

# RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY

East Dulwich,  
London  
SE22



FOR

Miss X

Prepared by:

INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS

Marketing by:

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Firstly, may we thank you for using our services once again and your kind instruction; we have now undertaken a Building Survey (formerly known as a Structural Survey) of the aforementioned property.

As you may recall 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.

As we mentioned previously we are aware that a report of this size is somewhat daunting and almost off-putting to the reader because of this. Again we would stress that the purchase of a house is usually one of the largest financial outlays made (particularly when you consider the interest you pay as well).

As always we recommend that you set aside time to read the report in full, consider the comments, make notes of any areas that 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 house 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 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 semi-detached three storey property, which has been altered and amended over the years, set in a residential area of similar properties.

There is a small garden to the front and smallish garden to the rear, with a patio area and trees. Parking is on the roadside on a first come first serve basis.

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

#### **Putting Life into Perspective!**

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

1854	Florence Nightingale pioneers modern nursing in the Crimea
1859	Charles Darwin proposes the Theory of Evolution
1870	British Red Cross Established
1880	Commencement of 1st Test Cricket England v Australia at the oval.
1890	The longest bridge in Britain, the Forth Bridge is opened
1899-1902	Boer War between Britain and Boers in Southern Africa
1901	Queen Victoria Died

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# EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front Elevation



Rear View



Left hand view



Rear garden



Street view

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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 hallway and staircase
- 2) Front reception room
- 3) Rear reception room
- 4) Kitchen / breakfast room/dining area (enlarged by existing owners)

## **First Floor**

The first floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Master bedroom to front
- 2) Middle bedroom
- 3) WC
- 4) Bathroom
- 5) Rear bedroom

The second floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Rear bedroom
- 2) Very small room / store

## **Outside Areas**

There are small gardens to the front and rear, with some mature trees in the rear garden and the property sits on a sloping site. Parking is on the road on a first come first serve basis.

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

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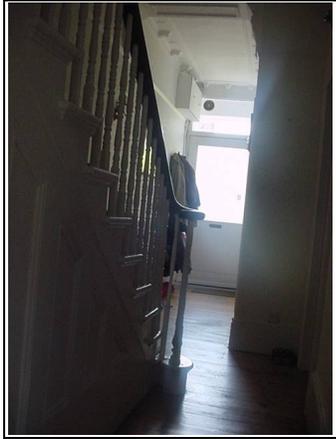
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# INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

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.

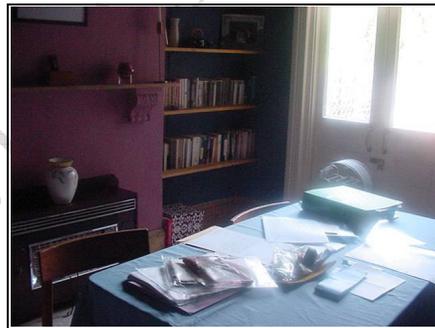
## Ground Floor



Hallway



Front reception room



Rear reception room



Kitchen



Breakfast / dining area

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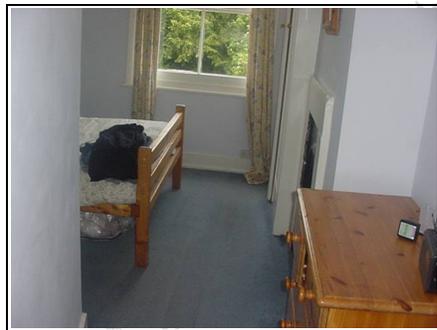
**First Floor**



Master bedroom



Middle bedroom



Rear bedroom



WC



Bathroom

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**Top Floor**



Landing



Rear bedroom / office



Small bedroom / store

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# **SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION**

## **External**

Chimneys:	brick chimneys and brick parapet walls
Main Roof:	Pitched, clad with concrete tiles
Main Roof Structure:	Cut timber roof with additions
Gutters and Downpipes:	Plastic, with some original cast iron remaining, possibly even lead (front bay)
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Cast iron
Walls:	Flemish Bond brickwork (assumed), repointed in cement mortar
Fascias and Soffits:	Painted timber (limited view)
Windows and Doors:	Aluminium to front, plastic to rear without trickle vents and timber sliding sash windows and timber French doors

## **Internal**

Ceilings:	Lath and plaster and plasterboard (assumed)
Walls:	Predominantly studwork, with some solid walls (assumed)
Floors: Ground Floor:	Suspended floor to the front with a concrete floor to kitchen area (assumed)
First Floor And Second Floor:	Joist and floorboards with embedded timbers (assumed)

## **Services**

We believe that the property has a mains water supply, mains drainage, electricity and gas (all assumed). The boiler is located in the kitchen on the rear left hand side and is dated and the electrics are also dated.

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.

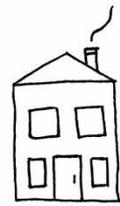
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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



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 350 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 consider this a relatively high risk purchase, details of which are explained in the main body of the report.

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

## **The Good**

*Survey reports often are full of only the faults and general 'doom and gloom', so we thought we would start with some positive comments on the property!*

- 1.0) The overall size of the property and the size of the rooms. This era of property tends to have larger rooms both in width and room height.
- 2.0) The property has great natural light with the bay window to the front and the French doors to the rear.
- 3.0) Many of the original features still remain on the property (some of which is good and some of which is bad); this gives the original characteristics of this era.

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) **Chimney lowered, in need of repointing or possibly removal**

The chimney to the front left hand side (all directions given as you face the property) has been lowered and in need of repointing. The front chimney normally feeds the fireplace in the front room.



Chimney lowered with missing pointing on right hand side

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Repoint and check the condition of the chimney in the roof. Please note we viewed the chimney from the loft hatch.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £500 to £1,500 as scaffolding may be required. Please obtain quotations.

Please see the Chimneys Section of this Report.

### 2.0) **Alterations and amendments**

When we spoke to the owner during our question and answer session she advised that there had been alterations and amendments to the kitchen area, which included opening up the kitchen into the outbuildings, which should have had Planning Permission.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your legal adviser to check Planning Permission was obtained for these alterations / amendments.

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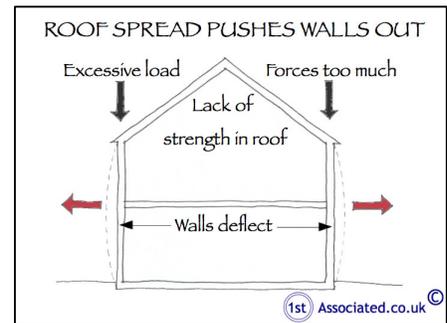
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### 3.0) Concrete roof tiles

To the main roof a heavier concrete tile has been put on the roof, probably replacing the original lighter slates. We can see that extra supports have been put in the roof but we are not certain that these are sufficient and/or were added before the vertical crack occurred that we can see to the side of the property, which indicates the wall is being pushed outwards by the roof, known as roof spread. This would put many people off buying this building.



Extra timber supports in roof space



Pen indicates crack in left hand wall

Alternatively, there could be movement to the front bay window that has caused this problem.

#### Movement seen inside

Movement can be seen in the property via movement in the doors



Movement can be seen around the doors

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your legal adviser to:

- 2.1 Check and confirm if Building Regulations Permission was obtained for the concrete tile roof.
- 2.2 Ask the owners have they had structural work carried out to pin together the vertical cracking on the left hand side (from the messy finish to it it does not look like this is the case).
- 2.3 If neither of these have taken place then this is a high risk purchase, but it could be purchased with the existing owner putting in an insurance claim which you then take over when you purchase the property. Your legal adviser needs to check this; the aim being to limit your liability to the premium and to reduce the purchase price by this amount plus an amount for inconvenience.

We would add that typically the insurance companies will want to monitor for a year and this type of work will be inconvenient, particularly if they decide to put foundations under the bay window as well as tying together the structure.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** This to us should be at no cost to you and should be at the owner's costs.

Please see the Roof and Walls Sections of this Report.

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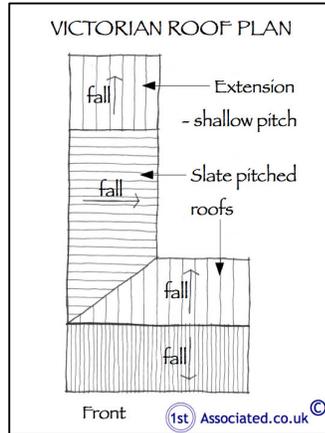
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#### 4.0) Dampness coming in where the two roofs meet

Where the roof meets the wall is a poor detail and dampness is coming in.



Dampness coming in to corner of top floor small room / store

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You need to first of all check that the gutters are not blocked and the valley gutter where the two roofs meet is clear and there are no broken or slipped tiles and is watertight. As this is high level work it is likely to need a tower scaffold to the rear.



Example of a tower scaffold

#### Low level rear pitched roof

The junction where the concrete tiles meet next door's wall should have a lead flashing. It looks like there have been various repairs over the years which does indicate it probably does leak during bad weather.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Add a lead flashing.

Please see the Roof and Dampness Sections of this Report.

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## 5.0) Minor dampness to kitchen / breakfast room

Minor damp was found to the kitchen / breakfast room. This we believe is due to high ground levels. It could be argued that the kitchen / breakfast room is not a habitable area and as such does not need to be as dry as the rest of the property.



**ACTION REQUIRED:** Lower the ground level, ideally adding a French drain. Please see Appendices.

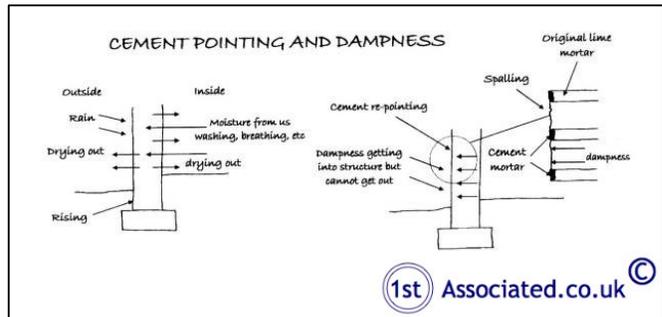
High ground level to rear, which is why there is dampness here

The paint on the outside may also be a plastic based paint that is not allowing the property to breathe, so ensure that when the property is redecorated a water based or microporous paint is used. Please see our comments below about the property not being able to breathe at a whole.

Please see the Dampness Section of this Report.

## 6.0) Repointing in cement mortar

The walls have been repointed in a cement mortar, they would have originally had a lime mortar, which traps in dampness (although to some extent this age of property should have slightly damp walls).



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Cement mortar repointing



Close up of cement mortar

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend gradual repointing of the property, with a regular visit from an old bricklayer who knows how to work in lime mortar, who uses a stiff brush against the mortar to remove it.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of a few hundred pounds every year for the next five or so years. The works may need a tower scaffold or similar. Please obtain quotations for any works.

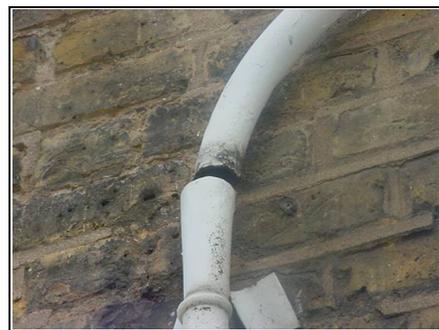
Please see the Walls Section of this Report.

7.0) **Bay window outlet**

On the bay window to the front is a very small outlet. These often get blocked. The pipe does not look to be joined. It may be causing dampness internally when it rains. At the time of our inspection, bearing in mind it had been sunny and hot for about a week, we did not find any excessive dampness.



Bay window outlet left hand side



Close up

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend adding 100mm wide downpipe, as opposed to the 50mm that you have which is a more common size.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of a few hundred pounds. The difficulty is getting the connection without causing damage. Please obtain quotations.

Please see the Gutters and Dampness Sections of this Report.

#### 8.0) Mould to aluminium windows

Aluminium windows are renowned for condensation. The darkening of the aluminium may be a sign that condensation is occurring in the property.



Pen indicates mould to window

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You may ultimately want to/have to replace the windows.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** Windows really can cost as much or as little as you want. They start typically for this age of building, bearing in mind that not all the windows are aluminium, we would suggest from about £3,000 to £4,000 upwards. Please obtain quotations.

Please see the Windows and Dampness Sections of this Report.

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## 9.0) No manholes

There were no manholes noted. We spoke to the owner and she advised they had had problems in the past with the drains and had to dig up the side of the rear left hand area of the property (all directions given as you face the property). There was cracking in this area which could be an indication there are further problems with the drains.



Cracking left hand side of property

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend a closed circuit TV camera report of the drains.

Please see the Main Drains Section of this Report.

## 10.0) Services

### Electrics

The services are from the 1960's, possibly 1970's, and are dated.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Replace the fuseboard and have an Institute of Electrical Engineers standards (IEE) test and report carried out by an NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent, which is recommended whenever a property changes occupancy.



Dated fuseboard

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £250 to £1,000; please obtain quotations. In addition to this, you may want extra socket points which could add another £500 to £1,000 quite easily.

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### Older style gas fire

There is an older style gas fire in the rear reception room. This is not ideal, particularly if you have children around.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You may wish to replace.

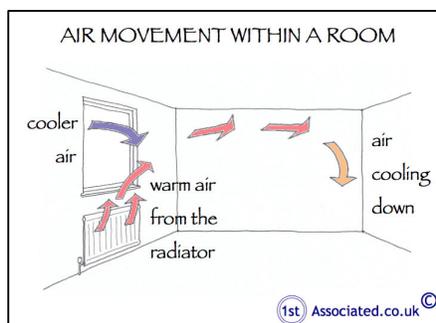


Gas fire

### Internal radiators

Please read this in conjunction with the aluminium windows.

We noted the radiators are internal in some areas. This is often carried out on cheaper central heating systems to save the labour and piping costs of taking the radiators underneath the windows. However, it then reduces the air movement in the room.



Internal radiator

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would live in the property and then if there are problems we suggest you move the radiators underneath the windows as this gives a better circulation of air and reduces the chance of condensation.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of a few hundred pounds per radiator.

Please see the Services Section of this Report.

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### 11.0) Next door's balcony

To the rear of the property is a balcony that looks relatively new that overlooks the garden. This may or may not be a concern to you (we personally would not like it). This should have been screened.



Next door's balcony



Close up of next door's balcony

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your legal adviser to check and confirm there has been planning permission for this.

Please see the Outside Areas Section of this Report.

### 12.0) Bird nuisance

We noticed there were bird defence spikes around the property, which may mean there has been a problem with birds near the property. This has blocked some of the windows from opening properly.



Pigeon defence spikes



These also block the window from opening

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## **The Ugly**

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

From what we saw we would not recommend purchasing this property. Further investigation does need to be carried out and discussions before you proceed.

## **Other Items**

Moving on to more general information.

## **Maintenance**

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

This type of property will require ongoing maintenance and repair, in particular the height of it is an important consideration as any high level work, which as you can see from the report, tends to be left (and indeed has been left in this case) and needs a tower scaffold, and with health and safety progressing and developing, as it does, may well mean that in future proper scaffolding will be required, all of which adds thousands of pounds to the cost of any work being carried out.

## **Services**

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

## **Heating**

The heating was turned on briefly as it was a very warm day. We would recommend that the system be tested and overhauled before exchange of contracts and that a regular maintenance contract be placed with an approved heating engineer.

## **Water Supply**

There is danger in older properties of having a lead water supply; we would recommend that you speak to the water company to ask them if they have carried out such replacement, as you will be re-piping much of the water used in the building it gives an ideal opportunity to also check for any remaining lead pipes.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** 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.

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## **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 £100 per day (the higher costs in the city areas) and for tradesmen we use between £100 and £200 per day for an accredited, qualified, skilled tradesman. Other variations include the quality of materials used and how the work is carried out, for example off ladders or from scaffold.

If you obtain builders estimates that vary widely, we would advise the work is probably difficult or open to various interpretations and we would recommend a specification is prepared. It would usually be best to have work supervised if it is complex, both of which we can do if so required.

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## **SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION**



The Summary Upon Reflection is a second summary so to speak, which is carried out when we are doing the second or third draft a few days after the initial survey when we have had time to reflect upon our thoughts on the property. We would add the following in this instance:

There are more risks with this property than we are comfortable with. In a buyer's market, such as the one we are in presently, it would be better to purchase a different property. If you do wish to proceed with it then a substantial discount is required in our opinion.

As a general comment for any work required we would always recommend that you obtain at least three quotations for any work from a qualified, time served tradesperson or a competent registered building contractor prior to legal completion.

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

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# **MORE ABOUT THE REPORT FORMAT**

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

## **TENURE – FREEHOLD (OR AS GOOD AS)**

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

## **ESTATE AGENTS – FRIEND OR FOE?**

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

## **SOLICITOR/LEGAL ADVISOR**

To carry out your legal work you can use a solicitor or a legal advisor. We have used both terms within the report.

## **TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT/LIMITATIONS**

This report is being carried out under our terms of engagement for Building Surveys, as agreed to and signed by yourselves. If you have not seen or are not happy with the terms of engagement please phone immediately 0800 298 5424 or email the secretary from which this survey came from.

## **OUR AIM IS ONE HUNDRED PERCENT SATISFACTION**

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

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



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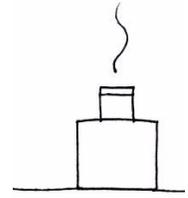
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## EXTERNAL

### CHIMNEY STACKS AND PARAPET WALLS



#### Chimney Stacks

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

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

#### Chimney One – front left hand side

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.



Front left hand chimney



Dampness visible inside

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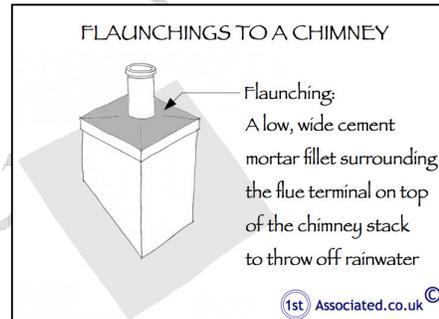
### Chimney Two – front left hand side

This is a brick built chimney that has been reduced in height, with a lead flashing and no chimney pots.



Front left hand chimney  
(photo taken from rear of property)

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



### Chimney Three – rear right hand side

We had a limited view of this brick chimney. What we could see appeared in average condition. Interestingly one of the pots seems to have been removed; again we could not see the flaunching properly.



Rear right hand chimney

#### 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.

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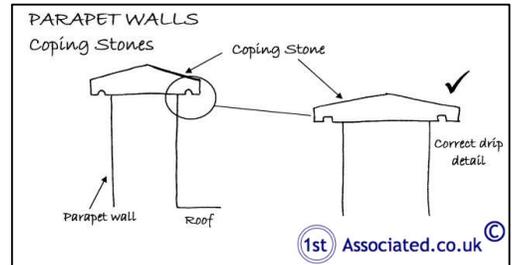
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## Parapet Walls

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

In this case there are brick parapet walls; one to the front right hand side and one to the rear right hand side (all directions given as you face the property). They look to be in reasonable condition, with a rendered finish and a coping stone. Often the drips are the problems with these parapet walls. Unfortunately we cannot get close enough to see them properly.



Front right hand side parapet wall



Close up view



Rear right hand side parapet wall

### Render Defined

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

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

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## **Party Wall**

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

Party Structures Defined - Party Wall Act Etc. 1996

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

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

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

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

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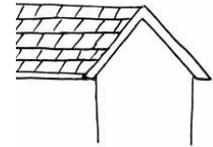
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# ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERLAYERS



The Roof Coverings and Underlayers section considers the condition of the outer covering of the roof. Such coverings usually endure the extremes of climate and temperatures. They are susceptible to deterioration, which ultimately leads to water penetration. Dependent upon the age of your property and the type of construction it may or may not be present, please read on:

We will consider the roofs in two areas; the main roof and the low level roofs.

## Main Roof

The main roof is pitched and clad with concrete tiles and, from ground level, this looks in average condition considering the roof's age type and style. We believe this roof replaced the original roof and is much heavier.

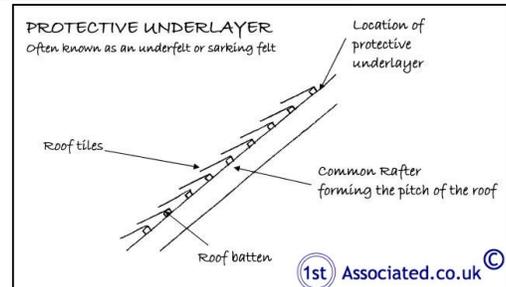


Concrete roof tiles

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary. Carry out periodic inspections and maintenance of the roof, as required.

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

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



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



This photo shows the common rafters (the ones that form the pitch of the roof) and the dark area between is the protective underlayer. 33

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## Low level roofs

### Rear low level pitched roof

There is a low level pitched roof to the rear of the property which is clad with a concrete tile. There is some wear to the top of it, which is not ideal. We believe there is a problem with the right hand side flashing.



The protective coating on the tiles is wearing off



Poor detail where roof meets wall

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Re-flash in a lead flashing. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

### Front bay roof

The bay roof is covered with felt.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary about the outlet and the general trouble the property will have with these bay windows.



Bay roof

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

Finally, we were only able to see approximately seventy percent of the main roof from ground level via our ladder or via any other vantage point that we managed to gain. We have made our best conclusions based upon what we could see, however a closer inspection may reveal other defects. For further comments with regard to ventilation please see the Roof Structure and Loft Section.

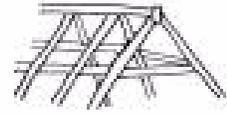
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# **ROOF STRUCTURE AND LOFT**



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

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

### **Main Roof**

#### **Roof Access**

The main roof is accessed via the loft hatch located on the upper landing. It is fairly difficult to access due to the height. There is no loft ladder, electric light or secured floorboards. We recommend that these be added, as it will make the loft space safer and easier to use

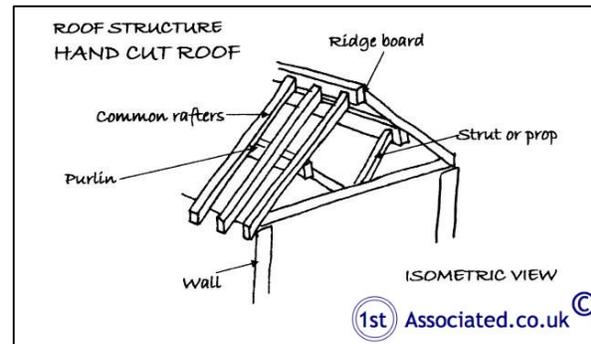


Loft difficult to access

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

#### **Roof Structure**

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



The roof has been amended and we can see new timbers within it. The amendments should have had Building Regulations Approval for a new roof, unless this roof is very old prior to Building Regulations requirements. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

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## Roof Timbers

We have inspected the roof structure for:

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

Our examination was limited by our concerns of accessing the roof so we have viewed everything from a ladder via the access hatch. We can see that extra timbers have been added to give additional support. As mentioned, you need to establish that these are correctly added via Building Regulations.

We believe there is some minor woodworm in the roof, although we could not see whether it was active.



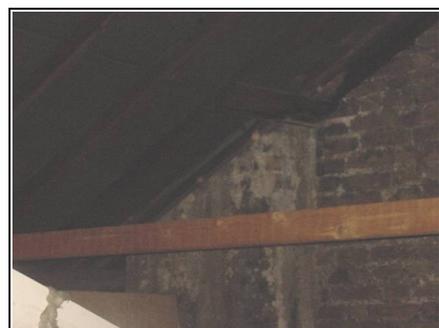
New back to back timbers have been added



Close up of new timbers



Timber coming away from chimney



The colour of the chimney shows that dampness is getting in

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

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## **Fire Walls**

The property has a brick firewall which is located to the right hand side (all directions given as you face the property).

### Fire Walls Defined

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

## **Water Tanks**

There does not appear to be a water tank, though there may be one hidden in the roof.

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

## **Ventilation**

As far as we could see there was no specific ventilation added to the roof tile or to the fascias and soffits, which is a requirement under modern Building Regulations.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Add ventilation.

## **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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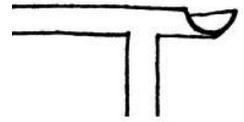
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# GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES



*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 are plastic, with some older piping visible, for example to the front bay window. Please see our comments on these. With high level guttering such as this it tends to be left and not cleared.



Gutters

**ACTION REQUIRED:** 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. This may be why there is a reason to the rear of the property.

## Soil and Vent Pipe

The main soil and vent pipe is cast iron, with other pipes being in plastic. There are no obvious visual signs of defects.



Soil and vent pipe



Hopper head to soil and vent pipe

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.

# WALLS



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

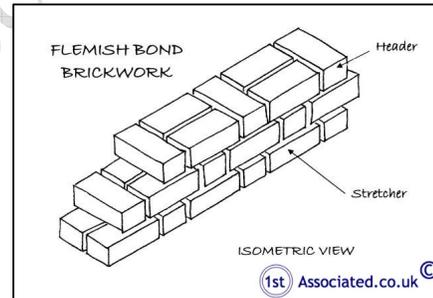
The walls are constructed of Flemish Bond brickwork with a cement finish; originally lime. There is decorative detailing around the windows and there are some areas of painted brickwork to the rear.



Having had surveys from us previously you are probably familiar with the following detail about Flemish Bond brickwork.

Decorative detail around windows

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



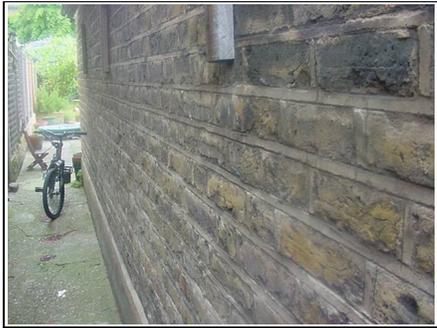
The term Flemish Bond relates to the way the bricks are bonded together and have a pattern visible from the outside of the property that shows the end of the brick (header), then the side of the brick (stretcher), then the end of the brick, then the side of the brick, and this pattern repeats course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

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

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

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

The walls have been repointed in a cement mortar, they would have originally been in lime. This does not allow the property to breathe properly.

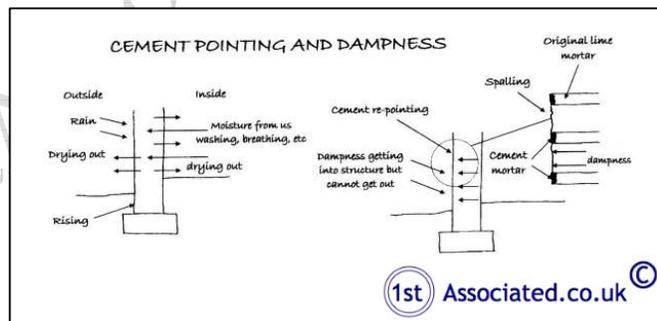


Cement mortar repointing



Close up of cement mortar

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



There looks to have been repointing carried out around the rear window. The owner advised they had not carried out any work to this area, although it looks like there has been.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your legal adviser to specifically ask the question what work has been carried out with regard to the walls.



Looks to have been repointing over the rear window

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## **Cracking**

We would remind you of the vertical crack that is visible to the left hand side of the property.

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



Crack to left hand side

Finally, the external walls have been inspected visually from ground level and/or randomly via a ladder. Where the window and door lintels are concealed by brickwork / plasterwork we cannot comment on their construction or condition. In buildings of this age timber lintels, concrete lintels, rubbed brick lintels or metal lintels are common, which can be susceptible to deterioration that is unseen, particularly if in contact with dampness.

Our comments have been based upon how the brickwork / plaster has been finished. We have made various assumptions based upon what we could see and how we think the brickwork / plaster would be if it were opened up for this age, style and type of construction. We are however aware that all is not always as it seems in the building industry and often short cuts are taken. Without opening up the structure we have no way of establishing this.

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# **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.

## **London Clay**

As with most properties in the London area, this property stands on London Clay. It is therefore more susceptible than most should drains leak or trees be allowed to overgrow etc. It is not unusual to have some settlement in London properties. However, from our inspection of the walls we have found nothing unusual.

## **Building Insurance Policy**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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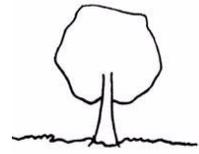
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# TREES



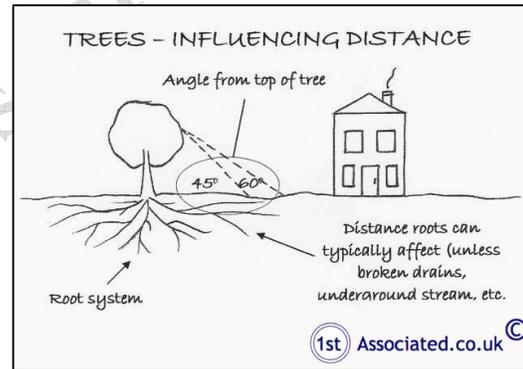
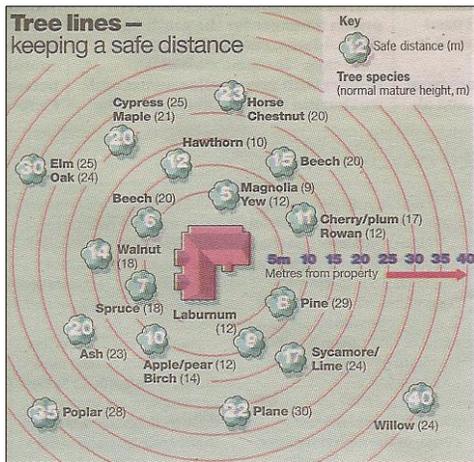
*Trees within influencing distance of a property can affect the foundations by affecting the moisture content of the soil.*

There are trees in the rear garden which may be within what insurance companies would term as influencing distance of the property.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend you speak to an insurance company before you purchase this property (although we are advising against purchasing it) to confirm insurance requirements.



Trees in rear garden



## Influencing Distance Defined

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

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

Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

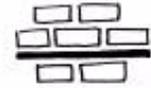
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# DAMP PROOF COURSE



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

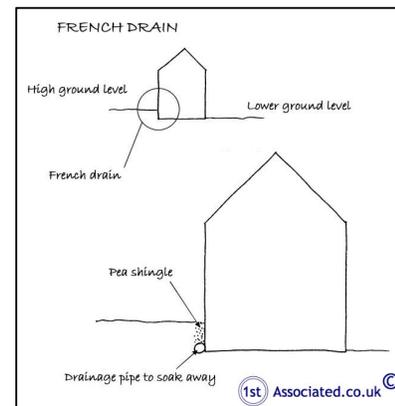
All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) and good building practice dictates that a differential of 150mm (6 inches) should be maintained between the damp proof course and ground levels. In this case we can see a DPC.



Pen pointing to injected DPC

There is a rendered plinth around the property which normally has a slate DPC in it. In addition to this we can see that an injection course has been added just above it and further to this we can find some dampness in the property so we do not believe that the DPC is working. This is because the ground outside is at too high a level to the inside ground.

We therefore recommend a French gully. However, we would also comment that the kitchen is not a habitable room so you may be able to live quite happily without it, but many mortgage companies do require this type of work.



**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend a French gully to the rear of the property once you have lived in it for a while if you consider the dampness to be a problem, i.e, the paint and the plaster are flaking. Please see Appendices.

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

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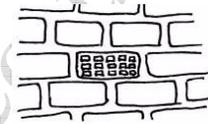
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Finally, sometimes it is difficult for us to identify if there is a damp proof course in a property. We have made our best assumptions based upon our general knowledge of the age, type and style of this property.

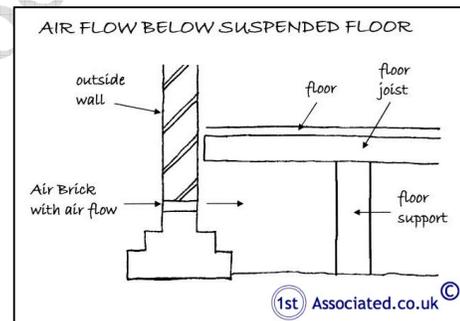
## AIRBRICKS



*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 and rear of the property. Air bricks are essential to have a through flow of air as this helps to reduce the chances of wet rot, dry rot and woodworm.



Air brick under steps to the front of the property



Air brick to front bay needs unblocking

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Air brick to side of property



Air brick to rear

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would suggest that you clear all the air bricks to allow a through flow of air

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

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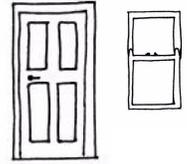
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# FASCIAS AND SOFFITS AND WINDOWS AND DOORS



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

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

## Fascias and Soffits

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

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Redecorate by the summer of 2013. You of course need to ensure the gutters and downpipes are watertight before you do this.



Fascias and soffits need redecoration

## Windows and Doors

The property has a mixture of windows: aluminium to front, plastic to rear, without trickle vents, and timber sliding sash windows and timber French doors. We would specifically comment please see our concerns with regard to condensation on the aluminium windows, which is not unusual and is a normal problem with aluminium windows.

To the rear we noted windows from what we would term the cheaper end of the market from the fact there were no trickle vents. It is, in our opinion, a shame to have lost the original windows being replaced by the aluminium and plastic windows.

There are some sliding sash windows remaining and timber French doors.

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Aluminium window



No trickle vent to window



Sliding sash timber window



Timber French doors

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.

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

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### General Information on Sliding Sash Windows

If you have not lived in a property with sliding sash windows previously, you should be aware that typically they are draughty and rattle. There is no easy way to eliminate this problem. In our experience, a general ease and adjustment of the windows and the addition of a plastic tube draught sealer (available from most DIY stores) and regular redecoration is the best option to minimise the draughtiness of the windows in this case. Horizontal Sliding Sash Windows (sometimes known as York Windows).

### 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.*

The property would benefit from external redecoration, particularly the high level fascias and soffits which do not look to have been decorated for some while.

We also noted the painted brickwork to the rear and would not recommend this be repainted for a while to allow the property to breathe and then proper masonry paint that is breathable to be used.



Fascias and soffits need redecorating

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend redecoration of the property at the latest by the summer of 2013.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £2,000 to £4,000 as tower scaffolding is likely to be required.

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.

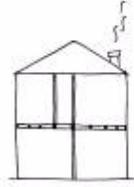
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# INTERNAL



## 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

The ceilings are likely to be predominantly the original lath and plaster, although the modern alterations in the kitchen, and possibly some of the other ceilings due to their smoothness, are likely to have a modern gypsum plaster finish.



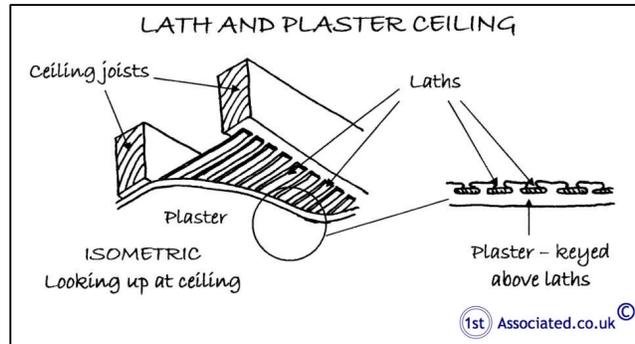
Hallway ceiling



Ornate ceiling rose

#### Lath and Plaster Defined

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



#### Plasterboard Defined

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

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## **Internal Walls and Partitions**

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

## **Perimeter Walls**

These would have been constructed in brickwork with a wet plaster finish. We believe that a lot of them are still in the original lime based plaster.

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

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

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

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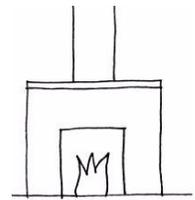
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# CHIMNEY BREASTS, FLUES AND FIREPLACES



*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 and also to the rear of the property within the kitchen (all directions given as you face the front of the property).

At the time the property was built it would have been warmed by fires in each habitable room.

No chimneys were in use during our survey. The owner advised us that the fire in the front reception room was a 'real' gas fire, in other words an imitation fire.

Any chimneys that you do not propose to use should be capped and ventilated to prevent dampness.

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

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

It is strongly recommended that flues be cleaned and checked for obstructions prior to use to minimise the risk of hazardous fumes entering the building. Please also see the Chimney Stacks, Flues



Fireplace in front reception room



Chimney breast to kitchen area

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# FLOORS



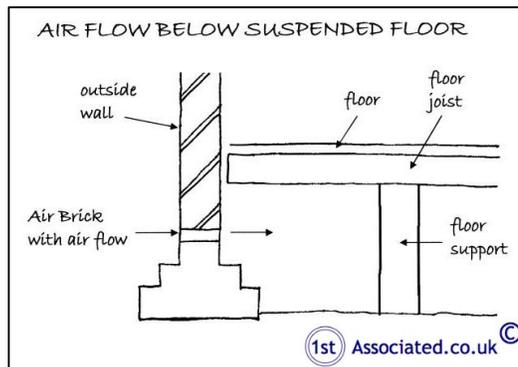
*Functionally floors should be capable of withstanding appropriate loading, preventing dampness, have thermal properties and durability. In addition to this upper floors should offer support for ceilings, resistance to fire and resistance to sound transfer.*

## Ground Floor

There is a mixture of a suspended timber floor to the front of the property and a solid floor to the rear kitchen area.

### Suspended Timber Floor / Air Bricks

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. We can see air bricks to the front and rear of the property.



Wood floor – slightly worn

### Solid Floor

The floors to the rear kitchen area felt solid under foot so we have assumed that they are constructed in concrete. Please see our comments with regard to the level of the kitchen floor in relation to the external level.



Tiled kitchen floor

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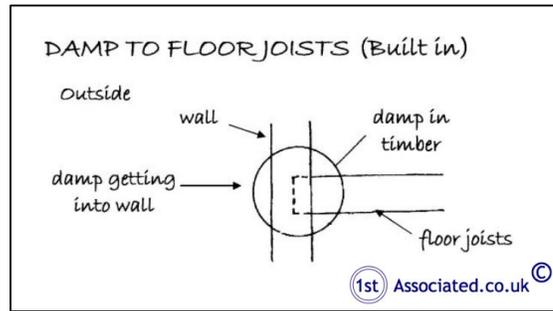
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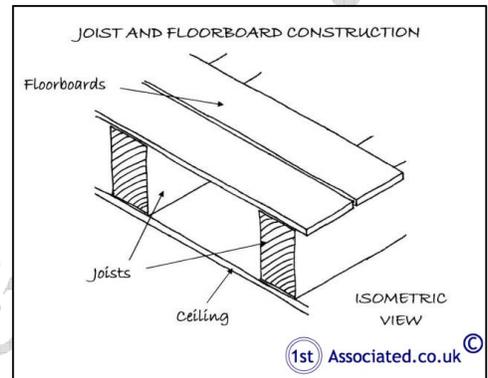
## First Floor and Second Floors

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



### Joist and Floorboard Construction Defined

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



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

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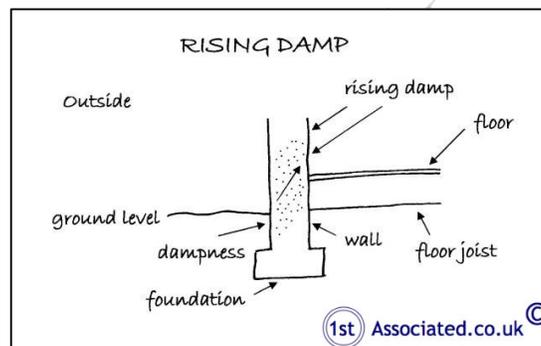


## DAMPNESS

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

### Rising Damp

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



A random visual inspection and tests with a moisture meter have been taken to the perimeter walls. Much evidence points towards there being true rising damp in only very rare cases.

In this particular case we have found dampness to the rear of the property and believe this relates to the ground levels.



Finding high damp readings

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

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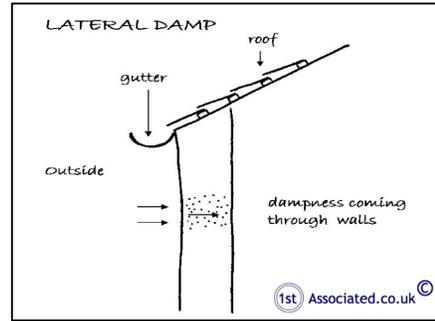
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## Lateral or Penetrating Dampness

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

We used a damp meter on the external walls. We have found dampness in line with what we typically see for this age, type and style of property. There are some specific areas where dampness is coming through, for example between the junction of the main building and the rear building box room.

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



Testing for lateral dampness

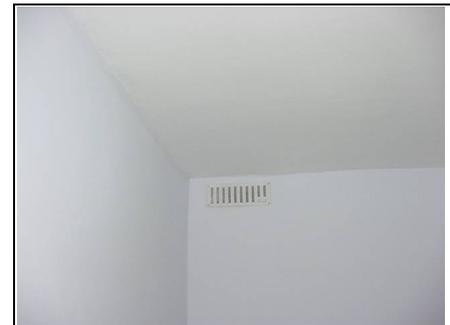
## Condensation

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

We believe this property has a higher than normal risk of condensation due to a mixture of things such as:

1. The aluminium windows
2. The plastic windows without trickle vents
3. The radiators being positioned internally
4. Lack of good quality large extract fans and humidity controls in the kitchen and bathroom areas.

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



Air vent in rear bedroom will help reduce condensation

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

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# INTERNAL JOINERY



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

## Doors

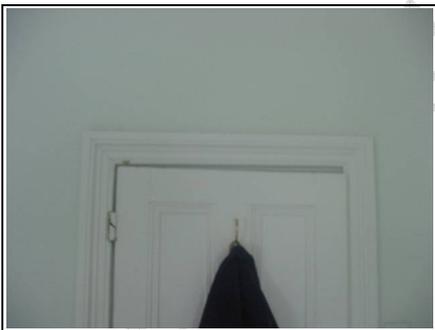
The property has painted panel doors, which is how they originally would have been, and some stripped panel doors, which is how many people like their doors to be today. There is also a glazed door to the bathroom with an opaque glass. There has been some movement in the building which can be seen in the doors.



Panel door stripped of paint



Bathroom door with opaque glass panel



Twist in door to master bedroom, emphasised by the door not shutting



Close up



Door to middle bedroom needs some work

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## Staircase

We were unable to examine the underside of the stair timbers due to it being lined, which precluded our inspection, so we cannot comment further upon the stair structure. We can, however, say that the lining gives a resistance to the spread of fire if such circumstances were to occur.



Stairs lined

## Kitchen

We found the kitchen in average to slightly below average condition, for example the mastic seal around the sink is worn, allowing water to get behind the units.

We have not tested any of the kitchen appliances.



Seal around kitchen sink has gone

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

### **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 have not visually seen any wet rot during the course of our inspection. Again, we would advise that we have not opened up the floors and there may well be some in the fascias and soffits considering their condition as viewed from ground level.

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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 visual signs of minor woodworm activity. In many properties there is an element of woodworm that is not active.

**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.

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

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

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

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## INTERNAL DECORATIONS



*With paints it should be remembered that up to 1992 lead could be used within paint and prior to this most textured paints (commonly known as Artex) contained an element of asbestos up to 1984, so care should be taken if the paintwork looks old and dated.*

Internal decorations are in average to below average condition. You may wish to redecorate to your own personal style and standard.

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

Some roof insulation was present although not to current Building Regulations requirements of 300mm. In this instance approximately 200mm was present.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** The roof needs venting.

## Walls

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

## Windows

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

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## Services

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

## Summary

Assuming the above is correct, this property is average to below average compared with what we typically see. Please do not insulate the roof any more without adding ventilation and if the windows are replaced please ensure they have trickle vents to allow natural air movement in the property.

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

*[HTTP//www.est.org.uk](http://www.est.org.uk), which is by the Energy Saving Trust and includes a section on grant aid.*

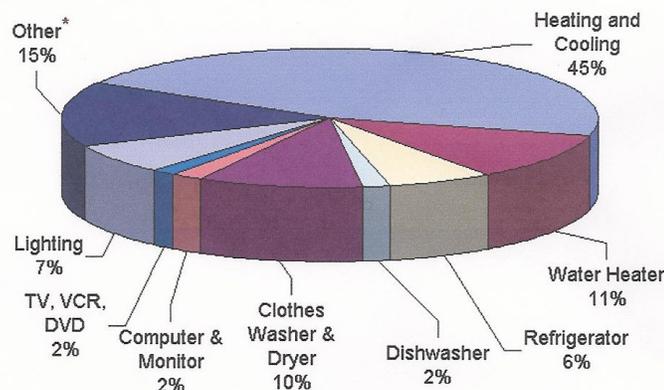
*or alternatively [www.org.uk](http://www.org.uk)*

*or Sustainable Energy Without the Hot Air by David J C MacKay  
[HTTP//www.withouthotair.com/Videos.html](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](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UR8wRSp21Xs)*

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

What does my energy bill pay for?



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

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## OTHER MATTERS



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

### Security

No security system was noted, although we did note next door had an alarm box on the outside of the house. It is a personal decision as to whether you feel one is necessary. We are not experts in this field and therefore cannot comment further. We suggest you contact a member of NACOSS (National Approval Council for Security Services), obtainable through directory enquiries, or your local Police Force for advice on a security system.

### Fire / Smoke Alarms

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

**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.

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## Asbestos

In a property of this age there may well be some asbestos. In this case we have not noted asbestos. This was commonly used post war until it was banned only in the last ten or so years, although it is rumoured that it was still used after this point in time. We are not asbestos surveyors.

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

## 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 fuse board is from the 1960's/1970s and looked dated and much better are now available.



Dated fuseboard

## 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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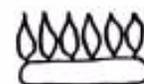
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**ACTION REQUIRED:** As the property is changing occupancy an Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) test and report should be carried out by a NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

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.

## 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. The consumer unit is located under the stairs.

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

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

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# PLUMBING AND HEATING



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

## Water Supply

We were advised by the owner that the controlling stopcock is located in the end cupboard of the kitchen.

We have not actually inspected this and 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 exactly where it is.

## Water Pressure

The water pressure seemed to be affected by the number of taps on.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please check you are happy with the water pressure. 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!).

## Plumbing

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

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## Heating

The wall mounted boiler was located in the kitchen, it is manufactured by Logic, a make we rarely come across and cannot comment upon how well it performs.

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.



Logic boiler

## Ten Minute Heating Test

The heating was turned on briefly. Obviously it is difficult to judge a hot water system on a very warm day, as this was.

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

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

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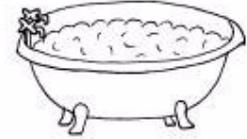
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# **BATHROOM**



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

## **Bathroom**

Compared with the size of the property the bathroom is relatively small, with a separate WC and wash hand basin

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You may wish to upgrade.

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

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## MAIN DRAINS



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

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

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



Running water for 15 minutes

### 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.*

### No Manholes Found

In older properties often there were no manholes. Drainage was a relatively new invention that has been added at a later date.

Manholes are used where there is a change in direction of pipes or new pipes join the main run. It is therefore a good location for clearing any blockages. In this case we were unable to see any manholes.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary. We would recommend a closed circuit TV camera report of the drains.

#### Manholes Defined

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

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Finally, it must be emphasised that the condition of the property's foul drains can only be ascertained by the carrying out of a test; such a test has not been undertaken. Should there be leaks in the vicinity of the building then problems could occur, particularly with respect to the stability of the building's foundations. Drainage repairs are inevitably costly and may result in damage being caused to those areas of the property beneath, or adjacent to, which the drains have been run.

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

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

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

We have been unable to determine the ultimate means of rain/surface water disposal. In this age of property it is likely to be into shared drains. These can be a problem during heavy rainfall and peak periods, such as the 9 o'clock rush to work.

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

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

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## OUTSIDE AREAS

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

### OFF ROAD PARKING

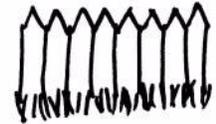


Parking is roadside on a first come first serve basis.



Off road parking

### EXTERNAL AREAS



#### Front Garden

The property has a small front garden. The front path is deteriorating and needs putting back together again.



Front Garden



Tiled entrance path deteriorating



Front wall

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** Make repairs to front path. The bushes to the front of the property would also benefit from being cut back.

## **Rear Garden**

The rear garden is grassed with a patio area and trees to the rear.



Rear Garden



Patio area



Concrete area to side

**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**

Neither neighbour answered the door at the time of our survey.

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## **POINTS FOR YOUR LEGAL ADVISOR**

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

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

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- k) Confirm from enquiries that no underground tunnels, wells, sewers, gases, mining, minerals, site reclamation/contamination etc., exist, have existed or are likely to exist beneath the curtilage of the site upon which the property stands and which could affect the quiet enjoyment, safety or stability of the property, outbuildings or surrounding areas.
- l) Our Report assumes that the site has not been put to contaminative use and no investigations have been made in this respect.
- m) Any outstanding Party Wall Notice or the knowledge that any are about to be served.
- n) Most Legal advisors will recommend an Envirosearch or a similar product is used by you to establish whether the area falls within a flood plain, old landfill site, radon area etc. If your Legal Advisor is not aware of Envirosearch or similar please ensure that they contact us and we will advise them of it. Any general findings should be brought to their logical conclusion by using appropriate specialist advisers.

However, with regard to Envirosearch or similar general reports please see our article link on the [www.1stAssociated.co.uk](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**.

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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 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 very warm spring 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 very limited:

due to the insulation and mass of stored items in the roof space.

as we were not happy to go into the roof and it being full of stored items which limited our view further

as we have not opened up the suspended timber ground floor or the first and second floors



Mass of stored items in roof

and we didn't have the benefit of meeting you at this particular property and look forward to talking to you on the phone.

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## **BUILDING INSURANCE**

We do not advise with regard to building insurance. You need to make your own enquiries. Some areas may have a premium, some buildings may have a premium and some insurers may be unwilling to insure at all in certain areas. You need to make your own enquires prior to committing to purchase the property. Please be aware the fact a building is currently insured does not mean it can be re insured.

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

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

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

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

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# APPENDICES

1. The electrical regulations – Part P of the Building Regulations
2. Information on the Property Market
3. 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 - British Gas or NICEIC Electrical Contractor.
2. A certificate from the local authority saying that the installation has approval under the building regulations.

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

## **Work You Cannot do Yourself**

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

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## INFORMATION ON THE PROPERTY MARKET

We used to include within our reports articles on the property market that we thought would be of interest and informative to you, however we were concerned that in some cases these did not offer the latest information. We have therefore decided to recommend various websites to you, however it is important to realise the vested interest the parties may have and the limits to the information.

[www.landreg.org.uk](http://www.landreg.org.uk)

This records the ownership of interests in registered land in England and Wales and issues a residential property price report quarterly, which is free of charge. The Land Registry is a Government body and records all transactions as far as we are aware, although critics of it would argue that the information is often many months out of date.

[www.rics.org.uk](http://www.rics.org.uk)

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors offer quarterly reports via their members. Although this has been criticised as being subjective and also limited, historically their predictions have been found to be reasonably accurate.

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

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

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

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

[www.motleyfool.co.uk](http://www.motleyfool.co.uk)

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

[www.rightmove.co.uk](http://www.rightmove.co.uk)

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

[www.zoopla.co.uk](http://www.zoopla.co.uk)

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

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# French Drain

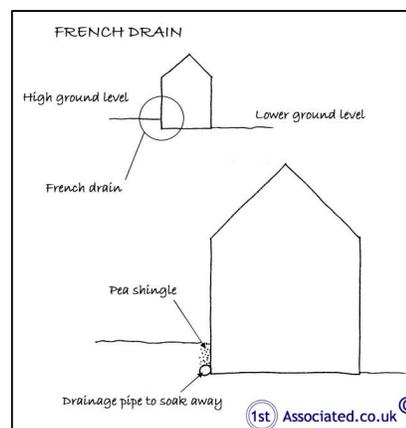
## Using a French drain to resolve a dampness problem

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

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

## What use is a French drain?

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **The French pond!**

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

# 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.

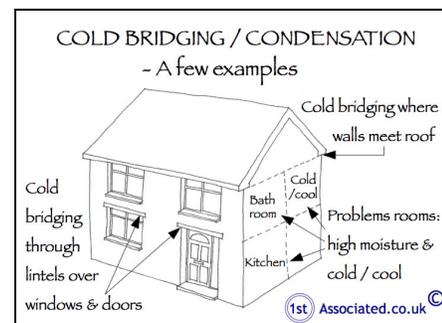
### Cold Bridging

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.

### 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.



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.

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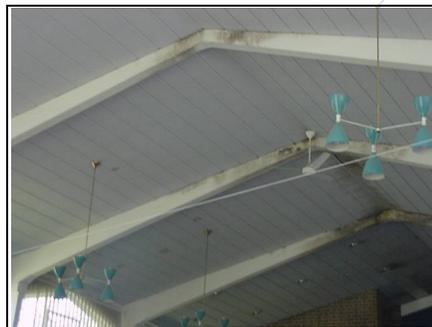
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Cold Bridging can also occur on metal lintels. We note that some modern metal lintels now have insulation in them which we assume is to reduce cold bridging.

### **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.

### **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.



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

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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.



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

### **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  
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.



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



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

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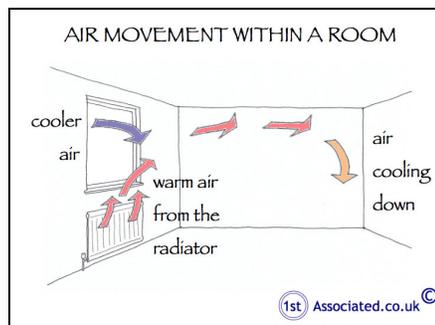
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## How to solve Cold Bridging

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?

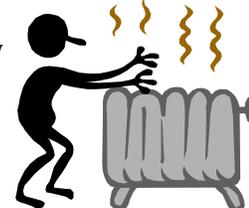
Our thoughts on this have very much changed as we used to say that cold bridging was typically found in properties from the 1960's/1970's. However we are increasingly finding it in a broader range of properties, particularly Victorian properties, where people are trying to live to modern standards of 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.

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

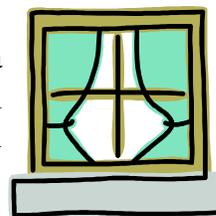
This is where you employ someone who is a specialist within a field, such as us as Chartered Building Surveyors, who comment on problems of condensation within the property. We have been involved in several court cases as expert witnesses where landlords are being taken to court over the condensation 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

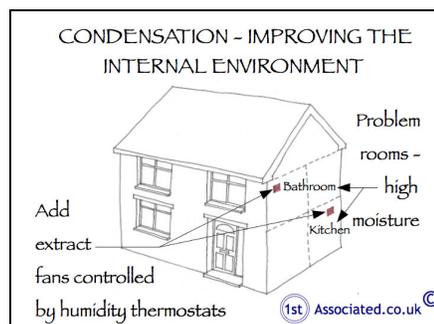
## Is Cold Bridging and Condensation a design problem or a lifestyle problem?

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 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.



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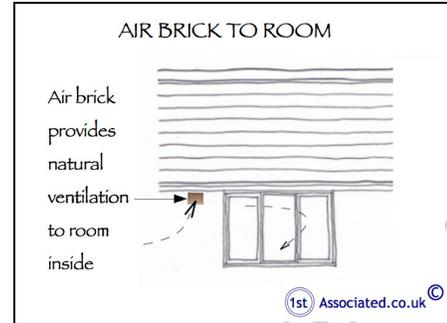
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## Things to remember about an air brick

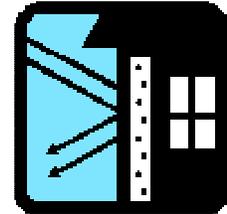
If you are thinking about adding an air brick then you need to be aware that airbricks don't actually allow that much air through. Although externally a nine by three air brick has a lot of gaps, as these gaps taper, it is generally considered that only about one inch square of air regularly passes through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

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## 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.

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).



Sliding sash windows can swell in the winter months

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.

