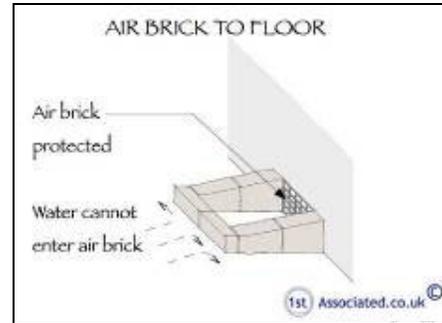
Air brick

## Air Bricks acting as gutters

We are slightly concerned that the airbricks may be acting as gutters due to their position and so would recommend that you protect them.



Air brick unprotected allows water in



Air brick protected

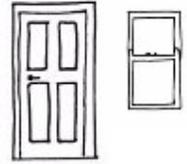
### Cleaning of air bricks

Some of the air bricks look to have been painted over the years and as such are blocked up.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend these are unblocked.

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.

# FASCIAS AND SOFFITS AND WINDOWS AND DOORS



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

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

## Fascias and Soffits

The fascias and soffits are timber and in some areas are deteriorating. They are painted and we would comment they are in below average condition for their age, type and style.

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



Fascias need painting

## Windows and Doors

The property has double glazed plastic windows without trickle vents to the front and we would comment that they are from the poorer end of the market.

There are also timber single glazed windows to the rear of the property and also in the roof space.



1 Double glazed windows to the front

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would suggest that it may be worth adding trickle vents to the double glazed windows. The timber windows on the right hand side that give light into the roof space are in need of repair

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and redecoration. Please see our comments within the executive Summary.



Timber windows in roof space need re-decoration



Single glazed windows to the rear



Single glazed windows to the rear

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.

#### Trickle Vents Defined

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

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.*

External decorations are limited due to the replacement plastic windows. You do need to redecorate the fascias and soffits and also you have awkward staining to the rear conservatory windows and doors and will be quite time consuming.

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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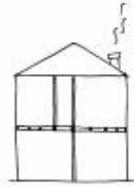
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# INTERNAL



## CEILING, WALLS, PARTITIONS AND FINISHES

*In this section we look at the finish applied to the structural elements such as the plasterwork applied to the ceiling joists, walls or partitions, together with the construction of the internal walls and partitions.*

### Ceilings

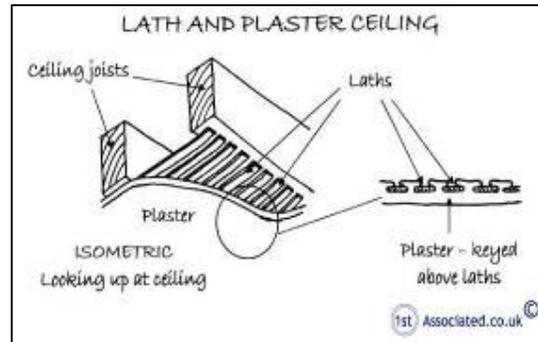
From our visual inspection of the ceilings and our general knowledge of this age and type of construction and where we could see the ceilings from the roof space we could see that they were lath and plaster. We think there is likely to be plasterboard to the newer extension i.e. the kitchen and the conservatory.



Lath and plaster ceiling visible from roof space

#### 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.



Lath and plaster ceiling

#### 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.

### Suspended ceiling

Within the bathroom, quite unusually, there is a suspended ceiling. These are usually added where there is a roof in poor condition. As this is directly below the hidden rear valley gutter we suspect it has leaked over the years.

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## Internal Walls and Partitions

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

### Wall removed

A wall has been removed that is not to Building Regulations (if Building regulations existed when it was done) as it has not got a pier. Typically this would be 450mm.



Removed wall

### Perimeter Walls

Originally these would have been constructed with a wet plaster, possibly a lime plaster. We now suspect they are a mixture of the original lime plaster and a more modern Gypsum plaster or even a cement render type plaster.

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



Cracking where the studwork wall in utility room meets the solid wall

We noted hairline cracking, for example, where the solid wall in the Utility Room meets the modern studwork.

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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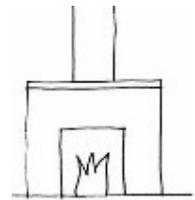
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## CHIMNEY BREASTS, FLUES AND FIREPLACES



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

The chimney breasts are located to the left hand side (all directions given as you face the front of the property).

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments within the Executive Summary with regard to the chimney having been removed.



Fireplace in lounge  
The owner did not say if this is used

At the time of the survey the chimney was not in use. When we spoke to the occupier, as we understood it, she said that she did not use the chimney, Note if you do wish to use the chimney you need to have it swept and the lining checked in this age of property. If you do not propose to use the chimney it should be capped and ventilated to prevent dampness.

Where does the second chimney breast go?

We were unable to establish where the second chimney breast to the rear left hand side is. It would appear that it has been removed.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** This should have had Building Regulations for the removal and as such should have a lintel in place. Please see our comments within the Executive Summary.

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.

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

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

Please also see the Chimney Stacks, Flues and Parapet Walls section of this Report.

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# FLOORS

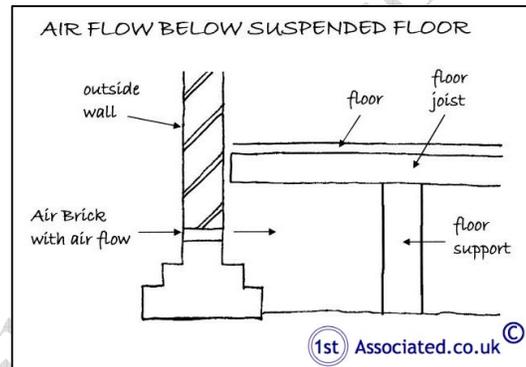


*Functionally floors should be capable of withstanding appropriate loading, preventing dampness, have thermal properties and durability. In addition to this upper floors should offer support for ceilings, resistance to fire and resistance to sound transfer.*

## Ground Floor

The floors to the front of the property are suspended timber floors which require air movement underneath to minimise wet rot, dry rot and woodworm. However this is blocked by the solid floor.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend that air bricks are added in the Utility Room or the cupboards in the kitchen.



Suspended timber floor

## Solid Floor

The floors to the rear felt solid under foot so we have assumed that they are constructed in concrete which will block the suspended timber floor. Sometimes vents are added but we cannot see them in this instance.

Our investigation has been restricted due to us not opening up the floor or lifted the carpets//floor coverings.



Step down from the timber floor to the concrete floor

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

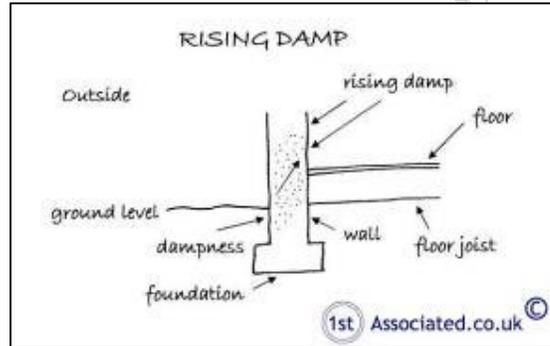


# DAMPNESS

*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. Much evidence points towards there being true rising damp in only very rare cases.*



Rising damp

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



Testing for rising damp

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments within the Executive Summary particularly in relation to the bell mouth detail and the lack of air circulation and sunlight.

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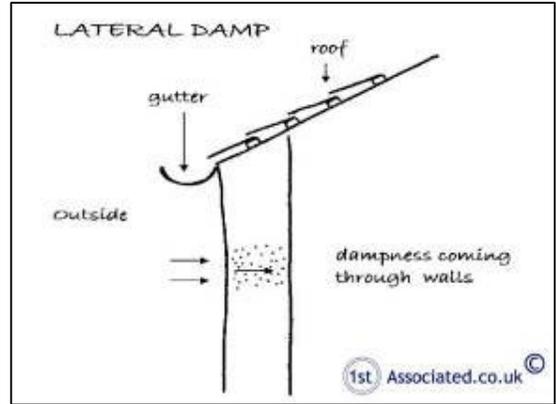
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## Lateral or Penetrating Dampness

*This is where water ingress occurs through the walls. This can be for various reasons such as poor pointing or wall materials or inadequate gutters and downpipes, such as poorly jointed gutters.*

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

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



Lateral dampness



Testing for lateral dampness

## Condensation

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

At the time of the inspection there were signs of condensation on the double glazed windows. We suspect the property is prone to condensation.

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

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments within the Executive Summary with regard to the radiator positioning, lack of trickle vents and this type of properties general susceptibility to condensation.

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### **Extract fans in kitchens, bathrooms and drying areas**

A way of helping to reduce condensation is to have good large extract fans with humidity controlled thermostats within the kitchens and bathrooms and also in any areas where you intend to dry clothes which are moisture generating areas.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend humidity controlled extract fans be added to the kitchen, bathroom and drying areas. 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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## 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.



Panel door

### Kitchen

We found the kitchen in average condition.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments about adding humidity controlled extract fans. You may also have to add air vents in the cupboard area to allow a through flow of air.

We have not tested any of the kitchen appliances.

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

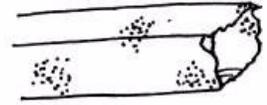
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## TIMBER DEFECTS



*This section considers dry rot, wet rot and woodworm. Wet and Dry rot are species of fungi, both need moisture to develop and both can be very expensive to correct. We would also add that in our experience they are also often wrongly diagnosed.*

### Dry Rot

*Dry rot is also sometimes known by its Latin name *Serpula lacrymans*. Dry rot requires constant dampness together with a warmish atmosphere and can lead to extensive decay in timber.*

We have not visually seen any dry rot during the course of our inspection. We would advise that we have not opened up the floors and we had a limited view of the roof. There is a possibility of some under the floor.

### 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 what looks to be wet rot in the side windows in the roof space. There is possibly some in the fascias and probably some under the floors.

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

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Open up the floors to check.

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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.

Within the roof we found no obvious 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.

**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.*

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

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

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## **THERMAL EFFICIENCY**



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

### **HIPs**

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

### **Roofs**

No roof insulation was present.

Current Building Regulations requires 300mm. If you do add this then you do need to add ventilation. We would recommend you add a board with solid insulation underneath it.

### **Walls**

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

### **Windows**

The windows are a combination of double glazed and single glazed therefore will have reasonable to below average thermal properties.

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## Services

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

## Summary

Assuming the above is correct, this property is below average compared with what we typically see because of the lack of roof insulation.

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.*

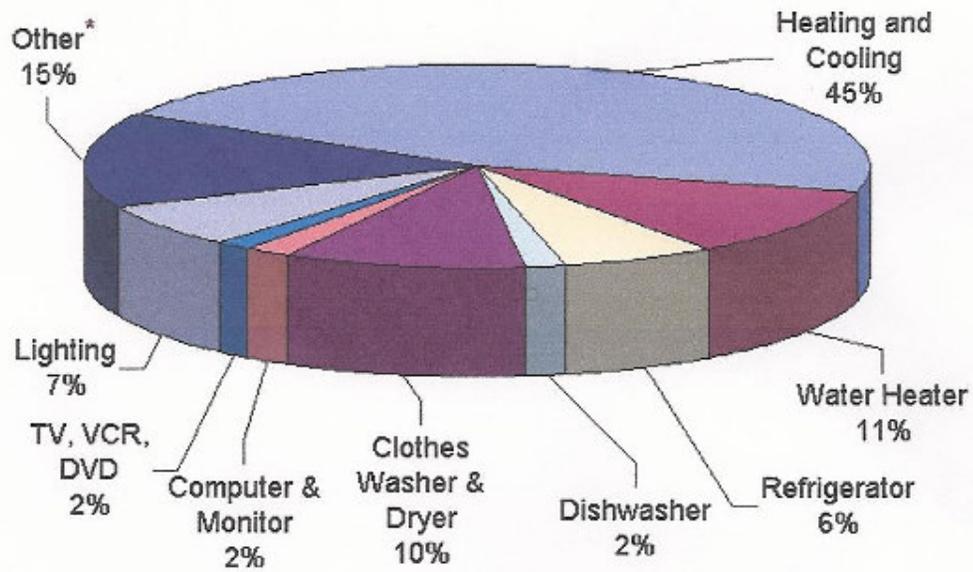
*or alternatively www.cat.org.uk*

*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

We believe a security system has been installed. A good alarm system should not only help reduce break-ins but also your insurance. We are not experts in this field and therefore cannot comment further.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Further information should be obtained from the vendor.

### Fire / Smoke Alarms

No smoke detectors were noted. The current Building Regulations require that they be wired into the main power supply. Obviously in a property of this age that is difficult, as it would mean having surface mounted wires or cutting wiring into the plaster.

**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.

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 not noted asbestos.

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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.

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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 front right bedroom. The fuse board looked dated, circa 1970's/1980's, better are now available.



Fuse Board

**ACTION REQUIRED:** A 1970s/1980's fuse board may not pass a current electric test. We would recommend a modern fuse board is added plus the property looks to need additional socket points. Please see the Executive Summary.

## Earth Test

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



Earth Test

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

In addition to this your Legal Advisor is required to make full enquires with the owners to establish if any electrical installation work has been carried out and to provide suitable certification for any works carried out after 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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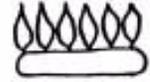
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## GAS



*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.

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.

**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

You need to check the location of this with the owner.

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!).



Running the tap to carry out drainage test and to check the pressure

### Cold Water Cistern

Please see our comments in the Roof Section.

### Hot Water Cylinder

There is an older style hot water cylinder in the roof space which has an insulation jacket. This cylinder will therefore not have the same thermal properties as a modern factory insulated cylinder. The problem with these dated cylinders is they can just leak at any time.



Dated cylinder in roof space

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You have advised that you will be replacing this with a modern boiler which will eliminate the need for a water cylinder.

### **Plumbing**

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

### **Heating**

You advised that the system is going to be replaced and therefore we have not commented on this in detail. However we would comment that new boilers often require higher pressure than older boilers and can test the joints and leaks can occur.

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.

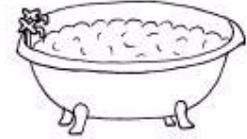
### **Ten Minute Heating Test**

The heating was on during the course of the survey and the property was pleasantly warm.

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.

## **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.*

The property has a three piece bathroom suite, consisting of a bath, wash hand basin and WC, which looks in average condition. Unusually the bathroom has a suspended ceiling. We believe the roof above this is leaking and is the reason this has been added. Please note our comments with regard to damp making the tiles become hollow and blown.

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 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 one inspection chambers / manholes to the rear right hand side (this is where we found most cracks in the render).

### Inspection Chamber / Manhole One - rear right

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

From what we could see it is brick built. It appears to have had a new plastic pipe added to it which we assume is from the kitchen.



Manhole- rear right



Rusting cover indicates it may have blocked up in the past

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### Manholes Defined

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

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

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

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

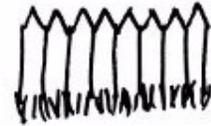
The main focus of this report has been on the main building. If you wish us to do a specific report on the other buildings then you need to instruct us for this separately. We are offering here a brief overview.

### PARKING



Parking is very limited and is at the roadside on a first come first serve basis.

### EXTERNAL AREAS



#### Front Garden

There is an alpine style garden to the front of the property. The brick wall has a stepped crack in it and will need repair.



Front garden



Front Garden and wall

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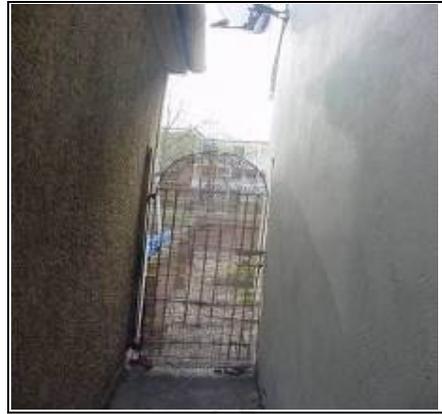
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Step cracking in wall will need repairs.



Right hand side gate giving access to the rear of the garden. This is handy as you do not need to walk through the property with anything that will cause dust, dirt or damage.

## Rear Garden

The property has a good sized rear garden (larger than we expected) with patio areas, shed, greenhouse and a pond.



Rear Garden



Shed and greenhouse



Pond

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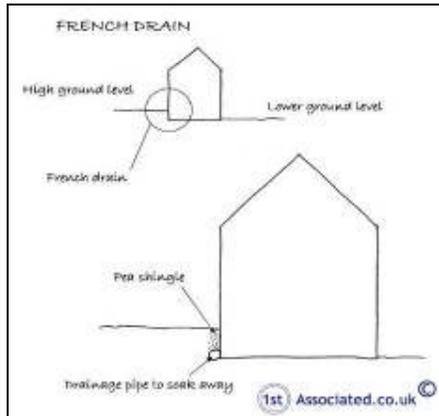
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## French Drain

French drains would typically have been used where water was getting into a property.



French Drain



Is this a real French Drain?

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our article in the appendices.

**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.

## Neighbours

### Right Hand Neighbours

We knocked but no one opened the door.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend that you speak to the neighbours before purchasing the property.

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## **POINTS FOR YOUR LEGAL ADVISOR**

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

- a) Responsibility for boundaries.
- b) Rights for you to enter onto the adjacent property to maintain any structure situated near or on the boundary and any similar rights your neighbour may have to enter onto your property.
- c) Obtain any certificates, guarantees or approvals in relation to:
  - i) Timber treatments, wet or dry rot infestations.
  - ii) Rising damp treatments.
  - iii) Double glazing or replacement windows.
  - iv) Roof and similar renewals.
  - v) Central heating installation.
  - vi) Planning and Building Regulation Approvals.
  - vii) Removal of any walls in part or whole.
  - viii) Removal of any chimneys in part or whole.
  - ix) Any other matters pertinent to the property.
- d) Confirm that there are no defects in the legal Title in respect of the property and all rights associated therewith, e.g., access.
- e) Rights of Way e.g., access, easements and wayleaves.
- f) Liabilities in connection with shared services.
- g) Adjoining roads and services.
- h) Road Schemes/Road Widening.
- i) General development proposals in the locality.
- j) Conservation Area, Listed Building, Tree Preservation Orders or any other Designated Planning Area.
- k) Confirm from enquiries that no underground tunnels, wells, sewers, gases, mining, minerals, site reclamation/contamination etc., exist, have existed or

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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.

## **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  
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Independent Chartered Surveyors

**This Report is dated: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx**

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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 xxxxxxxxxxxx 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 cold frosty winter's day at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

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

## **NOT LOCAL**

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

## **OCCUPIED PROPERTY**

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

## **INSPECTION LIMITED**

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been limited as the roof space had lots of stored items in it that limited our view as did the building paper. We were unable to open up the flat roofs and we were not able to open up the ground floor.

## **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

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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. French Drain Article
4. Condensation and Cold Bridging 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 - NICEIC Electrical Contractor or equivalent trades body.
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.

[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.

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[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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# French Drain

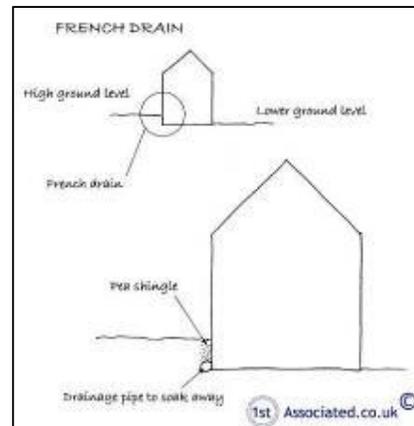
## Using a French drain to resolve a dampness problem

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

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

## What use is a French drain?

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



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

## **French drains must be on a slope**

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

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

## **The French drain system that we would recommend**

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

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

## **The French pond!**

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

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# Condensation and Cold Bridging

## What is Cold Bridging?

### What is cold bridging and how does it work?

Cold bridging is a term and a problem we feel will become much more common in years to come. We are finding more and more examples of Cold Bridging. This happens in certain types of property and to some extent it could be argued that it is a characteristic of that type of property and quite a complex issue to resolve. Unfortunately it means condensation is more likely.



Post war / 1950's property that cold bridging can be a problem in.

### Cold Bridging

Cold bridging is caused by a colder element in the structure or fabric of the building allowing coldness to pass through. When warm moist air is present in the property and it passes through the colder elements of the structure we have what is known as Cold Bridging. This is often caused by a combination of issues. It can occur from things such as having a shower or a bath, cooking or clothes washing, particularly if you are drying washing on the radiators. It could, in commercial properties, be a large gathering of people breathing (this can cause a lot of humidity) in a building that has stood cold and empty for some time such as a church, village hall, sports centre or a crèche. These human atmospheres create a climate which can result in condensation on the cold elements of the structure and fabric if the room is not ventilated properly.

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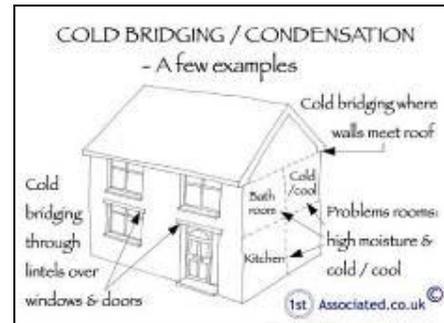
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## Certain types of buildings are more susceptible to Condensation and Cold Bridging

### **Here is our sketch on Cold Bridging**

This is a good indication of the typical things that cause Cold Bridging in a house and how extraction from humidity generating areas such as the kitchen and the bathroom can reduce problems. You do need to look at how you live in the house.



### **Cold Bridging isn't just about condensation on mirrors**

Cold Bridging isn't just about condensation on mirrors. Not only can it be an original characteristic of the building it can be encouraged by all types of extension and alterations.

Cold bridging is far worse than condensation as it is caused by an element in the structure which you can do very little to change without great expense. If you buy a 1960's property for example, with concrete lintels that cause cold bridging, this is a characteristic of the property and it is very difficult to change. However not only could it be a characteristic of the building it could also be caused by alterations that you make to the building.



1960's properties built with concrete lintels that can cause Cold Bridging

### **To give you some examples of Cold Bridging**

As mentioned above typically Cold Bridging can be caused by lintels and also by beams (which effectively are big lintels). These were very commonly used in 1960's and 1970's buildings and can lead to condensation over doors and windows. We mentioned a 1960's building but here are some examples of concrete lintels that were commonly used in the 1970's and which today have caused cold bridging over the door and which in turn has led to condensation and deterioration of the paintwork.

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A rear door to a 1970's building.  
Can you tell where the cold bridging would be in this photo?

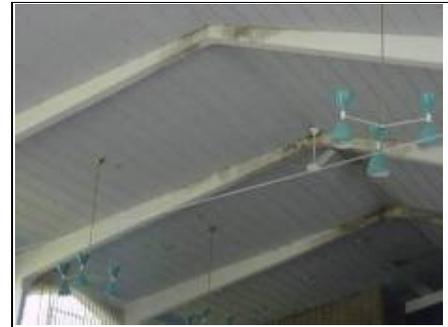


A close up view showing there is a concrete lintel over the door and window.  
This is where the cold bridging occurs causing condensation inside

Cold Bridging can also occur on metal lintels. We note that some modern metal lintels now have insulation in them which we assume is to reduce cold bridging.

### **Commercial properties suffer from Cold Bridging too**

Commercial buildings are often built using structural frames. These frames are usually constructed of concrete or metal or sometimes both. The structural frame forms the skeleton of the building as you can see in the adjoining photo. Sometimes the structural frames, particularly, the concrete ones can suffer from Cold Bridging which causes blackening of the concrete frame. This can look like the roof has leaked and can lead to wrongly diagnosing a problem as being a roof leak. This can result in great time and expense being wasted repairing a roof that was not leaking and indeed in some cases has led to a new roof being fitted which has costs tens of thousands of pounds. This happened because it wasn't understood what the problem was.



Cold Bridging in a commercial property with a concrete frame.

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## **When is Cold Bridging Likely?**

In our experience we have seen cold bridging occurring in

1. Georgian and Regency properties
2. Victorian and Edwardian properties
3. Pre-war properties
4. War years construction properties
5. Post war construction properties up to the 1980's.
6. Commercial properties that use structural frames particularly concrete frames.

We find that cold bridging and condensation occur most commonly where a property has a relatively high heating level, a good level of insulation and where it has many occupants.

## **Problems with 1970/1980 era properties relating to Cold Bridging**

Let us take a look at the 1970's/1980's era of property to give an example of the problems we have come across with this era.

The 1970's is an era where we had just begun to think about insulating due to the oil crisis and where we added insulation into our structures



Georgian style properties can suffer from cold bridging and condensation. However in our experience it is more likely to be the new extensions or alterations that are added to them



Post war 1960's properties with plastic double glazing without trickle vents that have been added can cause condensation.



1970's property with cold bridging to the roof beams and the lintels

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For example with:

1. cavity wall insulation or
2. double glazed windows.

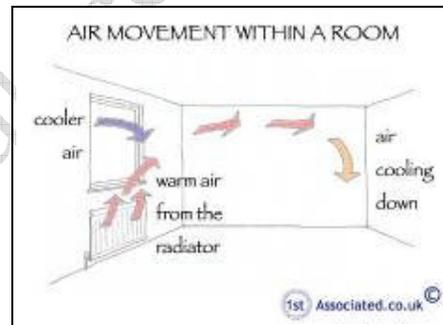
This meant they were warmer which has meant the significance of a lintel, over a door or window, being colder and allowing the transfer of coldness becomes much more important. This results in condensation that we commonly see above windows in this age and era of property.



1980's property, cold bridging was found in the lintels

### How to solve Cold Bridging

The difficulty is resolving cold bridging. Normally, where condensation is involved, if you get the balance of warm and coolness of the air, ventilation and movement you can reduce considerably the chances of condensation. Airing the room by opening the windows, which seems to have gone out of fashion, can help considerably.



### Where do we most commonly find Cold Bridging?

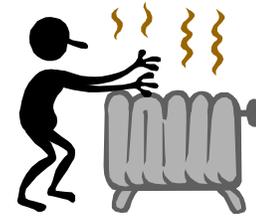
Our thoughts on this have very much changed as we used to say that cold bridging was typically found in properties from the 1960's/1970's. However we are increasingly finding it in a broader range of properties, particularly Victorian properties, where people are trying to live to modern standards of heating and insulation without understanding that the properties need to breathe as well. We have also found cold bridging in properties where extensions have been carried out and where the extension has been built to a different standard to the original property.



Victorian properties that have been extended and altered over the years with new thermal properties that can cause Cold Bridging because of the mix of old and new standards

## **Is your life style a factor in Cold Bridging?**

This is often a contentious and difficult question, particularly where the occupier is a tenant and there is a disagreement between the landlord and the occupier as to why there is mould in the property. In our experience the major factor is the size of the family living in a property. This is especially the case with large families with young children and where in turn there is a lot of washing of clothes being done. This is particularly the case in the winter months, with the wet washed clothes being dried on radiators. Also general hygiene washing and not to mention cooking to feed everyone all lead toward a more humid atmosphere.



This is generally known as the lifestyle of occupants and can be a major factor particularly where there are legal cases as to the problems within a property.

## **Expert witness case, what is an expert witness?**

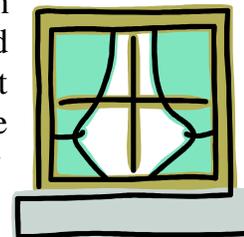
This is where you employ someone who is a specialist within a field, such as us as Chartered Building Surveyors, who comment on problems of condensation within the property. We have been involved in several court cases as expert witnesses where landlords are being taken to court over the condensation that is occurring in their property. The expert witness case looks at how this condensation is occurring and if it relates, for example, to the occupiers' lifestyle or whether it relates to the way the building was constructed and where there are, for example, cold bridging elements. When discussions of this nature take place in court they can be very expensive.



Older style London converted flats with property problems such as Condensation and Cold Bridging

## **Is Cold Bridging and Condensation a design problem or a lifestyle problem?**

This really is a difficult question to answer. We have been involved in a number of cases as expert witnesses or advocates and the answer can vary. We would comment that there are factors that can be changed and factors that can't be changed. For example, the occupiers lifestyle can in most cases be amended. This may involve the occupier having an understanding of the problems they are causing. For example, drying lots of washing on a



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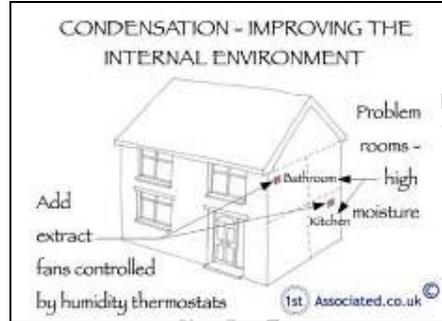
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radiator inside may be causing excessive moisture in the atmosphere. Equally not opening the windows and closing or sealing up vents can be a problem.

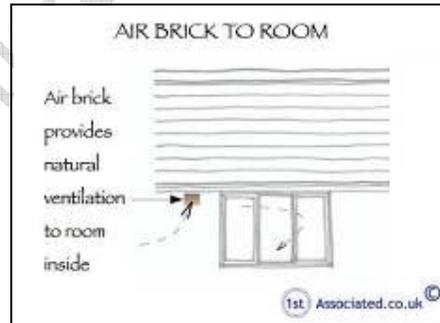
### Design of the Building

Sometimes it really is down to the design of the property. Where there are cold elements in it, such as a concrete structural frame or concrete lintels, when these are in contact with moist air condensation occurs. Sometimes this is impossible to stop but often it is possible to reduce it by having a better circulation of air with a better heat and coolness balance and the removal of any moist air.



### Things to remember about an air brick

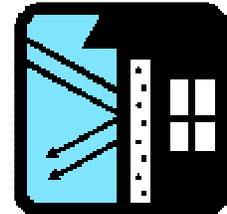
If you are thinking about adding an air brick then you need to be aware that airbricks don't actually allow that much air through. Although externally a nine by three air brick has a lot of gaps, as these gaps taper, it is generally considered that only about one inch square of air regularly passes through the grills.



Air brick may not ventilate room enough

### What's happening in brand new housing?

It could be argued that we still do not know what is happening in brand new houses that are highly insulated. We have been involved in one legal case where a modern heat exchange system was being used where it was simply not possible to have a shower in the property without causing condensation, even with the windows open and taking other measures. Our concern is what is happening to this condensation? It was not visible on the surface so is it visible as interstitial condensation? We still think there will be problems to be found in modern properties.



As Chartered Surveyors we like to see things that have been in use for some time work before we would recommend them.

## **In the winter we have condensation problems 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 sliding sash windows will swell during the winter months.



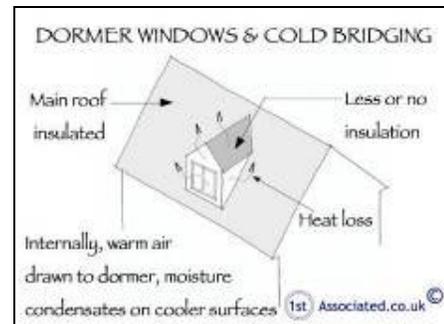
Sliding sash windows can swell in the winter months

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).

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.

## **Extensions and Cold Bridging**

Increasingly we are coming across problems where properties have been extended and it has not been planned or thought through properly. We have come across dormer roofs that simply have no insulation so any heat in the property is going straight out of the dormer roof. We have also come across property problems where an extension has resulted in colder areas within the property and which although not problem areas, as such, our clients have found them not nice areas to be in. It is not a great outcome if you have just spent tens of thousands of pounds on a new extension that you are not happy with.



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